



Debates

WEEKLY HANSARD

Legislative Assembly for the ACT

NINTH ASSEMBLY

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Wednesday, 22 August 2018

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Wednesday, 22 August 2018

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.

Sub judice convention Statement by Speaker

MADAM SPEAKER: I wish to make a statement concerning the application of the sub judice continuing resolution of the Assembly. This convention, as described in the sixth edition of *House of Representatives Practice*, is, and I quote:

... subject to the right of the House to legislate on any matter, matters awaiting adjudication in a court of law should not be brought forward in debate, motions or questions.

Continuing resolution 10 of the Assembly provides that the Assembly shall apply certain rules where sub judice matters arise.

I note that in Mr Wall's notice No 1 mention is made of criminal charges laid against the Construction, Forestry, Maritime, Mining and Energy Union and its ACT divisional branch secretary for alleged cartel conduct in the ACT. As this matter is before the courts, I would ask that, in addressing this motion, members avoid canvassing issues that may affect that court case.

Construction, Forestry, Maritime, Mining and Energy Union

MR WALL (Brindabella) (10.02): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) the criminal charges laid against the Construction, Forestry, Maritime, Mining and Energy Union (CFMMEU) and its ACT Divisional Branch Secretary for alleged cartel conduct in the ACT; and
- (b) the formal affiliation between the CFMMEU and the ACT Labor Party; and

(2) calls on ACT Labor Members of the Assembly to suspend all affiliations with the CFMMEU.

As members can, I am sure, hear, I am struggling with my voice today. I will keep my remarks short, noting that other members of the opposition will be speaking on this motion as well.

It is no secret that members of the Labor Party—in fact, the Labor Party itself—have a very close affiliation with the CFMMEU. The influence that the CFMMEU has over

the party and members of the Labor leadership but, more importantly, members of the Labor Party serving in this Assembly, is well known and well documented.

The continued association with an organisation that has been labelled by many as the worst corporate offender in the country raises serious questions as to the appropriateness of this relationship continuing and the appropriateness of the influence that this union continues to wage over the policy directions of this government and of the territory.

We see time and again individuals and officials from the CFMMEU being dragged before the courts on numerous criminal and civil charges that raise serious questions around whether or not the union are fit to have such an influence over public policy. They continue to wage unfair and unfounded campaigns against businesses that they deem to not be their friends. I would like to draw members' attention to an ongoing campaign between the construction union and a local builder and developer named Milin construction, who had the courage to stand up in the royal commission and explain their experiences of what was happening in the construction industry locally, only to be faced by a vicious and malicious campaign against them and their company on the ground in the community.

These campaigns are not only defamatory, and raise serious questions around the way that the union operates as a law unto itself within this town, but also they impact thousands of Canberrans who have purchased properties and now have a smear campaign being run against the builder of those properties, in many instances costing those home owners thousands and thousands of dollars, simply because of a reputation being besmirched.

There have been numerous inquiries into the special deals and the special treatment that the Tradies group, owned by the CFMMEU, and the CFMMEU themselves, have enjoyed through land deals, changes to zoning, car parks being exchanged, leasebacks and the like. It simply continues to paint a picture that, ultimately, these organisations operate in their own interests, not in the interests of the community and not in the interests of the ratepayers of Canberra. For that reason those opposite should cease their formal affiliation with such a disreputable movement as the union.

I am struggling at this point to continue talking, so I will leave my remarks there. As members are well aware, I will continue to raise these issues. This is something that is of paramount importance regarding the integrity of the way that government is conducted in the ACT. I commend my motion to the Assembly.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong) (10.05): As Mr Wall's motion notes, there were reports last week that the ACT branch of the CFMMEU—I will get the hang of that, with the addition of the maritime section—and the branch secretary have been charged with criminal cartel conduct. This follows an investigation by the ACCC and the Federal Police. I understand that the matter is listed to appear in the ACT Magistrates Court in September, and the ACT CFMMEU has said it will vigorously defend the charges.

