



Debates

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

Out-of-order petition
ACTION bus service—route 7

MISS C BURCH (Kurrajong) (10.00): I seek leave to table an out-of-order petition relating to proposed changes to current ACTION bus route 7 along Elouera, Fawkner, Torrens and Ipima streets, Braddon, and to make a statement in relation to the paper.

Leave granted.

MISS C BURCH: I present the following paper:

Petition which does not conform with the standing orders—Proposed changes to bus route 7—Miss C Burch (74 signatures).

I present this petition on behalf of 74 residents of Braddon, regarding proposed changes to route 7 under the government's new bus network. The changes would have a significant impact on the local community of Girrahween Lodge, and the St Columba's Uniting Church in Braddon.

We have heard from hundreds of people and organisations across Canberra about the government's proposed bus changes. The government's claim of "more trips more often" rings false in many residents' ears, because they will go from having a daily half-hourly service to a very limited part-time service. People's independence and dignity will be lost, and organisations will find it even harder to provide services without easy access to public transport.

Disability service providers who serve clients with limited mobility have told us that losing nearby bus stops will directly hurt their clients. Community service providers who help homeless people have told us that they rely on the public bus network to get their clients to safe shelters. Retirement village residents have told us they will be left stranded if their nearby bus stop is taken away. Many of them have moved into these residences based on the availability of public transport.

It is the residents of Girrahween Lodge, a retirement village in my electorate of Kurrajong, whom I speak for today. Having a bus stop outside their home gives these residents independence. It allows them to maintain their dignity. It lets them do their shopping, travel to medical appointments, visit friends, and maintain connections with the local community on their own schedule.

At the moment the route 7 bus runs along Fawkner Street, with a stop no more than 100 metres away. Girrahween Lodge residents do not have to be dependent on services that have to be booked days in advance, or that only go to a limited number

of destinations; and it is this independence that they have told me they will lose under the new network. Taking away regularly scheduled bus services from retirement village residents takes away their independence and their dignity.

Losing the bus stop outside their village will mean that residents will face an up to 700-metre walk to the nearest public transport stop. I have heard from residents who are getting quite frail and who would find it difficult, if not impossible, to walk that far, particularly if they are carrying shopping bags.

Elderly residents have told me that they can manage public transport if they do not have to walk too far. Residents have also told me that they are concerned about having to walk so far in the cold of winter or the heat of summer. They are even more concerned about having to walk in the rain, and, with the poor quality of footpaths in their suburb as well, one fall can lead to life-altering injuries for an elderly person.

Residents have also told me about the frustration they have experienced when they have tried to use flexibus services. The problem is that they have to be booked two days in advance. The second problem is that they operate only on weekdays, and residents cannot use them for unexpected situations or spontaneous outings with friends. Residents have told me that when they have called to book, the phone menu is difficult to navigate or that the lines are often busy. They just do not have the confidence that the flexibus will meet their needs.

Residents are particularly concerned that they will lose direct bus services to Belconnen. The current route 7 bus provides Girrahween Lodge residents with direct access to Calvary hospital and the Ginninderra medical centre. This will be lost with the new network. Retirement village residents rely heavily on public transport for easy access to medical services. Losing this access has left them fearful for their health and their independence.

We have heard many times how little regard the Chief Minister and his government have for anyone over the age of 60. Perhaps that is why no members of his government showed up at the Girrahween Lodge when Transport Canberra gave a briefing. They were invited; they just could not find the time. The residents of Girrahween Lodge feel as though they have been ignored by the government, that they are out of sight and most definitely out of mind.

It is not just the residents of Girrahween Lodge who will be affected by these cuts. The route 7 bus also transports homeless men from the city to the safe shelter provided by St Columba's Church, and to the nearby Salvation Army. Organisations who help homeless men in Civic and Braddon know that if they can get those men onto the route 7 bus, it will drop them right outside either of these shelters. These shelters provide safe shelter for homeless men, protecting them from harsh Canberra winters. Taking away the route 7 service, and taking away the bus stops near St Columba's Church and the Salvation Army, will make it all the more difficult for clients of these services to access these vital shelters.

In conclusion, the Labor-Greens government's changes to bus services will have severe impacts on the independence and dignity of some of our most vulnerable Canberrans.

Update on ACT Health transition and Australian Council on Healthcare Standards accreditation

Ministerial statement

MS FITZHARRIS (Yerrabi—Minister for Health and Wellbeing, Minister for Transport and City Services and Minister for Higher Education, Training and Research) (10.05): Today I would like to update the Assembly and the broader community on the significant work that has been going on across ACT Health to improve workplace culture and to cement the organisational values of care, excellence, collaboration and integrity. March 2018 marked a significant turning point for ACT Health for a number of reasons, which I will outline today.

It was in March that the Australian Council on Healthcare Standards, ACHS, conducted an organisation-wide survey of ACT Health as part of the re-accreditation process. I will go into greater detail on this shortly, but it is fair to say that this site visit and the resulting not met report were the catalyst for a profound shift in the organisation, one which has resulted in an outstanding accreditation result and a glowing external assessment of ACT Health's culture, leadership and commitment to continuous improvement.

It was also in March that the Minister for Mental Health and I announced that ACT Health would become two distinct organisations from 1 October 2018. The organisational reform will build on the outstanding improvements we have seen through the re-accreditation process and will be an opportunity to re-set and re-focus the organisation on its core purpose and values.

Madam Speaker, as part of the reform, the interim director-general is leading an extensive piece of work focused on the cultural needs of the organisations, in particular for the first six months of operations. I will go into further detail on both the progress of the transition and the work to improve ACT Health's culture and to cement its values shortly.

But first to accreditation. As I mentioned earlier, ACT Health underwent a re-accreditation assessment in March 2018 against the 10 national safety and quality health service standards. All public and private hospitals in Australia undergo this important rigorous process. The process is part of a continuous cycle of improvement to ensure that we deliver safe and high quality health care to Canberrans. It is an opportunity to identify areas for improvement that will make health services even better.

As part of the process, the ACHS conducted an organisation-wide survey of ACT Health between 19 and 23 March. During this survey, ACHS assessed ACT Health's implementation of the national standards. ACT Health was assessed against 256 actions, 209 of which are core under the national standards. While ACT Health met 176 of the core criteria, the surveyors assessed it as not meeting 33 of the core criteria under five of the 10 national standards.

Subsequently, ACHS provided ACT Health with a period of 90 days to remediate those matters that did not meet the 33 core criteria. ACT Health was re-assessed on its implementation of these not met criteria through a process called an advanced completion survey. Two surveyors from ACHS conducted this survey on site at Canberra Hospital and Health services between 3 and 5 July 2018.

ACT Health staff have risen to the challenge to address the 33 core criteria. I can advise you that ACT Health has made all the improvements necessary to achieve re-accreditation. I can further advise that ACT Health has been awarded re-accreditation for a further three years, which is the maximum allowable period. The surveyors were highly complementary of the improvements ACT Health and its staff have made since the initial site visit in March 2018.

The final accreditation survey report observed that ACT Health underwent significant transformation to address the improvements required. It further noted that ACT Health has taken the necessary steps to ensure the implementation of sustainable systems and processes that provide direction and strong governance from both a corporate and clinical governance perspective. The surveyors acknowledged, and were impressed by, the extensive work undertaken, staff engagement, leadership and commitment to achieve this result and to drive positive change in the culture of the organisation.

ACT Health was observed to have a positive culture of cohesion and teamwork, as well as a commitment to the delivery of safe and effective care. This has enabled the organisation to achieve great outcomes for all Canberrans. The surveyors are confident that ACT Health will sustain these achievements due to the systems and processes implemented and its commitment to delivery of excellent and safe health care.

Examples of the exceptional improvements that ACT Health have achieved include the active management of ligature points by ACT Health whilst still ensuring a recovery-focused environment for the consumer. The surveyors acknowledged the leadership of the mental health, justice health and alcohol and drug service division and the large body of work undertaken to address the recommendations.

The staff and leadership team in food and environmental services at ACT Health demonstrated to surveyors a can-do approach through the implementation of sustainable improvements. Surveyors commended ACT Health staff on their collaboration, leadership and commitment to improve the standards of care evident across the multidisciplinary team.

The surveyors applauded ACT Health for the positive and direct action that has occurred over the past three months in improving compliance with the use of the surgical safety checklist. A robust and sustainable policy, including performance escalation pathways for ongoing individual non-compliance, has been implemented. Effective communication and education processes have also been implemented to support staff and ensure that they sustain this improvement.

Surveyors were impressed by ACT Health's commitment to ensuring the delivery of quality patient care through improving timely completion of discharge reports. The work undertaken by an ACT Health GP, with extensive forensic mental health qualifications and clinical experience, to review and complete complex mental health discharge summaries was recognised as outstanding.

Madam Speaker, the surveyors are so impressed by the improvements ACT Health has implemented that they have encouraged ACT Health staff to publish and submit a number of the improvement activities for national quality improvements awards. These are just some examples of the tremendous work that ACT Health has undertaken over the past three months. Minister Rattenbury and I have both congratulated and thanked ACT Health staff for their enormous effort, professionalism and dedication to this achievement.

But, Madam Speaker, as you know, improving quality and safety is an ongoing process in the health system that does not start or end with accreditation. This is certainly something that ACT Health recognises. ACT Health has already begun preparatory work for the next re-accreditation process where it will be assessed against new and even more stringent national standards, a challenge it is more than up to.

ACT Health's commitment to continuous improvement was recognised by the surveyors, who commented that the systems and processes put in place over the past few months will assist staff and the leadership to drive towards excellence and safety in all patient care services.

As Minister for Health and Wellbeing I am committed to overseeing a health system that is constantly striving to improve safety and quality. That is a big part of why the government took the decision in March to reform ACT Health into two distinct organisations. As I have previously outlined, one organisation will be responsible for the clinical operations and will focus on the operational delivery of quality health services to the community. It will be responsible for the delivery of health care in ACT Health acute, sub-acute and community health settings, as well as having responsibility for driving continuous improvement in health service delivery.

The other will be responsible for strategic stewardship of the ACT's health system. It will oversee the system as a whole, set the strategic direction for health services and health research and innovation, and drive a preventative health approach, as well as provide health protection services. Both organisations will be committed to keeping our community healthy through person-centred care, quality, innovation, engagement and accountability.

Madam Speaker, this organisational reform will ensure that we have a sustainable health system that is better able to respond to our community's future health needs as we continue to grow and as our community changes. There will be greater autonomy and clarity by having two organisations that are appropriately resourced and focused on what they need to do.

Minister Rattenbury and I are being regularly updated on the progress that ACT Health is making as we move towards 1 October 2018. A transition office is facilitating the program of work to create the two new organisations. The formation of two organisations means that some of the existing functions within ACT Health will either move or be restructured, while others will be required in both organisations. As a result, an area of focus for the transition office has been on the enabling functions of ACT Health. This will ensure that the organisations are appropriately resourced to perform their specific functions.

A steering committee formed by ACT Health executive leaders has been established to guide the progress of the transition and to ensure effective decision-making and governance. A number of working groups have also been formed, utilising the subject-matter expertise within the organisation to develop and progress detailed action plans to ensure that the transition will be conducted in a timely manner.

Importantly, the transition office has factored into its plan many opportunities for staff engagement and consultation. This is to minimise disruption to the workforce, increase understanding of the changes being made, and improve workforce readiness. A series of workshops has commenced with leaders across ACT Health to ensure strategic alignment with the vision and objectives of the change, to create a guiding coalition of change leaders, and to seek their engagement and input into the design of the organisations. A set of design principles has been developed to guide the development of the structures.

Last week more than 140 leaders from across ACT Health came together for a collaborative leadership event. They discussed the importance of their roles in positively leading ACT Health staff through this time of change. This event was an opportunity for leaders from across the broad spectrum of ACT Health to have input into the functional design of the two new organisations. A draft functional design of the two new organisations was discussed and refined. This was an important step in the design of the structures. Leaders also participated in process-mapping exercises in order to get a greater understanding of how the organisations will interact under various scenarios.

I am pleased that recruitment for the positions of Director-General, ACT Health and the Chief Executive Officer, Canberra Hospital and Health Service is progressing for two such key leadership positions. I look forward to the announcement being made in the near future following a national and international search.

Transparent and accountable decision-making will be key to the success of the transition program. The interim director-general has provided and will continue to provide regular updates to staff on the transition via staff bulletins, face-to-face forums and a dedicated intranet page. More detailed consultations around the structure of the two organisations will be conducted through the transition office in the coming weeks.

Over the past three months, the ACT Health leadership team has worked hard to improve the organisational culture, particularly through the re-accreditation process.

The commitment from the leadership team is showing signs of a significant shift in the positivity of the workforce culture across the organisation. Developing a high performing culture where people feel valued and are able to contribute and build effective partnerships is a high priority for ACT Health's leadership.

As part of the preparatory work for 1 October, the interim director-general is leading a significant piece of organisational development work. It is focused on the cultural needs of the organisations, in particular for the first six months of operations. It is underpinned by a focus on values and genuine engagement with staff and leadership across the organisations. It will enable us to embed an even more positive culture across our health system.

This work includes a focus on building a cohesive, values-based executive team and on building an environment where collaboration can thrive. There will be an increased focus on engagement and communication with staff and on identifying and promoting the many instances of great care and service which happen across ACT Health every day.

There will also be stronger engagement with our tertiary stakeholders to ensure that we continue to be focused on learning and development. One particular initiative that is being driven by the interim Director-General, ACT Health is to establish a policy, practice and research summit to develop health systems thinking. The inaugural summit will take place in November of this year.

It is clear that the culture within ACT Health has been improving greatly. We want staff to feel safe and confident about raising issues, and there are a number of mechanisms currently available to staff to seek support. However, I acknowledge, as does ACT Health, that sometimes people in all organisations may not feel confident to go through these established processes. That is why the interim director-general has met with the Health Services Commissioner to see what other avenues can be opened to staff who wish to raise concerns. The Health Services Commissioner is another option for staff to raise issues of culture if they so choose, and I am confident that these measures, and the changes in health's leadership, are improving the culture within the ACT government's largest organisation.

An enormous amount of work has occurred across the ACT Health Directorate to achieve accreditation. The final accreditation report details the outstanding achievements that ACT Health have made over the past few months. Staff have stepped up to this challenge, demonstrating outstanding commitment to the delivery of safe and effective care to the Canberra community. In the words of the surveyors:

This has been no mean feat and everyone needs to recognise this achievement in a positive productive light.

The final accreditation report and achievement of accreditation is a significant accomplishment for the ACT. The outcome reflects the high quality of work being performed on a daily basis and the dedication of ACT Health to delivering Canberrans the safe and quality healthcare services they expect and deserve.

March 2018 marked a point in time when ACT Health staff at all levels stood up and said, “We are proud, and we are committed to delivering the best possible health care to our community.” Significant improvements have been made during this process and all staff should feel rightly proud. The organisational reform will ensure that we continue to see profound improvements in our health system, and we will ensure that our community continues to receive the high quality, safe health care it expects and deserves.

Because we know that as our community grows our community’s changing healthcare needs must be met, this year’s budget continues to invest in our community’s health, spending ACT taxpayer’s money responsibly and sustainably. We will continue to invest in clinical capacity such as additional beds at our hospitals, more nurse-led walk-in centres, more mental health services and a major expansion of hospital in the home.

We will keep investing in our health system as well, planning truly territory-wide health services, leveraging and improving health data, improving health literacy through individual and environmental health literacy, and continuing our focus on prevention. The important work in mental health led and driven by Mr Rattenbury, including the establishment of the office for mental health, will also continue to be a priority.

As I have also outlined above, we will invest in our health workforce by insisting on a positive organisational culture, building leadership capacity and engaging with staff. We will work side by side with our workforce and their representatives to improve access to training and development and ensuring safe staffing levels.

We will find new and exciting ways to support and encourage clinical research and innovation and to leverage the ACT’s unique and rich tertiary sector, especially by deepening our engagement and collaboration with the Australian National University and the University of Canberra.

We will work closely with the primary care sector and strengthen our collaboration for the benefit of patients and their families. And we will continue to work with our valued community sector partners, many of whom not only deliver vital healthcare services but also provide insight and advocacy on behalf of many members of our community.

We do this because we know deeply on this side of the chamber that a person’s health is affected by social and economic conditions, and that is why universal health care is so vital to the health and wellbeing of our community. We know that we must continue to meet our community’s healthcare needs and that the best way we can do this is to invest in a healthcare system that focuses on keeping people healthy and well and supporting them to access health care closer to home and investing in care to keep people out of hospital. This sets us apart from others who seek to cut health services and take a narrow lens about what keeps our community healthy and well.

As we continue to invest in this future for our community I acknowledge and thank again on behalf of Minister Rattenbury and the ACT government all of the staff at ACT Health for their commitment and effort throughout the accreditation process and to the work they do every day dedicated to the health of our community.

I present the following papers:

ACT Health transition and Australian Council on Healthcare Standards Accreditation—Update—Ministerial statement, 21 August 2018.

Australian Council on Healthcare Standard National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards Survey—Report, dated 31 July 2018.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the papers.

MRS DUNNE (Ginninderra) (10.23): Most hospitals, when they go through the accreditation process, pass the first time. Most hospitals do not use the accreditation process to point out areas where they need continuous improvement; they have done that before they sit the first test. This statement is like a student who gets to sit a special exam because they failed their first exam. The minister should be a little more contrite, a little bit crestfallen, and there should be a great deal less spin than she has displayed today. The fact that we are here, six months after the first accreditation process, wiping our brow and saying, “Thank goodness we passed that one,” is of no credit to this minister and to this government.

We have to remember that back in March this year Canberra Hospital and Health Services failed 30-plus critical criteria. What we have seen today is a minister trying to put a positive spin on the fact that back in March the hospital failed accreditation. What we have seen here is the minister trying to make the best of it.

Ms Fitzharris: Madam Speaker, a point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mrs Dunne, can you resume your seat. The minister on a point of order.

Ms Fitzharris: Madam Speaker, I seek guidance on the correct procedure. It is simply not the case that in March ACT Health failed accreditation. I do not know how many times I need to say this. It is incorrect, and I ask Mrs Dunne to withdraw.

MRS DUNNE: You cannot ask me to withdraw; I have not said anything unparliamentary.

MADAM SPEAKER: Please wait, Mrs Dunne. Ms Fitzharris, at this point Mrs Dunne has not said anything unparliamentary. If you believe she has misrepresented your position then you can address that under standing order 47. Mrs Dunne, on the motion being agreed to.

MRS DUNNE: Look at some of the language used in the minister's statement. The minister says that the issue of ligature points is under active management. One of the criteria we failed as a high risk was that we had not addressed the issue of ligature points. We heard in an answer from Mr Rattenbury in question time two sitting weeks ago that that issue is not completely resolved and that there is not a final timetable for resolving that. So having it under active management is the best that we can possibly say about it. There is a lot of work to be done.

To be as brief as possible, what we are seeing today is a minister who has fessed up to the fact that we have a poor culture in ACT Health and the hospital system and that somehow, sometime in March, ACT Health and the hospital system had this Damascus-like conversion and since then everything is on an upward trajectory. From what the minister and Mr Rattenbury have said on previous occasions, and from the clear message today, March was some magical period and now everything is rainbows and unicorns. The minister may not like the fact that the opposition does not believe her spin and does not accept her spin, but if you read the words of the minister today, they are purely about spin.

I am not yet convinced that March created this Damascus-like conversion in ACT Health and that everything is on an upward trajectory. The Liberal opposition is not convinced that the anticipated October splitting of the organisation will give greater autonomy and clarity to policy settings and the delivery of health services in the ACT. Quite the contrary—we believe this will be a backward step, a step back to how ACT Health was a few years ago, and that it is change for change's sake.

We can have all the leadership forums we like, but that will not change the delivery of health services until we have a coherent health system which first and foremost addresses the culture in ACT Health. I am very hopeful some of the issues outlined here will address the culture in ACT Health, but there needs to be leadership from the very head.

To my knowledge, the minister has two instances in her email inbox where members of ACT Health have disclosed to her—and in one case to every member of this Assembly—things that are going wrong in the ACT health system and the way staff have been bullied over a long and sustained period. There is no confidentiality about those matters; they have been publically aired by the people.

I refer the minister to those emails and I challenge her to show leadership: to show how those people who disclosed matters to her and Minister Rattenbury, and in one case every member of this Assembly, have had a respectful pathway; to show how after disclosing to this minister she has ensured all the systems in ACT Health work to protect them, the people about whom those disclosures have been made and the people who have been bullied; to have the situation independently investigated by somebody who does not have a stake in the game; and to come to a conclusion about how those very serious issues, if they are true, can be addressed in a professional and respectful way.

Let this minister lead by example; let us see her leadership on this. There are two cases out there. There was an email to the minister, I think on 5 August, and one on 24 July that outline bullying and harassment in a particular area in ACT Health. I challenge you, minister, to do something about it. I challenge you to report back to this Assembly, after the matter has been resolved, on how it was resolved and how the people who have made those complaints are protected in ACT Health. Then we will know that there is a cultural change. Then the staff will know they have a chance, if they make a complaint. At the moment the staff of ACT Health do not trust you. They do not trust the system because they fear that every time they make a complaint they will be victimised.

MS FITZHARRIS (Yerrabi—Minister for Health and Wellbeing, Minister for Transport and City Services and Minister for Higher Education, Training and Research) (10.31), in reply: How disappointing for those 7,000 staff in ACT Health who work tirelessly. I do not believe there was not an utterance of respect from the opposition, or thanks or recognition of the work they do every day. That will not go unnoticed. Mrs Dunne and the opposition can play politics on this matter for as long as they like. The opposition were very keen to quote back at me and Minister Rattenbury words from the surveys in March; they endlessly quoted the surveyors. I repeat again the words of the surveyors in regard to the achievements in ACT Health:

This has been no mean feat and everyone needs to recognise this achievement in a positive productive light.

For years, the opposition have had little regard for the work of ACT Health and have played politics. I have said repeatedly and I will say again that I take responsibility for the performance of ACT Health. I take responsibility for making significant strategic decisions regarding the future of ACT Health. But I recognise that ACT Health is complex, as all health systems are. It is incredibly disappointing for an organisation of 7,000 people not to have the opposition acknowledge this incredible achievement, and I am sad for them on their behalf.

I acknowledge that there will be people in large organisations that will want to have their voices heard, and I will make sure there are appropriate processes for that. As I indicated in my statement, I have also asked the interim director-general to look at other avenues, and I spoke about the Health Services Commissioner.

Madam Speaker, under standing order 47 I ask Mrs Dunne to discontinue her false claim that ACT Health failed accreditation. She said it this morning; she says it publicly, and it is not correct. It is simply not correct. It is a mistruth and it should not be repeated in this place. ACT Health did not meet a number of criteria. It is enormously significant to claim repeatedly—after repeated requests not to—that our hospital system has failed. It has not. It did not. And we should be proud. Whatever politics the opposition want to play with health to distract from their real plans in health, they cannot say a mistruth. I will seek guidance on what I do if the opposition make that claim again in this chamber and, indeed, make it publicly, because it is simply not true.

I again thank ACT Health staff for their work. I thank them for their ongoing commitment and their dedication to our community and for the work they do every day. The doctors, the nurses, the physios, the OTs, the pathologists, the pharmacists, the cleaners, the wards people, the administrators, the people in our kitchens, I thank them all. They all work hard every day for our community, and the last three months have shown their dedication to that. I put on the record again my disappointment at the opposition's mean-spiritedness in the response today, and I thank again the staff of ACT Health for their efforts.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Outcomes of the ACT Health system-wide data review

Ministerial statement

MS FITZHARRIS (Yerrabi—Minister for Health and Wellbeing, Minister for Transport and City Services and Minister for Higher Education, Training and Research) (10.36): I take this opportunity to update the Assembly on another significant milestone for ACT Health following finalisation of the ACT Health system-wide data review. As members are aware, this is a critical piece of work and significant improvement has occurred within ACT Health since the review commenced in March 2017. When I announced this comprehensive review, I committed to provide quarterly updates to the Assembly as this work progressed.

Today I am pleased to table the review, together with the ACT government's response and ACT Health's implementation plan. Firstly, I would like to take the opportunity today to acknowledge and thank the members of the review panel for their guidance and support to ACT Health over the period of the review. The review panel has provided an important balance of internal and external oversight and expertise that has helped shape the outcomes of this review.

ACT Health has completed the review with a high level of confidence that recent recommendations about its data management and reporting practices have been either addressed as part of the review or will be actioned as a future activity. It is clear that over time the outcomes of this review will be the foundations upon which ACT Health's important change programs will be built.

The outcomes of the review will drive ACT Health's vision of best practice performance and underpin quality and continuous improvement of patient outcomes. This will enable innovative approaches to health service delivery and health system performance, leveraging the full capability of the datasets we hold. Moving forward, the outcomes from the review will enable meaningful change that will benefit our patients, clinicians, workforce, research, training and administrators.

As members are aware, I ordered this review last year, shortly after the Productivity Commission's *Report on Government Services 2017* was released. Some ACT Health data was not available in time for that publication. As a result, it was clear more work needed to be done to ensure that ACT Health's data management and quality assurance processes were robust and accurate.

The review was tasked to investigate the extent of the problems, governance practices and protocols in relation to the management of data. In ordering the review, I made it clear that I wanted more than just a post-mortem of the mistakes of the past. I wanted a visionary document to map out how data can support a high quality health system that Canberrans expect and deserve, both now and in the future.

In ordering the review, I required a report addressing the review's terms of reference to be completed by 31 March. This was done, with a report delivered to me on 6 April 2018. It was vital to me that the review's recommendations resulted in practical outcomes that support service delivery priorities and ensure quality outcomes across the health system and for the community.

Therefore, I subsequently directed that clinical and non-clinical ACT Health staff be consulted on the findings and recommendations of the review. In response to the feedback received from ACT Health staff, the final outcomes report that I am tabling today has been streamlined. Repetitive content has been removed to make it easier for everyone to understand, and other supporting content that was in the April 2018 report, and that had been attached as appendices, will be published on ACT Health's website instead.

Madam Speaker, I provide assurance to you today that the findings and recommendations resulting from the review remain the same and have not been amended in any way in the final outcomes report. As the Minister for Health and Wellbeing, I am excited about the opportunities this review presents for the future of our health system. Through the extensive work that has been undertaken, it is my intention to ensure that ACT Health provides access to high quality, timely and useful information that the ACT community can rely on.

Our success in this goal will be measured by the health outcome improvements we can achieve for our patients, as they are at the centre of everything ACT Health does. Good data is integral to this, whether it be for our community to access data and information to support better patient involvement in their own care or to ensure that our hardworking health professionals are supported to continuously improve clinical practice through timely access to data and information.

As such, the ACT Health performance, reporting and data management strategy has been identified as a key outcome from the review. The strategy will define the longer term frameworks that will enable ACT Health to deliver high quality performance reporting and data services to its stakeholders. This strategy aims to transform the healthcare outcomes for our community through better data supporting improved clinical knowledge and practices.

I would like to remind members that for ACT Health this has been a time of reflection. Lessons have been learnt and a process of change management is now underway. Through this process we have reached out to our key stakeholders, calling for openness and honesty so that no stone remains unturned. ACT Health has listened, taken ownership of and responsibility for the changes ahead, and we have now embedded a leadership that is ready and committed to the journey ahead.

To ensure openness of the system-wide data review as it progressed, independent quarterly reports were undertaken. In part, these audits tracked ACT Health's progress in implementing the 175 data integrity recommendations across six external reviews from recent years, including the Auditor-General's reviews in 2012 and 2015.

I am pleased to say that throughout the review ACT Health made significant progress in addressing these recommendations. This has been quality assured by an external auditor to ensure all work was undertaken in a transparent way. Of the 175 data integrity recommendations, 69 recommendations have been addressed and are now complete; 70 are underway; 15 are considered ongoing with work in progress; and 21 recommendations were assessed as part of the review as no longer relevant.

A complete list of all 175 recommendations and their status will be available on the ACT Health website. Following on from the review, ACT Health is continuing its work to address all remaining recommendations. The paper I am tabling today outlines the review's key findings and recommendations addressing the terms of reference that were tabled in the Assembly in March 2017.

Madam Speaker, as you are aware, the terms of reference required that a root cause analysis be conducted of the systemic and underlying drivers of the data issues. The independent root cause analysis process found that the key issues were uncertainty over the quality of data; a lack of access to timely data; a lack of clarity on how to compare and interpret data; and a perception that not all of the required data was being collected. These issues and subsequent recommendations helped to inform the key findings and recommendations identified in the outcomes report.

The nine recommendations from the review are: to build a new data repository that becomes a single source of truth; embed governance structures to establish clarity around data categories, ownership, decisions and accountabilities; routinely review data quality and identify any gaps in data collection; create user-friendly data documents to ensure interpretation is accurate; maintain security and privacy through training on access rights, obligations, legislative requirements and protocols; improve workforce capabilities and skill sets for collecting, maintaining and releasing data; regularly educate, remind and reinforce issues about data management through targeted communications; ensure staff are proactive and responsive to changes in business requirements, systems and policies by creating a change request register; and deliver timely information to maximise data for policy development, services provided and to better inform the performance, quality and safety of the care provided by ACT Health.

I note that one of the review's recommendations centres on data security and privacy. This is vitally important to me to ensure the safety and security of the health data of all Canberrans. Given the recent and ongoing public discussions about the my health record and the use of health data more broadly, we all have the expectation that our information will be collected, managed and used appropriately. The review has considered these issues carefully, with the understanding that the highest standards of data security and privacy will be maintained now and into the future.

Right now, implementation of the review's recommendations is a key priority. The review envisages a work program over three years to fully implement and embed the range of recommendations that target best practice data management and reporting. That is why I am also tabling an implementation plan to accompany the outcomes report today.

The implementation plan tabled today details the first six months of the work program to December 2018. There will be rolling six-monthly updates to provide information on ACT Health's progress and to detail activities for the next six months. The first implementation plan details priority activities that will address the review's nine key recommendations.

The completion of the system-wide data review marks the beginning of an exciting new journey for ACT Health. We have already seen a number of notable outcomes as a result of the review, with the foundations of robust data, reporting frameworks and processes now set. Throughout the review ACT Health met all external reporting requirements, including for the report on government services. This will continue, with all reporting requirements continuing to be met.

Quarterly performance reporting, starting with the first quarter of the 2018-19 financial year, will be reinstated. The review has provided ACT Health with the potential to transform the delivery of health care in the ACT community. Work is underway to transform the way ACT Health produces and shares data with consumers.

We want the community to be able to learn more about the accessibility, effectiveness and quality of our health system. We have an exciting opportunity now to make access to data more transparent and fundamentally reshape the way the ACT community understands our health system. This ultimately sets the scene for opportunities like the territory-wide sharing of data that I hope will empower patients and support clinicians and staff to provide the best possible health care they can.

In conclusion, I would like to commend ACT Health on the completion of the review, which has been an enormous piece of work. The ACT government acknowledges the key findings resulting from the review and accepts all nine recommendations, including the road map of key future activities.

ACT Health will now focus on delivering the comprehensive implementation plan. This will ensure that ACT Health continues to work to deliver high quality data management and reporting practices and healthcare outcomes. I am pleased to table the following papers:

Leading Data Reform: The Way Forward—Outcomes of the ACT Health System-Wide Data Review—

Ministerial statement, 21 August 2018.

Review, dated August 2018.

Government response, dated 21 August 2018.

System-Wide Data Review—Implementation Plan—Phase One, to December 2018.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the papers.

MRS DUNNE (Ginninderra) (10.48): I welcome the tabling of this statement today and what is apparently the conclusion of the system-wide data review, somewhat later than the minister promised, as we have all noted previously. *Leading Data Reform: The Way Forward* speaks a lot about the potential that we have here. It is to be noted that in the minister's concluding comments she confirmed something I have said on a number of occasions. She confirmed how important it is that we have good health data. She said:

The review has provided ACT Health with the potential—

“Potential,” Madam Speaker—

to transform the delivery of health care in the ACT community.

When this issue first arose, I spoke at length about the importance of health data. Members on the government side kept saying, “It is not important. It is only data. It doesn't actually relate to patient health and safety.” That went back to 2012, when we had the data doctoring issues. The minister for health at the time said, “It is only data. It doesn't really impact on people's health and safety.”

But the minister today puts the lie to all of those claims, all of those brushings off that we have had since 2012, because what the minister says here is that without good data we cannot have optimal health delivery. If we do not have optimal health delivery, we do not have optimal health. Thank you, minister, for at last acknowledging on behalf of successive ACT governments that ACT Health data does matter. It does matter, and without good health data we cannot make the right choices about where we should be spending our health dollar. That is something that at last this government has admitted.

While I welcome this report, I think it also highlights the whole sorry saga of health data operations when you consider that, as the minister outlines on page 7 of her statement, this is the culmination of six or seven years of reviews and counter reviews. As we have seen from the minister's statement, there are 175 individual recommendations to fix data in the ACT Health system.

We have to remember that there have been two Auditor-General's reports into health data and, the minister says, six external reviews. I counted five. Actually, I realised when I was thinking about this today that in fact there were six because there was an independent data review at the time of the 2012 Auditor-General's report that I had not counted. In a very short period of time—most of those were pushed into 2015-16—there have been six independent reviews by accounting companies and two Auditor-General's reviews. We had 175 recommendations. What we have seen here is an admission that many of those recommendations were not being actioned.

From time to time in annual reports we could see what was happening with the Auditor-General's recommendations, but the other reports that the ACT taxpayer had paid handsomely for were not being reported on. As a result, it is quite clear that most of what was being recommended is not underway. Why have we been so slow to do this? I think it is mainly because the ministers—successive ministers—sent the message that health data was not all that important.

I note that the minister has tabled the current version of the system-wide review and has made an undertaking to you, Madam Speaker, and I presume through you to the Assembly, that all the recommendations from the original version are in the version that has been tabled here today. But we discussed this at length in the estimates process, which is why I have circulated a motion that, after the conclusion of this debate, I will seek leave to move.

There was extensive discussion during the estimates process about how we will know that there have not been modifications to this report. The minister has said in her statement today that a lot of text has been withdrawn. It has been taken out, she says, because the text is repetitious. Also, a lot of the information that was in the report has been stripped out and put in appendices. I understand that it has not been tabled today—the minister can clarify this—and will only go on the Health website.

I wonder why the minister does not table it here today. Is there a question about the validity of that data, so that the minister does not want to table it and have it attract privilege in some way? I am a little uncertain as to why we are not getting the whole report. There was considerable concern expressed by me and others during the estimates process. We asked the minister to table both reports at this time. She said that she would look into it, but I notice that she has not. That is my understanding. If the minister has tabled both the March-April report and the final report, I will not have to move my motion. She can clarify that in any closing comments that she wishes to make.

Generally speaking, I welcome this. But it is a very sorry tale of failure that the minister has told here today. Again, it goes to the culture of the organisation that we have had such a spectacular failure in relation to health data. I welcome the changes that have been wrought. But I also think it is interesting that there are nine recommendations that the government has said it will implement. But those recommendations seem to me to be business as usual—the sorts of things that should be in an integrated, well-functioning data system.

I highlight the fact that after six reviews and two Auditor-General's inquiries we have to have another \$1 million-plus review that comes up with recommendations like: build a data repository; embed governance structures; review the quality of data; create user-friendly data documents; maintain security and privacy; improve workforce capabilities; regularly educate, remind and reinforce issues about data management; ensure staff are proactive and responsive to changes in business requirements; and deliver timely information. That is just business as usual. I find it astounding that we needed to spend \$1 million-plus to come up with recommendations that are essentially business as usual.

I will take considerable time to read the documentation. I hope that the documentation that is on the ACT Health website is easy to locate and to navigate. If the minister has not tabled the March-April version of the health-wide data system review, I will seek leave of the Assembly to move a motion in relation to that.

MS FITZHARRIS (Yerrabi—Minister for Health and Wellbeing, Minister for Transport and City Services and Minister for Higher Education, Training and Research) (10.57), in reply: I note Mrs Dunne's proposed motion. I will be happy to table that version. In doing that, I believe that Mrs Dunne need not move her motion. I will do that by the close of business today.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bushfire season 2018-19

Ministerial statement

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) (10.57): I rise to report to the Assembly about the 2018-19 bushfire season in the ACT. Our territory has a history of severe and damaging bushfires, both locally and regionally. More recently, changes in climate have contributed further to the threat of bushfire in the region.

Madam Speaker, we cannot escape the realities of climate change, the harm a warming planet brings. Expert scientists have warned of drier winters and narrower windows in which to conduct hazard reduction burns. In a 2016 report, the Climate Council found that over the past 40 years or so extreme fire weather has increased in large parts of Australia, including in our region. The council noted that in New South Wales and the ACT the fire seasons have started earlier and lasted longer than before. It also reported that the total economic costs of bushfires for New South Wales and the ACT is estimated to be approximately \$100 million per year and will more than double by the middle of this century.

This is why it is important that we not only prepare for the current threats but make a concerted effort to tackle climate change and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, an area that this government is leading in and will continue to lead in. It is also important to ensure that we are taking the best possible approach to preparing for bushfire threats. The ACT's bushfire season is governed by provisions in the Emergencies Act 2004. This act outlines that the season will run from 1 October in any given year through to 31 March the following year, unless conditions warrant a change to that time frame. This is decided by the ACT Emergency Services Agency Commissioner, the ESA Commissioner, in consultation with the ACT Bushfire Council.

After consultation and reviewing the current conditions, the ESA Commissioner has declared the bushfire season will commence early, on 1 September, this year. On 6 August this year, the Queanbeyan-Palerang council, to our east, advised that due to the ongoing dry conditions in the region, they have brought forward their bushfire danger period to start on 1 September 2018. Just last week a total fire ban was

declared for Sydney and surrounding areas, and active fires around Nowra resulted in evacuations to parts of Ulladulla.

The Bureau of Meteorology has reported that the Murray-Darling Basin has experienced the driest January to June since 1986, and as part of the picture the ACT currently has a very low soil moisture. The rainfall outlook for the coming months is expected to be low, with higher than expected temperatures. The Bureau of Meteorology has also issued an El Nino watch, which indicates that the likelihood of El Nino this summer is higher than normal. Unless future outlooks start to suggest that the situation differs, the risks from heatwave and bushfire to the ACT from this coming summer must be assessed and elevated. The Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Council will release their southern Australia seasonal bushfire outlook at the Australasian Fire and Emergency Services Authorities Council conference in early September this year.

The ESA has responsibility for responding to bushfire in the ACT, with its mission to work together to care and protect through cohesive operations, collaborative management and unified executive. The strategic bushfire management plan, the SBMP, provides a planned and measured approach to managing the risk of bushfire in the territory. The SBMP is the key document for the ACT for managing the risk of bushfire, which is reviewed every five years and presented to this Assembly. The latest territory-wide risk assessment, released in 2017, continues to identify bushfire, along with heatwave, as the ACT's extreme risk.

The ESA, through the ACT Rural Fire Service and ACT Fire & Rescue, and the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate, EPSDD, through the parks and conservation service, have highly skilled, experienced and qualified firefighters who stand ready to protect the community should it be required. Firefighters in the ACT are a mix of volunteers and employed people and are well resourced and well trained.

The ESA assists the land managers from the ACT parks and conservation service within the EPSDD to mitigate the risk of bushfire. The EPSDD bushfire operations plan sets out the work and activities that the ACT parks and conservation service aim to achieve each financial year to help manage bushfire risk across the territory.

The early declaration of the fire season has minimal impact on the delivery of fire preparations for the EPSDD, including the ACT parks and conservation service. This is because fire preparedness is a year-round function and the ACT parks and conservation services work crews are already engaged in implementing required works under the EPSDD draft bushfire operations plan. Prescribed burns are implemented when the weather and ground conditions are appropriate and allow a burn to be undertaken safely, and this can happen at any time of the year.

EPSDD delivers a range of bushfire preparedness activities, including prescribed burning; strategic stock grazing; management of trail upgrades; and maintenance, mulching and slashing of fuels. Essential activities such as fire training, seasonal recruitment and establishment of contracts for slashing are currently being undertaken,

as is fire trail access maintenance and the physical removal of vegetation and other flammable material.

These activities are all outlined in the 2018-19 BOP, which will soon be presented to the ESA Commissioner for final approval. This year's BOP will highlight over 700 individual tasks to better prepare the territory for bushfire and will include 5,000 hectares of proposed prescribed burning, subject to appropriate conditions. I note the ACT Bushfire Council's acknowledgement of the work completed against the 2017-18 EPSDD BOP, given the difficulty of decreasing windows of opportunity to safely conduct hazard reduction burns as the climate changes.

ACT and federal government funding has provided 12 automated digital fire danger signs that will help keep Canberrans and visitors up to date with the latest fire danger information. Funding has also been provided so that all ESA vehicles have automated external defibrillators to increase the availability of providing this additional potential lifesaving service to the Canberra community.

To prepare the community, each year the ESA doorknocks houses in the bushfire-prone area to help residents understand their risk and how they take steps to prepare their family and property. Further supporting this activity is the Emergency Services Open Day, which will be held on 28 October this year at ESA headquarters in Fairbairn. The open day is where the ESA, supported by ACT government directorates and partners, showcases its members and capability to the general public and provides further information to the public on how to prepare itself.

The community fire units, CFUs, are a valued volunteer service made up of local residents who live close to bushland areas across the ACT. On 1 September 2018, CFU Saturday, units across Canberra will meet at a number of locations, such as local shops, parks and bushfire-prone areas, to conduct community education activities.

The work undertaken by ESA in the lead-up to each bushfire season is in preparation for an eventuation of the worst-case scenario. In addition to regular administrative, training and interagency collaborative pre-season preparation, the early start to the bushfire season will be supported by new initiatives and capabilities.

These include the contracting of a special intelligence-gathering helicopter for the height of the coming season. This helicopter has a high-definition and infrared camera on board, with imagery that can livestream to the ESA incident management room. The helicopter will significantly enhance bushfire fighting operations by allowing key decision-makers to better understand the extent of the situation as it unfolds from the IMR, which will generally and greatly assist the incident controller in complex situations.

To further improve incident management in the ACT, the ESA recently invested to upgrade incident management facilities at ESA headquarters. The upgrades include improved ICT, dedicated seating for key incident staff, and an improved layout that will enhance team communications and coordination during critical and complex incidents.

The ESA has established an all-hazards agency-wide training and assessment pathway for ESA volunteers and staff, enabling certification to the national unit of competency to control a level 3 incident. Eleven ESA executives and senior staff recently completed a pilot level 3 incident controller course. A level 3 incident under the Australasian interagency incident management system is characterised by degrees of complexity that may require the establishment of divisions of effective management of a situation. Before the end of 2018, the ESA will also deliver a program to train additional volunteers and staff in a variety of disciplines to manage level 2 incidents. The skills provided will include more volunteers and staff trained in incident control, operations, logistics and planning.

The recently completed course expands the pool of available qualified level 3 incident controllers to 70 personnel and 114 personnel with level 2 incident controller qualifications, should the ACT or other jurisdictions require such expertise over the coming months.

The ACT regularly provides assistance to other jurisdictions in times of emergencies as part of national and international responses. The rapport established with other jurisdictions in all types of emergencies will assist the ACT in seeking support when faced with any major emergencies of our own in future. Just last week we deployed the specialised capability of mapping and planning support personnel to the Bega Valley to assist with a fire that had already burnt more than 3,000 hectares. In early August the ACT also deployed 10 personnel to the United States and two personnel to Canada in key firefighting roles.

The experience and lessons learnt from these deployments helps ensure that our own capability is well tested and prepared. The returning personnel will bring with them the experience of fighting fires that in 2018, to date, have burnt 625,744 hectares in the United States and 865,466 hectares in Canada. Our thoughts go out to those currently affected by wildfires in the Northern Hemisphere as we prepare for what is shaping up to be an extended local bushfire season.

I present the following paper:

2018-19 bushfire season—Early commencement—Ministerial statement,
21 August 2018.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Workplace safety performance Ministerial statement

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

Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations) (11.09): I am pleased to present to the Assembly my annual update on the territory's workplace safety performance.

Before commencing, I would like to reaffirm this government's ongoing commitment to protecting the health and safety of workers. Safety must be everyone's priority and it is everyone's responsibility. Working together, we can make sure everyone gets home safely. At the end of the day, this is the most important thing.

I am pleased to inform the Assembly that, in the private sector, workers compensation data indicates that the number of lost time injuries experienced in 2017-18 reduced by around 17 per cent compared to the previous year. Improvements in lost time claim levels were visible in most industry sectors, with significant reductions achieved by the construction, healthcare and social assistance and education sectors.

While these results are heartening, the construction and healthcare and social assistance sectors remain the ACT's two highest risk industries in which to work. Together, they accounted for more than 43 per cent of all lost time injuries in the private sector. The most common causes of injury were body stressing, slips, trips and falls, being hit by moving objects and vehicle incidents.

Much more needs to be done to make ACT industries the safest in Australia, and I will shortly outline what we are doing to help make sure ACT workplaces are safe. In the ACT public sector there have also been some significant improvements in performance. The government has expressed its support for the national workplace health and safety strategy and has adopted annual public sector industry reduction targets designed to achieve the strategy's objective of reducing the rate of serious work-related injury by 30 per cent by 2022.

In 2017-18 not only did the ACT public sector achieve its required annual rate of improvement but I am pleased to advise the Assembly that it exceeded it by more than 20 per cent. I expect further improvements in public sector performance will flow from it becoming a workers compensation self-insurer during 2018-19 by introducing provisional liability for medical services, for example. This will allow for medical and rehabilitation support to commence immediately after a work injury is notified and it should help prevent injuries from becoming more serious.

We are also working closely with public sector unions to improve return-to-work outcomes, in line with our commitment from the 2017-18 budget, which provides \$1.4 million over four years to fund new injury prevention initiatives, including training and early intervention health services.

For the private sector, the government is implementing a multifaceted approach to improving safety outcomes. In addition to pursuing improvements in safety laws, we are undertaking an independent review of the enforcement and compliance activities and systems that support WHS laws. WorkSafe ACT has continued to be proactive, with a particular focus on young workers, retail, light rail safety, aged and health care, electrical safety, falls from heights and winter safety over the colder months.

Young workers and apprentices have been identified as an area of particular concern in terms of safety. WorkSafe ACT has been undertaking a dedicated campaign on apprentices and young workers, which has included on-site inspections and engaging with this part of the workforce. As part of this campaign, a new inspector position at WorkSafe ACT has also been established to specifically focus on apprentices.

Young workers and apprentices are vulnerable in the workplace because they are more likely to be unfamiliar with their rights at work. It can be intimidating for someone who is new to the workplace and eager to keep their job to raise a safety concern. The government is focusing on how we can best inform young workers about their rights and empower them to raise safety issues at work.

The 2018-19 budget allocated \$470,000 over the next four years to establish a young workers advice service. This service will assist young workers with understanding their rights and protections at work by providing a free, anonymous way to obtain territory-specific advice from a trusted source. When young workers and apprentices get the support they need, they are better equipped and more confident about speaking up about the safety of themselves and others at work.

I am pleased to reiterate that, as part of our multifaceted approach to improving workplace safety, the government has commissioned an independent review of the territory's work health and safety compliance infrastructure, policies and procedures. The review is considering WorkSafe ACT's compliance framework, governance structure, organisational structure, and its collection, use and analysis of data. This will help us to ensure that the territory is obtaining the maximum benefits from its investment in work health and safety regulatory activities.

I am aware that the independent review team has consulted widely with key stakeholders in compiling its report, which I am expecting to receive in September. As the Assembly knows, this government values stakeholder input. The Work Safety Council, a tripartite ministerial advisory body with an equal number of employee and employer representatives, continues to advise me on work safety and workers compensation developments and initiatives. This year it has had a particular focus on apprentices and young workers, occupational violence and construction safety. As part of this focus, subject-specific subcommittees have been established to give these areas the attention they need.

The apprentice and young workers safety advisory subcommittee recently provided me with a report which suggests ways to improve health and safety outcomes for young workers. The construction safety advisory subcommittee has considered legislative reforms and has also drafted a safety strategy to improve the industry through to 2022. The occupational violence advisory subcommittee is working to empower health and safety representatives in hospitals and schools to work with employers to ensure adequate safety systems are in place. These are some of the ways in which the government continues to take into account the views of stakeholders in addressing both ongoing and emerging issues in work health and safety.

In the last year the government has implemented several legislative reforms to help ensure the safety of workers. In March the territory took the final step in implementing the nationally agreed model work health and safety laws by adopting the last two chapters relating to hazardous chemicals regulation. We have also made amendments to the territory's workers compensation scheme which significantly increased the compensation available to a worker's family in the event of a fatal workplace injury and expanded the list of acknowledged employment-related diseases.

As the Assembly knows, construction is a particularly dangerous industry, and we are committed to strengthening laws, when necessary, to help protect worker safety. The Work Health and Safety Amendment Bill 2018, which was passed by the Assembly on 31 July 2018, will impose additional obligations on principal contractors to ensure there is meaningful consultation on major construction projects, which will in turn focus on keeping our construction workers safe.

In addition, the new law mandates the election and training of health and safety representatives and health and safety committee members. This initiative is aimed at increasing worker knowledge and giving them the information they need to effectively participate in safety discussions. I look forward to seeing improved health and safety outcomes in the territory construction industry as a result of these changes.

I also note that Safe Work Australia is conducting a review of the content and operation of the model work health and safety laws. A report is expected by the end of 2018. The territory has made recommendations to Safe Work Australia that we believe, if implemented nationally, will make a positive difference to safety outcomes.

These include the changes we have recently made, as well as proposing the inclusion in work health and safety laws of an industrial manslaughter provision based on those recently introduced in Queensland. While the ACT was the first jurisdiction to create an industrial manslaughter offence in the Crimes Act, we consider that transferring this provision to work health and safety law will improve its operation, creating a nationally consistent approach that responds to changes in corporate structures over recent years.

I am also pleased to draw the Assembly's attention to the fact that the ACT is fulfilling its election commitment to deliver a secure local jobs package. A key element of the package was introduced earlier this month—the Government Procurement (Secure Local Jobs) Amendment Bill. The package includes a suite of new arrangements that will ensure that only businesses that meet the highest ethical and labour standards will be awarded ACT government contracts. This is another way in which the government is protecting local jobs and keeping our workers safe.

This government will never settle when it comes to the health and safety of our workers. This is evident in the statistics I have outlined, in the work we continue to do and in the steps we have taken in the past year. We will continue to strive to ensure that everyone gets home safely. I present the following paper:

Workplace Safety Performance—Annual statement 2017-18—Ministerial statement, 21 August 2018.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Appropriation Bill 2018-2019

[Cognate bill:

Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2018-2019

Cognate papers:

Estimates 2018-2019—Select Committee report

Estimates 2018-2019—Select Committee—government response]

Debate resumed from 16 August 2018.

Detail stage

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: I remind members that in debating order of the day No 1, executive business, they may also address their remarks to executive business order of the day No 2 and Assembly business orders of the day relating to the report of the Select Committee on Estimates 2018-2019 and the government response.

Justice and Community Safety Directorate—Part 1.6

MR COE (Yerrabi—Leader of the Opposition) (11.19): I rise to make remarks on behalf of Mrs Jones on police, emergency services and corrections, and I am grateful to her office for the support that they have provided me in the preparation of this material. This budget, I am afraid, does little to solve the problems faced by our men and women serving on the ground in emergency services. I believe front-line police have not been prioritised, that ambulance services have been neglected and that the prison continues to be a money pit without getting adequate results for this money.

With regard to police, the Canberra Liberals were disappointed to see that the government passed on the opportunity to invest further in our front-line force. In 2010-11 there were 719 sworn police officers serving the territory. Now, under this Labor-Greens government, eight years on, the number has fallen to 684. Let me repeat that: in 2010-11 there were 719. Now there are 684.

The cut of 35 front-line officers compared to the beginning of the decade is proof of this government's lack of commitment to policing the territory, and it is no surprise that we have seen many areas of crime increasing, most notably the continued and vicious robberies, thefts and break-ins targeted at our local clubs and businesses. This is a growing concern in our community and it is having a huge impact on businesses and the many victims of these crimes.

It would be absolutely shattering to be held at gunpoint or at knifepoint at one of these robberies or hold-ups. And there are many victims of these crimes. Whilst it is easy to think of a robbery as something that is done in the dark of night with few victims, the

reality is that all these have a significant impact on the police, the victims, the family and friends of those victims and of course on those workplaces.

The government frequently praise the strong growth in Canberra's population. They say that the growth in Canberra's population is a good thing—and I have got no problem with that—but they seem to forget that they need to have services that keep pace with this growth. As our population continues to grow, workloads for the police continue to grow too and it is disappointing that funding has failed to keep up with inflation, population growth and workloads.

I am pleased, however, that the ACT Policing futures plan is progressing. This document, created by and for ACT Policing, will, I hope, provide government with the blueprint package for a stronger and sustainable force into the future. I look forward to seeing this document once it is finalised and made public and I hope that the government takes its recommendations seriously and implements them as a priority.

The Canberra Liberals welcome the initiatives in the emergency services space in this year's budget, but it is a shame that others have been ignored or the government has fallen short with regard to other areas that are in need of investment. Firefighters will receive new protective helmets. This is good, but it does fall short of what many firefighters believe should have been an investment in their full protective gear—their helmets and their uniforms. We also welcome the additional 18 firefighters, but once again this, it seems, has fallen short of what is actually required.

I am also pleased to see that there are more ambulance paramedics being recruited, along with upgrades to ambulance vehicles and stretchers. However, it is important to remember what happened in the lead-up to the government making this decision. In the 2016-17 financial year over 300 emergency ambulance shifts—that is, 41½ per cent of all shifts—fell below the minimum level of crewing. Over 300 shifts have not had enough crew to even cover the minimum requirement.

This financial year things are not looking much better. While we do not have all the data—and hopefully the minister will actually provide it, rather than hide it or stall it—it seems that we are on track to have 200 shifts below the minimum crewing level. It is no wonder our response times for the ambulance service are beginning to slip. The ambulance service do a great job, but this government and this minister need to back them up. While the ACT government may be replacing some old ambulances with newer vehicles, there are simply not the number of ambulance officers required to actually operate them all. This is a failure of government.

Finally, in the corrections space the AMC continues to cost ACT ratepayers more and more, while the facility fails to live up to its mandate. It fails to live up to the promise that Mr Stanhope made all those years ago. We have seen escapes, bashings, high levels of contraband, continual drug use and, sadly, two deaths. Late last year a prisoner was mistakenly allowed to go free, straight out the front door.

The Minister for Corrections has been in charge of this facility for several years now but the failures keep happening and we keep seeing an ever-increasing cost to deliver

these values. In just 12 months costs for ACT corrections are expected to increase by \$8 million or 10 per cent. Hopefully that will lead to better results. The question has got to be not just are we measuring things on inputs but also are we measuring them on outputs? What are we actually going to get for this additional \$8 million? I hope the minister will be able to shed more light, in addition to what is in the budget.

Ratepayers continue to pay the price for this government's inability to maintain costs, stick to budgets and actually prioritise what the front line is advising them. This budget is not a good budget for emergency services in Canberra. The Canberra Liberals will continue to do all we can to advocate for better budget solutions, better results and more effective and efficient government, especially for the front line of our emergency services.

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (11.26): I rise to respond to the appropriation bill in relation to the Justice and Community Safety Directorate and to focus on some of the gaming and racing space. I note that the minister when he spoke to this line did not actually make any mention of gaming and racing—and I understand that the Gambling and Racing Commission is still to come—but as the policy comes from this space I want to address it here.

Time and again we see that this government has absolutely no comprehension of the gaming and racing space. There is no minister for gaming and racing, and those who are connected to either industry scratch their heads and wonder if this minister should be given the title of “minister against all gaming and racing”—a minister who would like to stop all gaming and racing because it is just not nice, because it is not something that he would ever do and so why would anyone else want to do it, and because it seems that he believes that if there is any possibility of harm then you should not ever consider undertaking that behaviour and, indeed, you should forcibly stop every other community member participating as well.

We can all hope that the ministerial reshuffle will move Mr Ramsay as far away from gaming and racing as is humanly possible because it is not a portfolio that Mr Ramsay should have anything to do with. It just is not. The only thing that he sees connected to gambling is harm. That is it. He does not see anything else.

I note that the minister chooses to dismiss everything I say in this space as the ravings of a shock jock. And I guess my question to the minister would be: if I were such a shock jock why did he choose to keep on being a guest on my program every week, if you do not mind, every single week? Week after week, year after year every Monday at 6.50 am: “Gordon Ramsay joins me from UnitingCare at Kippax.”

When we consider the wafer-thin margin by which Mr Ramsay was elected to this place it would be very easy to arrive at a conclusion that, had Mr Ramsay not associated with such an evil, conservative shock jock, had he not appeared on my program every week, he would not be in this place. Is it not also ironic that, without the money that flows to Labor coffers from poker machines, I dare say Mr Ramsay would not have made it over the line either? How ironic, the two things that Mr Ramsay seems to hate the most—poker machines and evil, conservative shock jocks—ultimately have delivered him to the Assembly!

But I digress. The review of the community contributions scheme from ACT clubs is an absolute debacle. This government seems intent on picking a fight with the clubs industry and it is very easy for those involved, or even for those watching from afar, to make the call that this government is intent on punishing the clubs industry, particularly those associated with ClubsACT. It is easy for many to make the assumption that what is going on here is vindictive revenge, and when we have Labor members in this place telling this chamber that clubs are fiddling the books and that Liberals are trying to maximise pokie profits—which is a bit rich, again, when you consider how much funding from poker machines has gone directly to the Labor Party of the ACT—I shake my head.

The community is understandably outraged, and that outrage extends well past any obvious left and right voting lines. I note that the profile picture of a number of the people who shared my video was “Stop Adani”. They are ropable out there in the suburbs. They are ropable because the changes forecast in the discussion paper amount to an attack on the very reasons for the existence of our clubs in the ACT. The proposed changes reek of arrogant righteousness.

Members of clubs should continue to have the right to determine which community projects their club supports. Speeches in this chamber from those opposite last week suggested that the clubs were corporations. Of course they are not; they are member organisations. They are community. To every member of every club in the ACT, let me tell you: the government do not trust you. They do not trust you to make the right decision in this space or, rather, they fear that decisions may not be in the same direction as their decisions. As we see time and again with this long-term government, there can be only one way. It is their way or the highway.

It is interesting that the Auditor-General in her report from earlier in the year, when giving her overall conclusion, did not criticise the clubs at all. She was critical of the ambiguity of the Gaming Machine Act 2004 in that the act has no supporting objectives or guidance on how to interpret the development of the community or raising the standard of living of the community.

I do wish to put on the record that I have been a supporter of Hands Across Canberra for a number of years. They were a client of mine for a period and, indeed, when they ceased to be a client I volunteered my services to them for a period. I regard Hands Across Canberra as an exceptional organisation. Peter Gordon has been a friend of mine for a number of years. I do hope that the tension in this space has not damaged that friendship. I am somewhat dismayed by the fallout that Hands Across Canberra has felt by being dragged into this political debate.

Hands Across Canberra have been doing a wonderful job in making Canberra a better place for quite a number of years and although I am opposed to the changes to the clubs community contributions scheme it should not be seen by anyone as an attack on Hands Across Canberra. They are to be commended for their work thus far.

Related to the gambling space, I do note that we will be debating in coming weeks the point of consumption gambling tax. It is a rather uncontroversial piece of legislation

in that it follows a path that has been beaten by New South Wales, South Australia, Victoria and Queensland. I know there will be more in this place in coming weeks.

Of course, we are also dealing with the EGM reduction scheme, despite the fact that the New Zealand experience has shown us that reducing the number of operating machines had no effect on total turnover. But the machine reduction, the associated trading scheme, has been a debacle thus far, and as we heard this morning the worst is yet to come. RSM put together a research paper earlier in the year in regard to the EGM reduction. They went through an extremely forensic process to arrive at a price for those authorisations—what they are actually worth to the club. Their extremely complex and open process arrived at a compensation price of well over \$100,000.

The hardware itself costs \$35,000. If you went to Aristocrat today, Mr Assistant Speaker, and wanted to buy yourself a poker machine it would cost you \$35,000. That is what the hardware will cost. Obviously, without the authorisation the machine is worthless. But seriously, the government is going to offer \$12,000 for a machine for which the hardware is worth \$35,000.

In the Labor Club group, for example, the average revenue per year of that machine is \$49,000. Over the forward estimates you are talking about \$200,000. The machine is worth \$35,000 and you are going to offer \$12,000! Even at the smaller end, the Belconnen group, the average yearly revenue will be \$16,000. This offer to the small and medium clubs of \$12,000 per machine for their tools of core business is insulting. It is like going up to a tradie and saying, “We would like to buy all your tools. You are not allowed to buy any more, and good luck. Good luck on the way forward.” When you couple that with the newly announced per machine levy it gets reduced to virtually nothing.

Let us give the RUC as an example. They will surrender 10 machines, probably, and get a \$100,000 sugar hit. Most of that sugar hit will be sucked up by this new per authorisation levy. I would love to know how the so-called diversification fund announced today by Neville Stevens will actually aid diversification. It is not a fund at all. It is not a fund. It is just another tax.

For the small clubs, for the very small clubs, of course there was no tax in this space at all. There was none. Belconnen bowlo pay no tax on their gaming operation. Their gaming revenue is not enough to cover even one bowling green. They will now need to find \$2½ thousand for the new fund. And I think we all know where that is going to end. If the minister cannot see where that is going to end I would question his ability to hold the portfolio.

The Burns Club, aren't they an interesting example? The Burns Club effectively used their diversification tax breaks, but all the money that they got from the government to diversify they used to buy more authorisations, which they got from the Tradies Group. They will now trade those authorisations back, having never actually put them on the floor, and cop a \$12,000 hit for each of them, which will mean they will not have to reduce their reliance on gaming.

Let us talk about the Spanish Club. They pay no gaming tax at all. They give all their gaming revenue away. Now they will need to find \$3,300 to go into the diversification fund. I shake my head. In the election campaign in 2016 there were banners up in most clubs that said, “Don’t let ACT Labor destroy your club.” There is no question that this policy will bring about the closure of some clubs. Clubs will close, jobs will be lost, and it will be on this minister.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong—Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability, Minister for Justice, Consumer Affairs and Road Safety, Minister for Corrections and Minister for Mental Health) (11.37): In the 2018-19 budget the government has provided additional funding of \$1 million focused on achieving a reduction in recidivism by 25 per cent by 2025. This funding will provide the government with the ability to continue implementing targeted, evidence-based interventions that change people’s contact with the justice system.

Having a target like this might be considered a risky thing to do. Reducing recidivism is recognised as a difficult thing to do, and if we set a target and do not achieve it there will no doubt be a political consequence. But I think it is important that we set a target and set out to achieve it because it will deliver more safety in our community and improve the lives of those people currently involved in the criminal justice system. This is an incredibly worthwhile target to be pursuing, and the investments in this year’s budget are designed to move us towards the achievement of that goal.

The funding will support initiatives which prevent crime and address offending behaviour, including \$84,000 for an Aboriginal victim liaison officer for the victims of crime office; \$285,000 to expand the high density housing community and safety program; \$152,000 to establish the Warrumbul court in the Children’s Court to provide a culturally appropriate sentencing process for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth in the justice system; and \$434,000 for the continued development of and operationalising initiatives within the justice reinvestment program.

Responses to combat crime are often viewed in binary terms—tough or soft on crime. But in reality the tough on crime mantra and its impact on the people in our prison system is a major concern. We have to ask the question: does a tough-on-crime approach really make us safer? The answer to that question depends on whether we are building prisons or seeking to build communities.

In 2014 the government made a commitment to develop a justice reinvestment strategy. Our approach, which the Australian Institute of Criminology has endorsed, involves adopting a multifaceted strategy incorporating multiple interventions that together achieve greater cumulative results in the both the community and the justice system. The funding provided in this budget demonstrates the diverse ways in which we need to work across the justice system to strengthen it and the positive impact we want it to have on the people involved in it.

Let me turn in a little more detail to a few of the initiatives I have just mentioned, starting with the \$84,000 for an Aboriginal and victim liaison officer for the victims of crimes office. The role of this officer is to provide culturally sensitive and

trauma-informed support to victims referred to Victim Support ACT. They also provide advocacy and support to navigate the criminal justice system, including as a companion in court, and assist victims making claims under the financial assistance scheme. This role is important, as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are over represented in the justice system not only as offenders but also as victims.

Changing the cycle of disadvantage that comes with repeated contact with the justice system requires critical culturally proficient roles like that of a victim liaison officer. The *It's About Trust* report prepared for Victim Support ACT in 2011 found that few Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders would seek Victim Support ACT's services unless there was an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander worker or someone they trusted working there.

The number of registered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients with Victim Support has been decreasing over time, with a 47 per cent drop between 2015-16 and 2016-17. Since contracting an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victim liaison officer in September 2017, the number of registered clients started to increase immediately, with 15 new registered clients recorded by December 2017.

Also central to the role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victim liaison officer is building cultural competence within Victim Support ACT and among organisations supporting victims of crime. The victim liaison officer is critical to identifying and maintaining appropriate referral pathways to building trust with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community so that victims of crime will feel confident to access the service.

As I said, the government has provided \$285,000 to expand the highly successful, high density housing community and safety program, an example of place-based justice reinvestment, and it is currently operating on Ainslie Avenue. This crime-reducing and community-building program will now also be implemented at Illawarra Court. The program is a multi-agency initiative designed to improve the lives of and reduce the recidivism rates for residents living in high density housing sites.

This multi-agency initiative that includes the Justice and Community Safety Directorate, the Community Services Directorate, ACT Health and ACT Policing, has the following objectives: firstly, prevent or reduce opportunities for crime; secondly, promote community safety and security; thirdly, develop pro-social and law-abiding community engagement; and, finally, facilitate access to services that are related to justice, health, mental health, education and employment.

ReLink Australia, through an on-the-ground program manager and a small team, delivers a range of structured and informal programs to promote and deliver health, social and economic benefits to residents. These have included activities such as building and maintaining community gardens, neighbourhood chats, a skills development shed and a monthly run, roll or walk event at Lake Burley Griffin.

The program is targeted at high and complex-needs residents and includes socially disengaged or isolated people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, women—

including mothers—children and youth, and residents who have had contact with or are at risk of becoming involved in the criminal justice system. I am pleased to report that the recently released evaluation by the Australian Institute of Criminology confirmed that the program is reducing crime and building community resilience. It reduced violent crime by 50 per cent, property crime by 60 per cent and disturbance incidents by 49 per cent. It also demonstrated increased levels of social cohesion amongst the high and complex needs residents.