I do not intend to speculate or comment on that situation. Obviously, there has been no conviction made. We abide by the principle that a person is innocent until proven guilty. The matter is still to go to court. That is what we should all be doing if we are to be fair to those individuals.

I note that previously an ACT union official, Mr John Lomax, was charged as a result of the royal commission into unions. That case elicited a lot of publicity. It was all over the front page of the paper, and it got extensive coverage, which included commentary here in the ACT Assembly. Several months after these charges were laid against Mr Lomax, they were dropped—simply dropped—and Mr Lomax received a payout of compensation from the Australian Federal Police for the prosecution.

In terms of the call for ACT Labor members of the Assembly to suspend affiliations with the CFMMEU, I would say that I do not see any problem with the ALP affiliating with and associating with unions. Unions in Australia have a long and proud history of advocating for workers' rights, and the affiliation between the Labor Party and the unions is no secret. I think it is extremely well understood in the community—in fact, it is proudly trumpeted by many—and I do not think that in any way voters are being deceived about connections. They are very transparent and they are very open about it, and I think that is a well-understood public matter.

However, as always, the Liberal Party want to use anything they can to try to smear the entire union movement. Alleged criminal conduct by an individual or individuals should not taint an entire organisation, nor necessarily should criminal conduct by an individual. The Liberal Party obviously have an ideological position when it comes to unions. They disagree with the things that unions stand for: workers' rights, fair pay and good employment conditions. The Liberal Party will always swoop on any allegation of bad behaviour somewhere within the vast network of unions in Australia and use that singular example to attack the union movement as a whole.

Mr Wall's motion is another example in a long line of attacks from the Liberal Party to try to discredit unions, to attack people who work for unions, and to attack their political opponents for associating with unions. These attacks are usually filled with some degree of hyperbole and often a barely contained ideological outrage.

In 2015 Mr Wall moved a similar motion that noted that, following the royal commission into unions, several union members had been arrested. It went so far as to note "the silence" from the Labor and Greens parties, as if we should come in here and comment on active cases, in breach of the sub judice rule and in breach of fair trial principles. I will not be lured into that today, and, just as we did not in 2015, we will not comment on an active matter before the courts, particularly in this space.

At that time, in 2015, I said that it was disappointing, but not surprising, to see Mr Wall and his colleagues trying to make political hay out of these issues, and that the approach was all politics, no policy and an obvious attempt to continue the Liberal Party's position and war on unions and on workers' rights and entitlements. The same is true of this motion, and the Greens will not be supporting it today.

The Liberal Party's attacks on unions are problematic in other ways. Members undoubtedly have read this week that Mr Hanson was sued for defamation by Dean Hall, the former secretary of the ACT CFMEU, for comments he made in public in 2016. The case was recently settled, and Mr Hanson has now been required to send a letter of apology and pay a \$280,000 legal bill to Mr Hall, although Mr Hanson will not actually pay that bill himself, and ACT taxpayers will foot the bill.

Mr Coe: A point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: Resume your seat, Mr Rattenbury. Stop the clock.

Mr Coe: On the question of sub judice, I ask whether it is appropriate for Mr Rattenbury to make those comments.

MADAM SPEAKER: Relating to Mr Hanson, where the matter has been settled?

Mr Coe: That is right. And has the matter been settled?

MADAM SPEAKER: It is on the public record, a public comment, that an apology has been made. I think you are referring to that public commentary, Mr Rattenbury?

MR RATTENBURY: On the point of order, Madam Speaker, I can assure Mr Coe that I do not have much more to go on this. I have made my point, which I think was in the newspaper, so I did not think it breached the rules. But I will defer to you.

MADAM SPEAKER: No, I would not have thought so, because it has been in the public domain. It is within order. But be mindful of other matters around sub judice, Mr Rattenbury. Please continue.