The report by the Australian Institute of Criminology identified not only those crime outcomes but underlined the social benefits and also the financial benefits. Just on those numbers alone the simple reduction in call-outs to ACT Policing has had a significant impact on their workload and, therefore, their ability to address other matters as needed.

The government has also committed \$152,000 to establish the Warrumbul court and the Children's Court. The Warrumbul sentencing court—meaning “youth” in Ngunnawal—will be a culturally sensitive sentencing experience for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. The highly skilled and specially trained panel members who are guided by restorative principles will help these young people to tell their story to the court in a culturally safe and respectful environment.

Under the guidance of a panel of elders, young people will be helped to understand the circumstances and underlying reasons behind their offending behaviours, who has been harmed and what can be done to make things right. Through the process the panel of elders has the opportunity to work collaboratively with the ACT criminal justice system and identify gaps in support programs and services provided in the community and in custody.

Through the experience of the Galambany court, new culturally relevant and sensitive support programs have been established based upon needs identified by the court. This experience is expected to continue in terms of young people through the Warrumbul Circle Sentencing Court.

Finally in this space I want to talk about the \$434,000 for the continued development of and operationalising of initiatives within the justice reinvestment program. The government will provide support to develop the recidivism reduction plan that will aim to reduce recidivism by 25 per cent by 2025. This will include funding for a range of legislative, policy and program initiatives within government and the community that will prevent or reduce people's contact with the justice system. That work will come forward in several forms, and I expect to be able to present bills to the Assembly through the course of this financial year, as well as other policy initiatives. I look forward to the Assembly's continued support for this approach to justice reinvestment.

I also flag under this area of the justice portfolio that the government will invest \$557,000 over two years to upgrade the Human Rights Commission's digital capabilities and implement a single case management system. This will enable the commission to improve the performance of their functions, to make them able to

operate more effectively and efficiently, therefore increasing their capability to support the community.

Let me turn to corrections. The appropriation bill provides funding to strengthen the capacity of ACT Corrective Services to provide a safe and secure environment for detainees, staff and visitors at the AMC and to enhance the delivery of offender rehabilitation through the intensive corrections order scheme. I take this opportunity to thank all the hardworking ACT Corrective Services staff for the important work they do each day, often under very difficult circumstances.

Mr Coe, on behalf of Mrs Jones, comes in and rattles off a series of things that have happened in the last year or so. I have never been shy about the fact that it is a difficult environment. There are people there who do not want to be there who, for a range of reasons, will undertake illegal and unlawful behaviour and resolve disputes with violence. That is the nature of jails, unfortunately. Our job is to try to prevent those matters.

We have made significant strides in recent years in improving the capability of the AMC through expanding capacity and the provision of prison industries and recreational facilities. All of these things are about addressing some of the shortcomings in the original design of the building and ensuring there is a structured day for detainees. We are working hard to break down some of those behaviours reflected on by Mr Coe today which are of great concern to me. I will never accept that we cannot do more to improve the operation of our prison and intervene in the lives of those who are there, to help them put their lives back on a better track.

This budget provides \$15.5 million over four years to provide additional staff resources associated with an increase in average detainee numbers at the AMC and to replace the mobile duress system. As members would be aware, the ACT has seen a continuing upwards growth in detainee numbers in recent years. In 2013 we began to see unprecedented growth in detainee numbers. In the 2014-15 financial year the daily average number of detainees was 342. This daily average increased to 402 in the following year and then to 445 in the year after that. In 2017-18 we averaged 474 detainees a day, and in June 2018 the detainee population reached a new high of 507.

These sorts of numbers have placed considerable strain on the AMC's staff resources. This bill will provide funding to alleviate some of that pressure. It will ensure that all areas of the AMC are better resourced to meet the increased demands in custodial, therapeutic program and case management operations associated with the growth in detainee numbers.

The bill also contains funding to improve security systems. The existing duress system at the AMC is almost 10 years old and, as the manufacturer has ceased production of these devices, it can no longer be upgraded. A replacement of the staff mobile duress system at the AMC will ensure corrections staff can continue to provide a safe and secure environment for detainees, staff, and visitors.

Responding to increased detainee numbers and augmenting safety and security at the AMC has not been the only priority for this budget. The bill also provides \$6 million over three years to continue the intensive corrections order scheme to strengthen rehabilitation opportunities for offenders. As part of the government's commitment under the justice reform program, legislation was passed in 2016 to give the courts an option to sentence offenders to an intensive corrections order. This sentencing option provides an alternative to prison by allowing low-risk offenders to serve a term of imprisonment in the community. The 2018-19 funding will allow ACT Corrective Services to strengthen rehabilitative opportunities and enhance services for offenders subject to an order.

In addition, the 2017-18 second appropriation provided \$11.6 million over five years to enhance security and safety within the Alexander Maconochie Centre and \$6.8 million over five years—that is the JACS component—to introduce the Winnunga model of care at the Alexander Maconochie Centre. ACT Health also contributed \$1.6 million over two years to be offset against the health funding envelope.

The ACT government recognises that increasing Aboriginal-led services within the AMC is essential to maintaining cultural connection for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander detainees and improving overall cultural awareness and safety. To this end, a groundbreaking partnership agreement is being developed with Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Services to deliver health, social and emotional wellbeing services within its own model of care to detainees at the AMC. Winnunga has begun delivering services, and this funding will enable their continued rollout to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander detainees who choose to access those services.

The initiative provides continuity of care options for detainees and ensures that health, family and community connections can be maintained while in custody and are sustained post release. It is a partnership which has the potential to be a model for other jurisdictions to emulate in due course and to have a significant positive impact upon the life trajectories of detainees.

Through this bill and its strategic investments the government aims to make the experience of imprisonment one that reinforces the potential for rehabilitation and betterment to the lives of those that have been incarcerated. I am hopeful that by investing in these individuals the government will move closer to achieving its goal of reducing recidivism by 25 per cent by 2025, thereby improving the overall community safety and wellbeing of all Canberrans. I commend these JACS components of the budget to the Assembly.

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Minister for Planning and Land Management and Minister for Urban Renewal) (11.53): I commence by expressing my thanks and the government's appreciation to all the staff who work in each of our emergency services for their continued efforts in keeping the ACT community safe.

As Minister for Police and Emergency Services, I am pleased to support the 2018-19 budget, which contains a number of initiatives that will enhance emergency services capabilities for the ACT. The ACT 2018-19 budget provides funding of \$8.9 million for the ACT Emergency Services Agency, the ESA. New initiatives supported include \$4.6 million over four years to upgrade the ACT ambulance fleet with electric stretchers and loaders, and equipping all ACT ambulances and fire trucks with new cardiac monitors and defibrillators.

Electric stretchers have a battery-powered hydraulic system that allows for much easier and safer carrying. It is anticipated that the use of electric stretchers will reduce the likelihood of any injuries sustained with the loading of patients into ambulances. The chances of someone surviving cardiac arrest increase dramatically if there is intervention with the use of a defibrillator. The new units are designed to be operated simply and quickly, even by members of the general public who may have no formal first aid training, and will help to save lives.

There will be \$2 million over two years and ongoing maintenance costs for a new aerial apparatus for ACT Fire & Rescue to support the existing Bronto appliance and respond to multistorey building incidents. The ESA is working to have the new aerial apparatus on the road in the 2019-20 financial year.

\$332,000 will be allocated in 2018-19 to conduct an additional recruit college to train 18 new firefighters in 2018-19 for ACT Fire & Rescue. This follows on from the successful 2017 recruitment, which resulted in an additional 17 firefighters on duty in June 2018, the nine firefighters who commenced duty as part of a lateral recruitment in November 2017 and the 16 firefighters who joined ACT Fire & Rescue as part of the 2016 recruit college in October 2016.

\$270,000 will be allocated in the 2018-19 year to provide new protective helmets to ACT firefighters. This ensures that our firefighters continue to have access to safe protective equipment and will allow them to do their job effectively and safely. There will be \$1.7 million over four years to make up for the shortfall in funding from the commonwealth fire payment as a result of a revised memorandum of understanding between the commonwealth government and the territory for the provision of fire services.

The 2018-19 budget also invests \$1.5 million over four years to upgrade the public safety CCTV network across the CBD, at the Kingston and Manuka shopping precincts, bus stations and major public facilities, including Manuka Oval, EPIC and GIO stadium. This helps to improve public safety for citizens at these key locations.

In addition the 2017-18 second appropriation provided \$10.2 million over four years for an additional ambulance crew, as committed to by the government, to deliver 23 more paramedics to meet continued increases in demand. Demand on our ambulance service is at the highest level ever. Despite this growing demand, the ACT has continued to record the best response times in the country over the past six years, as well as the highest levels of patient satisfaction. These additional front-line resources should ensure that our response times remain the fastest in the country.

The 2018-19 ACT budget provides funding of \$11.8 million over four years to better support ACT Policing's operations. The funding will deliver \$2.6 million over four years—two FTE in 2018-19 and four FTE per year from 2019-20—to recruit and expand ACT Policing's strategic analysis capability targeting crime hot spots and identifying emerging risks; \$1.6 million over four years to recruit additional resources—two FTE per year—and provide specialised training and tools to target, disrupt, deter and prevent organised crime in the ACT; \$5.6 million over four years to provide new smartphones to ACT Policing staff to improve the secure capture, transmission and sharing of data and radiocommunications, and improve service delivery and officer safety; and \$2 million over two years to upgrade facilities at Tuggeranong Police Station and Winchester Police Centre.

In closing my remarks on this part of the approp bill, I want to turn to the matters raised by Mr Coe earlier. The problem for us is that Mr Coe does not actually do his research. He is more concerned about spin and scaremongering. As he was told by the Chief Police Officer, the new initiatives in this year's budget for ACT Policing are what she asked for.

Further, it would help if Mr Coe read the paper, or got up to date with some of ACT Policing's news. My advice from ACT Policing is that there have been no aggravated robberies or incidents against ACT clubs since earlier this year. Let me also read from two recent media releases from ACT Policing. One from 16 August, entitled "Man to face 22 charges linked to historic aggravated crimes", says:

A man will face the ACT Magistrates Court after being summonsed on 22 charges including attempted murder, forcible confinement and aggravated robbery in relation to historic offences between 2009 and 2018.

The 25-year-old man was charged as part of Operation Athabasca, which saw ACT Policing's Crime Disruption Team link 14 incidents, including 13 aggravated robberies. Across a ten-year period, the incidents resulted in a significant amount of cash being stolen.

Detective Station Sergeant Harry Hains said public information was a significant contributing factor to the operation's success.

"I would like to acknowledge the courage of victims and others who came forward with information, even though they were still recovering from these traumatic events," Detective Station Sergeant Hains said.

"Our officers followed up this information and today, we have laid nearly two dozen serious criminal charges. This is a significant milestone for Operation Athabasca, which is ongoing and will continue to target other offenders in this series of events."

"The success of this operation serves as a reminder to anyone who commits a serious crime that it doesn't matter whether it is one day or ten years after the event, ACT Policing's investigations of serious crimes stay active until a case is closed."

The man will face the ACT Magistrates Court on Wednesday September 26, 2018 on 22 charges ...

The charges include attempted murder, 10 counts of aggravated robbery, two counts of attempted aggravated robbery, forcible confinement, use of a prohibited weapon, aggravated burglary, theft, criminal damage and four offences relating to stealing motor vehicles.

Another media release, from Friday, 17 August this year, entitled “Second man arrested in Operation Athabasca”, says:

A Calwell man will face the ACT Magistrates Court today on six charges including aggravated robbery, aggravated burglary for offences dating back to 2010.

ACT Policing yesterday arrested the 29-year-old as part of Operation Athabasca for his involvement in two historic aggravated offences.

He is the second person arrested as a result of the operation which is focused on linking and solving long-term aggravated offences.

Yesterday ACT Policing announced a 25-year-old man has been summonsed on 22 charges including attempted murder, forcible confinement and aggravated robbery in relation to historic offences between 2009 and 2018.

Detective Station Sergeant Harry Hains said while this is a good result it is only the beginning.

“The operation remains ongoing and ACT Policing’s Crime Disruption Team are investigating a number of leads,” Detective Hains said.

In closing, I want to congratulate ACT Policing and the crime team on these outcomes, and on their ongoing work to keep Canberrans safe and bring these criminals to justice.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong) (12.02): I want to add a few further remarks on some areas that are not in my portfolio. I am speaking as a member of the crossbench. In relation to the investment in police and emergency services, we do know that global warming is increasing bushfire danger weather in the ACT, which creates an increased risk of bushfires. As the minister has alluded to this morning, this is having an impact. The fire season is starting earlier and running for longer, and will continue to lengthen into the future. We must adequately equip and resource our firefighters to respond to this increasing threat, particularly in a bushfire-prone landscape like the ACT.

At the last election the Greens called for the purchase of a new aerial pumper fire truck for ACT Fire & Rescue, which became part of the parliamentary agreement, and it is pleasing to see funding for this important piece of equipment provided in this budget. With urban density in our city increasing, the new aerial pumper will be able to better navigate suburban areas and multistorey buildings more efficiently, which is an important capability for our firefighters to have.

I also want to touch on the money in the budget for more protective firefighting equipment. The budget provides \$270,000 for new protective helmets, which is welcomed. However, we recognise that protective equipment is about more than just helmets. As the technology and reliability of all equipment, including firefighting suits and breathing apparatuses, are improving, this must be kept up. It is important that our firefighters have equipment that will best protect them in very hazardous and dangerous situations, so I do hope to see further investments in additional protective equipment in future budgets.

The Greens are pleased to see additional resources given to police, and in particular to Taskforce Nemesis, which aims to target, disrupt, deter and prevent organised crime. There has been considerable community concern recently about the presence and activities of outlaw motorcycle gangs in our city. These additional resources are part of the range of measures that the government is taking to tackle outlaw motorcycle gang-related violence. We believe these measures, in addition to recent legislative measures, will assist police to disrupt that activity in Canberra.

We are also pleased to see funding in the budget for an additional magistrate. I would like to take this opportunity to welcome the appointment of Louise Taylor as the eighth permanent magistrate sitting on the ACT Magistrates Court. The Magistrates Court will be where many people first interact with the justice system. Whilst the cases may not be as high profile as those in the Supreme Court, they are equally important and can have a significant impact on people's lives.

Like other jurisdictions, the ACT Magistrates Court has been under significant pressures, with many individuals waiting for many months for matters to be resolved. This can add additional stress to what is already a stressful experience, both for the alleged offender and for the victims of crime. As the Minister for Corrections, of course, I see the impact of this on our prison. As the saying goes, "Justice delayed is justice denied," and we believe the addition of an eighth magistrate will go a long way to alleviating some of the pressures experienced by the court.

Finally, we welcome the additional funding towards the creation of the ACT's first drug and alcohol court. This was an election commitment that we took to the 2016 poll, and it is an important item in the parliamentary agreement, alongside our targets for reducing recidivism.

A drug and alcohol court will give the judiciary another option to divert offenders from serious involvement in the justice system and instead enable them to seek proper treatment to address their drug and alcohol addictions. We have seen the model working in other jurisdictions and producing very promising results. I know that the government is in the process of evaluating how to implement such a court in order to obtain high quality outcomes in the territory. I look forward to seeing further work on that because I believe this is an important project that, as I discussed in my earlier remarks, can help people to get their lives back on track. I look forward to working with my fellow ministers to deliver that.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate—Part 1.7

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) (12.07): Thank you for the opportunity to outline some of the ways the planning and land management, urban renewal, environment and heritage portfolios will make the most of their budget allocation this year to help make the ACT a better place.

As you would appreciate, the budget allocation covers a multitude of policies, plans and projects. Work ranges from the macro, such as managing Namadgi National Park and planning for our new suburbs, to the micro, such as protecting threatened species and approving development for individual dwellings.

I will use this opportunity to highlight a few of the more interesting and important projects in my portfolio that help our city grow and prosper and our environment to be protected and conserved. Our environment division helps protect and improve the integrity of our air, land, water and biodiversity.

The government recognises that the only way to effectively control the spread of invasive species is by sustained pressure on their populations. This initiative will provide ongoing base funding for invasive species control in nature reserves and catchments. In 2018-19, the government will provide an additional \$112,000 to control weeds and \$188,000 to control invasive animals. From next year, additional funding rises to over \$900,000 in a year, an increase of \$3.125 million over the four years. The government will invest \$598,000 over three years to eradicate pests in the expanded Mulligans Flat Woodland Sanctuary.

On healthier catchments through better water management, the government owns the territory's water supply and provides users with an entitlement to extract water for use. Given current use, approximately 15 gigalitres could be made available for trade on the temporary trading market, with the potential to raise in the vicinity of \$2 million a year, which could go towards improved catchment management. We have provided \$120,000 for initial modelling and investigation to examine how water trading could occur and what might be needed to set up such a scheme.

On ecotourism, the government has provided \$200,000 towards a nature learning centre at the Mulligans Flat Woodland Sanctuary where the community can learn about our nationally endangered eucalypt woodlands and be inspired to care for biodiversity. The centre will be run by the Woodlands and Wetlands Trust, a unique partnership between the conservation community, ANU and ACT government. A further \$1.438 million has been provisioned to the Woodlands and Wetlands Trust for the construction and fit-out of a Woodlands learning centre in future years.

In July 1969, Honeysuckle Creek Tracking Station in Namadgi National Park relayed to the world the first images of people stepping onto the moon. To commemorate the 50th anniversary, a celebration is currently being considered at Namadgi National Park. It is proposed to include former tracking station employees, Tidbinbilla Deep

Space Communication Complex, NASA, the ANU, the Parks and Conservation Service and ACT Heritage. With around 500 visitors expected to visit the site over the four-day celebrations, \$391,000 is funded for walking track improvements at Orroral tracking station, the Orroral Geodetic Observatory and Honeysuckle Creek. An app will be created to help visitors understand the significance of the sites along the track.

On heritage, our territory is rich in Indigenous, European, natural and geological history. Through the better infrastructure fund, the government has committed \$40,000 to upgrade the Canberra tracks program of self-drive tours of heritage sites by expanding the Canberra tracks app and signage. We have allocated \$43,000 to develop a conservation management plan for the Aboriginal heritage places managed by the Parks and Conservation Service. More than \$350,000 has been made available for the annual heritage grants program.

On planning and land management, the planning and land management portfolio has a very wide remit. The National Capital Design Review Panel is a joint initiative between the ACT government and the National Capital Authority to encourage improved quality of the built environment and public domain. The review panel will be made up of a range of experts and the review will allow for the exploration and testing of design concepts for significant public sector projects as part of the pre-development application process for large-scale private sector development proposals.

We are also looking at an engineer registration scheme. The government is committed to effective regulation of people designing buildings, including engineers. Potential regulatory schemes are being investigated for engineers working in the ACT or supplying services to ACT residents and businesses other than those covered by current reforms to the ACT building regulatory system. Funding of \$35,000 in 2018-19 is for the early planning work, and \$407,000 in 2019-20 is for completing the consultation and for completion of a regulatory impact statement.

On the Molonglo River Reserve, \$3.182 million is allocated over four years to continue establishing the Molonglo River Reserve. And the former Molonglo sewage treatment ponds, including the current AFP bomb disposal site, will be remediated and rehabilitated. Habitat will be restored and enhanced and work will begin on a recreational hub at Catherine Park.

On the best of Canberra mountain bike experience, \$347,000 is allocated over two years for preliminary design studies and community consultation on a new iconic and environmentally sustainable mountain bike trail loop for Canberra.

On urban renewal, a quick glance around the ACT indicates how much the government is doing in the urban renewal space. With regard to Dickson, the government is delivering on its commitment to community-focused urban renewal of section 72, Dickson. The renewal has the capacity to deliver Common Ground 2 and other social housing options close to the Dickson group centre and excellent public and active transport options. There is \$1 million being provided to remove vacant buildings at the end of their useful life and to prepare sites for redevelopment.

On better public places, \$100,000 has been provided to develop an ACT place-making guide and facilitate public place improvements, with a focus on the Woden town centre. This work will be done in partnership with Transport Canberra and City Services. The Suburban Land Agency will have a lead role in managing and maintaining these areas.

On innovation in housing choices, the government has committed to provide \$775,000 over three years to deliver demonstration housing projects across the territory that support a vibrant, compact and sustainable city. The demonstration housing project is an important part of the housing choices policy engagement. This project will provide an opportunity for architects, builders, residents and social housing providers to showcase innovative design and delivery of real-world examples that are not currently available in the ACT, including small houses, co-housing, carbon neutral buildings and affordable housing.

I will move now to asbestos and the loose-fill asbestos insulation eradication scheme. The taskforce continues to provide a coordinated and compassionate response to the 1,023 homeowners and their families directly affected by Mr Fluffy through the loose-fill asbestos insulation eradication scheme. The scheme is ahead of schedule and under budget, with an estimated net cost decreasing by \$12 million to \$295 million. One-thousand and eight home owners have agreed to participate in the scheme, comprising 994 affected houses and 14 impacted properties. Over 668 owners have received stamp duty concessions totalling \$16.31 million to help purchase another home or buy back their remediated block, and 1,084 assistance grants, totalling \$12.2 million, have been paid to help those people relocate. Strong sales results are being achieved: 746 remediated blocks have been sold, with a total sales value of \$497.3 million. The bulk of standard single-dwelling demolitions was completed in 2017, with the focus now shifting to preparing for the demolition of properties with additional complexities.

These initiatives are key components of a wider program of work being done in my portfolio. I am confident that the projects I have outlined will contribute to making our city safer, more livable, and more attractive to residents and investors. Our environment will be better protected for the communities and individual species that inhabit it and the people who enjoy it.

MS LEE (Kurrajong) (12.17): Environment estimates hearings, by their very nature, cover a wide collection of subjects, with discussion split among a number of officials, ministers and the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment. It is perhaps incongruous that environment is, for want of a better term, lumped in with heritage and planning and sustainable development, especially given its diverse and wide range of area coverage, from energy policy through to the natural environment. Additionally, with the range and breadth of subjects, the allocated time of 3.5 hours is a bit tight to get to the nub of some of the problems.

Environmental concerns started on day 1, community day, when the ACT and Region Frogwatch Program committee delivered a submission outlining their changed funding circumstances; the concerns they had that their most important work—their

annual frog census—might be curtailed or abandoned; and the impact it might have on other ongoing projects.

Frogwatch lost \$80,000 in core funding in this year's budget while receiving some grants for special projects. We were told that the organisation has been operating on about half of what it actually costs to run the program. We learnt that Frogwatch carries out a range of activities, including education for students in schools, but that its most critical and longest data collection activity is the annual frog census in the Canberra region. The census has been undertaken every year since 2002.

For those who do not know the important role frogs play in the environment, the Frogwatch coordinator, Anke Hoefler, described them as the canaries in the coalmine. They are indicators of healthy environments, especially healthy waterways. The program, managed by the Ginninderra Catchment Group, has won awards for its work, but it is at risk, or will likely be reduced in scope, if funding is not locked in. I note that the committee's recommendation that the government continue to work with Frogwatch ACT to develop sustainable funding options was agreed to. I trust that a sustainable funding model can be determined, and I look forward to seeing some of the work that Frogwatch does in its census work and also its tadpole projects in schools.

During estimates we also learnt of the progress of the Mulligans Flat area and the funding being supplied to extend the rabbit-proof fencing to protect the eastern bettong, which has struggled to become re-established. As Assembly members would know, Mulligans Flat is the only ACT home to the endangered eastern bettong. Sadly, the bettong has suffered further losses recently, when Brian Bettong lost out by a whisker to Rhonda Rock Wallaby for the title of mammal emblem for the ACT. As one of a privileged few to have seen a bettong at Mulligans Flat on a twilight tour, I must say—nothing against Rhonda Rock Wallaby—that I will always have a special soft spot for Brian Bettong.

We also heard about the progress in establishing the visitor centre and the role this building will play in promoting this important area and making it more accessible and informative to locals and tourists alike.

Last year was the first year of adoption of the kangaroo management plan. From the smooth introduction and activities this year, it would seem that the cull was efficiently and professionally delivered. A record number of 3,252 kangaroos were culled in this year's cull, about 1,000 more than last year. Given the seasonal conditions and the number of carcasses on roads, some could argue that it was certainly not more than was required. If dry conditions in the area continue through summer, the woodland environments around Canberra will be under further stress.

On the subject of other unwanted animals in our national parks, we learnt that deer, wild dogs and pigs, as well as the ever-present rabbit, are also part of the ongoing challenges our rangers face. I was interested to hear the confident assurances that the recent changes to any brumby cull in New South Wales national parks would have no environmental impact in any ACT national parks area and that in fact in recent years there had been very few, if any, sightings on the ACT side of the border. I know that

the stance taken by New South Wales is of concern to the National Parks Association, and I guess the proof of whether it will hurt either the New South Wales high country or the ACT lower areas will be in the months and years to come.

I thank Mr Daniel Iglesias, director of the parks and conservation service, for the depth of his knowledge across a range of issues from water quality to weed management and even down to providing details of how rabbits are culled in various areas.

In our grasslands and national parks we are also blessed to have a large army of dedicated volunteers who give freely and generously of their time to care for places like Mulligans Flat, Black Mountain and Namadgi, to name just a few. I had the pleasure earlier this year of going on an exploratory walk of Black Mountain with the former Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment, Rosemary Purdie, who is passionate about that reserve and is an absolute encyclopaedia of knowledge about its plant species, its soil types and its endangered areas.

I have raised in previous annual reports and estimates hearings, and I did so again this year, the issue of the quality of water in our lakes and the importance of managing algal blooms so that people can safely enjoy activities in and around our lakes with lake closures becoming less frequent. Carp management programs are also important, and the rollout of the biological control methods offers real hope for the lakes and rivers in our region that we may at last be getting the better of this revolting unwanted visitor.

As we move into potentially drier times, Canberra families need to be conscious of their water use. We have a strong track record of using water wisely, and I trust that this continues.

Time was provided for a separate session with the office of the commissioner for the environment, Professor Kate Auty. There is, frankly, little direct material contained in the budget that can provide meaningful discussion on the office, with annual reports hearings probably being a more opportune time to ask questions of direct relevance to the papers at hand. I am disappointed that the committee recommendation that new accountability indicators be considered for the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment were not agreed to by the government or by the office of the commissioner itself.

I hasten to add that the recommendation that they change in no way reflects adversely on the important functions of the office or on the work it carries out, but let me quote an example. In budget paper E, we have an accountability indicator for the commissioner which outlined an accountability measure for commissioner-initiated investigations undertaken in accordance with the terms of reference, with a target of 100 per cent, which was achieved. I have to ask: if it is commissioner-initiated, why would it not be?

In estimates I asked: when exactly was the last commissioner-initiated investigation? The answer came back that the last one was in 1999 by a former commissioner. Surely an accountability indicator set by the commissioner, measuring an outcome

that is within the full control of the commissioner, is a meaningless measure of the work that her office does. I know that I am not the only one confused by this indicator, and I trust that the commissioner will take on board the discussion from estimates despite the government not agreeing to the recommendation.

When I asked how many complaints the office had received in this past financial year, the answer was four.

Elsewhere in the hearings the question of the proposal for a recycling facility at Fyshwick was raised, and the subject of a current EIS arose. I asked the commissioner if she had any comments about that and whether she had provided a view to the EIS process. The answer came back: no, she did not think it appropriate for her to comment. Nor was any comment forthcoming on the container deposit scheme or on progress of plastic bag bans. Questions related to the last state of the environment report, which is now three years old, were taken on notice.

The point I make is that the major work of the office of commissioner for the environment is to produce every four years a solid reference document, the state of the environment report. Given that issues we asked about could not be answered because they were the subject of the next report, and other answers referred to issues that apparently occurred too long ago to be familiar, I wonder whether the commissioner's time might be better used if she only appeared in the year—or the year and the year after—that the latest state of the environment report is tabled.

I was pleased to see discussion about waste in the ACT during the estimates hearings. It is important that we know what the government is planning in this area. It might not be the most glamorous part of government, but is nonetheless an important municipal service. I was pleased when a representative from TCCS indicated that the government will undertake public consultation specifically on the development of a waste to energy policy. As the ACT looks to deal with the challenges that waste management offers, it is crucial that Canberrans understand what is taking place and how it affects them. I look forward to learning about the outcome of the current EIS process for the Fyshwick site and, more importantly, how the ACT government will address future options for waste management, given the rapid population growth in the ACT and the limited scope for expansion of the Mugga Lane facility.

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee) (12.25): I rise to speak in support of the measures contained in the 2018-19 budget which will improve public places in the ACT, particularly on the south side. The ACT government is committed to urban regeneration of our town centres and renewing our neighbourhoods. Having more people living in our existing town centres is an opportunity to create quality spaces that enhance Canberra as a great place to live. One of the reasons I ran for election was to help deliver urban renewal in Woden, and our government is investing in budget measures to improve public places in Woden town centre and across the ACT.

There is significant investment for more services in our suburbs in the 2018-19 budget, across both the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate and Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate. The government will engage with the community and business to improve the amenity and use of public places with a

\$100,000 investment in the 2018-19 budget. The primary focus is Woden town centre, which will provide lessons to inform the development of an ACT place-making guide. The funding in the ACT budget in the EPSD portfolio and TCCS portfolio will support place-making initiatives which will enhance the use of the public realm and support the continued regeneration of the town centre.

This marks a very exciting time of growth and regeneration for Woden. As members know, we have been working with Street Furniture Australia on the #WodenExperiment place-making initiative in the town square. It is envisaged that there will be a six-month installation to make the town square a better place for people to connect and be.

I am very optimistic about Woden's future, not only because we are already seeing regeneration occurring, but because we are also seeing significant new investments in Woden through the budget, including the Transport Canberra and City Services measures that have already been debated in that part of the budget debate, delivering funding for improvements to public transport, including the upgrade to the Woden interchange, investment in light rail to Woden, better public spaces and public footpaths and cycleways in our town centres.

I also want to mention that the budget measures to improve public spaces are complemented by the continuing work on city planning and place making by my Labor colleague Suzanne Orr MLA, who has, since her election, been working closely with the community on the making space initiative, bringing together architects, city planners and landscape architects and engineers to discuss how city design can respond to the needs of people who experience our city.

We are a government that cares about providing better spaces for people. I look forward to continuing to work with my colleagues and the Minister for Planning and Land Management and the minister for the environment on new and innovative ways to activate public spaces around Canberra.

I would like to take this opportunity today to highlight another measure in the EPSD portfolio, to upgrade the Mount Taylor entry on Sulwood Drive and trail upgrades on the mountain. One of the reasons Canberra is such a great place to live is our parks and nature reserves. There are now over 4,000 visitors to Mount Taylor nature reserve every month. Our government wants to provide quality paths and access for even more visitors to come and enjoy our fantastic Mount Taylor reserve as our city grows.

This measure in the budget will include upgrades of the reserve entry, landscaping, signage upgrades and alignment with the existing car park to better manage visitor access. The reserve entry design will set a template for urban reserve entries across Canberra. Planning work on these upgrades will begin soon, with works anticipated to be completed by mid-next year. This work on the Mount Taylor nature reserve in the EPSD portfolio complements the continuing conversation and work we are doing with the community on the Mount Taylor car park on Sulwood Drive.

The 2018-19 budget invests in the infrastructure improvements that our growing city needs. The budget reflects our priorities, with a focus on renewing our neighbourhoods, the public spaces within them and the nature reserves around them. I commend the EPSDD budget expenditure to the Assembly.

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 12.30 to 2.30 pm.

Questions without notice

Government—reshuffle

MR COE: My question is to the Chief Minister. Yesterday you announced the decision to appoint an eighth minister. Chief Minister, what pressure has been placed on you to appoint an eighth minister?

MR BARR: None.

MR COE: Minister, how will you demonstrate that the appointment of an eighth minister is based on ability and not just a power play by factions in your party?

MR BARR: The democratic process that we have within our party allows any member to nominate for the executive, and their colleagues make a determination. That process has served the Labor party well over more than a century.

MS LAWDER: Chief Minister, how will ACT taxpayers get value for money by funding an eighth minister, or is this merely the cost of your holding on to the leadership of your party?

MR BARR: This is on a day when their side of politics is in absolute chaos. Of all the days to raise leadership, they choose the day when their party is imploding, when nearly 40 per cent of the party room three kilometres from here has just voted to get rid of another prime minister. With the revolving door of leadership of the Liberal Party at the moment, it is wonderful that—

Mr Parton: Madam Speaker, I raise a point of order on relevance. The question was nothing to do with federal politics.

MADAM SPEAKER: It was about leadership within a party room.

MR BARR: The point on relevance is very well made, Madam Speaker, because the Liberal Party are fast making themselves irrelevant in Australian political debate.

Let me be very clear that the benefit for Canberrans will be reflected in the strength of the government. It will also be reflected in the continued economic and social progress of this city. We have the fastest growing economy in Australia. We have the second highest rate of population growth, and we continue to deliver more and better

services across our community. That trend is going to continue as the ACT reaches half a million people. Within our lifetimes this jurisdiction, with an economy already bigger than Tasmania's, will also exceed Tasmania's population. That will bring into question our representation in the federal parliament. It should be increased in time. But for now we are focused on the good governance of the Australian Capital Territory.

Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders—Boomanulla Oval

MS LE COUTEUR: My question is to the Minister for Sport and Recreation and relates to Boomanulla Oval. My question is: are there plans for the ACT government to facilitate Aboriginal community control of the oval at any time in the future?

MS BERRY: Yes. That is the commitment that the ACT government made to the elected body a couple of years ago when we started discussing restoration of Boomanulla Oval. The first part of that restoration of Boomanulla Oval will include some of the upgrade work that is occurring already at that site; that is occurring in close consultation with the community, in particular with the elected body.

MS LE COUTEUR: What is the time frame for control to return to the Aboriginal community?

MS BERRY: We will work with the community about what is the best model and how the government can support an Aboriginal-owned and operated organisation like Boomanulla Oval. There is no time frame at the moment. However, as I said, we are working very closely with the elected body. The elected body are currently reviewing and renegotiating their agreement with the government. I understand that Boomanulla is high on their list of priorities as well.

MS CHEYNE: Minister, what is the significance of the oval to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people?

MS BERRY: I thank Ms Cheyne for the question. Of course, Boomanulla is incredibly significant to the local community, not just here in the ACT but across the country as well. Aboriginal sporting and cultural events have been held at that site for many years, and it was very sad for everybody in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community here in the ACT that it was not working as successfully as it could have been. Our role in the government is to ensure that we restore the oval; we will then continue, during that process, to work with the elected body and with the Aboriginal community here in the ACT to ensure that at some point in the future it returns to being an Indigenous-run and operated organisation.

Australian Labor Party—conference

MR WALL: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, at the ALP conference over the weekend we saw the left faction of your party, as reported, sensationally flex its muscle. The left faction of your party has also been accused of breaching the rules and ignoring fair process out of self-interest. Chief Minister, how

can you ensure that the left faction members of your cabinet do not make decisions based on self-interest but instead make decisions on behalf of all Canberrans?

MADAM SPEAKER: Can you hold on for a moment. I am just getting some advice about that question being in order. The advice was given that the focus was around factional work from the party conference, but then he has linked it to cabinet. Chief Minister.

MR BARR: All members of cabinet act at all times in the best interests of the people of the Australian Capital Territory.

MR WALL: Chief Minister, how can you ensure that left faction members of your cabinet are not unduly influenced by left faction powerbrokers of your party and other entities such as United Voice and the CFMEU?

MR BARR: I refer the member to my previous answer.

MR COE: Chief Minister, what role do the factions formally play in the leadership of the Australian Labor Party?

MADAM SPEAKER: The question is out of order. That is the advice I have.

Government—employment policy

MR STEEL: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, why are secure and permanent jobs so important to the ACT economy?

MR BARR: I thank Mr Steel for the question. There is no doubt that secure and permanent jobs create certainty and certainty creates confidence, which then flows through into the economy. When people have secure work and they are being paid good wages, they are far more likely to consume and invest in our local economy.

People on short-term contracts do not feel financially safe and are more likely to be living from payday to payday. There is a move internationally and nationally towards labour hire arrangements, which has only exacerbated this insecurity. The federal coalition government's propensity to continue efficiency dividends and to have what have turned out to be very counterproductive average staffing level caps in the public sector have caused significant surges in the use of labour hire contractors and consultancies.

When labour hire is engaged, we can see circumstances where people who are working side by side are not receiving the same pay or the same rights for the same work. This is why we have recently announced that the ACT government will move to license labour hire companies who engage in work in the territory. We want Canberrans to be certain of their financial future so that they can continue to support local business and the broader economy.

MR STEEL: Chief Minister what steps is the ACT government taking to combat insecure work?

MR BARR: Along with the announcement of the move to license labour hire operators, the government has introduced legislation, as members would be aware, to implement our secure local jobs package. This fulfils an election commitment to use the territory government's purchasing power to deliver better outcomes for our city.

In a booming economy with significant construction and export opportunities opening up for local, national and international companies, we want to ensure that workers always get a fair go, have the right to organise and have access to their legal pay and entitlements.

We are committed to proper resourcing of the ACT public service and to promoting permanent employment and job security for ACT government employees. This means minimising the use of labour hire casual, temporary and contract employment in the ACT public service as well as the use of outsourcing.

To ensure that these commitments are delivered, the government has set up a taskforce to look at existing employment practices and to put forward policy proposals for the future. That is why the government will introduce labour hire licensing laws to ensure that workers are protected and treated fairly.

MS CODY: Chief Minister, what do the most recent employment figures demonstrate for the ACT?

MR BARR: I thank Ms Cody for the supplementary. It is pleasing to see that the ACT economy continues to generate thousands of new jobs each year and that our focus on training workers in new industries as diverse as space industries, renewables and health research is delivering more secure, well-paid jobs for Canberrans into the future.

I am pleased to advise the Assembly that in July the employment figures once again showed that the territory had the lowest unemployment rate in the country, at just 3.6 per cent. In that month 600 more Canberrans found work and in the past 12 months there were 5½ thousand new full-time jobs created. These figures demonstrate that the government's focus on economic diversification and jobs growth is working and that, whilst the public sector will continue to be a strong backbone for our economy, we have a much more diverse employment base than we have had previously.

These new jobs and new industries have been created off the back of very significant economic growth and record increases in domestic and international tourism, for example, and very strong service export growth, particularly led by the higher education sector, all of which is showing that our local economy continues to go from strength to strength.

Trade unions—influence on government

MS LAWDER: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, the CFMMEU recently gave a directive that its staff become members of the left faction of your

party. A former staff member of the CFMMEU and member of your backbench is reported to have quit the right faction of your party and has stated that joining the left faction is a “live option”. Chief Minister, will you assure the Canberra community that members of your government are not disproportionately influenced by the union movement?

MADAM SPEAKER: I refer members to *House of Representatives Practice*, page 554:

The underlying principle is that Ministers are required to answer questions ... Consequently Speakers have ruled out of order questions or parts of questions to Ministers which concern, for example:

statements, activities, actions or decisions of a Minister’s own party (including party or party/union activities which may have had some connection to a Minister), or of its conferences, officials, representatives or candidates, or of those of other parties, including opposition parties ...

There is a line of questioning that came out in the supplementary from Mr Coe, and also from Ms Lawder. I would invite you to restate your question, noting that I am going to apply these out-of-order boundaries. If you want to, for the sake of—

Mr Wall: On your ruling, Madam Speaker, the question was specifically, after the preamble: will the Chief Minister assure the Canberra community that members of your government are not disproportionately influenced by the union movement? The question is specifically around the undue influence on members within the government or the governing party, and the Chief Minister is the leader of that party.

MADAM SPEAKER: My comments just then, with reference to this, are consistent with it being ruled out of order. I will also give the Chief Minister the opportunity to answer, should he like, but I refer members of the opposition—

Mr Wall: It’s in order or it’s not, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: I have said that I will rule it out of order from here, and when Ms Lawder stands to ask her supplementary, she should consider the language of the supplementary. Chief Minister, do you wish to answer that first question?

MR BARR: Madam Speaker, I am happy to answer the question in the affirmative. Yes, I can assure the people of Canberra that ministers and members of this Assembly act in the best interests of the people of the Australian Capital Territory.

MS LAWDER: Chief Minister, to what extent is the government’s legislative agenda being dictated by the powerful left faction membership of your party, i.e. the union movement?

MR BARR: The government’s legislative program is being dictated by the commitments we took to the people of Canberra in 2016.

MR COE: Chief Minister, to what extent is your role as Chief Minister becoming untenable because of the powerful left faction and their influence in your cabinet and party?

MR BARR: To no extent. This government operates very effectively across all elements of its membership. That includes a minister from another political party, and we have demonstrated capacity to govern effectively and stably over an extended period of time. That does stand in marked contrast to the governing abilities of your own party even when you command a majority on the floor of the House of Representatives in your own right with your National Party colleagues.

ACTION bus service—consultation

MS CODY: My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services. Minister, can you update the Assembly on planning for a new seven-day bus network for Canberra and the current phase of community consultation?

MS FITZHARRIS: I thank Ms Cody for the question and I am delighted to update the Assembly on the government's work to deliver on our commitment for a city-wide integrated public transport network that can move people around our city efficiently and effectively, providing a real alternative to the car. We are delivering an integrated public transport system where buses will work alongside light rail to help residents and visitors travel across our city.

Canberra's population is growing fast, and the ACT government is redesigning our bus network from the ground up to better serve our community. A proposed new bus network was out for public comment from 18 June to 12 August. Transport Canberra received more than 10,000 pieces of feedback, reflecting the very great lengths the ACT government has gone to in ensuring that the Canberra community has had an opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed new network. We have also met with commuters, parents, schools, students, community groups and peak bodies about these proposed changes. As I said last week, this extensive consultation is genuine.

Our task is now well underway to consider how the survey responses and various other correspondence will inform the completed design of the final bus network. I am committed to telling Canberrans what we have heard and what we are doing in response. I am also committed to making the case for an integrated public transport network. The final network will be released, along with detailed timetables and the final bus network, in late 2018, with the new network to start in early 2019 prior to the first school term.

While the Canberra Liberals will run their scare campaign against any changes to buses, I will listen and I will get on with the job of delivering what the people of Canberra voted for: more buses more often, seven days a week.

MS CODY: Minister, what are the main benefits, and what concerns have been raised through the consultation and how will the government work to address these concerns?

MS FITZHARRIS: The extensive consultation has built on previous plans and strategies, published since 2009 and taken to two elections by the Labor government, which outline our plans for a modern, frequent public transport network. Feedback from this latest consultation has ranged from community comments on the change of bus routes to comments on the frequency of services, travel times, location of new bus stops and safety around bus interchanges. Services to schools have also been an area of interest.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MS FITZHARRIS: The consultation phase has also provided positive feedback from the community on the redistribution of bus services in the proposed new network—

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MS FITZHARRIS: particularly the increased frequency along major transit routes—

Ms Orr: Point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: Minister, can you resume your seat.

Ms Orr: Madam Speaker, the opposition is getting quite noisy and it is hard to hear the minister when she sits in front of us and has her back to us.

MADAM SPEAKER: Members, I ask that the level of interjection be limited. Thank you.

MS FITZHARRIS: We are particularly looking to increase the frequency along major transit thoroughfares and make improvements in bus safety and the reliability of services.

The findings of the consultation are being reviewed, assessed and, where appropriate, addressed by Transport Canberra. This information will inform how the government can provide a better experience for bus users and decision-making about the final shape of the new bus network.

It is clear that as our city grows we need an integrated public transport network that works for more people. Currently many of our routes are too infrequent, and routes are too long and make too many deviations before people get to where they want to go. Different weekday and weekend routes are not intuitive and the operating hours do not work for everyone.

These are all problems we want to fix; I believe they contribute to the fact that about 85 per cent of Canberrans are still choosing not to use public transport. Our aim is to create a network which provides the greatest overall outcome for the entire Canberra community.

MR PETERSSON: Minister, what are the next steps in finalising a new bus network for Canberra?

MS FITZHARRIS: I thank Mr Pettersson for the supplementary question. As I have indicated, formal consultation on the proposed new bus network closed just a little over a week ago and, as I have already outlined, the government received a record amount of feedback from the community, including on specific local services, how interchanges will work in the future and what else we can do to help Canberrans use public transport more.

I can assure members of this place that the government is looking closely at the feedback received and considering how the proposed network—

Mr Gentleman: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, Mr Hanson has interjected seven times during this answer and is continuing even during this discussion. The noise from the opposition in question time needs to be dealt with.

Mr Wall interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Wall, no interjections. Just let the minister answer the question. It would be exciting for all of us to get through question time without any interjections. Minister.

MS FITZHARRIS: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Nothing quite like an exciting question time! I can assure members of this place that the government is looking closely at the feedback and considering how the feedback on the proposed network can be improved, based on what we have heard from Canberrans. In due course I will be very pleased to release the report detailing the feedback that we have received from Canberrans about the network and the changes made to the network based on this feedback once the government has made final decisions about the 2019 network.

Further details will be provided, including timetables once they have been developed. But of course you cannot develop timetables until you actually have the network. We will have more to say about the massive investment Labor is making in public transport with the aim of encouraging all Canberrans to use public transport. *(Time expired.)*

Australian Labor Party—conference

MRS KIKKERT: My question is to the Chief Minister. It is well known that members of the right faction of your party staged a dramatic walk-out of the ACT Labor Party conference on the weekend, in response to behaviour and decisions that have been described as “unruly and lawless”. Chief Minister, what decisions were made at the recent ACT Labor Party conference that will become government policy?

MADAM SPEAKER: Mrs Kikkert, again I think that under standing order—

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Excuse me, did you have a point on the point of order, Mr Hanson?

Mr Hanson: I thought it was in order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Again, I refer you to what Speakers have ruled out of order. I suggest that everyone read page 554. There is limited connection between what happens on conference floor and decisions of executive. I will rule that question out of order.

Mr Coe: Point of order, Madam Speaker. Prior to your making a ruling, can I ask you to consider the question? It was: what decisions made at the recent ACT Labor Party conference will become government policy? Surely that is a reasonable question to ask and should not be ruled out of order simply because we cannot use the term "Labor Party conference".

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Gentleman, on the point of order.

Mr Gentleman: On the point of order, Madam Speaker. You cannot ask ministers to announce government policy in question time.

Mrs Dunne: On the point of order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Can you wait a moment, Mrs Dunne? I will come back to you.

Mrs Dunne: Yes, sure.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mrs Dunne, on the point of order.

Mrs Dunne: On the point of order, the question, like all the questions asked by the opposition, has referred to the Chief Minister in his capacity as the head of government responsible for the implementation of the government's policies. Therefore, I cannot see how you can rule Mrs Kikkert's question out of order because she is only asking which decisions will become government policy. It is not an announcement of government policy because the decisions have already been made by another body.

MADAM SPEAKER: Which is not the executive.

Mr Rattenbury: Madam Speaker, on the point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Rattenbury on the point of order.

Mr Rattenbury: Thank you, Madam Speaker. On the point of order, I think that whilst Mrs Kikkert's preamble does tend to distract and point to the House of Representatives question, my view would be that that question is in order because she is asking the Chief Minister in his role as head of government. Nonetheless, I think that Minister Gentleman has clarified very well that the Chief Minister is being asked to pre-empt policy and it is his decision to announce that when he wishes.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr Rattenbury. I refer members to standing order 117(c), which states:

questions shall not ask Ministers:

- (i) for an expression of opinion;
- (ii) to announce Executive policy, but may seek an explanation regarding the policy of the Executive and its application ...
- (iii) for a legal opinion;

Unless you have something on the point of order, Chief Minister, my ruling—

Mrs Dunne: Sorry, can I get some clarity, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Sorry, I meant to come back to you, Mrs Dunne.

Mrs Dunne: Have you ruled on Mrs Kikkert's question without giving her the opportunity to rephrase it?

MADAM SPEAKER: Without labouring this point, Mrs Dunne, I made the point when Mr Coe's supplementary question was ruled out of order. I made reference to be very careful about language with Ms Lawder. For peace and harmony in this place, be very mindful about this; be very clear about what I am going to be ruling in and out of order. But if Mrs Kikkert wants to rephrase that, this will be the last time we get to rephrase anything. Mrs Kikkert.

MRS KIKKERT: Chief Minister, it is well known that members of the right faction of your party staged a dramatic walkout of the ACT Labor Party conference on the weekend—

Government members interjecting—

MRS KIKKERT: I am not up to the question yet, so calm your voices—in response to behaviour and decisions that have been described as “unruly and lawless”. Chief Minister, were you pressured at the recent ACT Labor Party conference in a way that will have an impact on committing to government policies?

MR BARR: No, but I can advise members—

Mr Wall interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Wall, stop it, please!

MR BARR: I can advise—

Mr Coe: Did you walk out, Andrew?

MR BARR: No, I didn't. I can advise members—

Opposition members interjecting—

Ms Berry: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Can you resume your seat, Chief Minister?

Ms Berry: In addition to the constant interruptions, it is the constant badgering by those opposite that makes it very difficult for anybody to hear a question, let alone answer it.

MADAM SPEAKER: Members of the opposition, please refrain. Chief Minister, do you have anything else to add?

MR BARR: I was attempting to make the point that the Labor Party takes its policymaking responsibilities seriously. We do have a significant process throughout each calendar year that culminates in an annual conference where both general resolutions and platform changes are debated by the Labor Party membership.

It remains the case in the ACT branch, as it is across the nation, that it is the responsibility of the parliamentary party and the executive to determine both the implementation and time frame of any policy commitment that is made by the Labor Party. We do respect our rank and file members' and our affiliates' role in assisting in policy development. We do not just ignore our branch members and we do not—

Mr Coe: You did ignore them throughout the—

MR BARR: run around the place voting to privatise the ABC and then to hide from those decisions in this place.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mrs Kikkert, please be mindful of my comments when you put this supplementary together.

MRS KIKKERT: Chief Minister, did the walkout of the right faction at the conference have an impact on policy decisions that will impact the government's agenda?

MR BARR: No.

MR COE: A supplementary.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Coe. And you be mindful as well, if I may say so.

MR COE: I always am, Madam Speaker; always. Chief Minister, has the government or the cabinet taken any instructions from the recent ACT Labor Party conference?

MR BARR: No, the ACT executive and the parliamentary Labor Party have the full sovereignty, under our party rules and constitution, to determine the enactment of policy. We have a process, as I have indicated, within the Labor Party where rank-and-file members, policy committees, affiliate unions and others contribute to policymaking. That is why our side of politics delivers better policies than yours: because we have a process that engages our extensive membership, which is significantly larger than on your side of politics, and we draw upon a much wider base of input than just the interests of the big end of town, which entirely dominates the policy agenda of the Liberal Party.

If you want to talk about party democracy, and if you want to talk about party processes, I will always defend the Labor Party's democratic processes. We conduct our affairs in public. The media attend our conferences. They know what goes on, and that is an important part of an open, democratic, mainstream political party.

It is not the case that the same rules apply to those opposite. As we know, they try to keep everything very secret. What we do know is that they represent the A to Z of conservatism. From Alistair to Zed, they are the conservatives of this city's political landscape: the dinosaurs, the throwbacks to the 1950s. We have seen that on nearly every issue before this chamber in this parliamentary term, and they continue to represent only the far right wing. *(Time expired.)*

Bushfires—preparation

MR PETTERSSON: My question is to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Minister, why has the ACT bushfire season been brought forward?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Mr Pettersson for his interest in the safety of all Canberrans. Our city, of course, is all too familiar with what Mother Nature can bring, and this is why the ACT government takes the threat of bushfires very seriously.

Under our Emergency Services Act the ESA commissioner is charged with ensuring that our city is safe from the threat of bushfires. This act also sets out the circumstances under which the commissioner can bring forward the prescribed bushfire season start date of 1 October. The season will commence early because of the dry weather. This has been the driest first six months of any year since 1986. Also, soil moisture is very low. Unfortunately the outlook does remain grim.

The BOM has advised that we are facing low rainfall and higher than expected temperatures in the coming months. The BOM is also advising that the likelihood of an El Nino forming this summer is higher than normal. Given this outlook, the commissioner consulted the Bushfire Council and determined that commencing the bushfire season from 1 September 2018 was the prudent course.

I also want to assure the Assembly that preparations have been and are being made to mitigate the threat. However, it is also important to keep in mind that there is no complete inoculation from the threats that Mother Nature can bring.

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, what preparations have been made regarding this year's ACT bushfire season?

MR GENTLEMAN: That is another excellent question from Mr Pettersson. There are a range of ways to tackle the threat from bushfires. These include prescribed burns, which mainly occur in autumn, grass slashing, stock grazing, fuel removal and chemical control of fuel loads.

To help manage the threat, a bushfire operation plan, the BOP, is prepared each year in consultation with the ACT Rural Fire Service, the ACT Bushfire Council and the ESA. Many of the activities under the BOP are delivered by the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate.

I am pleased to advise that the EPSDD have achieved 97 per cent implementation of activities identified and approved in the 2017-18 EPSDD BOP. This includes completing 37 burns, slashing over 4,700 hectares and strategic grazing across more than 6,000 hectares of land. In addition many of the activities that will be included in the 2018-19 BOP are already underway.

The government is also communicating with residents across Canberra about the dangers of the bushfire season and how they can prepare. This includes through doorknocking of houses in bushfire-prone areas, open days and work undertaken by the community fire units. While the advice I have from our officials is that this city is better prepared for a bushfire emergency than ever before, it is important to remember that we all need to make efforts to reduce the threat and that we can never mitigate the threat 100 per cent.

MS CHEYNE: Minister, does global warming have any impact on bushfires in the ACT region?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Ms Cheyne for her interest in the environment. The government takes all aspects of bushfires seriously, including climate change. We are not only preparing for the coming season but also looking to lead national and international efforts to tackle dangerous global warming.

The impacts of a warming planet are already being felt across our nation, with bushfires being a particular example. Experts have warned that global warming will cause drier, warmer and longer fire seasons and also cause more intense fires. For example, a senior BOM climatologist told an emergency management conference last year that the length of the fire season in Australia has been increasing and that Australia's forest fire danger index is also rising, with fire danger likely to increase throughout the remainder of this century. We are already seeing these impacts in our own part of Australia.

Failing to tackle climate change seriously is not only environmental vandalism but also economic stupidity. As I have already noted in this place, experts have warned that the economic cost to our region is set to double by the middle of this century. The year 2050 is only a few decades away and the cost of bushfires to New South Wales

and the ACT is already estimated to be \$100 million a year. No government in Australia can be serious about tackling the threat of bushfires unless it is prepared to accept that climate change is occurring and take active steps to transition to a low-carbon economy. I am proud to serve in a government that is committed to doing both. It is time that all of us, including those who aspire to govern, did the same.

Trade unions—influence on government

MR PARTON: My question is to the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development. I refer to statements by UnionsACT secretary Alex White in the media on 31 July this year about an almost joint Greens-Liberal proposal about land tax exemptions for landlords who agree to rent their houses through affordable housing providers. Mr White described it as “neoliberalist nonsense” which Labor and the Greens should not act on. Two days later, after Mr White’s comments, the Greens retreated. Minister, does UnionsACT have a right of veto over what policy proposals are put forward or adopted regarding affordable housing?

MS BERRY: No, they do not, but they have as much right as anybody else to make comment through the media.

MR PARTON: Minister, what actions will you take to ensure that all proposals put forward to address housing affordability and homelessness are given a fair hearing?

MS BERRY: I thank Mr Parton for the question. He was at the housing and homelessness summit, and he is aware that there were a number of suggestions and ideas that came forward out of that summit. I will be releasing a strategy later this year. I have already implemented a number of ideas and suggestions that came out of that summit, and I announced one today.

MS LAWDER: Minister, are there any policy issues on which you disagree with UnionsACT?

MS BERRY: I do not even know where to start. I do not think I will answer that.

Ms Le Couteur: A point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: A point of order.

Ms Le Couteur: I would like to make a personal explanation under rule 46, please.

MADAM SPEAKER: Can we do that at the end of question time? I will give you the call when we finish question time.

Ms Le Couteur: Okay.

Planning—Woden

MR HANSON: My question is to the Minister for Planning and Land Management. Minister, the 2015 Woden master plan required developers to provide a community

benefit, such as a childcare centre or other community facilities, if they applied to take advantage of a four-storey bonus above the proposed height limits in the town centre. That requirement has been removed in the latest changes. Minister, why has the requirement for developers to provide a community benefit in order to qualify for the four-storey bonus above height limits for the Woden town centre been removed?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Mr Hanson for his question. My directorate worked with all of the Woden community in developing the master plan and the following variation—

Mr Hanson: All of them?

MR GENTLEMAN: Well, with as many of the community as they could, who presented quite a number of representations to both the master plan process and the variation to the Territory Plan. With regard to the particulars of Mr Hanson's comments on four storeys and community benefits, the advice to me from EPSDD was that the outcomes for allowing those height limits were of benefit to the whole Woden community and the ACT.

MR HANSON: Minister, why wasn't the community consulted about the changes to the Woden master plan?

MR GENTLEMAN: There was quite a bit of consultation—detailed consultation—with the Woden community in the drawing up of the master planning process and the draft variation process.

MR PARTON: Minister, why have you tried to sneak these changes through, rather than being open and up-front about your plans?

MR GENTLEMAN: I certainly have not snuck any changes through. We have been very open with the Canberra community and, of course, the Woden community. There have been a number of workshops, and quite a bit of representation from the Woden community to the directorate in the process of the master plan. We also held a roundtable with proponents from the Woden area and stakeholders. We have been very open during the process, and we look forward to implementing the changes to Woden to ensure lively opportunity for the Woden town centre. We intend to see light rail stage 2 go to Woden. It will be an exciting time for Woden in the near future.

Planning—Woden

MISS C BURCH: My question is to the Minister for Planning and Land Management. I refer to the Woden master plan, which you recently tabled, and the decision to remove the requirement for developers to provide community facilities in order to receive a four-storey bonus for developments in the Woden town centre. The site of the former Tradies club is one of the sites affected by the changes. Did the CFMMEU or its representatives meet with you, members of your office or members of your department in order to lobby for this change to the master plan?

MR GENTLEMAN: No.

MISS C BURCH: Will the CFMMEU receive yet another unearned windfall gain as a result of this government decision?

MR GENTLEMAN: That would be a matter for the CFMMEU. I understand that they have sold the property.

MR PARTON: Minister, was the CFMMEU invited to the meeting which was consulted about the proposed changes to the Woden master plan? Were they invited?

MR GENTLEMAN: I think most stakeholders that had an interest in the area were invited, by way of a general invitation.

Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders—child protection

MS CHEYNE: My question is to the Minister for Disability, Children and Youth. Minister, how will the ACT government's new partnership with Gugan Gulwan and OzChild support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families at risk of ongoing involvement with child and youth protection services?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Ms Cheyne for the question. More than 40 Canberra families will benefit from the trial of functional family therapy, which is being undertaken in a partnership between Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation and OzChild. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families at risk of involvement in the ACT child protection system will be able to access functional family therapy for the first time as part of this 12-month trial.

Functional family therapy is a culturally appropriate family-based program designed to improve family dynamics, communication and support. The role of FFT is to reduce or eliminate the need for ongoing services. FFT focuses on the systems around families and how they can support and motivate change. Work is done at the parental, peer, school and community level. Gugan Gulwan brings important cultural insights to the program as well as strong connections to Canberra's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

OzChild has a history of delivering evidence-based programs across Australia, including FFT. The partnership between Gugan Gulwan and OzChild will support our collective goal of reducing the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families involved with the out of home care system. The program is in the early stages of development and Gugan Gulwan, OzChild and the ACT government are working together to establish this model in the ACT as soon as possible.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have the answers. It is up to government to listen to them and recognise the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led solutions. The government is implementing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led programs like FFT while the Our Booris, Our Way review of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people involved in the child protection system is underway.

MS CHEYNE: Minister, what other supports are available in the ACT for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families involved with child and youth protection services?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Ms Cheyne for her supplementary question. The ACT government is committed to understanding and addressing the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in child protection. The functional family therapy trial is just one of the programs being implemented to address this issue.

The ACT government has also committed \$1.44 million over four years in the latest budget for the ongoing delivery of family group conferencing so that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families can be supported to make decisions to keep their children safe, strong and connected to family and culture. This process supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural values of family and community responsibility.

From the beginning of the pilot to 8 August 2018, 13 families have been involved in a family group conference, involving 25 children. Eighteen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children have not subsequently entered care following a family group conference. Three families, seven children, have entered into the care system subsequent to a family group conference. However, in these cases the children have been placed with kin identified through the conference process.

The new funding provides for the permanent appointment of two facilitators in addition to brokerage costs. These staff are supported and mentored by Curijo Pty Ltd, an Aboriginal-operated organisation with more than 20 years experience working with child protection systems in New South Wales and the ACT.

Functional family therapy and family group conferencing are additional to the existing services that are providing support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, including Uniting's children and families ACT program and the ACT government's growing healthy families program run from each of the child and family centres in Gungahlin, Tuggeranong and west Belconnen.

MS ORR: Minister, can you update the Assembly on work to address the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children involved with child protection in the ACT?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Ms Orr for her supplementary question. Over-representation is a legacy of the discrimination, disconnection and dislocation from country, culture and family that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been subjected to as a result of past policies and practices.

In the ACT it is a sad fact that 28 per cent of children in out of home care are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. However, those children represent only about three per cent of the population of children in the ACT. This is completely unacceptable, which is why the government established Our Booris, Our Way, a review of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people involved with the child protection system.

The review seeks to understand the reasons for children and young people entering care and to develop strategies to reduce the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in care, improve their experience and outcomes while in care, and examine ways for children to return home safely.

The review is being overseen by a wholly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander steering committee, in line with the principle of self-determination. Committee members bring a diverse set of capabilities and lived experience in child protection, service delivery and related areas.

The steering committee has met seven times to date. Terms of reference for the review and the review methodology have been finalised and three communiques have been released on the ACT stronger families website.

The case files of approximately 350 children and young people involved with CYPS will be reviewed by an independent team of reviewers as part of Our Booris, Our Way. The review team, led by a senior clinical lead, have completed the review of the first cohort, consisting of 73 case reviews. I look forward to receiving the steering committee's interim report in coming weeks.

Education—future strategy

MS LEE: My question is to the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development and relates to the future of education strategy. Minister, in your statement you said, “As schools become more seamlessly engaged with other human services, in the future it may be that children are enrolled in their learning and development journey from birth so that no one falls through the gaps.” How are children to be enrolled from birth?

MS BERRY: That is the suggestion in the strategy and in the conversations that we have had: that there may be a way to enrol students from birth. The model for that and whether that would actually occur and be useful in the future of education strategy is still being considered.

MS LEE: Minister, how will schools become more seamlessly engaged with other human services, and what human services are you referring to?

MS BERRY: Schools are already engaged with other human services, and we want to build on that excellent relationship, particularly around making sure that there is support for young people who are experiencing mental health issues. I have psychologists in schools making sure that there is seamlessness in referrals outside the school environment. Also, it is about ensuring that organisations that come into schools to support students and teachers are welcomed into schools and look at learning needs that particularly align with the future of education strategy.

MR WALL: Minister, how will “effective union partnerships help students to access important learning opportunities”?

MS BERRY: Parents that I speak to want to ensure that their children are well aware of their rights at work, particularly young people starting work in the ACT, and make sure that they are paid correctly and learn to ensure that they get the right treatment at work and where they can get advice if they need it. I think it is absolutely vital that young people are engaged with unions to ensure that they can access the support that they need from various organisations that can support them.

Mr Coe: How is that a learning opportunity?

MS BERRY: How is it not?

Canberra Hospital—accident and emergency procedures

MRS DUNNE: My question is to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing. I refer to the case of a lung transplant recipient with low levels of immunity who sat in accident and emergency yesterday, 20 August, for six hours before he saw a doctor. During that time he was exposed to people with colds, the flu and other contagious diseases. The patient commented on social media that in the time he waited he could have driven 3½ hours to St Vincent's Hospital where "they know how to treat, care for and prioritise transplant patients". He also commented that when he did eventually see someone they apologised and told him he had slipped through the cracks. Minister, why did a known transplant patient sit in accident and emergency at the Canberra Hospital for six hours before seeing a doctor?

MS FITZHARRIS: I was not aware of that situation until Mrs Dunne raised it. I do know that emergency department staff triage and the doctors in the emergency department make decisions based on clinical needs. On occasion it is not unusual, depending on what is happening in the emergency department on any given day. But I can follow up, if Mrs Dunne could point me to this particular commentary on social media, and provide further advice. I trust, as I hope Mrs Dunne should, the clinical decisions made by staff in an emergency department, a very busy place on any given day.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, does the Canberra Hospital accident and emergency department have a set of procedures for people who have had transplants or suffer other significant immunodeficiencies?

MS FITZHARRIS: I shall take that question on notice. But I, unlike, it appears, Mrs Dunne, do trust the clinical decisions of the—

Mrs Dunne: They admitted that he fell through the cracks.

MS FITZHARRIS: Well, as I indicated in my previous answer, if Mrs Dunne would like to provide further advice on that to my office directly, I would be more than happy to follow up.

MISS C BURCH: Minister, why did this patient not get higher priority in accident and emergency, instead of being left to slip through the cracks?

MS FITZHARRIS: I reject the assertion that Miss Burch has made. If she could reflect on my previous answers, she will note that I was not aware of this until a couple of minutes ago. I have said that I will take the question on notice and find out more detail, particularly on what might have been happening in a very busy place on any given day.

Housing—affordable housing scheme

MS ORR: My question is to the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development. Minister, can you update the Assembly on initiatives being funded under the affordable housing innovation fund?

MS BERRY: I thank Ms Orr for the question. Yes, I can update the Assembly. The affordable housing innovation fund was established to support new approaches to affordable housing. The fund encouraged innovative affordable housing projects that have been established in other jurisdictions around Australia to see whether they can be just as successful in Canberra.

The successful applicant for round 1 of the \$1 million innovation fund was announced today by me. Work will start on these projects to get them off the ground. An amount of \$230,000 has been awarded to Community Housing Canberra to establish an affordable rental real estate initiative. Modelled after Victoria's HomeGround Real Estate, property owners will be able to have their properties managed by CHC and leased to individuals and families who are in need of affordable housing.

There was also some discussion in the chamber about this initiative a few weeks ago. It will be good to see property owners take up this challenge and offer their properties under this model. An amount of \$50,000 has been awarded to two different groups to advance co-housing initiatives. Successful applicants were Environmental Collective Housing Organisation, ECHO, and Smart Urban Villages.

This is a great opportunity to test innovative sustainable design of co-housing initiatives that have been taking off in other parts of the country. The creation and funding of projects under the innovation fund form part of the ACT Greens and ACT Labor parliamentary agreement that this government is delivering on.

MS ORR: How will projects like these help grow the provision of affordable housing in Canberra?

MS BERRY: Projects under the housing innovation fund aim to increase the supply of dedicated affordable housing for rent or purchase through the support of ideas from the community. These innovative ideas may be ones that typically are not financially viable under normal market conditions or have difficulty attracting priority investment. By demonstrating innovative ways of growing the supply of affordable homes through the fund, government and industry may look to expand and continue specific housing delivery models into the future.

The HomeGround Real Estate model has the potential to unlock priority dwellings to be rented at below market rates to eligible tenants. Registering under the HomeGround Canberra brand, CHC will provide a not-for-profit real estate agency that delivers professional property management services to property investors while creating more affordable housing for low to moderate income earners. As the largest community housing provider in Canberra, CHC is well placed to introduce the proven HomeGround business model to the territory.

Co-housing provides a great opportunity for a group of interested purchasers to come together and collectively design and fund their own multi-unit housing project. Both ECHO and Smart Urban Villages will provide affordable housing options for people looking for an alternative to your typical housing model. The projects will be well designed, energy efficient and affordable for people on low incomes. Projects funded under year 1 will help grow the amount of affordable housing in Canberra.

MR STEEL: Minister, what other projects will the innovation fund be able to support in future?

MS BERRY: I thank Mr Steel for the question. With year 1 projects now underway, the second year of the housing innovation fund will aim to continue to increase the supply of affordable housing, with a focus on special cohorts and projects.

Five specific initiatives have been identified for year 2 funding. Two of the initiatives will seek proposals to increase the supply of affordable housing for two specific cohorts: specialist disability accommodation and dedicated accommodation for low income families escaping domestic violence.

Canberrans will be asked to come forward with projects that boost the supply of accessible, low-cost accommodation for either rent or purchase for these cohorts, and will need innovative solutions that will not only incorporate high levels of universal design but will also enable better social inclusion.

The government will also be calling for supported housing projects on underutilised community facility land. This initiative will seek expressions of interest from groups who own community facility land, who can access funding to facilitate projects that boost the supply of affordable supported accommodation.

Across Canberra there is a range of community facilities land in private ownership that could be better utilised for housing and other facilities to support the wider community. Applications will be reopened in year 2 for proposals to establish a home share initiative, to make use of spare bedrooms to provide affordable accommodation and support for Canberrans who need support in their home.

Finally, any other proposal will be able to come forward to seek funding under the innovation fund. A range of ideas were brought forward as part of the housing strategy consultations and this initiative will enable individuals and groups to come forward with those proposals for funding. Details on the application process for year 2 funding will be made available later this year.

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

Personal explanation

MS LE COUTEUR (Murrumbidgee): I would like to make a personal explanation. Mr Parton suggested that the Greens had retreated from our policy about land tax exemptions for landlords who rent via community housing providers at an affordable rate. That is not in fact what happened or our policy, and I am pleased that eventually, after some confusion, the Assembly did pass a motion which committed the government to an implementation plan for this policy by the end of the sitting period in October.

Paper

MS FITZHARRIS (Yerrabi—Minister for Health and Wellbeing, Minister for Transport and City Services and Minister for Higher Education, Training and Research) (3.31): Madam Speaker, I seek your indulgence, not in response to question time but referencing debate earlier this morning. Mrs Dunne sought leave to move a motion requesting me to table the March report into the ACT Health system-wide data review. I would like to table that now. I present the following paper:

Leading Data Reform: The Way Forward—Outcomes of the ACT Health System-Wide Data Review, dated 6 April 2018.

Leave of absence

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

That leave of absence be granted to Mr Milligan for today's sitting, for personal reasons.

Appropriation Bill 2018-2019

[Cognate bill:

Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2018-2019

Cognate papers:

Estimates 2018-2019—Select Committee report

Estimates 2018-2019—Select Committee—government response]

Debate resumed.

Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate—Part 1.7

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) (3.33): I appreciate the opportunity to outline some of the ways my climate and sustainability portfolio will continue to assist Canberrans to reduce their energy consumption, reduce their energy bills, reduce their waste and build a sustainable and prosperous Canberra for future generations to enjoy.

The 2018-19 budget provides funding to support a number of policies and programs that will ensure that the ACT remains a world leader in its response to climate change. As we know, our climate is already changing. This is bringing risks to every aspect of our society: human health, our environment, agriculture, our infrastructure and our property. Scientific evidence tells us that there is an urgent need for action, and the ACT government is committed to tackling climate change through our range of programs and doing our fair share as responsible global citizens, as well as protecting our own community.

The budget is investing \$845,000 over three years to support the government's commitment to transition to net zero emissions by 2045 at the latest. This includes \$264,000 in the 2018 financial year. This initiative involves undertaking detailed modelling and analysis to support the ACT government's commitment to transition to net zero emissions by 2045. This work will underpin the development of detailed strategies and actions across all sectors of the ACT economy as we work towards this ambitious goal.

The development of the territory's upcoming climate change strategy will ensure that key sectors including transport, commercial energy in buildings and waste have detailed action plans in place. These will be supported by regulation and detailed analysis to ensure that we are doing the right things in the right way.

These actions are to be developed through close collaboration with the community, and already the community has given us significant input. I was very pleased, as I have mentioned in the Assembly before, that through the process of setting the targets and undertaking the broad consultation we had an excellent level of community engagement that has enabled us to set the targets already and now, I guess, to fill in the details behind that for the first action plan through to 2025. What this work will help fund is that detailed analysis.

Last week in debate I indicated the broad modelling that has been done to reach the 2030 goals but obviously then, as we bring each policy initiative through, we need to look at it in more detail, and that is what this work is funded to do.

In this year's budget we have also announced an allocation of \$456,000 to support the rollout of 50 dual-electric vehicle charging stations at government buildings and facilities. This is one of the actions under the ACT's transition to zero emission vehicle action plan 2018-2021. These funds will support the gradual replacement of internal combustion engine passenger vehicles with electric vehicles in the government fleet. As passenger vehicles come off their lease we will replace them with zero emission vehicles, targeting 50 per cent of them in 2019-20 and 100 per cent coming off lease in 2020-21, and onwards until all are zero emission vehicles.

Replacing conventional petrol-fuelled cars with zero emission vehicles will reduce our emissions and noise pollution and enhance the uptake of these vehicles by the broader community as they come out of our leasing period and are available for purchase in the second-hand market. We see this benefitting the community in a number of ways, including government having lower emissions in the short term. We

believe the running costs of these vehicles will stack up very well economically and ultimately these vehicles will be available to the community to purchase second-hand.

The ACT budget is also investing nearly \$2 million over three years to support the implementation of the ACT climate change adaptation strategy including over \$577,000 in 2018-19. Adaptation is about identifying risks posed by climate change and preparing for them. Taking adaptation actions now will have both direct and indirect savings for the community by improving overall resilience to extreme weather events or climate-induced natural disasters.

The adaptation strategy has the primary goal of supporting the community, our city and the natural environment to become more resilient to the impacts from climate change such as extreme heat and increasing severe weather events like storms. I think it is important to reflect here that the government does have strong strategies in both spaces—mitigation and adaptation—and, in plain English, that means both trying to stop climate change but also preparing to cope with the climate changes that are already embedded in the system.

Interestingly, and I think beneficially, sometimes these policy areas deliver on both fronts at once. Things such as green infrastructure, which we are looking at very closely, will both help absorb carbon as part of the mitigation strategy but also ensure that as, for example, hotter weather strikes us the infrastructure will have a cooling effect on the city. We are certainly looking for those kinds of synergistic opportunities to make sure that we are getting the best value we can and having the greatest impact with the funds that we have available.

When it comes to the carbon neutral goal of the ACT government, the government continues to lead by example in the community, both nationally and internationally, in seeking to reduce emissions from our own operations. The carbon neutral government program has already achieved \$2 million per year of savings in energy costs and an 11 per cent reduction in ACT government emissions since 2014. This has been achieved through mitigation actions like large-scale energy efficiency upgrades and the transition to 100 per cent renewable electricity.

The 2018-19 budget allocates a total of \$1.897 million to implementing and strengthening the carbon neutral government program, which includes funding a dedicated team of policy, project and energy specialist officers, as well as allowing the carbon neutral government fund to support further emission reduction projects across government. This initiative will allow the government to refresh the carbon neutral government framework, target government emissions from natural gas used for space and water heating, investigate reducing emissions from the government corporate vehicle and bus fleets and investigate innovative emission reduction technologies.

The budget also provides more than \$3 million for Actsmart to continue its programs which provide free information, tools and advice to assist households, schools and businesses to improve their sustainability. All local schools are signed up to the Actsmart program, with many fantastic sustainability projects underway, as well as

strong links to the curriculum. Schools accredited under the program send 25 per cent less waste to landfill and use 20 per cent less electricity.

Business will continue to be supported with energy, waste and water programs. There are now over 1,850 businesses participating in the Actsmart business programs. Businesses signed up to the Actsmart program achieve, on average, annual energy bill savings of \$1,900 per business and see a reduction in waste into landfill and greenhouse gas emissions. We are seeing a lot of bluster this week on the hill just across the road but it is the ACT government that is actually providing real energy savings for households and for businesses in this city.

A total of 545 low income households will receive free household energy efficiency assessments, with a further 450 attending energy efficiency workshops. Additionally, 1,500 residents will be supported with Actsmart providing free tailored advice and self-help workshops on reducing their energy and water use during the year. This initiative will support the continuation of the community gardens grants program and the curtain retrofit volunteer program to install curtains in the homes of some of our most vulnerable citizens.

The energy efficiency improvement scheme will continue to deliver big savings this year, especially to alleviate energy poverty for low income priority households. Since the scheme started in 2013 it has helped more than 71,000 households and businesses to reduce emissions and energy bills. Each participating household is saving up to \$5.65 per week, and businesses are saving \$57 a week on their energy bills through the big business light switch program.

Rebates of around \$3,000 are now available from ActewAGL to replace a household's inefficient gas heater with a more efficient system, such as an electric reverse-cycle air conditioner. With upward pressure on energy prices, it is now more important than ever to help people reduce their energy costs through energy efficiency.

With a 20 per cent priority household target set for 2018, the scheme will continue to significantly reduce energy costs for some of the ACT's most vulnerable households and help them adapt to a changing climate. The ongoing commitment to the EIS follows an independent review of the scheme published in July 2018 which showed that the scheme delivered benefits to the community four times the cost of the scheme.

I want to particularly mention a new element to the EIS which Minister Berry and I have worked on. Over the next three years the ACT government will build on a successful pilot program in public housing to invest a further \$7 million to improve the energy efficiency of public housing heaters and hot-water systems through the scheme. The energy efficiency upgrade will extend to 2,200 public housing dwellings and will help reduce climate emissions as well as heating and cooling bills for some of Canberra's most vulnerable residents.

For the average household that gets involved in this program and benefits from it, we expect a saving of around \$500 on their annual energy bills. That is not some mythical NEG \$500. Go back to Tony Abbot's efforts a few years ago when he promised that removing the carbon tax would save households \$550 a year. This is \$500 of real

savings funded in this budget and will be delivered in the coming years. We have already proved it through the pilot program. We have demonstrated what you can do when you actually have political will to roll these programs out and not just use them as a political football.

These investments will continue to ensure that the ACT government provides a range of opportunities for people to reduce their energy costs. They will ensure that the ACT continues to deliver the emissions reduction agenda that we have and will continue to help the ACT community best understand how they can be involved in a range of these important initiatives. I commend this spending to the Assembly as a real boon to the ACT community.

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) (3.44): The government will be providing \$500,000 for the housing innovation fund to deliver affordable projects. I talked about these earlier today. These projects will increase access to specialist disability accommodation through dedicated affordable housing for rent or for purchase, and increase access to affordable rental properties for families escaping domestic and family violence by seeking interest in those, as well as reviewing options for use of underutilised community facility land to increase the supply of affordable housing and undertaking other innovative activities in keeping with the wide-ranging scope and intent of the affordable housing innovation fund. This project will not be limited to any specific delivery model but rather will seek expressions of interest for projects or ideas that could potentially boost the supply of affordable housing.

The government will also continue to deliver great places where the community can thrive through considered and sustainable suburban development. The government is committed to developing people-focused neighbourhoods which are safe, environmentally sustainable and inclusive. The Suburban Land Agency's mingle program will continue to help provide opportunities for people to strengthen connections with their neighbours and within our suburbs. In 2018-19, mingle will be active in Throsby, Taylor, Lawson and Moncrieff.

Providing a diverse range of housing options across our estates through the delivery of the indicative land release program is also important to our community. Through the work of the SLA, this will allow more people to realise the dream of owning their own home. We will give careful consideration to diversification of built form, different block sizes and prices and innovation in design, while fulfilling the government's commitment to affordable housing.

We will be ensuring better social outcomes for all Canberrans, with government continuing to offer a mix of public and private housing in new suburbs, and to increase the supply of affordable and community housing. Place making and design excellence will continue to be priorities for this government in the development of new communities. We will be ensuring that our communities are designed in a way that delivers value for money in accordance with sound risk management, as well as

long-term sustainability for our new suburbs, which will remain a critical consideration.

We will also provide innovative solutions to build a city for the future. This includes access to transport, sustainable environments, connectivity and energy efficiency. Engaging stakeholders from within the government and externally will be important for the government to demonstrate new ways of working which will continue to be fair, open and equitable.

We will ensure that the Suburban Land Agency continues to prove itself to the community as an organisation that can be trusted, through good governance and values-driven behaviour. The agency will engage and empower its staff to meet the government's expectations at a strategic and operational level. I look forward to talking with the Assembly more about the work of the Suburban Land Agency over the next couple of years.

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (3.47): In the planning space, most of these spending items are uncontroversial. From a party perspective, we are in support of most of them. I do not think that I would find anyone in this chamber who would disagree with me when I say that Canberra is the best city in Australia. We all love this city. It is a fantastic place to live, to work and to raise a family. I am equally blessed, as is the planning minister, to live in the most beautiful electorate in Canberra, Brindabella. Mr Gentleman and I agree on lots of things, and this is one of the things we agree on.

This, however, does not mean that we can become complacent in our job as legislators. We are here to look ahead to an even better Canberra, and that is why planning is such an important portfolio space. I think we are all looking forward to the future for Canberra but I am not sure that we all share the same vision.

In this year's budget it has been highlighted again that master plans for a number of group centres are yet to be finalised. I sincerely hope that this process comes to a close very soon. The Tharwa master plan has been under consideration now for some time, I think over 2½ years. The Tharwa community were first engaged on the master plan on 27 January 2016, so it is well overdue for this to be finalised and the community given some certainty about the future of their village. Tharwa is a beautiful part of Canberra and one that I am immensely proud to represent in this place. They deserve better than the way they have been treated by this government in this particular episode. I am sure you will all remember the passion with which the late Val Jeffery used to speak of his home. The Canberra Liberals are determined to continue Val's legacy and to ensure that the Tharwa community gets the best result. I am certain that if Val were here today delivering this speech, not me, he would not be happy.

Tharwa is not the only local community whose patience has begun to wear thin. Both the Kippax and Curtin communities have also been waiting for over two years for the finalisation of their master plans. The minister will unsurprisingly defend these time frames and fall back on his ever-predictable talking points, but we know that when this government prioritises a project or decides that a particular policy is important then the time frames are cut incredibly short. This is not a point lost on the community.

Government ministers can lecture us all they like but the Canberra community know that they are being taken for a ride. I dare to mention again the community contributions consultation period, for example. Despite the minister outlining that consultation would be available on the government's your say website, that never happened. Our local communities deserve far better than this with regard to consultation.

Another feature outlined in the government's plans is activating public spaces in Tuggeranong. Like many other residents of Brindabella, I am sceptical about what that actually means. I have many constituents in Brindabella contact me through my office, at shopping centres and when I am out doorknocking who have pleaded with me to ask the government to finally get something done in Tuggeranong. One of the suggestions from a gentleman whom I doorknocked recently was that the most notable activation of public spaces in Tuggeranong has been done by outlaw motorcycle gangs. I am not sure that I concur with him but I can see where he was coming from. That is not the sort of activation the minister speaks of. Tuggeranong residents are sick of being treated like second-class citizens and taken for granted by their Labor MLAs.

There is also talk about renewal of the Woden and Belconnen town centres. I have held a number of talks with local residents who spend a large amount of time trying to convince the government that something of substance needs to be done about these town centres. Again this week the Woden community council expressed its displeasure at the changes announced by the planning minister last week, which they believe favour developers over people.

We congratulate the government on finally creating the position of Chief Engineer and the appointment of same. It is a mystery to us why this had not been done sooner but it is refreshing to see us moving forward in this space. I also commend the minister and Chief Planner Ben Ponton at least for their rhetoric on simplifying the Territory Plan. I have heard from Mr Ponton on a number of occasions about his perfect vision for reducing the size of the Territory Plan to a one-pager. Although I do not expect us ever to arrive at this point, I note his and the minister's genuine will to simplify this and other associated documents. There is a process being undertaken now and we look forward to some movement in that space.

On a broader planning level which straddles Treasury and other portfolios, I am dismayed at this government's blind push to densification at all costs and the all-encompassing narrative that the only real way for growth is up. Although it may fit the economic imperatives of this government, I for one do not believe that it lines up with the vision of most Canberrans. I refer again to the Winton report, which very clearly suggested that, given a choice, most Canberrans would be living in a standalone house and not a unit or an apartment.

This government must be continually embarrassed by the former Labor Chief Minister Jon Stanhope, who is consistently in the public space asking why his party is abandoning the dreams of Canberra families who wish to live in a standalone house in this rabid push for densification and to somehow turn Canberra into Singapore or New York. While the bus debate was on last week I saw a really funny comment come up

on Facebook. This person suggested that the bus debate was superfluous because under the Chief Minister's vision the entire city will eventually all be living in the one big thousand-storey apartment building and the debate will just become about the size of the elevators.

MS LE COUTEUR (Murrumbidgee) (3.53): I would like to talk about a number of areas, first of course—what would you expect me to start with?—climate. We have talked a little about climate today, particularly the ESA announcement of starting the bushfire season early. I think this is a reminder for all of us that climate change is real. It is happening here. As Minister Gentleman usefully said, we need to do something about it.

Doing something about it requires action from a large range of portfolios. In transport, for example, we have to transition to a sustainable zero emissions transport sector. In building and planning, we have to build zero emissions buildings. We need to plan for a city that is more compact to facilitate more sustainable lifestyles.

For the entire time that Greens members have been members of the Assembly, we have been strong advocates for the environment and strong advocates in respect of climate change. We started off well in the Assembly when Brendan Smyth was minister for the environment. He had an excellent climate change policy. That unfortunately fell by the wayside.

But then the Seventh Assembly passed legislation committing the ACT government to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. We are on track for a 40 per cent reduction on 1990 levels by 2020. As we all acknowledge, I think this is a considerable achievement but I suspect it would not have happened without the Greens being here. We are going to do this by reaching 100 per cent renewable electricity by 2020. We are showing Australia and the world that it is possible to make emissions reductions and to lead with renewable energy.

We started this in the 2008 parliamentary agreement with Labor a decade ago and this policy has continued in the ACT. It has brought new investment to the ACT. It has brought new renewable energy companies to set up here. It has brought benefits for ACT energy consumers. It has brought benefits for the world as a whole by showing that a different energy future, a zero emissions energy future, is possible.

We now have a world-leading target of zero net emissions by 2045. In coming years ACT budgets will have to invest in initiatives to achieve this target although, positively, some of the modelling recently done suggests that the investment, at least in the short run, will not need to be very high because the improvements, as with renewable energy, are moving into the electric transport sector.

The cost of transition will be comparatively minor but we do need continued investment in active transport and public transport. We need to shift away from always planning for the private motor vehicle, even when that private motor vehicle does become electrically powered.

I think it has been really great that we are in the middle of a large debate about our bus routes and timetables. A few decades ago we did not really have these debates. Everyone assumed that you travel by private motor vehicle, that you would walk or ride your bike. That is certainly how it was when I grew up. There was very little public transport. I am very pleased at the good initiatives of the government.

I acknowledge the commitment to light rail, more funding for active travel and the commitment to expand bus networks. But we are not there yet. There needs to be more money going to public transport and to active transport. Unfortunately, the planning budget contains decisions that continue to lock Canberra into a future of unsustainable private car travel.

Our light rail will be using 100 per cent renewable electricity. Over the next five to 10 years, I think we are going to see a real expansion of zero emission private cars. Electric cars are becoming more affordable and we will see them more and more on our streets. But we also need a clear ACT government commitment to transition our bus fleet to a zero emissions fleet.

This was something we talked about at some length in the estimates process. I would really like to see a clear commitment to do it, not just to looking at doing it. It seems that there is no strategy at present. It was one of the policies of the Greens at the last election. I think it would be possible to have a carbon neutral fleet reasonably soon—in the next 15 years or so—but only if we actually start phasing out polluting vehicles and start purchasing zero emission technologies.

There are lots of other cities that are making progress on this. In London 20 per cent of the bus fleet is already hybrid electric and they are operating 17 electric-only buses. They are even trialling buses running on biofuel made from catering industry cooking oil.

The government also needs to do more work in relation to emissions from stationary energy. As the Greens said during the last election, it is now appropriate for cities to start phasing out the use of gas. It is a polluting fossil fuel. There are no two ways about that. Of course, it is also now possible to build comfortable and more economical all-electric suburbs that can work on 100 per cent renewable energy.

I am pleased to say that I believe the initial development out at Ginninderry will be an all-electric suburb working on 100 per cent electricity. Unfortunately, our Territory Plan at present still requires developments to have gas infrastructure installed. This is an expensive and obsolete provision. I think it is time that we changed the plan to remove this.

The ACT government should also be setting a standard whereby its new facilities, whether these are schools, pools or other buildings, are built to the best environmental standards consistent with our zero net emissions trajectory, preferably electric only and avoiding the use of gas.

I now turn to waste. We have in the past been a leader in waste recycling. Remember our zero waste by 2010? But we are falling behind other jurisdictions. We need to rule out unsustainable processes like incineration and start focusing on capturing and recycling organic waste. Sending organic waste to landfill creates a lot of greenhouse gas emissions, uses up landfill space and wastes a potentially very valuable resource.

The ACT Greens strongly support improved measures to collect and process organic waste to prevent it going to landfill. One relatively simple option is to allow the green bins that are being rolled out to households also to collect food scraps. This has been done successfully by many other Australian councils. The ACT even successfully trialled this over 15 years ago but unfortunately it has not progressed.

We should also look immediately at ways of collecting and recycling organic materials from the commercial sector, such as cafes, restaurants and supermarkets. Other cities, such as San Francisco, do that. Collected organics can be processed in sustainable ways such as through large-scale composting or anaerobic digestion. These processes can create energy such as biogas as well as soil enrichment products. It means that it is a win-win for the environment.

Another issue of concern to the Greens is our work on catchments and waterways. As members would be aware, we have been working for a long time to ensure our catchments in the ACT are better looked after. As a result of this work and the parliamentary agreement item from the last Assembly, we now have close to a \$100 million investment in our waterways to reduce nutrients running into our lakes and thereby improve water quality and environmental conditions for native wildlife, including fish.

I know that Minister Gentleman, as the ACT environment minister, and Senator Seselja have been launching a great many of these projects in recent years. It is great to see the progress. There is one about 500 metres away from my place, which is very inspiring to observe. But the key to supporting these engineering works to create wetlands, slow water flow and enhance habitat, is people.

Our ACT catchment groups—the Ginninderra, the Molonglo and the southern catchment groups—work very hard to look after our three catchments. These groups do on-the-ground work such as habitat restoration, monitoring and cleaning. They work closely with regional councils on regional catchment work. They advocate on issues to ensure that government does the right things when it is necessary. I know that the catchment groups were very concerned about their funding. (*Second speaking period taken.*)

Unfortunately, it is a sad situation. The federal government has not committed to ongoing funding for these important groups. I am pleased that the ACT government has stepped in to cover this shortfall this year. This is another example of the ACT government having to cover costs that the federal government should be covering. I understand that through this process, Frogwatch missed out on funding. It had previously been funded by the federal government. I hope that it is able to work closely with the catchment groups so that it is supported next year.

I would also like to mention funding for additional rangers and habitat management, particularly focused on pest plant and animal management. This is a key parliamentary agreement item for the Greens. The sporadic funding of this is really not something that works very well for pest and weed control.

I move on to planning. Of course, planning is very important in terms of climate change. We need to plan a city that will be a zero emissions city. As I said, that means planning our transport sector correctly, planning the location of things in the ACT so that they are compact and so that we do not need to expend a lot of energy moving from one place to another.

It also means planning housing that people want to live in, that people enjoy living in, that is affordable, that meets people's needs and that is current for our climate. One of the things we are particularly interested in is the money—about \$750,000—for the housing choices review of the rules for residential housing and preparing sites for demonstration housing projects. The Greens are very supportive of both these projects. Demonstration housing has been talked about for probably the past 10 years. It seems to be finally happening as a result of my motion in June last year.

Looking at housing choices, this is an innovative use of participatory democracy. I hope it will be a particularly good one. We know that how our residential areas are developed attracts considerable community interest and that there is not total community consensus about this. Mr Parton spoke about it in his speech. He felt that people should not be, to use his words, forced into apartments and that most of us wanted to live in detached houses.

I do not know if most of us do want to live in detached houses. I also do not know whether we have looked at the implications for Canberra as a whole if we continue putting most people in detached housing. How we do our residential housing has attracted a lot of attention from this government, from the planning minister, from the planning committee and from the citizens of Canberra, because I do not think what we are doing at present is serving us very well. It is not environmentally sustainable. It does not meet the needs of the inhabitants of the diverse city of Canberra. It is certainly not affordable for many people.

It also leads to a huge amount of conflict between residents, developers and government. Partly that is due to our planning rules; partly that is due to how our consultation is done. I note that we have had about 60 submissions to the public accounts committee inquiry. This is not because people are sitting around thinking that they would like to write a submission. It is because people have genuine concerns about how we are actually doing planning in the ACT and they want to make it better. They want less conflict

I think we are all looking for the same things. We want smaller, more affordable houses while protecting our garden city character. The Greens strongly think it is possible to do both of these. The housing choices project and the demonstration housing project will hopefully show Canberra how we can do better. Hopefully, they will work towards resolving these longstanding problems. I look forward to progress in this area over the next 12 months.

MR COE (Yerrabi—Leader of the Opposition) (4.08): I will touch on a few issues with regard to land supply and housing affordability. It is interesting that I should follow on from Ms Le Couteur's contribution to this debate, particularly with regard to her stated principle that greenfield cannot keep on going on forever. Contrary to the Greens' view, I believe there is plenty of land in Canberra. I know some people in Canberra that disagree with me, but plenty of land is available for construction. It is the ACT government that has created this artificial shortfall of land which has, of course, driven up the cost of land to a point where it is near \$1,000 a square metre and in some instances more than \$1,000 a square metre.

It is all very well for the Greens to come into this place and say that they are against greenfield development, but since Ms Le Couteur was elected to this place in 2008 we have seen Casey, much of Harrison, Throsby, much of Bonner, much of Forde, Jacka, Coombs, Wright, Denman, west Belconnen and numerous other suburbs and greenfield estates. I do not think it has been enough, quite frankly. But it begs the question whether the Greens really believe this rhetoric. How can you have all these suburbs done under their watch, when they have had the balance of power, yet they say they do not want greenfield? Obviously, they are just as addicted to the revenue from land sales as the Labor Party is.

The difference with our commitment to supplying more land is that our motivation for supplying more land to the market is so that more people can achieve home ownership. I believe people want to have their own block of land. The government's own survey says the vast majority of people at some stage in their life want to have a house and a block of land. They want that detached home on land, which is the great Australian dream. It is so disappointing that we have had a government that, through their own levers, has put the provision and price of land out of reach for so many Canberra families.

We are yet to see a plan for housing affordability from this government. This government has a vested interest in driving up the cost of land for numerous reasons. The first one is, of course, the sugar hit they get when they sell the block of land and they make big money. But the second is when they sell that block of land for top dollar that then has a huge impact on the unimproved value for that block of land, meaning that for all time the rates a household will pay for that block of land will be extortionate. That is because of the government's desire to squeeze land supply and drive up the cost of housing.

In the last year median house prices have gone up, second only to Hobart in growth rate. It is not just property prices and sale prices on the rise; rents continue to increase at a phenomenal rate—4.7 per cent over the last quarter, the highest in the country. This government is not just squeezing homebuyers and potential homebuyers but also squeezing renters. It is those bottom two quintiles that the Labor Party used to represent that have been hit the hardest by this government's housing policy—or lack thereof.

A recent Anglicare report found properties in Canberra have undergone a long-term decline in affordability for low income earners and that no properties reviewed were

within the budget of low income earners. How is that for a socially progressive city? How is that for a government that claims to be about social justice? No properties reviewed were within the budget of low income earners. None. There are no private properties in Canberra within the budget of low income earners. That is what you get for 17 years of Labor. That is what you get with a Labor-Greens coalition—no properties available for low income earners, according to Anglicare.

It is an extraordinary failure of this government. It is all very well to talk about these grandiose schemes designed to save the world, but how about saving those in the lowest quintile in Canberra? How about saving the livelihoods of people really doing it tough in this city? It is no wonder that former treasury official Dr Khalid Ahmed described the ACT government Suburban Land Agency's policy as classic monopolistic behaviour designed to maximise revenue.

If any organisation is putting profit before people it is the ACT Labor government with regard to their housing policy. It is a housing policy that means there are no properties in the ACT within the budget of low income earners all because this government cannot manage its budget and it looks to squeeze first homebuyers even more through the sale of land.

In this year's budget the Suburban Land Agency has profit margin targets at 41 per cent. Dr Khalid Ahmed states that most land developers operate on potential profit margins of only 10 to 15 per cent, but here you have the Suburban Land Agency at 41 per cent. If you listen to the Labor Party's rhetoric, it is the other way around—it is the private developers that are screwing people. No, it is this government. It is this Labor government that is putting profit before people.

In Gungahlin we have blocks of land that are about \$1,000 a square metre. Just a few decades ago it would be absolutely unheard of to have even purchased a 400-square-metre block, let alone a 400-square-metre-block and paid \$400,000 for it. There is no doubt in my mind that the majority of Canberrans want to purchase freestanding homes. Obviously demand is exceeding supply; that is why the price keeps going up—there is more demand.

It is all very well for Ms Le Couteur to say that she is not convinced, but if she was not convinced by Mr Parton's statement she should be convinced by the fact that the prices keep going up. Demand is exceeding supply; there is no doubt about it. And it is only Labor government coffers gaining from this policy.

What does the government do with all this money? So much of it gets squandered in their dodgy deals: it gets squandered on purchasing rural leases; it gets squandered on purchasing a block of land next to Glebe Park; it gets squandered on paying top dollar for businesses and leases and licences next to the lake; and it gets squandered on the Dickson land swap, a terrible deal in everyone's book.

MS ORR (Yerrabi) (4.18): Canberra has long been known as the bush capital, and it is a name we celebrate today, even if originally it was a derogatory term for Canberra, as the anti-bush capital movement derided the idea of a national capital outside of a major city. In our defence, one senator was quoted as saying:

I do not regard it as a name of reproach ... Anyone who does not love the bush is not a true Australian.

The preservation of all native trees and open grasslands around Canberra being written into the original Territory Plan is symbolic of the way this love of the bush was fully embraced in the ACT. Around 40 per cent of the ACT is taken up by Namadgi National Park, and the city is blessed with nature reserves, green corridors, lakes, rivers, bushland, hills and mountains. In any other major city, Black Mountain and Mount Ainslie would almost certainly be suburbs rather than nature reserves, and today “Canberra—The bush capital” is on our number plates.

However, the phrase also serves as a challenge to the ACT and its people. At a time when Canberra is growing at 7,000 people per year, how do we continue to grow as a city while maintaining our green spaces? In attempting to answer that question, I invite everyone here to the making space initiative, to be hosted by me here at the Assembly on 4 October. I also endorse the answers the ACT government have offered to date in this budget and encourage the ACT government to continue its vital work in this area.

The ACT government will plant an additional 1,330 trees. Despite Mr Coe’s assertions otherwise during estimates, trees and, in particular, an urban tree canopy are incredibly valuable. The amenity and function that trees provide will only increase as our climate continues to change. Canberra’s summer land surface temperatures can be up to 10 degrees Celsius hotter by mid-morning. Neighbourhoods with tree canopy shade of 30 per cent or more can be up to 10 degrees Celsius cooler on a hot summer day, and the increasing occurrence of extreme heat tends to affect the more vulnerable in our community—namely the elderly and low income households.

Providing additional trees offers everyone a greater degree of comfort and can assist in lowering the cost of living through reduced electricity usage in summer. I have been regularly calling on this Assembly to continue its efforts around energy efficiency and reducing the need for electricity consumption in Canberra. The ACT government is continuing the energy efficiency improvement scheme to help achieve this, and already the scheme has delivered one million energy-saving items to over 70,000 ACT households and businesses. Importantly, lower income households are often the ones most impacted by rising energy prices. The scheme has specifically targeted these households and has provided 17,800 items to date.