MR RATTENBURY: Yes, thank you. Mr Hanson also apologised to Mr Hall, and this letter has been published, so I feel I can note that he did apologise for suggesting that he had a criminal past. The apology reads:

I know that you do not have criminal convictions nor that you are facing any criminal charges.

To the extent my words suggested that you had any criminal convictions or are facing any criminal charges, I retract any such words and I apologise for any hurt and distress this has caused you.

Both this and the Lomax example underline the fact that you should not believe everything at first blush, that you should not jump to conclusions, that you should let processes play out in the normal way. On that basis we cannot support this motion today.

The fact that a charge has been laid means there is obviously some belief amongst those prosecuting it, but I think that it is fair to the secretary of the union, and to the union as a whole, that we do not prejudge that matter in this place, and certainly that we do not draw the sort of conclusions that the motion is suggesting we draw. The Greens will therefore not support the motion today.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Community Services and Social Inclusion, Minister for Disability, Children and Youth, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations) (10.12): I have to say that I was surprised at some of Mr Wall's comments today, brief though they were, given that, as Mr Rattenbury has pointed out, the Liberals and their former leader have been required twice within the past 12 months to apologise to the CFMMEU, the CFMEU as it was, for such comments. The Liberal Party ACT division has been forced to apologise for statements made on a Facebook page, in addition to the apology that Mr Hanson has made to Mr Hall.

I was intending to keep my contribution to this debate short, not because I do not have much to say about the great contributions of the union movement in this country, but because I think the motion is so inappropriate that it does not really warrant more time in this place. But I do want to note that last night I spoke in this place to mark the passing of Laurie Carmichael, a giant of the Australian Labor movement, and someone who has been closely associated with and closely involved in many of the movement's greatest achievements, including the 38-hour week, the prices and incomes accord, and better access to university and vocational education.

Laurie was not an official of the CFMMEU or its predecessors. He was an official of the mighty Amalgamated Metal Workers Union, now the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union, of which I am a proud member. Senator Doug Cameron said this in his statement on Laurie's passing:

Laurie fought on behalf of working class Australians to achieve fundamental social reforms we all enjoy today.

In doing so, Laurie Carmichael fought alongside his comrades in other blue-collar unions like the predecessors of the CFMMEU. Union organising is often loud. It is sometimes messy. Its aim is to upset the status quo, to empower workers by bringing them together in solidarity so that they can stand up to the power and might of capital. Conservatives do not like this. Of course they don't. The Liberals representing big business do not like this. They do not like anything that upsets the status quo that heralds progress in our community. Conservatives were not particularly keen on suffrage either, but here we are with a majority of women in our local parliament.

Madam Speaker, the reality is that progress has only ever been achieved by people organising, working together to fight for their rights, to fight for equality and sometimes simply to preserve what ordinary folk hold dear.

Last night I spoke about the union movement's involvement in the fight against apartheid. Apartheid did not end by the rest of the world quietly sitting by and waiting for those who held power in South Africa to give it up. Around the world, and particularly here in Australia, people rallied and protested and made their voices heard, and unions were at the heart of that movement.

The 38-hour week did not come about as a gift from the bosses because they suddenly decided to be generous to their workforce. Unions campaigned for it, as they have for

sick leave, annual leave, and strong workplace health and safety laws. The historic buildings in The Rocks in Sydney were not preserved because the developers who were intending to destroy them just changed their minds. The Royal Botanic Gardens remain today as a jewel in Sydney's crown, rather than a carpark for the Opera House, because ordinary people stood up and fought back, supported by the BLF.

Of course, we should never accept or condone criminal behaviour by unions, or by banks. But the current federal Liberal government, like the Howard government before it, is doing what it can to seek to criminalise and punish legitimate union organising while doing everything it can to protect its mates in big business, including the banks. Those opposite in this place are their little cheer squad making ridiculous, at times highly offensive and at times slanderous, arguments about individuals and unions.