In the 2018 budget \$6 million will go towards the delivery of Actsmart programs that help low income households save on their energy bills. A reduction in energy consumption is the best way to reduce environmental damage, and it also has a direct impact on the cost of living. Lower electricity use benefits both the planet and the pocket, and we will continue to offer solutions for how Canberrans can reduce their energy usage.

As we move towards a carbon neutral city, transport will become a critical challenge. The shift to renewable electricity and electric vehicles will offer assistance. In the 2018 budget the ACT government has announced 50 new electric charging stations as part of its push towards a carbon neutral fleet of government vehicles.

When we talk about the bush capital, we are making reference in part to the fact that 70 per cent of land in the ACT is undeveloped and either protected in national parks and nature reserves or managed as pine plantation. The ACT also plays home to the preservation of the largest public patch of nationally endangered yellow box woodland inside Mulligans Flat Woodland Sanctuary. The ACT government is expanding the predator-proof fence at the sanctuary to further the vital research and restoration work taking place inside.

In future years the potential for more reintroductions and the stabilisation of populations of species such as the eastern bettong, eastern quoll and the bush stone curlew offers the opportunity to explore ecotourism and education within the sanctuary. The budget provides \$1.5 million towards an ecotourism woodlands learning centre. The centre will offer a tourism experience for visitors to Mulligans. With a cafe, community-use space and interactive displays, the work being done in the sanctuary and the cultural and historical significance of the site will be better understood and appreciated by visitors.

Of course, while we commit to restoration and preservation, it is important to ensure we protect our native species from invasive pests and plants. The budget provides for this both inside the sanctuary and more broadly, with \$598,000 over the next three years going towards eradicating rabbits and hares from within the extension to the predator-proof fence at Mulligans Flat. Two new rangers will be employed by the ACT government, and investment will be made in more habitat management to reduce invasive pests and plants, including feral deer, within the ACT.

The ACT leads the nation in environmental management and the reduction of carbon emissions. Our investment in renewables has long underpinned the industry in Australia, and the ACT is pioneering restoration and preservation activities in Mulligans Flat and Tidbinbilla.

The ACT is helping Canberrans lower their cost of living through lower electricity bills. I look forward to working with my government colleagues and peers around the Assembly to further the leadership of the ACT in this space. We have to look after the environment so that the environment can look after us.

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra) (4.24): As we have heard just now from Ms Orr, Canberra is Australia's bush capital. Right here in our backyard we are surrounded by trees, lakes, bushland, mountains and rivers. We share our home with countless creatures, from the striking gang-gang cockatoo to my favourite, the southern brush-tailed wallaby. Our air is scented with eucalyptus and filled with golden wattle flowers in spring, if that is your thing.

Here in Canberra, we have done what capital cities across the world have struggled to do: preserved our natural treasures. In fact, 70 per cent of ACT land is protected in nature reserves, national parks and plantations. This includes the largest areas of nationally endangered yellow box woodland and temperate grassland in the country.

With this budget, the government continues to make sure that that our lived environment is the best it can be. This year, we are renewing our commitment to protecting Canberra's natural environment by allocating \$3.3 million for ecological conservation on the Molonglo River reserve and \$1.2 million for land conservation management works in the Jerrabomberra valley.

We are also significantly investing in our environmental biosecurity programs that protect our unique landscapes and native flora and fauna from invasive species. Some \$3.3 million will be used to reduce invasive plants and animals in natural habitats across Canberra, and \$598,000 is allocated specifically for eradicating rabbits and hares from the Mulligans Flat sanctuary. On top of this, there is \$175,000 to plant up to 5,000 trees under the Murrumbidgee River corridor million trees project.

The government's efforts to preserve Canberra's natural environment would not be possible without the work of groups like the Molonglo Catchment Group, the Southern ACT Catchment Group and the Ginninderra Catchment Group, who in particular do outstanding work. It comes as no surprise that we have allocated a significant amount of funding for these groups to support them during the transition to new Landcare funding arrangements. I am very pleased, like my colleagues, that we have been able to do that.

Every year, millions of visitors flock to Canberra to experience our magnificent wildlife. In fact, ecotourism is one of the fastest growing industries in the ACT, and it provides many opportunities for economic growth and for jobs. This government is continuing to follow through on the election promise to develop our city's ecotourism strategy to provide better opportunities for local nature enthusiasts and environmental experts.

That is why we are contributing \$1.6 million towards constructing an ecotourism learning centre at Mulligans Flat. The learning centre will be a doorway to the country's largest patch of yellow box Blakely's red gum grassy woodland, with its unique bouquet of native flowers and incredible variety of native plants and creatures. It will bring together students, researchers, conservationists, visitors and the local community and inspire them to take part in preserving and enhancing our natural landscapes.

While I have the opportunity, I want to put on the record my thanks in particular to Dr Kate Grarock who, from what I have witnessed, has been one of the key people, if not the key person, who has helped give Mulligans Flat not only national but international prominence through her tireless work and advocacy, including through her Twitter alter ego—but he is an actual creature—Brian Bettong. It is my hope, and indeed my expectation, that this investment from the government further enhances this work. I really want to thank Dr Kate for all that she has done in promoting Mulligans Flat.

As Canberra grows up and out, we also need to ensure that our growing community has access to well-designed buildings, reliable infrastructure and welcoming and accessible public spaces that also protect our environment. This budget recognises the

importance of this, with \$126 million over four years for planning the future of our growing city. This funding will enable the ACT government to finalise master plans that guide the sustainable development of our precincts, while also respecting the distinct features of each town centre and community hub.

I am particularly excited about the delivery of the Kippax group centre master plan. West Belconnen residents need certainty, and I think many people will agree that this process has been a little protracted, for a range of reasons, including a number which have been outside the government's control. The master plan will help give this certainty.

Something the community also needs certainty about is our approach in this city to billboards. While I am pleased that we learned during estimates that there is a working group underway, there are very strong feelings in the community about billboards, and providing certainty to residents and businesses alike does need to be a priority. It is my expectation that the working group will continue to take into account the views of the community, and I look forward to regular updates about this. I am very pleased that this does remain a priority for the directorate, and I thank the minister for the response from the directorate to the estimates report.

As our population grows, the need for affordable housing choices becomes even more important. This year the government will be releasing more land for more than 4,000 homes in both suburban and urban areas, including 228 affordable homes, 113 public housing properties and 20 community housing properties. I am very aware that we also have supportive housing in amongst this. I was pleased to attend some consultations, which I spoke about last week, and note the community's willingness to embrace these in their neighbourhoods. An additional 472 affordable homes for eligible low income households will be realised in the coming year.

In my own electorate—and yours, Madam Deputy Speaker—the government is working to improve the availability of housing. To the west of Belconnen, we are releasing land, continually but in a very measured way, for Ginninderry. Ginninderry is creating schools, shops, community facilities and as many as 11,500 new homes for ACT residents. It is also a key player in improving our energy efficiency and sustainability. It has already been rated Australia's first six-star, green star community. Minister Rattenbury helped launch the electric vehicle charging station there, and that is mandated across households. Ginninderry is also leading the way in making sure that our community is supported through the Spark program. I very much appreciate their work; I want to put that on the record and particularly thank Emma.

I note that there is a significant amount of land release occurring in the Belconnen town centre and slated to occur. While it is a fabulous place to be, and as a resident I can absolutely understand why everybody wants to move there, I am reassured that the directorate is continuing to very carefully consider the timing of the land release. I will continue to strongly encourage this.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I said it last week, and I am repeating it today: Canberra is growing, and we recognise this. We also recognise our responsibility to ensure that this growth is sustainable. With this budget's new investments in energy conservation,

renewable energy, urban renewal and affordable housing, we are committing ourselves to creating a city that is attractive, affordable and considerate of the environment. By investing in the preservation of our natural landscape and wildlife, we are ensuring that our growth does not come at the cost of the environment. Instead, we are making sure that it thrives, as we do. Madam Deputy Speaker, with this budget we will make sure that as Canberra continues to grow, our lived environment continues to be of the highest standard.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (4.32): I am pleased to speak a bit today about heritage. During the estimates committee process, we talked quite a bit about potential *Apollo 11* anniversary projects, as we are now less than a year away from the 50th anniversary of the *Apollo 11* landing on the moon.

One of the things we discussed was the upgrading of the track between Orroral Valley and Honeysuckle Creek, including the Orroral geodetic dome. It is a lovely area, and will be a beautiful walk, I am sure. I am looking forward to doing it myself once it is ready. However, it is largely going to be inaccessible to people who participated in that mission back in 1969. The upgrade is going to be suitable for an able-bodied person, according to the budget papers.

It was interesting to gently question the minister and his staff as they waxed lyrical about the importance of the Orroral Valley tracking station to that moon landing in 1969. Of course, Orroral Valley did not take part in that particular mission and did not take part in the moon landings until one of the *Skylab* missions, in about 1975, to my memory.

There will also be a phone app to go with the walking track. The app will use the existing ACT heritage tracks app, so in effect there is not a lot new there. I know that a number of the people who worked at Tidbinbilla and at Honeysuckle Creek, and Orroral Valley—many of them are technicians, engineers and operators—are very tech savvy, but not all of them are using apps at this point in their life. I encourage the minister to keep working with relevant ex-staff and workers at the tracking station to identify suitable projects.

I am a bit disappointed that it was not specifically mentioned in the budget. There was a grant process, and there was provision for the walking track, but the walking track, of course, could have been done at any time; it is not necessarily linked to the *Apollo 11* anniversary. Time is running out to ensure that there are appropriate commemorative activities. I listed many of them, including in a motion in this place, a few weeks ago.

Going to the heritage assessment backlog, it is at 93. That is down from 320 ten years ago, so that is a good improvement. On average, that is 22 per year. At this rate, it may be another five years until the backlog of assessment is completed. We have spoken before about whether that particular area is adequately resourced to undertake the work. The minister assures us that that is the case, but at this rate of clearing of the heritage applications I remain to be convinced.

There were a couple of recommendations relating to heritage in the estimates committee report and the government response, including one about the *Apollo 11* anniversary, one about the accountability indicators. I continue to struggle with those accountability indicators. I do not believe they adequately reflect the work that the Heritage Council undertake. It would be good if more meaningful indicators were included.

There is also a recommendation about the National Trust. The National Trust ACT does not get funded, despite the government funding a whole lot of other organisations. It is one of those things where, if you like, you keep your enemies poor so that it is much more difficult for them to do their work. I commend the people in the National Trust ACT for the work that they do and again encourage the government to continue to work collaboratively with the National Trust ACT. I thank them for their work. In a general sense, we all acknowledge the importance of preserving and acknowledging our heritage, whether that is in the natural environment, in the built sense, in a cultural sense or in other ways.

Before I finish, I want to make a few quick remarks about land release and housing affordability. It is something I have been very interested in for some time. My interest in making a comment on that extends largely from acknowledging and agreeing with the comments made by my colleague Mr Coe about the price of land. If you look historically at how much it costs to purchase a house, you can see that it is not in the products or the materials to build the house: the largest increase has been in the price of land.

It is this government's policies which are feeding into that. Everyone acknowledges the importance of affordable housing in the ACT and that we need to do something to rectify it. I have pulled up a speech that I gave in 2014, four years ago. Again I encourage you to reflect on what Mr Coe has just said about the Anglicare national rental affordability snapshot, which this year indicated that there were no houses in the ACT that were affordable to someone on a low income. What I wrote in 2014 strikes a chord with me. Four years ago I said: "The Anglicare national rental affordability snapshot 2014 made it abundantly clear in the statement that there were practically no affordable rental options found in Canberra or Queanbeyan for any of the low income household studies." So in fact it has got worse in the past four years under this government. Four years ago they said there were practically none; this year there are none.

Along the housing continuum, we have homelessness at one end; we have private housing and home ownership at the other; and we have social housing and private rental in the middle. The problem is that most Canberrans in that middle cannot make the jump from social housing to private rental. The gap is too large for them. They simply cannot make it out of that system. It is the government's policies that are forcing that to be the case. Part of that is that the government is so focused on getting its income from land sales and land taxes that it does not have the right approach to reducing housing affordability or improving housing affordability.

Katy Gallagher, when she entered this place in 2001, said, “Long-term residents of Canberra’s suburbs could be forced out of their homes due to rates increases.” Whether they like it or not, this argument still stands today. This is Katy Gallagher, who went on to become the Chief Minister, talking about rates.

This government is continually and recklessly promoting that tax grab through rates and through land sales. We are reminded—I think they were spurred on by the Henry tax review—that in the Quinlan tax review, quite famously, Ted Quinlan said, “Squeeze them until they bleed, but not until they die.”

Mr Barr has selectively applied recommendations from a number of different sources, including the Australians for affordable housing campaign, the Quinlan tax review and the Henry tax review, to make sure that people are paying up front, paying as they go and paying when they leave. They are absolutely squeezing them to the point where you are forcing people into the risk of homelessness.

Until you do something about land prices—which are being artificially forced up, as Mr Coe has alluded to, by saying that there is a shortage of land—we are never going to adequately address the issue of housing affordability, which feeds directly into putting people at risk of homelessness. To me, that is just not good enough. It is time this government did something to fix the issue.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Community Services Directorate—Part 1.8

MS LE COUTEUR (Murrumbidgee) (4.42): The Greens welcome the government’s commitment to the diversity of needs of Canberrans through the community services portfolio. I would like to talk about a few things in particular—women, young people, people with disability and seniors.

It is pleasing to note that some initiatives listed in the parliamentary agreement have been funded, not least of which is the investment in front-line accommodation services. The Greens have been calling for the strengthening of specialist homelessness services since before the last election, and I am pleased that the calls have been at least partially heeded. We are not sure at this stage exactly how the added investment of \$6.5 million will in fact be spent.

It is important to note the need to increase service capacity through both increased caseworkers and physical availability of appropriate accommodation for women and their children escaping violence. We know that services are at capacity and that in reality this is catch-up funding. There is an ever-increasing demand for these services and related support services, and we should continue to invest in expansion in future years. The real number of beds in the crisis accommodation sector has not grown by any significant level, but we do know, as Ms Lawder has just said, that the number of people in our community doing it tough is increasing.

I am pleased, of course, to see added investment in the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre and the Domestic Violence Crisis Service, as unfortunately we are witnessing an ever-increasing demand for their services, both as a result of the focus on family violence that is happening in the ACT, and more broadly across the nation, and as a result of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. These are issues that will not go away any time soon, and we must ensure that appropriate supports are available for those who experience such violence.

I am pleased to see the added investment for the office for women. I know that the office has effectively been under-resourced for many years, and this investment will allow the office to progress gender equality across government. I do hope that some of these funds will be allocated to the item at appendix 3.4 in the parliamentary agreement, which specifies undertaking disability and gender impact analysis as part of the triple bottom line framework and to ensure that all staff are trained to do so.

This is an important aspect of government policy, program and legislature development that could do with strengthening. Gone are the days, unfortunately, of having a specific women's statement in the budget. Although, positively, I think the word "women" has occurred more often in this budget than in previous years, there has not been any overall gender, disability or poverty impact analysis. There could be significant benefits from undertaking such an analysis, and I will continue to advocate for that.

I am very pleased to acknowledge the positive initiatives in the budget to better protect and support children and young people in our community. While I am the oldest member of the Legislative Assembly, I do remember what it is like to be a young mum and to have young kids. It is important that our children and young people feel valued and included in the community.

While I am disappointed that it is an issue in the ACT, I welcome the funding to review the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people involved with child and youth protection services, and measures such as family group conferencing for families at risk of ongoing involvement with the child protection system.

The young workers advice service is a step towards seeing that young people, our future leaders, are not taken advantage of by unfair and in some cases unlawful employment practices, especially at a time when increasing numbers of young people are juggling work and studies, both secondary and tertiary, to support themselves and provide for their future and ours.

I would like to acknowledge the important work of my colleague Minister Rattenbury on mental health initiatives for young people and the important role that the office for mental health has, as part of the parliamentary agreement, in continuing improvements in access to mental health services in the ACT.

I would also like to highlight a number of recommendations from this year's estimates report about the needs of young people in the ACT. Recommendations 163 and 164 are about finding appropriate indicators for youth engagement in the budget and more

broadly. I am pleased that the government has agreed to it. I know that, when it comes to measuring concepts such as engagement and wellbeing, it can be difficult, but I think we do our young people an injustice by only measuring them in terms of contact with youth justice and child protection, as was the case in this year's budget papers.

I note that the government's response to the estimates report referred to a report entitled *A picture of the ACT's children and young people*. I hope that this is due to be updated, given that it was done before the release of the latest census data, especially given that the ACT has seen significant population growth. As well as having a positive impact on the territory's bottom line, we must realise the impact that this has on the provision of services and infrastructure for children and young people.

All too often, recreational activities are targeted to the needs of families with young children, such as playgrounds, which are, of course, important. But, as has been raised by advocates like the Youth Coalition, there is a real need to consider and consult with middle-year and teenage young people on the design and location of recreational facilities to meet their needs and interests. That is one reason why the Greens-Labor parliamentary agreement called for multipurpose indoor sports facilities in Woden and Gungahlin, and I look forward to progress in the next parliamentary agreement update. I hope to see targeted resources, too, that meet the needs of growing children and young people, not only to maintain community engagement and feeling valued in the life of our community but also to improve their mental health and wellbeing outcomes.

There were also a number of recommendations in the estimates report relating to the increasing number of STIs in our community. This, of course, is not an issue only for young people, but it is important to young people. It is really important to educate young people about STIs—sexually transmitted infections—and how to prevent them with targeted awareness programs. I am also pleased to see the positive response from the government on increasing the availability and awareness of free condoms in the ACT.

I welcome the additional \$1.8 million for the integrated service response program for the national disability insurance scheme. As I and other members of the HACS committee have heard repeatedly, it is critical that the ACT can provide emergency funding where the first phase of the NDIS has shown up gaps. For those who are eligible for the NDIS, it is great to see the additional funds for advocacy so that participants are supported to fully advocate for their needs.

Expanding the disability inclusion grants program is another positive step that the government has taken to improve social inclusion for people with disability. This is one of those cases where awareness and support in the wider community have the potential to shape our city to be accessible and inclusive for people with disability.

I am pleased that there was additional funding for the development of a disability justice strategy. This is a much-needed strategy that should assist in addressing not only the disproportionate victimisation of people with disability but also the high rates of interaction with the criminal justice system more broadly. The crunch, of course, will be in what is next. We must ensure that actions identified in the disability justice

strategy are adequately funded so that they can make real change for this group of people.

Looking briefly at seniors, there are some measures in the budget which we very much support, including additional places in the hospital in the home program. This is not just for seniors, of course, but I believe that seniors will be disproportionately represented in the patients cared for under this program.

I am very pleased to see the continued rollout of the age-friendly suburbs program, in Page and Hughes. I point out that an age-friendly suburb is a suburb which will be friendly for people of all ages, not just senior citizens. Also, there is now to be a seniors rights service, to address the concerning rates of elder abuse in our community. I think that is particularly good. I am also pleased that the government has responded to calls by me and others to expand the general rates aged deferral scheme.

In conclusion, recommendation 37 of the estimates committee report states:

The committee recommends the ACT Government continue to focus on delivering the services for a growing city.

(Second speaking period taken.) As a Greens member of the Assembly, I believe it is imperative that these services should cater not just for the mainstream members of our community, not just for the affluent members of our community but for those people who, for many and varied reasons, are struggling, possibly on a long-term basis or possibly on a short-term basis, to gain access to vital community services. Vital services such as housing, transport, health, education, broader community supports and basic social inclusion need to be accessible and affordable for everybody in our community. It is vital that the government continue to consider the needs of vulnerable Canberrans and to support the community services and organisations who are expert in identifying these issues and responding to them.

We want Canberra to be a place that works for all of the community and is a safe, loving, compassionate and inclusive community. This is the directorate which, more than others, should be focusing on that. I support the continuing expenditure and would love to see it do better in the future.

MRS KIKKERT (Ginninderra) (4.53): The budget that we are talking about today is underwhelming in a number of areas. I would like to begin with safer families. When the government introduced the safer families levy two years ago, the Canberrans I know were all more than happy to contribute to making our city safer by better responding to and preventing domestic violence. Two years on, many of these residents are wondering where exactly this money is going and, more importantly, whether things are genuinely getting better.

I note the small funding increases provided in this year's budget to two important front-line service providers. But, as was reported in April this year, demand on the Domestic Violence Crisis Service, for example, has tripled over the past 10 years. Financial support, however, has not tripled over the same period. As I raised during estimates hearings, I have heard from Canberrans who still cannot get through to

DVCS even when in serious need. In one instance a member of my staff walked over to the Magistrates Court to assist one of these desperate victims who had been trying for hours to access help through the telephone.

This is not good enough. We need to have a completely accurate picture of what the real demand is for our front-line crisis providers, and then this government needs to make sure that these services have the funds they need to be able to operate without compromising the safety of families. Safer families falls into the “no” or “unclear” column.

What we need in this territory is clear accountability targets for specific prevention and early intervention measures, and regular reports against these targets. Many of these can be found in the national plan to reduce violence against women and their children, which this government signed up to. But what really has been implemented? Has the safer families package really made any difference? These kinds of questions were asked of this government in a forum in April and, according to what those who attended told me, the answers then were vague and unsatisfying. I see no improvement in this budget. Canberra residents rightly expect better.

I now want to address care and protection. This is another crucially important area where Canberrans expect their government to get things right. It is good to see a proper investment in adoption and permanency finally being made in this year’s budget. But why has it taken so long? My colleague Ms Lawder first raised concerns about the adoption process in the ACT in 2015. Both Labor and the Greens blocked her attempt to improve matters. Thankfully, she persisted and in 2016 secured the creation of the domestic adoptions task force. As was made very clear during estimates hearings, the commitment to provide funding to the Community Services Directorate for staff to work specifically on adoption and permanency is a direct response to the task force’s recommendations. In other words, without the clear leadership of the Canberra Liberals, who first raised this issue and then persistently pursued it over the course of two years, nothing would have changed.

This budget predicts that costs for out of home care will rise again this year, strongly suggesting that many of these kids are being provided for in residential care homes, which, despite being the most expensive option, has the worst known outcomes. In a recent discussion, a child protection expert told me that his single biggest concern when it comes to out of home care is lack of support for carers. In their budget submission, ACTCOSS specifically mentioned lack of training and financial support for carers. This, they added, is a particular issue for informal kinship carers, who lack access to the supports and services available through ACT Together.

Unfortunately, at least one grandparent carer support group has lost approximately 80 per cent of its government funding in this budget, without an adequate replacement. When they asked where to go for help instead, this government actually referred them to an organisation whose website specifically says they do not and cannot assist informal kinship carers, a fact I confirmed with a phone call. Imagine that: in one go this government yanked the funds these elderly care providers have been using to access a trained social worker, and then this same government sent these grandparents off to seek help from an organisation that openly advertises that it cannot provide that

help. Naturally, these Canberrans who selflessly care for their grandchildren have concluded that their current government does not care for them.

The final concern I want to address in the care and protection space is the lack of a straightforward and easily accessible process for handling complaints and concerns. First, carers in the territory are being told they can raise their concerns with the Children and Young People Commissioner. More than once, Minister Stephen-Smith has mentioned this option in this chamber. Nevertheless, in estimates hearings the commissioner said she does not know why that recommendation is given, since she cannot actually advocate on behalf of carers.

The reality is that this government does not seem to know how to handle many of the complaints that arise around care and protection issues. In answer to one of my questions in estimates hearings, I was told that existing pathways for the review of these decisions have not been clearly explained previously but would be in an upcoming handbook for carers.

We have known that we have a problem with this issue for many years now. The 2004 Vardon report noted that submissions to the commissioner “highlighted the lack of an independent grievance structure”. Parents, carers and agencies all relayed stories of frustration about having nowhere to go when they disagreed with care and protection decisions. Fourteen years later we have this government admitting that they have not even done a very good job of explaining the pathways that supposedly exist.

I look forward to seeing this new carers handbook but, as has been pointed out before, for a pathway to be useful it has to be accessible. From the Vardon report onwards, the recommendation has been for an independent mediator. Seeking the necessary legal advice in order to deal with these kinds of issues in a court is an effective barrier to most people. I was told in estimates hearings that the government report on what care and protection decisions should be subject to external review is, to quote the minister, “imminent”. I have not seen it yet, but I expect important changes. This and previous Labor governments have dragged their feet for too long on this issue.

On the subject of youth engagement, I raise a number of points. Again this budget underwhelms. Once again, youth advocates such as the Youth Coalition of the ACT have approached this government with a request that something substantial be done to address youth homelessness and youth unemployment in the territory. To quote from a statement released by the Youth Coalition:

This budget does not deliver on addressing insecure housing and employment for young Canberrans ... Young people in our city should not have to sleep in libraries, cars or couchsurf because they are unable to find accommodation in Canberra ... It is not acceptable to see this huge gap between those who thrive in this prosperous city, and the young people who don't have a safe place to live.

We learned during estimates hearings that New South Wales has programs that work with nine to 15-year-olds and their families to prevent homelessness. These family aware programs deal not just with the young person but directly with her or his family to address their pressures and functioning. Often the young person is able to safely stay at home. Where are such programs in this territory? I know that we have

community service providers that are equipped and prepared to implement these kinds of programs, but this government does not fund them to do so.

We are, as those opposite so often like to remind us, the most prosperous jurisdiction in this nation, yet our youth and especially those who are struggling seem to be invisible to this government. They certainly do not make much appearance in this budget. (*Second speaking period taken.*) I fully endorse the estimates committee's recommendation that the ACT government work with the youth sector to ensure that adequate initiatives and support programs are available, especially to those in the eight to 15-year-old cohort and to those exiting out of home care.

In fact, this government needs to work better with the youth sector across the board. Kulture Break, for example, currently have over 8,000 youth participating in their various programs each week, but they are struggling to secure the funding they need to run their risk intervention programs like man up and ladies first. They are one of many organisations that I am aware of that help young people stay out of trouble, succeed at school and so forth. This government needs to do a better job of taking young people seriously by engaging with and supporting such organisations.

I will now speak to multicultural affairs. Again the budget underwhelms. A very modest amount of money has been committed to the National Multicultural Festival for the next four years, but otherwise culturally and linguistically diverse Canberrans are almost invisible in this budget. The needs of multicultural communities are far bigger than an annual festival. As I raised in a recent motion, this government has made rather important promises through the ACT multicultural framework, many of which remain incomplete or only partially fulfilled. Where is the money, for example, that was promised to support the accreditation of additional formal interpreters for new and emerging language community groups?

The estimates committee recommends that the ACT government consider additional mechanisms, both formal and informal, for consulting with the territory's diverse multicultural communities. I wholeheartedly endorse this recommendation. We all saw a perfect example earlier this year of what happens when insufficient consultation happens. Cultural community groups had been serving alcoholic beverages at the Multicultural Festival since the event began in 1996. Ask these community groups what kind of consultation occurred before this government banned their selling alcohol at this year's festival and suggested that it was in response to a recommendation from ACT Policing, until we all found out that the recommendation from the police had been the exact opposite. I can assure you, Madam Deputy Speaker, that multicultural communities know when they have been taken seriously and consulted with and when they have not.

One final point is that Canberra is growing. Under this government, so are our rates and fees and so is government revenue. Canberra residents have a simple expectation that basic government services will likewise keep pace with this growth. This includes the community services that support families, young people and those who are struggling. Is this a budget that reflects a commitment to make sure that the provision of essential services is not falling further and further behind? It is not, from what I can tell.

We have community service providers who wish to be able to increase their capacity to partner with schools and provide targeted intensive supports to students and their families to avoid crisis. This budget ignores their requests. We have a Conflict Resolution Service that helps to avoid court cases but finds itself underfunded and overwhelmed by surging demand. This budget leaves it high and dry.

In conclusion, the funding commitment to community services in this budget is effectively a reduction because, as recently noted by former Chief Minister Jon Stanhope, the growth in funding is actually less than inflation. I echo Mr Stanhope's assessment of this government's approach to its 2018–19 budget:

It goes without saying that all of these cuts will impact disproportionately and dramatically on the most poor, disadvantaged, vulnerable and marginalised people in our community.

This is a tragedy. Canberrans rightly expect better of their current government, and so do I.

MR RAMSAY (Ginninderra—Attorney-General, Minister for Regulatory Services, Minister for the Arts and Community Events and Minister for Veterans and Seniors) (5.08): I am pleased to speak about my portfolio responsibilities as Minister for Veterans and Seniors. Both veterans and seniors bring their skills, their life experience, and their wisdom to the continuing contribution they make to this community. The significance of veterans and seniors to the ACT community is recognised strongly in the 2018-19 budget allocation of additional funding for the ACT government veterans employment strategy, the introduction of a dedicated veterans grants program, the creation of a seniors rights service, enhancements to key health services for older Canberrans, and for initiatives to ease cost of living pressures for older Canberrans.

The ACT government honours and respects those who have served our country through the Australian Defence Force. We are working to increase recognition of veterans' skills and experience and to strengthen their opportunities to participate in civilian employment, and in the Canberra community more broadly. The 2018-19 budget includes an allocation of funding to continue to deliver on the ACT government veterans employment strategy. Through this strategy the ACT public service will seek to increase the recruitment and retention of veterans and become a model employer of veterans in the territory. The benefits of employing veterans flow to individual veterans and their families but also to the territory as a whole through the utilisation of some of the most highly trained and skilled workers available.

Also included in the 2018-19 budget is an allocation of funding for the expansion of the veterans and seniors participation grants program. An additional \$80,000 per year has been made available to support the creation of a separate and distinct grants round for veterans. This grants program will allow organisations to enhance the support they provide veterans and their families in the ACT, and I look forward to launching this round in the coming weeks.

The number of older Canberrans is increasing rapidly. Between 2015 and 2055 the number of people aged 65 years and over is projected to almost triple, and the number of people aged 85 years and over is expected to increase almost fivefold. The increasing number of older Canberrans brings many opportunities as well as adding to the social fabric of our city. It also brings with it a responsibility to ensure that the rights of older Canberrans are protected.

There is increasing awareness across Australia and internationally of the need to take action to prevent and to respond to elder abuse. The ACT government is committed to tackling this here and cooperatively with other jurisdictions. The 2018-19 budget also includes funding to establish a seniors rights service, based in Legal Aid. This will provide targeted and specialised support for older Canberrans who are experiencing or are vulnerable to elder abuse.

The 2018-19 budget also includes an allocation for an increase in the staffing resources of the office for veterans and seniors. The office, working alongside the Justice and Community Safety Directorate, provides the ACT government's representation on the Council of Attorneys-General working group on protecting the rights of older Canberrans. This working group is overseeing the national response on the implementation of the recommendations resulting from the Australian Law Reform Commission's report *Elder Abuse—A National Legal Response* and is leading the development of a national plan on elder abuse.

The ACT government values the ongoing contribution older Canberrans make to our community and is working to make sure all Canberrans continue to enjoy good quality of life as they age. To realise this commitment the 2018-19 budget includes a number of initiatives to enhance services for older Canberrans and to ease cost of living pressures.

Outside my portfolio areas the hospital in the home program will be expanded so that around 3,000 more Canberrans a year can receive high quality care in their own home. The older persons mental health intensive treatment service will be boosted to provide stronger case management and clinical care to older Canberrans who are discharged from hospital, living in residential aged care or experiencing issues with housing.

To ease cost of living pressures the general rates aged deferral scheme will be expanded by removing the income and unimproved land value thresholds so that more senior Canberrans can defer their annual rates. Additionally, free off-peak travel on public transport for eligible pensioners will be extended for a further 12 months, and the utilities concession is also increased by \$50 from 1 July, taking the total payment to \$654 a year.

There is a lot in this budget for both veterans and seniors. I look forward to continuing work across government and with the community as the new and enhanced measures I have outlined take shape and as we continue to work towards ensuring veterans and seniors are able to actively participate as valued and respected citizens, appreciated for their contribution to this inclusive, vibrant city.

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) (5.14): The ACT government is ensuring we make families feel safe. The government's \$24.1 million safer families package is now in its third year. This package supports the implementation of commitments made in 2016 in the ACT government's response to family violence. In 2018-19 we continued funding to those services responding to the increase in reporting of domestic and family violence, and we built on the gains made in the first two years of reform.

The 2018-19 budget includes a further \$9.3 million over four years for initiatives that complement the safer families package. Budgets and responsibility for implementation of the safer families initiative lie across multiple directorates of the government. Much of this funding is then allocated to the community. This spread of responsibility highlights that domestic and family violence is an issue for the whole community. The development of this important work with experts within the sector has been front and centre of the conversation.

People who have lived experienced were asked for their input, which was important to ensuring that their voices and stories led to the development of the family safety hub and the work that will flow from there. The government has learned of the importance of having staff in front-line services skilled up to recognise and respond to people experiencing domestic and family violence.

The budget allocates \$1.27 million to two initiatives for 2018-19 to build workforce capability. A front-line worker training strategy will be implemented to build enduring core capability for front-line workers across the health, education, community services and justice sectors.

In recognition of the complex relationships between domestic and family violence and alcohol and drug use, work is underway to build workforce capability in the alcohol and drug sector. This will build upon the work of ATODA—the Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Association—utilising a whole-of-organisation approach. We want to ensure staff have access to training about domestic and family violence and are supported by leadership, policy, referral options, data collection and information sharing.

Funding of \$5.96 million over four years was allocated to the delivery of the family safety hub. Testing will commence on the family safety hub approach, with the focus for the first phase of work on women and families during pregnancy and early parenting. Research tells us that women are at greater risk of experiencing violence from their partner during pregnancy and postpartum. The family safety hub will increase opportunities for prevention and early intervention and facilitate improved responses, including expansion of the pathways to safety for families experiencing domestic and family violence. Implementation of the family safety hub will include a robust evaluation of both the process and outcomes. It is anticipated that the first phase will provide valuable learnings for the next phase of the family safety hub.

Additional funding for front-line services to respond to increased demand for domestic and family violence support has also been provided in 2018-19, with an additional \$1.7 million over four years for the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre and Domestic Violence Crisis Service. Additional funding of \$6.5 million over four years has been provided for specialist homelessness services to provide additional crisis accommodation and support to prevent women and children from becoming homeless due to domestic and family violence. This includes a children's program which actively addresses trauma issues in children and promotes healthy relationships.

The ACT government is working for the full and equal participation of women and girls in all aspects of society by providing genuine opportunities for women and girls to reach their full potential. This is critical to the wellbeing of our whole community. The government is leading by example in advancing the status of women at work and in our community through a new investment of \$696,000 to continue important work to implement key actions under the ACT women's plan and to support initiatives that promote greater representation of women and diversity and leadership.

As our city grows, the government is ensuring we continue to focus on building an even more inclusive community that ensures all Canberrans have equal opportunities to participate. This additional funding to be provided to the office for women will support the delivery of a suite of initiatives designed to drive outcomes in gender equality including: community engagement to promote gender equality in the ACT; improving the evidence base related to gender equality; training to reduce and eliminate unconscious bias across government; promoting diversity on boards through the diversity register; and delivering a board traineeship program for women.

The additional investment will assist the broader community, including corporate businesses and community not-for-profit organisations by providing additional tools to better address gender inequality in their own spheres of influence. Training packages, strategies and tools will be developed to provide useful information for the whole community on how unconscious bias can be addressed and how we can create a more respectful environment for everyone.

To ensure that the ACT continues to be a national leader in ensuring diversity on ACT boards and committees, this budget includes additional investment to maintain and promote the ACT diversity register. The diversity register was launched on 1 June 2018 to support the government's commitment to improve diversity in appointments to boards and committees in leadership roles. This commitment acknowledges the value for both individuals and communities in having a range of experiences represented in these roles.

The funding will also deliver a board traineeship program to promote gender equity. We will particularly focus on industries where female representation is low and on sporting organisations who are required to meet the target of 40 per cent female representation by 2020.

MS LEE (Kurrajong) (5.20): Since the introduction of the NDIS and the ACT government's decision to take up the challenge to be the first jurisdiction to

transition to the new scheme, the pathway for both bureaucracy and NDIS clients has been somewhat of a rocky journey. Since the move to transition, the directorate previously responsible for the delivery of disability services has had a confused status among people and groups who previously received funding from them, and there have been some turbulent times. We all know the on-again, off-again status of SHOUT, the concern about whether TADACT would or could be restructured and funded, the future of Pegasus and of Radio 1RPH, not to mention various people with mental health issues that do not fit the NDIS format.

I regret to say that I am still not entirely convinced the current arrangements are either yet well understood or entirely fair. We have too many advocacy groups who have become the forgotten people. We have mental health patients. Some qualify for NDIS while others do not. We have others who may or may not qualify under Health or under another directorate, like SHOUT was, eventually.

I am sure the intention was to make life easier for those with a disability and for their carers and families, but in fact the choice and control mantra has become somewhat of a nightmare for too many. And a key group of people who fall into this category are our most vulnerable members of the disability community: those from a culturally and linguistically diverse background and our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberrans.

Despite numerous questions from me on specific support initiatives for these vulnerable groups, I am yet to be convinced that there is anything substantive beyond advocacy groups and translated material. Both these things are important and absolutely necessary. But are they enough? Language barriers and having someone to speak for them is one part of the picture. Cultural barriers and the enormity of responding to a sudden trauma is another thing altogether. I know that the minister cares deeply about these groups, given her other portfolio responsibilities, and I await further initiatives in really supporting and making a difference to these groups.

I suspect there is even less understanding about the role of Disability ACT now. There is, for example, a budget allocation of \$4.2 million for an office for disability, and this included an increase of \$1 million over last year. I assume some of this is to progress the disability justice strategy and the connect and participate expo held earlier. We learnt during the estimates hearings that staff are also supporting advocacy and emergency funding. But despite all that, there is still an element of luck, of inconsistency in who gets supported, and I am not sure that that is fair.

Advocacy or support groups were clearly an overlooked area when the NDIS framework was being established. The patch-up approach through the capacity building and linkages funding is all very well but it is no long-term solution. I do not believe it is a deliberate oversight, just an unfortunate happenstance.

I know that in education the additional funds for disability education are equally not well understood, despite my questions during the estimates hearings and in question time only last week. I note the minister for education undertook to provide further information to the Assembly about this budget item and I look forward to receiving more detailed information on this.

The minister for disability said in her evidence to the committee that she acknowledged people are falling or have fallen between the cracks. She said:

In terms of preventing people falling through the gaps, some of the gaps that have been identified are between the mainstream system and the NDIS, and that interface. So staff will be specifically working on that.

I know there are many in the sector who query how SHOUT is now able to have funding certainty—which of course is a huge relief and of benefit to so many Canberrans—but at the same time other worthy groups are going to face the same uncertain future that SHOUT faced only 18 months ago. The minister advised in the hearings that she and her directorate had a longstanding relationship with Epilepsy ACT and indeed Epilepsy ACT was supported for some years through that directorate. But now they are on the orphan scrapheap. The longstanding relationship apparently amounted to zip.

Groups such as Epilepsy ACT, Arthritis ACT and Cystic Fibrosis ACT should not have to upskill in lobbying and media tactics or go cap in hand to the minister so that they can continue to do the work they do. Equally, they do not want their volunteers distracted from assisting people to focus on fundraising just to keep the doors open. I would hope that the government might take a more flexible approach in such things as rent. Many of these organisations have received funding on the one hand from the ACT government, only to have to pay back a good percentage of it in rent.

Another area of concern is the number of young people with a disability or other long-term health issues who, due to a lack of supported accommodation, are living in nursing homes or elderly retirement villages. A response to a question on notice informed us that there are currently 38 young people in residential aged care. Why and how is this happening in Canberra? This is another of those issues that impact across more than one directorate. The estimates hearings acknowledged that collaboration across the directorates was important.

The current circumstances are entirely unsatisfactory to those 38 young people. I hope the minister and the directorate will up the efforts to find a more suitable arrangement and, in doing so, collaborate with other directorates to see whether more appropriate alternatives might be available. The estimates committee recommendation reflects the importance of collaboration, and I note that the government response on this is favourable.

Discussion also focused on the need for qualified Auslan interpreters, in conjunction with a languages register, given the previous decision to allow hearing impaired people the opportunity to serve on juries. This is another recommendation that will require cooperation across a number of directorates, including Education and JACS, to make sure we have sufficient training opportunities and access to justice.

There are still too many unanswered questions for those requiring support in the disability sector. There are still too many mental health patients who simply do not fit into an NDIS plan. There are too many families with children on the autism spectrum

who are unsure what support might be available and where they should be looking for it. There are too many people with chronic illnesses that do not fit neatly into a category that reflects current arrangements. But they do not deserve to be treated like a football and bounced between Health and Disability ACT and federal agencies.

It is four years since the NDIS pathway was chosen and, as the first jurisdiction to transition, we should be closer to getting it right. I look forward to the day that we, as a jurisdiction, can say that we are there.

MR HANSON (Murrumbidgee) (5.27): I speak to the veterans element of the budget and I would like to say some nice things about the budget. Where recognition should be provided, the opposition will. And where the government is, I think, doing a good job, I am happy to provide that acknowledgement. I welcome the specific initiatives in the budget. The fact that there are grants and initiatives like the vets employment strategy is good.

As members would be aware, this comes after a lot of lobbying from the opposition. For a while the Chief Minister liked to make much of the fact that we have a new government—and that is true—so it is good when the opposition, through its lobbying and through the pressure it applies in this place, the media and elsewhere and working with the community, can actually achieve outcomes for constituents. In this particular situation, the constituents we are talking about are veterans and their families.

We now have a minister, we have a Veterans Advisory Council, we have specific initiatives and we have grants. And it is good to see that there is now a bipartisan approach to these issues in the Assembly.

Part of a democracy, as well, is turning up and I commend Mr Ramsay for the fact that he does turn up to these events. I think that is a good thing. I encourage him to do so. I am sure that he is welcomed by the veterans groups as he attends those events. Certainly Mr Ramsay was there on Saturday at the Vietnam Veterans Day. It was about six degrees and raining. But it was well appreciated that he was there.

There is always more to be done. It is an important area and I offer the government bipartisan support in this and I encourage them, now that they have started down this path, to continue and to look for more ways that they can provide support for veterans in our community.

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) (5.29): The 2018-19 ACT budget is a demonstration of ACT Labor's commitment to build a stronger, fairer, more vibrant and more inclusive city. One of the nation's fastest growing regions is right here in Canberra. This ACT Labor government is ensuring that our growing city has the services and supports it needs.

This budget has been shaped by Labor values. These values are what drive members on this side of the chamber: a commitment to fairness, to equality and to inclusion.

Many of my portfolio areas within the Community Services Directorate are fundamental to the values I have described: young people, children and families engaged in the child protection system, Canberrans with a disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberrans, and Canberrans from culturally and linguistically diverse communities. It is my honour and privilege to work to improve outcomes for all of these Canberrans.

For Canberrans with a disability, the ACT government continues its important role of providing oversight and advice to ensure the NDIS works for Canberrans. In this budget we are providing \$1.1 million to support people with disability whose complex needs are unable to be met by the NDIS. The integrated service response will work with the National Disability Insurance Agency to ensure a coordinated approach for people with a disability who engage with multiple service systems.

We are also providing \$400,000 over two years for individual advocacy. This will boost the capacity of local advocacy services to support NDIS participants facing challenges with the NDIA. In 2017 the first round of the disability inclusion grants demonstrated that Canberrans want to provide better, more accessible services and environments for people with disability. This budget expands the disability inclusion grants program over the next four years and increases the total grant pool to \$100,000 each year.

Work is underway on delivering a disability justice strategy for the ACT. We have provided \$580,000 to continue the development of this important piece of work to address the disadvantage that people with disability face when dealing with the justice system. Consultation is now underway. I encourage people to get involved, through the your say website, in the face-to-face consultations or by speaking directly to the Community Services Directorate.

This budget provides more than \$2.5 million over four years to strengthen the oversight of providers delivering services to our most vulnerable residents, including people with disability. With the introduction of the NDIS, the number of service providers has risen. We are seeing an increased demand for registration and compliance assessment.

There is no more important role for government than keeping children safe. The budget delivers \$345,000 over two years to strengthen the quality of child protection policy and practice by continuing funding for the Child and Youth Protection Quality Assurance and Improvement Committee—part of our comprehensive response to the Glanfield inquiry. The over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care is, as I said at question time today, unacceptable.

The independent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led review *Our Booris, Our Way* is examining the reasons for this over-representation. A wholly Aboriginal steering committee is overseeing the review. This budget provides \$1.371 million over 1½ years to fund completion of this important review. The review will release an interim report in coming weeks, with the final report due in late 2019. I am pleased that this funding will enable this important work to continue and to be completed.

I am committed to working with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and local organisations based on the spirit and principles of self-determination. This budget commits \$150,000 to investigate suitable accommodation options for Gugan Gulwan so that it can continue to deliver exceptional services to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. After the success of the first Reconciliation Day public holiday, \$200,000 a year has been allocated for the now annual Reconciliation Day event and for other activities promoting reconciliation and celebrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures.

Our city's cultural diversity enriches and strengthens Canberra. The government will provide increased support for the National Multicultural Festival to maintain a safe and vibrant community event that celebrates Canberra's rich cultural diversity and promotes social cohesion in the ACT. The National Multicultural Festival is a high profile government-managed event. It forms part of the cultural calendar for the ACT and serves as an important platform for community relations with the community groups participating, as well as being Australia's biggest celebration of cultural diversity.

Mrs Kikkert asked me earlier today on Twitter whether I could clarify why the National Multicultural Festival had run at least \$100,000 "over budget" for the last four years. I recognise that in using the term "over budget," Mrs Kikkert was using a reporter's language. I should clarify that the term the authors of the particular review report use is "operating deficit".

In terms of the details of what the operating deficit comprises, I refer Mrs Kikkert to page 9 of the Oakton report, which is available on the CSD website. It is also linked to my media release, in line with the transparency that I aspire to across all of my portfolios. In doing so, I note that this shortfall in operational funding has been a known pressure for the Community Services Directorate. That is why the 2017-18 budget review committed \$255,000 in additional funding for the 2018 festival and why this budget commits \$100,000 a year in additional operational funding, plus \$150,000 for staffing, in anticipation of receipt of the review.

Mrs Kikkert also talked about formal and informal consultation processes. I look forward, as I am sure Mrs Kikkert does, to the multicultural summit later this year, the organisation of which is being led and supported by the Multicultural Advisory Council that was appointed in 2017 to represent the voice of the multicultural community to the government. Our ongoing engagement with that community is extremely important to us.

The budget proudly invests in the local community sector. Self-help organisations united together, better known as SHOUT, will receive \$469,000 over four years. This provides certainty to SHOUT, recognising its value as core social infrastructure and ensuring that the service remains part of our community in the years ahead.

This budget also commits \$1.527 million over two years to reform and improve our early intervention response to the needs of vulnerable children and their families. Our aim is to enhance early intervention capacity to improve outcomes, particularly for

three priority groups: vulnerable children and families, with a focus on early years; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families; and families who have experienced domestic and family violence. In undertaking this complex work, we are drawing on the expertise of front-line workers, leaders, and policy workers in government and non-government services to develop a 10-year plan for reform. Importantly, the team has been consulting not only service users but also those who have chosen not to engage with existing services.

As Mrs Kikkert has noted, this government is committed to the timely delivery of adoption services and permanency planning for children and young people in out-of-home care. This budget invests \$3.461 million over four years for the employment of staff who specialise in adoption and permanency. This will be invaluable in maintaining long-term stability of care, for appropriate placements, and for reducing the risk and impact of trauma experienced by children and young people in the child protection system.

Family group conferencing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families aims to reduce their involvement with the statutory child protection system. Ongoing family group conferencing will be supported with \$1.4 million over four years in this budget. As I said in question time today, the pilot has already demonstrated early success. This budget initiative will help to build on that success.

The government invests \$2.729 million over four years, through this budget, to expand the scope of the new child and youth protection services client management system. This additional funding for the new client management system will allow better integration with key stakeholders, enabling a real-time exchange of information with staff in the field and sharing of safety and wellbeing information about children and young people.

This budget invests in our community through services that support the most vulnerable Canberrans and enable individuals to participate and be included in their local communities. While addressing immediate needs and working closely with the community sector, the government remains focused on a long-term vision for our community and the strategic reforms our services need to equip them into the future. I commend these initiatives and this budget to the Assembly.

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee) (5.39): I rise to speak in support of the multicultural affairs measures in the 2018-19 budget. The ACT is a progressive and inclusive place and we are a progressive and inclusive government committed to celebrating diversity and multiculturalism and to building social cohesion. As members know, the 2016 census revealed that Australia has an ever-expanding and diverse community. The ACT is no exception. We are one of the most multicultural cities in Australia, comprising people from 180 different countries around the world, with 32 per cent of people in the ACT being born overseas and 35,000 households speaking a non-English language.

The government continues to implement the ACT multicultural framework 2015-20 to effectively support the delivery of services to people from culturally and linguistically

diverse backgrounds, to promote an inclusive and harmonious community, and to provide genuine opportunities to assist all Canberrans to reach their full potential.

In addition to those actions, the budget is delivering on a number of specific commitments in order to improve the visibility and inclusivity of diverse Canberrans. We are investing \$247,000 to highlight and promote community participation, cultural diversity and inclusion. The ACT government is delivering this through programs designed to help ACT residents from diverse backgrounds meaningfully engage with the local workforce. It focuses on building the skills and experiences of new Canberrans.

The ACT government is also currently supporting the work experience support program, with an \$89,000 investment. This program assists ACT residents who are migrants from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to gain the skills, experience and confidence to enter into the workforce. The ACT government is also delivering additional funding for job brokerage services to help refugees to find jobs and to expand access to English language programs to help new Canberrans improve their language skills.

The government has also been taking steps to strengthen the engagement and inclusion of diverse Canberrans. In 2017 the ACT Multicultural Advisory Council was established to provide a forum for culturally diverse Canberrans to participate in consultation on the issues that affect their lives. The Multicultural Advisory Council is focused on delivering the ACT multicultural framework. It is fantastic to see the council meet and share their unique point of view on ACT issues and policies during 2018, as they will do in their upcoming summit. One of the ACT Multicultural Advisory Council's responsibilities is to assist with convening the summit, and this will culminate in November 2018.

The National Multicultural Festival is one of Canberra's most recognisable and vibrant events that truly celebrates the diversity and inclusivity of Canberra and its people. It is a three-day festival of food, music, dance and culture that attracts people from all around Australia and the globe. It showcases the extraordinary diversity of our city in particular.

At the core of the festival are the values of inclusion, social cohesion and harmony. I am very pleased that in this budget there is an investment of \$150,000 to support increased staff and \$100,000 in base funding per year that will further strengthen our commitment to the festival. I also want to put on record that I welcome the government commissioned review of the 2018 National Multicultural Festival being handed down, as we continue to strive to deliver a safe and inclusive festival that showcases the ACT's multicultural community.

In conclusion, the ACT government is delivering budget outcomes to improve the visibility and inclusion of diverse Canberrans. The budget is supporting active consultation and inclusion of Canberrans from different backgrounds in the decision-making process. The ACT government is supporting the celebration of our multicultural community through the National Multicultural Festival. These measures reflect the ACT government's continuing commitment to our values of inclusion and

celebrating and respecting our diverse communities. I commend this budget to the Assembly.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (5.44): It appears that many seniors in our community are disappointed and feel resigned to stoic acceptance that this is a government that do not really like them. They provide a small amount of money in a number of different areas but not enough money to achieve too much except fill a glossy magazine so that the government can pretend that they care.

Firstly, I will speak about duty concessions. There has been a steady increase in applicants over the last 10 years, but the government have not provided certainty past 30 June 2019. This is a scheme that assists eligible pensioners who own a residential home to move to accommodation more suited to their needs—for example, moving from a house to a townhouse—by the scheme reducing the conveyance duty payable on their purchase of a residential home or residential vacant land. We talk about helping people to move to more suitable accommodation, but it appears we may be making it more difficult for them to do that and less financially viable.

I also mention the 12-month trial of the free senior and concession off-peak bus travel. It is still only promised to continue as a trial, even though there was a 28 per cent increase in weekday bus trips during off-peak periods that qualified for free travel. This brings a lot of benefits to our seniors: greater inclusion in the community, independence and cost savings and a reduction in the cost of living for vulnerable Canberrans. Now we see potential changes and cuts to the bus network which will leave some vulnerable older Canberrans even more isolated. We talk a lot about the flexible bus, but the flexible bus system is not that flexible when you have to book well in advance. This is a concern for older Canberrans, especially those living on their own.

We talked about the seniors card quite a bit during the estimates process. It seems that including a senior's name on the cards would ensure that seniors will be better placed to get reciprocal rights across the country. The minister said he had not heard of issues, but I have certainly heard of issues with people getting reciprocal rights interstate. If I have heard about them I do not understand why the department and the minister have not heard about them. An answer to a question on notice we put in said it would take up to 10 days to receive a seniors card if it had to be individually made. However, licences and IDs given at Access Canberra can be made at the time of application, so I am not quite sure why it would take 10 days to put the name onto a seniors card.

There is also an issue about how you better track seniors cards. According to the 2016 census data there were 55,985 people in the ACT that met the age and work requirements to be eligible for a seniors card. However, there are currently 69,905 seniors cards in circulation, which is about 20 per cent more cards than eligible people. This should be investigated and a better way of managing the card process put into place.

I will briefly touch on age-friendly suburbs. This is a great initiative. I have seen some changes in Monash, for example, and some other suburbs. It appears, however, to be

going quite slowly. At this rate most of the people who are seniors today will not see their suburb become age-friendly.

There is no specific money in the budget for men's sheds, despite the great work they do in our community for both the mental and physical health of older men. We have seen \$80,000 in annual funding for seniors grants, which is welcome, but that is for all seniors groups to apply for. Many of these groups are in vital need of significant capital injections and even for ongoing operational costs. This relates also to the debates we have been having in this place recently about the community contribution scheme of clubs.

Many seniors groups have written to me and to other members of the Assembly about how valuable they find the in-kind support of clubs for holding their meetings, ensuring that they do not have to pay for the meeting rooms. That is something that will disproportionately potentially affect older people's groups.

There is a very welcome \$100,000 for the seniors rights service at Legal Aid, and I am looking forward to hearing more about how that will operationalise. About six per cent of seniors are apparently subject to elder abuse. That is a terrible thing and we must do whatever we can to improve the situation of those who may be physically, mentally, emotionally, financially or in any other way abused by other people, many of whom are people they believe care about them or should care about them. It is a very sad situation.

Another area I will touch on is hydrotherapy services. A number of older people have contacted me about the importance of hydrotherapy services and the benefit they bring in terms of the mobility of their joints. Access to the hydrotherapy pool at the Canberra Hospital will be removed, in favour of moving everyone to the pool at the University of Canberra Hospital in Bruce. This is not particularly amenable for people on the south side of Canberra, and when you combine it with things like the changes in buses it will see someone coming from Goodwin Village in Monash having to change buses four times each way on their way to the hydrotherapy pool in Bruce, probably removing any potential benefit they have received from the hydrotherapy by the time they have to get on and off four different buses on their way home.

The cost of maintaining the pool at the Canberra Hospital, according to an answer from the minister, is about \$143,000 per year. The same people who live at Goodwin in Monash will have to catch a minimum of three buses to access any hospital in Canberra under the proposed bus network.

In the Canberra omnibus survey the government have a target of 80 per cent of Canberrans agreeing that Canberra is an age-friendly city, which they are achieving. But if you look only at the answers for those aged over 60, they are not reaching their target. Seniors specifically do not feel the city is age friendly. Eleven per cent of our population were aged 65-plus in 2012 and that is projected to increase to 22.5 per cent by 2062. So in 50 years the percentage of our population aged 65-plus will have doubled.

I acknowledge the great work done by a number of different seniors groups, some of whom wrote submissions to or appeared before the estimates committee this year. They include but are not limited to COTA ACT, ACT Seniors, the Superannuated Commonwealth Officers Association, men's sheds, and the YWCA. I also acknowledge the work of OWLS—Older Women Lost in Housing. There are many, many other groups and I thank them for the work they do in our community to improve the lot, the rights, the access, the inclusion of people who are over 50, over 55, over 60, however you would like to define it. There are also a number of seniors clubs: Tuggeranong 55 Plus Club, Canberra Seniors Club and Woden Senior Citizens. There are clubs all over Canberra who work very hard on inclusion and providing activities and interest groups for older people.

I will also make some comments on behalf of my colleague Mrs Jones in relation to the women's portfolio. There has been some slow and small progress in this space, thanks to efforts by opposition MLAs—for example: a breastfeeding room audit of ACT public service directorate buildings, which led to installing privacy latches and locks on all doors that did not have them, and portaloos for women firefighters stationed at a fire site for extended periods of time—however, more should be done.

When was the last time the ACT government spoke with women in the public service about what they would like to see done to make their lives easier? How can we improve the workforce for mums returning to work?

The big ticket item in this year's budget is the diversity register, which aims to support greater representation of women and other diverse people on boards and committees as well as offering a board traineeship program and improving evidence relating to the benefits of gender equality. (*Second speaking period taken.*)

This is an important initiative that we need to support, but it does not do much for women who do not feel safe at night in their own suburbs or streets. It does not do much for women who are struggling to pay their rates bills, which continue to increase. It does not do much for women at risk of homelessness or experiencing homelessness. Instead, this is just another government program aimed at very few select and generally well-off women to further their career goals. It does not help the daily lives of many Canberra women.

Unfortunately, this budget does little for women's safety. The Labor-Greens government talks a big game when it comes to women, equality and their safety. However, this has not led to tangible results on the ground. All women have the right to feel safe and secure in our community, but this government does not seem to care if an overwhelming majority of women do not feel safe. Clearly they do not feel safe.

The budget papers show that this government are satisfied that only 38 per cent of women feel safe while walking alone in public places at night, and they do not plan on raising these targets any time soon. I find this alarming, even more so in the context of decreasing front-line police officer numbers compared to the beginning of the decade, as well as the government's general neglect of our suburbs and lack of street lighting.

A reduced police presence and neglected public places contribute to feelings of being unsafe. One of the examples I used during the estimates period was the CIT car park in Tuggeranong, where it took nearly a year for adequate lighting to be installed. When you join that up with the reports we have seen about sexual assaults at university and other tertiary institutions, it is not safe to have women, young women, or anyone in our community going out to their car late at night in pitch darkness. Minister Berry needs to answer why she is happy with these low targets and not deflect to other issues, as she did in the estimates process, such as the Geocon sexualised invitation.

A couple of recommendations came out of the estimates committee, including the best methodology for the survey on national women's safety. The government agreed with that one. There was also one about the Minister for Women and the Chief Police Officer working together to identify ways to make women safer and feel safer. Again, the government has agreed to that recommendation.

I and, I am sure, Mrs Jones are looking forward to seeing what comes next and what is going to be done. I think a lot of it comes down to basic local services. Areas with graffiti can make people feel less safe. Areas with poor lighting can make people feel less safe. If we focus on those basic local services, that is one very concrete way that can help women and everyone else feel safer in their own communities.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Superannuation Provision Account—Part 1.9

At approximately 6.00 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.

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism and Major Events) (5.58): The superannuation provision account recognises and accounts for the defined benefit employer superannuation liabilities of the territory and the financial investment assets for funding these liabilities. The liabilities include past and current ACT public service employees who are members of the Australian government's commonwealth superannuation scheme and the public sector superannuation scheme.

The government maintains the financial objective of fully funding the territory's defined benefit superannuation liabilities by 2030. While there has been an increase in the superannuation liability valuation estimates, following a reduction in the long-term average discount rate assumption from six per cent to five per cent, this funding objective remains achievable and we are on track to meet it. The annual budget appropriation to the superannuation provision account is used to extinguish the territory's employer share of employee superannuation benefits.

The long-term investment return objective for the superannuation provision account is the consumer price index plus 4.75 per cent per annum. Incorporating the estimated

investment return outcome for 2017-18 of CPI plus 7.3 per cent, the superannuation provision account portfolio will have generated an estimated investment return of CPI plus 5.3 per cent per annum over the past 22 years. That is a very positive outcome in anyone's book.

The headline net operating balance published in the budget papers incorporates a superannuation return adjustment to provide an accurate assessment of the longer term sustainability of the budget position. Without this adjustment, the reported budget bottom line would fluctuate much more widely and would not provide Canberrans with an accurate understanding of the territory's fiscal position. The consistent inclusion of the superannuation return adjustment in each annual budget means the state of the territory's books can be clearly tracked and compared year on year.

The superannuation provision account is another example of the government's long-term planning to meet the future needs of this city—in this case, the coming pension requirements of the thousands of local ACT public servants who will retire in the years ahead. The provision we are making now means that their needs and entitlements can be fully met without placing undue pressure on the wider ACT budget. I commend the provision to the Assembly.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Canberra Institute of Technology—Part 1.10

MS FITZHARRIS (Yerrabi—Minister for Health and Wellbeing, Minister for Transport and City Services and Minister for Higher Education, Training and Research) (6.01): I am pleased to speak today in the budget debate on the government's ongoing support for the Canberra Institute of Technology. The government is committed to supporting Canberra's vocational and tertiary education and research sector. We recognise that growing this sector is critical to establishing Canberra not just as Australia's leading knowledge city but as a hub city to our nearby region and as a major contributor to national and international innovation practice.

As a key part of this, the ACT government recognises the Canberra Institute of Technology as a major contributor to the Canberra region economy. The CIT enhances the community with essential skills and knowledge and is a trusted iconic feature of our knowledge landscape. The CIT continues to develop innovative courses and training environments for more than 25,000 small to medium businesses in the ACT, contributing to a confident, bold and ready city for the future.

CIT is on a journey of transformation and is ready to drive the future of skills development in the ACT. The renewal of CIT's campuses is a key driver in the aspirations of the CIT strategic compass 2020. CIT have allocated \$1 million from this year's budget to allow CIT to commence scoping work and to undertake site master planning and prepare a concept design to consolidate the Reid campus into a multistorey building. Renewal will ensure that CIT is able to meet the evolving needs and expectations of modern learners. This includes the development of contemporary teaching and learning facilities to reflect the digitisation of teaching, learning and work environments.

The redevelopment of the Reid campus is in line with CIT's long-term plan to progressively upgrade its campuses to ensure students and staff enjoy quality experiences in modern, fit-for-purpose facilities. This approach will ensure CIT is not burdened with unnecessary costs of maintaining an asset base that it no longer requires. The renewal project will significantly reduce the footprint of the current Reid campus, which also has the potential to facilitate UNSW Canberra to establish a university campus in the city east education precinct.

The buildings of the Woden CIT campus have passed their useful life as a modern educational facility. CIT's music program is the last CIT department to be relocated, moving to a newly refurbished section of the Reid campus in September 2018. Despite CIT no longer having a formal teaching presence at Woden, CIT students will continue to be trained at multiple workplaces throughout the Woden Valley, particularly at the Canberra Hospital.

As technology accelerates around us, CIT is a leader in offering training that benefits the ACT economy in growing niche markets such as cybersecurity. These future skills have been delivered successfully for over three years through vocational training. CIT will continue to have an industry first focus, working closely with the Australian Government Cyber Growth Network, AustCyber, to build models that provide students with up-to-the-minute skills.

CIT has also built thriving partnerships with Box Hill Institute, UNSW Canberra and the broader national network of TAFEs to ensure CIT's offerings are among the best in the nation. CIT remains committed to working with industry to increase Australian apprenticeships and is the registered training provider for nearly half of all ACT apprentices and trainees. The ACT government is proud to commit to keeping CIT in public hands.

The ACT government has continued to undertake a range of reform activities to achieve a flexible, responsive and high quality VET sector. In this budget, the government has allocated \$609 million over four years for training and skills development, supporting almost 7,000 apprentices and trainees across 100 training providers in the ACT. This includes 714 places for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and 1,910 places for students with a disability.

We can be proud that we have seen a five per cent increase from 2016 to 2017 in apprentices and trainees enrolled at CIT. This is against a concerning national trend, where apprenticeships and trainees have declined by nearly six per cent over the same period. As of July this year, there are 3,341 apprentices and trainees enrolled across a range of 78 qualifications at CIT. I am proud to say that CIT is raising ambitions to meet new expectations and is delivering new offerings to provide the skills crucial to industry success and an adaptive, modern workforce.

The higher education and training sector in the ACT is booming. Last year I informed the Assembly that a conservative estimate for the sector's economic value-add was \$3 billion per annum. We have commissioned an investigation as to its current value; preliminary findings show that indeed \$3 billion was a conservative estimate, with the

tertiary education and research sector currently valued at \$3.2 billion per annum. Initial findings also show that even more Canberra jobs—as many as 19,000—are tied to this sector's growth. At any one time, there are over 40,000 students studying at Canberra's higher education institutions and 20,000 studying in tertiary education. Considering the number of jobs their studies support, about one in every nine residents in Canberra are either working directly in the sector or participating as a student.

Moreover, the tertiary education and research sector is vital to linking Canberra with the global economy. Of Canberra's students, 17,000 are from overseas. Year after year, they attract friends, family and new researchers to Canberra, to add vibrancy to our city as well as adding a significant boost to our tourism industry. Last year Canberra's international education exports increased by 24 per cent, contributing \$879 million to Canberra's economy, making education Canberra's largest export. Then there is the relationship that the sector has with our business community. All of our key economic sectors that drive Canberra's growth and diversification—defence, space, cyber, agricultural science, healthy and active living, and tourism—depend on our growing tertiary education and research sector.

The ACT is fortunate to have such wonderful tertiary and vocational education institutions on our doorstep. We welcome the opportunity to work together through our strong relationship with the institutions, both on a one-on-one basis and through the ACT Vice-Chancellors Forum. Chaired by the Chief Minister, the forum provides high-level oversight by the leaders of the ACT's tertiary education institutions to collaborate to grow the sector, attract investment, diversify Canberra's economy and create even more jobs. As a result of discussions at the forum, we have a clear investment attraction framework and have positioned our new \$9.75 million priority investment program to attract investment into our key sector areas.

The government is dedicated to ensuring that Canberra has an innovative, high-performing and safe VET sector that supports all Canberrans to realise their potential. For this financial year, across the VET and higher education sector, my key priorities include continuing to act as a champion of the sector across the ACT government and externally. This includes seeking out and harnessing opportunities for research and innovation that are right on our doorstep, through our proximity to the great tertiary institutions that Canberra boasts. In particular, over the coming year I look forward to a much greater focus on health and medical research.

I also intend to establish policies that do not merely respond to the growth of the sector but look ahead to address and mitigate any challenges and opportunities from that growth. We will continue to implement the government's international education strategy: Canberra, Australia's education capital. We will support training in areas of highest needs, to best provide the skills needed by industry, students and the ACT economy. We will continue to achieve the best training outcomes for the ACT and deliver on agreed national priorities and work to ensure that all parties, including the commonwealth government, demonstrate their commitment to the skills and training sector.

We will also continue to roll out two important grants programs to encourage women to enter traditional trades and mature-aged students to re-engage or reskill in their chosen fields. Madam Speaker, as our city experiences a shift in pace more than ever before, and growth, the higher education, training, research and vocational educational sectors are a strong contributor to shaping that change that is giving the Canberra region an edge as a world-class, stronger knowledge economy.

MR WALL (Brindabella) (6.10): I rise to speak on the budget line item relating to the CIT. As a member for Brindabella, representing Tuggeranong in this place, it would be completely remiss of me in this debate not to mention the inequity of higher education facilities in the south compared to those in the north of Canberra. Despite the assurances of the government and officials that this is not the case, the facts speak for themselves. The only physical presence of a higher education campus south of the specialised Fyshwick trade centre is a very small facility operated by CIT in the Tuggeranong town centre.

Once again, as has been the case for a number of years, the discussion during estimates hearings this year centred on the future of the Woden CIT campus and the courses and students that have been operating out of there. The committee was informed that only 125 students and about eight staff need relocating. That number, 125, is still a significant number of students. I would be very interested to see some further data extracted relating to where those students and teachers are now being placed and how those course completion rates have followed. I reiterate for the record, though, that my personal view is that the south of Canberra, particularly Tuggeranong, is in dire need of a greater presence of tertiary education options and a further education presence.

Those opposite often point to the small CIT campus in the Tuggeranong town centre as a success on their part, but I would remind members that the course offerings at the CIT in Tuggeranong are very limited. A wider selection would always be welcomed, and in my belief would be well subscribed to by those in the southern parts of Canberra.

I acknowledge the good work being done by CIT in adapting to the changing needs of our workforce by ensuring that the courses on offer across the campuses reflect the skills that will be required into the future. I have heard firsthand from Canberra businesses that are forging ahead in many diverse industries, particularly in the cybersecurity field, that they are working closely with CIT and they are encouraged by the home-grown talent in this field of network and cybersecurity that is being fostered through some very diverse and cutting-edge courses operated by CIT.

I want to note the acknowledgement by the minister and CIT officials during estimates hearings this year that CIT relies on and continues to operate a flexible workforce. They underline that as key to the successful operation of CIT. In a response to a question relating to staffing levels at CIT, an official said:

I think it is really important to know that CIT has a responsive workforce. In fact, when you look at how it is made up from an FTE perspective, 40 per cent of our workforce is made up of non-permanent staff. That enables us to be able to meet the training needs of our students.

A responsive workforce is made up of a mix of permanent, casual and on-call staff and is key to maintaining the needs of a number of our front-line services, particularly those in the vocational education space. I would encourage the government to continue with this direction in workforce capabilities. I have watched keenly as a number of policy shifts have been announced in recent times relating to casual employment.

As part of ensuring our vocational training provider, our dominant provider, CIT, is competitive—both in terms of cost in the courses it offers and particularly in meeting the needs of local industry and making sure that the skills that are being delivered meet the demand of local businesses and give students the best opportunity, on completion, for entering employment in their chosen field in the local market—it is important that the CIT remain agile and able to adapt to an ever-changing education market.

The opposition continues to be committed to ensuring that where you live in Canberra does not represent a barrier to accessing vocational training. We will be watching closely over the coming years to see how the impact of the closure of the Woden campus pans out on enrolments and courses that are entered into. We will be keeping a very close eye on how that space evolves.

MS LE COUTEUR (Murrumbidgee) (6.14): I rise briefly to support very strongly Mr Wall's comments about the almost total lack of tertiary and higher education in south Canberra. Yes, there is a small facility in Tuggeranong and a small facility in Fyshwick, but this is not really enough to be equitable for the people of south Canberra. It is very depressing that community facilities seem to have been withdrawn from south Canberra.

I would also put forward a plea for the ACT government to make very good use of the excellent site that is probably now, unfortunately, available: the Woden CIT site. It seems to me that one of the more obvious uses could be an expansion of the Canberra Hospital. Anyone spending any time at the hospital or going past it can see that it appears to have pretty much run out of land, and the Woden CIT site is very conveniently located next door.

That clearly is not the only thing that could be done, and I am not saying that it necessarily is the best, but it is very important that the government uses this prime site for the benefit of the people of south Canberra and in particular for the residents of Woden who are adjacent to it.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Housing ACT—Part 1.11

MS LE COUTEUR (Murrumbidgee) (6.16): I figure I am on a roll; I will keep going. The ACT Greens welcome the government's response to the estimates committee's recommendations regarding housing. Nonetheless, there is scope for significant improvements in this portfolio. Of course, I remain very hopeful that the much

anticipated affordable housing strategy will provide some greater direction and some greater funding to improve housing outcomes and to better serve the needs of people at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

Firstly, I would like to acknowledge the government's injection of \$6½ million over four years for front-line homelessness services and to extend the operating hours of OneLink. Despite the government's claims in the budget papers that this funding would produce 36 places at front-line shelters—I innocently thought this would translate into 36 additional accommodation places—it was disappointing to hear from CSD officials that the 36 was an estimate based on the funding for the sector to employ additional staff to undertake intensive case management for 36 individuals or families at any one time. I am not really sure what, if anything, it does from the point of view of beds. But I am also very pleased that the government is allocating a much-needed investment of \$5.7 million to extend the successful energy efficiency improvement scheme to Housing ACT properties.

There are a number of other positives, including the housing innovation fund. I was very interested to hear Minister Berry's discussion, in question time today, of where the money from that has gone to. I refer also to funding for the development of MyHome, which is likely to be in Curtin, in my electorate. I am very positive about the work that is being done by the community there. I think this is, and hopefully will continue to be, an outstanding example of community and government cooperation for the good of all Canberrans. There is also, as I mentioned earlier, the work overseen by Minister Gentleman on housing choices.

Overall, though, I am afraid that the housing components of the budget, not to mention the government's response to many of the estimates committee's recommendations, represent pretty much a business as usual approach to this very needy, difficult portfolio area.

The most glaring gap in the budget is the lack of funding for, or in fact any action on, a new supply of affordable rental housing, both for social housing tenants and for people who would not be eligible for social housing but who are struggling in Canberra's very expensive private rental market. As I noted here three weeks ago, Canberra has the dubious distinction of sharing equal first place with Sydney in having the highest rents in the private rental market. We also have the highest proportion of people living in the private rental market who are still in housing stress, even after they have received commonwealth rent assistance.

Mr Coe usefully referenced Anglicare's survey of the availability—or otherwise, in the ACT's case—of affordable private rental. There simply is not affordable private rental for people who are on minimum wages with family or people on Centrelink. I have to wholeheartedly agree with Mr Coe that this is a significant problem that we as a community are failing to adequately address.

In this context I welcome the government's response to recommendation 127, which is a commitment to provide detail on the rationale for future targets for public and community housing dwelling sites. I have to say that the rationale is very unclear at this stage. Basically, there should be more of it.

The responses to recommendations 128 and 129 are less encouraging. In these responses the government only agrees in principle to provide more ambitious targets to the City Renewal Authority and the Suburban Land Agency for affordable, community and public housing targets. It still does not commit to explaining how the sites allocated to community housing providers will be allocated to specific community housing providers rather than the sector as a whole. That is quite concerning. The government's response notes:

The targets also need to consider the development capacity of the Community Housing Sector and Housing ACT ...

But this is a spurious argument. The budget figures state that Housing ACT will be investing \$37 million over 2018-19 to purchase, construct and refurbish properties. Even assuming that there is additional funding from the sale of properties that can be used to top this up, the trend is not encouraging. In the last year the public housing capital delivery program purchased or built 52 new public housing dwellings. This is great, but in that year Housing ACT also sold 60 properties; that is, more than they purchased—a net loss.

The capacity of Housing ACT to develop housing in new land release sites is clearly limited—very limited. This limitation, however, is clearly a function of how much this government is willing to spend in this portfolio area. Likewise for community housing: the targets for new dwelling sites have actually decreased from a very low 34 last year to a miserable 20 dwelling sites for 2018-19. Why? When we asked about this, we were told it was about the capacity of the community housing sector.

As with many other community sectors, the community housing sector is, to quite an extent, a creature of public policy. If organisations are funded or given opportunities to grow supply, they will; they clearly will. These targets, and the government's response to another recommendation, noting that it only agrees in principle to maintaining a minimum proportion of social housing stock—which reflects a successful Greens motion in April, passed with the generous support of the Liberal Party—are disappointing, to say the least. Again, in response to this recommendation, the government cites the development capacity of community and public housing providers. That is not the point. The issue really is the requirement of the community for housing; then the government needs to look at how it provides it, not the other way around.

The government's housing targets and in principle support for the Assembly's motion regarding maintaining the proportion of social housing reflect more than just a lack of willingness to properly fund this vital social infrastructure. They reflect a lack of creative thinking.

Minister Berry has noted on multiple occasions that she is proud that Housing ACT has not transferred large numbers of its properties to the community housing sector, as every other jurisdiction has done. This is despite the possibilities that such transfer could bring to leverage community housing tenants' access to commonwealth rent assistance, which increases providers' rental income, as well as the capacity of community housing providers to raise debt to increase supply.

In this context it is worth noting that community housing providers will soon be able to access competitive and long-term finance through the National Housing Finance and Investment Corporation. Despite the opportunities that the NHFIC will foster, Minister Berry's response to a question on notice regarding this matter offers little encouragement that the ACT government is looking seriously to leverage these opportunities.

If the government is not interested in increasing funding to the sector or transferring public housing properties, there are still a number of ways that the community housing sector could be supported to grow. One could be to use the planning system to incentivise affordable housing outcomes. This has been done successfully in Adelaide, and in Sydney via a developer levy in the Sydney CBD which funds housing delivered by City West Housing.

Another option would be to use the government's position as the dominant provider of land in the territory to incentivise and drive affordable housing outcomes. I note that the legislation for both the SLA and the CRA requires them to look at affordable housing and to specify how much affordable housing they will be releasing sites for in their area of influence. This is an area where the government should be doing more.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate, as I did last year, the importance of the parliamentary agreement between the Greens and Labor in driving many of the positive outcomes in this policy area. (*Second speaking period taken.*) I really look forward to the release of the housing strategy and working with my fellow MLAs across all parts of this Assembly to ensure that people in Canberra in housing need are able to access housing that suits their needs and that they can afford.

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (6.26): I find myself agreeing with so much of what Ms Le Couteur had to say in this space, which is a little frightening. I think she nailed a lot of what is going on in this portfolio. There are a lot of good things going on in this portfolio, but we are missing the mark on a few things, aren't we?

Canberra is a wonderful city in which to live, if you are earning a good quid. And if you are not, it is very difficult. Time and again, as shadow housing minister, I come across people who cannot find a home of any description, are in the public housing system and have been horribly let down by the system, or find themselves unable to access public housing without an absurdly long wait, but because of the policies of this long-term Labor-Greens government they find it nigh on impossible to service their daily needs and the needs of their family while paying exorbitant private rent.

We have a housing affordability crisis here in the ACT, and at this stage this government seem unable to address it. They are doing some things in small degrees, but the crisis remains. I know we are all waiting for the findings from the housing and homelessness summit. There are a few, in dribs and drabs. Aren't they a long time coming?

When you are out speaking to people on the street, when you are out speaking to residents who are literally under siege at Kanangra Court or those who simply cannot

pay the rent in this lopsided rental market, when you are talking to people, Madam Speaker, who have been sleeping in their car, it is tough to say to these people, “Don’t worry, the housing minister has got a plan. She’s been working on something for the last 18 months; they’ve had a big talkfest. Just hang on in there a little longer, because all the answers are coming. Her party has been working on the answers for 17 years, and I’m sure, if you just rug up and get through this winter, you’ll be fine.”

I often wonder what ACT Labor stands for in 2018. I get asked this question often, usually by former Labor voters. They say to me, “What does my party stand for now? It’s certainly not the downtrodden. It’s not the people on the margins. It’s not the workers. Who is it? Is it developers? Is it the CFMMEU? I don’t know.”

Time and again, these questions come out of the housing portfolio. The Chief Minister got all fired up during question time last week and made all of these ridiculous, theatrical accusations about us evil Liberals and why we got into politics. When you consider that this government has been in place since 2001, it beggars belief that we cleared the policy decks and seemingly started from scratch in the policymaking space in housing with this summit last spring. Now all of our eggs are in this basket and we are waiting for the silver bullets to come flying our way.

Those in the sector do not believe that there will be silver bullets. There will be much denial—denial like the sort of denial that we see from this minister, who continually refers to the ABS homeless figures from the ACT that magically show that we are winning the battle. Everybody knows that there are more rough sleepers in the city than there were last year. It does not matter what the ABS figures show you; that is not what is actually happening on the ground. Everybody knows that front-line homelessness services are under siege.

I do note—and Ms Le Couteur mentioned it—that there is an increase in funding to those front-line homelessness services. But it is not enough. The government talks about housing affordability but it does not do enough to genuinely move forward in that space. The actual budget allocation to deal with the problem is laughable. And it is not just us saying it; it is the Greens saying it, it is—dare I mention his name again?—the Jon Stanhopes of the world that are saying it. It is being said by many in the sector.

I understand that there are increases in homelessness services, but those increases are not keeping up with demand. Where would we be without Vinnies, the Salvos, UnitingCare, St John’s Care, Reclink, and many others? It should not be up to these community organisations—many of whom, I must say, are in part funded by our community clubs—to fix the mess created by 17 years of Labor-Greens policy in this space.

It is not necessarily policy in this space. Mr Coe and Ms Lawder went to great lengths earlier to talk about the land release program and how intrinsically linked it is to housing stress. With all that said, I must also refer to the announcements today from the minister on the first round of funding for affordable housing innovation arising from the housing and homelessness summit. I commend the minister and her directorate for having the courage to look outside the square. I understand there were

a bunch of suggestions that came forward, and a bunch of people that put their hands up. I do not doubt that the decisions that have been made here are worthwhile, to distribute funding to some of our community housing providers, enabling them to examine and potentially to trial some wonderful new ideas from other jurisdictions.

I am pleased to see us moving in these directions. I do not believe we are moving fast enough when we consider the impact that this housing affordability crisis is having on so many individuals and families. This government should be doing much more than a token effort in this space.

I do applaud today's announcement, but it is too little, too late. I do note that the minister, in question time today, also referred to—and please excuse me, because I am not fully across what is planned here—some moves to allow supportive housing to be built on some community facility zoned land in some special circumstances where that land was privately owned and it had been ascertained that this would be a better purpose.

I will wait to see further details on this. Again I look forward to some positive movement in this space. I do note, though, that the last time we were debating supportive housing on community facility zoned land, we had dozens of people marching on the Legislative Assembly and some fiery public meetings that were abandoned, with officials ushered out the back door. I am assuming that that will not be the case in this instance, so I look forward to seeing what is being considered in this space.

I will close by saying that I look forward to hearing more from the ACT housing and homelessness summit. From the perspective of those in the public, they are telling me that there are still no major outcomes, still no big ideas, and the community is sick of waiting.

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) (6.33): I am happy to speak on housing and the work the government is doing in housing and housing affordability in the ACT. The government is improving access to public housing and homelessness services and continues to lead the country in a number of areas. Public housing and a well-supported specialist homelessness service sector will always be at the heart of my priorities as minister.

The initiatives announced in this budget continue to demonstrate the government's commitment to ensuring all Canberrans can participate fully in this community. Public housing in the ACT provides affordable rental housing for 10,621 households or around seven per cent of ACT households as at 30 June 2018. The ACT government maintains the highest proportion of public housing and community housing stock in Australia, with about 27 dwellings per 1,000 people, against a national average of 17.

The ACT also continues to lead the nation in allocating social housing to those most in need. Of the 523 new allocations made to public housing during 2017-18, 99 per cent were households in greatest need. Sixty-six per cent of new public housing households were for persons with specific needs, including people with a disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders or tenants who are under 25 or over 75. In 2017-18 Housing ACT funded a \$50 million capital program to provide housing that meets tenants' needs and \$40 million on maintenance across the portfolio.

Housing ACT has worked to further refine maintenance programs to better achieve value for money. The outcome of this work has been a positive shift in the volume of plant versus responsive work, where Housing ACT has been able to redirect an additional \$1.3 million to planned works. As a result, in 2017-18 public housing tenants have benefited from 1,888 upgrades to properties, including 196 kitchens, 212 wet areas, as well as 584 floor coverings and 896 internal or external paint jobs.

I am very pleased to hear that there is apparently now support, or at least those people who have already spoken on this matter today say they care, but when the government was facing some hostility from some people in the community it was the government that was staring that hostility down and it was those opposite, and others who have spoken today, who were stoking the politics of fear out there in the suburbs where new public housing is built for people who need it most.

As well as building public housing, we are improving the energy efficiency of public housing properties, which has been an ongoing project. In the 2007-08 budget the government provided \$20 million over 10 years as part of the energy efficiency program. At the end of 2016, 8,956 properties had received energy efficient improvements. This included ceiling and wall insulation, draught sealing and installation of gas and electric-boosted solar hot water systems.

In early 2017 Housing ACT, in collaboration with the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate, entered into partnership with ActewAGL to deliver energy efficient products into public housing. As a result of this collaboration, the government launched a trial program in December 2017 to improve energy efficiency and lower utility bills in ACT public housing homes, under the energy efficiency improvement scheme. This program helped public housing tenants by replacing more than 200 old, inefficient heaters with better systems, including electric reverse-cycle units that will reduce energy bills and improve the comfort of all homes all year round. Two hundred and forty properties have now had new appliances installed, as at 30 June 2018.

Building on the success of this program, the government has allocated a further \$5.713 million to be spent over three years on the next stage of the program to improve energy efficiency to more than 2,000 public housing properties. The expanded program will target inefficient gas heating as well as electric space heaters. Public housing tenants will also be able to access education programs and energy audits through the energy efficiency improvement scheme and the Actsmart low income program.

The government also recognises the need for dedicated housing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members of our community. After close consultation with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body, Mura Gunya, a complex of five two-bedroom units for older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, was opened in September 2016, with tenancies commencing in November 2016. The homes allow tenants to maintain connection to their family, community and culture. In the 2017-18 budget the government committed \$250,000 to undertake planning and early design of further housing for older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. I am very pleased to say that a further \$4.488 million over two years has been allocated in this year's budget to deliver on this second dedicated, culturally appropriate housing for older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The government has committed to a range of funding packages to aid in providing early crisis intervention for key vulnerable groups, including women and children escaping domestic and family violence, older women and migrants with uncertain immigration status. This funding commitment will help enhance and tailor service delivery for these groups who are not yet in crisis but whose vulnerable situation puts them at significant risk of homelessness.

More than \$1.8 million over four years will be allocated to establish the new service to support asylum seekers and other migrants with uncertain immigration status who are in need of housing assistance. This funding will provide medium-term accommodation and support to resolve immigration status, gain community connections, education and training and income.

Over \$1.7 million over four years will go to establish support for older women who are either homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. The government will work with the community sector and service users over the coming months to design the new programs for asylum seekers and older women to ensure the funding will address key service gaps.

ABS census data released this year showed that the ACT was one of the few jurisdictions in Australia to successfully reduce homelessness. This is something to celebrate, but of course there is more work to be done. To provide further support for our front-line services the government in 2018-19 has allocated \$6.524 million over four years.

I am pleased to advise the Assembly that OneLink will receive extra funding in 2018-19 to extend its operating hours and brokerage funds so that appropriate crisis support can be provided at the time that it is needed. In the ACT one out of every five people approaching homelessness services have identified that their mental health is a contributing factor to their tenuous housing situation.

The ACT specialist homelessness sector has identified that people with enduring mental illness require long-term and often permanent support to stay housed. At the moment many of these people are supported in crisis accommodation. This reduces the capacity of our homelessness services to provide services to people who are in housing crisis.

Crisis accommodation is designed to provide intensive crisis support to transition people out of homelessness. A service gap exists for these people. What is needed is a long-term supportive accommodation environment. That was why I was happy to announce that the budget will provide \$200,000 to fund project development and a feasibility study into an appropriate long-term accommodation and wraparound services model that supports people with enduring mental health issues. Long term, the aim is to reduce the cyclical experience of homelessness that many people with mental illness face.

Housing ACT is also working with ACT Health to provide long-term supportive care and accommodation for people with mental health needs. Housing ACT will provide the land as well as manage the construction of the project. This project will be the foundation for providing supported accommodation to enable people to live in the community with an appropriate level of clinical support.

Based on the success of the original Common Ground model, we have also allocated funding for the design of a second Common Ground complex to be located in Dickson. The 2018-19 budget provides \$250,000 for further design work. This project provides an opportunity to increase the territory's supply of affordable housing and frees up crisis accommodation for those who are actually in crisis.

To ensure Housing ACT can continue to deliver high quality and relevant services to our community, the government will improve the speed and responsiveness of Housing ACT's service delivery by developing a digital service delivery channel. \$2.134 million has been allocated over two years to implement a complementary digital service delivery channel.

The move to digital access of housing and homelessness services will fill the gap in the existing service delivery model. The channel will be made up of a client portal, a mobile application and electronic forms. The channel will enable Housing ACT's existing clients and members of the broader community to access essential services 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Clients will also be able to submit applications, update personal information and lodge and manage maintenance requests from their mobile devices. This will really make a difference to the service delivery for tenants in public housing and improve the ability for Housing ACT to implement maintenance work in public housing.

In summary, the government's work to support Canberra's public housing tenants is work that I will continue to champion as a member. Whilst unusual, it is refreshing to hear those opposite talk about increases and call for increases in public housing. It is not something that we have heard from them in more recent times, when there has been such hostility directed at public housing tenants. I look forward to our united and collective result as we build more public housing across our city in new and existing suburbs.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

City Renewal Authority—Part 1.12

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

Adjournment

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

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Early learning

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee) (6.45): I would like to highlight Early Learning Matters Week, which recently passed. As members know, I really do think that early learning matters. Early Learning Matters Week is an event supported by the “Early learning—Everyone benefits” campaign, a campaign focused on giving children the opportunity to attend quality early childhood education for at least two days a week to build their cognitive skills and their social and emotional skills, to assist them to manage their emotions and to support their transition to school.

The goals of the “Early learning—Everyone benefits” campaign are to have all Australian children benefit from participating in early learning, particularly vulnerable children; to have political parties commit to policies that would support universal access for four-year-olds and three-year-olds to attend early childhood education for two days a week; and to change the national conversation on early childhood and the value of early learning, to convince politicians like us that supporting participation in early learning will increase future prosperity for us all.

Early Learning Matters Week has stepped up the conversation in our community with decision-makers. We know that Australia is in the bottom third of countries ranked by the OECD for participation of three-year-olds in early learning. Children are doing some of their most important early learning during their earliest years. Early Learning Matters Week has been raising awareness about the benefits of quality early childhood education for our future prosperity. More than 60 federal MPs and senators were invited to visit early childhood education services to better understand what early childhood education, and particularly quality early childhood education, looks like and to hear from educators and from parents about why early learning matters.

I was unable to attend a visit over the last few weeks, but I have been heavily involved in the early childhood sector over my working career and have visited hundreds of centres and services across Australia and the ACT. I will be delighted to attend the “bogong dreaming” grand opening of the Woden Valley Child Care Centre on 31 August.

Access to 15 hours preschool is the UNICEF recommended benchmark for children’s development. I have spoken on that in this place. In fact, we have had a visit in this place, on both sides, from Professor Ted Melhuish from Oxford University, who is one of the authors of the effective provision of preschool education study, which shows that when children have access to two to three years of quality early childhood

education they have much better outcomes all the way down the track when they finish high school.

That is why I am so incredibly proud that our Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development, Minister Berry, has announced that our government will commit to the goal of providing universal access to 15 hours free preschool for three year-old children. I congratulate Minister Berry on this announcement, which will form part of the government's early childhood strategy. It really shows that the minister understands that early learning matters and that our government understands the power of the early years in amplifying children's outcomes. I know that the early childhood education and care sector have welcomed and celebrated this nation-leading announcement and I know that they are looking forward to working with the government on the implementation.

The ACT government's goal of increasing access to quality early childhood education is another example of our government's progressive measures to build our future prosperity and will complement the future of education strategy, which was also announced by the minister last week.

Lisa Bush—tribute

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (6.49): I rise to speak about a member of our community who, sadly, passed away recently. Lisa Bush passed away on Wednesday, 15 August at Clare Holland House after a nine-year battle with cancer.

Lisa was well known among the local AFL community. For example, she was a longstanding, long-term volunteer with the Queanbeyan Tigers Australian Rules Football Club. While Queanbeyan technically is not within the ACT, the Queanbeyan Tigers Football Club play as part of the AFL Canberra league, and many AFL members in the ACT will have known Lisa and benefited from the volunteer work that she has done over many years.

The Queanbeyan Tigers have written a tribute to Lisa on their website. I will read from that now.

Not many people would have known the battle she endured with this insidious disease such was her strength and resolve to combat each problem during this time. Lisa was a true warrior, an inspiration to many with a never give in attitude which was clear throughout her life.

Tributes have been received from far and wide through the various mediums. They all reflect her wonderful sense of humor, enormous smile and appreciation for life—a legacy that will be forever remembered by the Tigers Family—a family that she loved and adored, supported and followed with enormous passion and giving—particularly in sponsorships, on committees and working with each of the respective teams and coaches.

“Bushie” will be deeply missed by everyone who had the pleasure to be in her company during her 13-year involvement with the Tigers Organisation. Unfortunately, illness meant her voluntary efforts were scaled down this year

however in the past she was recognised by the organisation and awarded the Tigers Spirit Award in 2015.

Most importantly Lisa was inducted into the Tigers prestigious 100 Club as an Associate Member in 2017 for her outstanding service to all and sundry during her time with the Club.

Lisa was known for her infectious laugh and beautiful smile, her giving nature and her ability to light up a room whenever she entered.

At just 50 years of age—a magnificent person has been taken.

Our thoughts are with daughter Caitlin, son Dwayne, sister Michelle and other family members.

I would like to add to that that our thoughts are with the Queanbeyan Tigers football club and the broader AFL community in the ACT.

Laurie Carmichael—tribute

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) (6.51): Over the weekend the Labor movement lost a true hero, with the passing of Laurie Carmichael. The Australian Manufacturing Workers Union, of which Laurie was an official, rightly described him as a formidable union leader. Laurie began an apprenticeship as a fitter and turner after leaving school at 14. In 1946, whilst working as a fitter at the Williamstown naval dockyard in Victoria, Laurie became active in the Amalgamated Engineering Union. He became the Victorian state secretary of this union in 1958 and in 1972 became assistant national secretary of the Amalgamated Metalworkers Union.

Laurie's leadership of campaigns in the metal industry was integral to achieving victory in the fight for the 38-hour week. He also led campaigns for better pay and increased annual leave in the industry. In 1969 Laurie also took a leading role in anti-Vietnam protests in Australia. He supported anti-apartheid education at workplace meetings, and union members attended demonstrations and rallies in great numbers, including against the 1971 Springboks tour.

In 1987 Laurie was elected as assistant secretary of the Australian Council of Trade Unions. In this role he was pivotal to the development of the ACTU and ALP prices and incomes accord. The accord delivered significant improvements for Australian workers, including programs we now take for granted, like Medicare and compulsory superannuation. As Senator Doug Cameron said in his statement on Laurie's passing:

Laurie fought on behalf of working class Australians to achieve fundamental social reforms we all enjoy today.

The accord is seen as having driven much of the economic success and social progress of the Hawke-Keating era. Importantly, the accord shows exactly what is possible when unions, government and business genuinely work together.

Laurie was also a strong advocate for vocational training and accessibility of higher education to the working class. Fundamentally, he understood the value of education and its importance in transforming people's lives. He is considered to have been an important influence on the federal government reform to the higher education system, which commenced in 1988.

His advocacy continued beyond his working career. After his retirement from the ACTU in 1991 he became chairman of the employment and skills formation council, the federal government's chief advisory body on vocational education. I have no doubt that the benefit of Laurie's life work will be felt for many decades by many who never heard of the man.

As Bill Shorten, leader of the federal Labor opposition, said:

Perhaps his greatest gift was the breadth and boldness of his vision ... He had a remarkable capacity to see over the horizon, to argue for the interests of future generations as well as his current members.

Vale, Mr Laurie Carmichael. As Bill Shorten said, a giant of the Labor movement remembered with sadness and with pride.

Legacy

MR HANSON (Murrumbidgee) (6.55): I rise tonight to pay tribute and recognition to Canberra Legacy, an organisation that conducts incredibly important work in our community. For one week every September we see Legacy volunteers on our streets. They certainly receive a warm welcome and generous support. I draw attention to much of the work they do behind the scenes for families in our community. I quote from the organisation's own material:

Legacy is dedicated to caring for the families of deceased and incapacitated veterans. Today Legacy's caring and compassionate service assists around 65,000 widow(er)s and 1,800 children and dependants with a disability ... Legacy is a voluntary organisation supported by veterans, servicemen and women, and volunteers drawn from all walks of life ... Legacy is dedicated to enhancing the lives and opportunities of our families through innovative and practical programs aimed at:

- the protection of individuals and families basic needs;
- advocating for their entitlements, rights and benefits;
- assisting families through bereavement; and
- helping people thrive, despite their adversity and loss.

The Legacy Club of Canberra was inaugurated on Anzac Day 1928 with 32 members, following the establishment of the first club in Melbourne in 1923. Since then the club has grown steadily and today Canberra Legacy includes the Yass-Boorowa group.

Legacy is an organisation that I have supported for many years, not just as a seller of badges and teddy bears during badge week but as a legatee supporting widows since

my retirement from the army and during my time here in the Assembly. I note the generous support that members and staff of all political persuasions have given to this great cause, certainly in previous years when I stood out front of the Assembly and rattled the tin.

Legacy in Canberra supports services to 1,067 widows. I would like to thank all of those involved, but in particular the president, Judy Mack; the vice-presidents, Bill Crews and Brian Edwards; the immediate past-president, Gerry Carwardine; the honorary secretary, Steve Jones; the honorary treasurer, Greg Heywood; the chairs of committees, Paul Stevens, Graham Bentley, Vic Gibbons, Chris Appleton and Bob Connor; the elected board members, John Heggart and Ian Wills; the recording secretaries, Frank Lehman and Tony Wilkinson; the welfare committee chair, Neil Horn; and other office bearers, including Ian Wills, Bob Connor, Brian Keil, Steve Hart, Mac Cottrell, Mark Crocker, Peter Launder, Brian Worth, Bob Richardson, John Heggart, Rosalie Bush, Jan Wilson, Ray England and Neil Turner.

I also thank the Laurel Club presidents. The president of Boorowa is Joan Birnie and the president of Canberra south is Mrs Mary Parker. I would also like to mention my own Legacy widows, four wonderful ladies: Pam Cockerell, Thelma Maurice, Barbara Nosworthy and Margaret Prior.

I add my thanks too to all of those other legatees that I have not named but who work very hard on behalf of their widows. Certainly, some legatees care for many widows. I wish Legacy all the best with Legacy Week that is coming up. I thank all of the legatees and staff for their tireless work for widows and families in our Canberra community.

Blood donation

MRS KIKKERT (Ginninderra) (6.58): One of my favourite things to do is give people gifts. On some occasions the gift is one that I carefully think about and pick out in order to bring a smile to a loved one's face. On other occasions the opportunity to give a gift comes out of the blue, like the day I walked out of the shops with a chocolate bar and felt impressed to offer it to a father in the car park who was clearly having a very difficult day with his kids.

Last month I chose to give the gift of life by making a donation of whole blood to the Australian Red Cross. I do not know exactly where my donated blood ended up or how it was used, but I do know that blood donation is an essential part of keeping many Australians alive and healthy. In fact, statistics reveal that one in three of us will need blood or blood products in her or his lifetime. Nationally, we require more than 25,000 donations every week, though each donation can save up to three lives.

After my donation the Red Cross shared with me the story of Jess. After experiencing a burst artery in her stomach, she experienced serious internal bleeding. In fact, by the time she realised it was not just the flu, she had lost fully half of her own blood. Thankfully, doctors were able to save her life but it required 21 units of whole blood, eight units of plasma and five units of platelets. Since her amazing recovery Jess has

been on a mission to encourage her family and friends to donate blood and plasma as frequently as possible. I wish to encourage all who can to do the same.

Certain safeguards have been put into place to protect the blood supply. But at any given point in time it is estimated that at least nine different Australians are eligible to make a donation. Sadly, only three per cent of the total population will actually donate each year.

Here in Canberra we have a number of options, including a fixed donor centre in Garran. In addition, the mobile blood van makes an appearance here in the city every three months, and the new Civic plasma donor centre is located just a few blocks away from the Assembly, in Mort Street.

I encourage all who are eligible to take advantage of one of these opportunities to give the gift of life. For many people the first donation can be somewhat intimidating. I assure you, you will be fine. For others who have donated in the past but have fallen out of the habit, please consider making regular donation a new habit.

I am grateful for the Australian Red Cross's role in seeking to secure an adequate blood supply. And I am grateful to the women and men who take a few minutes out of their day to give the gift of life. I also thank all those who would generously give if they could. Together we can let people know that their lives are worth saving.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 7.02 pm.