As we have heard, and as I alluded to at the beginning, it was only recently that the former Canberra Liberals leader was forced to formally apologise for a defamatory comment made about the former CFMEU ACT branch secretary. As I said, this is not the first time the Canberra Liberals have had to issue an apology to the CFMEU for defamation, defamation of an organisation and its leaders that exist solely for the benefit of working people

This is because those opposite find that, outside the privilege of this place, their attitude towards workers and their unions can very quickly see them at odds with the law. I will not go through their approach to the case of Mr Lomax, which Minister Rattenbury has outlined, as he has so much of the Liberals' terrible record in this regard.

Madam Speaker, I also spoke last night about the prices and income accord achieved under the Hawke-Keating government. The accord shows what is possible when unions, government and business genuinely work together. The accord delivered significant improvements for Australian workers, including programs that we now take for granted like Medicare and compulsory superannuation.

Laurie Carmichael's achievements are the achievements of unionists and the Labor movement and all that stand in solidarity with us. Like all in the Labor movement, Laurie fought on behalf of workers for a better standard of living, for a better future and for opportunity for all. I am proud to be part of a movement that has amongst its ranks champions like Laurie Carmichael and people like Sally McManus and Michele O'Neil who lead the charge today, and people like the members, delegates, organisers and officials of the CFMMEU.

I am proud to stand and fight for a better deal for workers, for better pay and secure entitlements, for fairer bargaining and for safer workplaces. The question to those opposite is: why don't you fight for these things? And the answer is clear. There is no mistaking what drives the ideological obsession of those opposite. They are not just anti-union; they are anti-worker. They deride the fairer and more equal future that the Labor movement fights for. Mr Wall proudly says that he will not support anything in this place that improves things for workers and their families.

Mr Wall: That is a lie and you know it.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: In doing so, those opposite stand against the migrant women—

Mr Gentleman: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Resume your seat, minister. Yes, a point of order?

Mr Gentleman: Madam Speaker, Mr Wall just called across the chamber that that is a lie. Those words are not to be used in this place. He should withdraw that imputation.

Mr Wall: Madam Speaker, if the member opposite wants to put words in my own mouth, I ask that she actually be accurate in her quote.

MADAM SPEAKER: Did you put across the chamber that that is a lie?

Mr Wall: Yes, Madam Speaker, and it is.

MADAM SPEAKER: Then you will withdraw that, thank you.

Mr Wall: I will bring a substantive motion later if I feel—

MADAM SPEAKER: No, you will withdraw it now.

Mr Wall: I withdraw.

MADAM SPEAKER: Ms Stephen-Smith.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: In their approach, those opposite stand against the migrant women doing piecework in the textile industry, who are represented by the manufacturing division of the CFMMEU. They oppose improved workplace safety, preferring company profits. In doing so, they stand against the seafarers represented by the maritime division of the CFMMEU.

They abhor unions because they take some of the power from the boardroom and give it to workers. In doing so, they stand against the formworker represented by the construction division of the CFMMEU. Like my colleagues in this place, I am proud to stand for workers' rights to organise and to be represented by their union. I am proud to stand for freedom of association.

The motion, in my view, is completely out of order but it warranted a strong response to stand up for unions and the Labor movement and for everything that they have achieved against the wishes of the conservatives and the Liberals.

MR COE (Yerrabi—Leader of the Opposition) (10.21): We in this place should be upholding the highest level of integrity, especially in our dealings with constituents

and with organisations in our community. That is why it is so important that Mr Wall's motion be passed today. It is appropriate that ACT Labor members of the Assembly suspend all affiliations with the CFMMEU. And there are many reasons why this should happen, not the least of which is the disproportionate power this organisation has over those opposite and, in turn, the disproportionate power it has over the ACT government. We have seen it time and time again through policies, through legislation and through sweetheart deals.

Of course, the most staggering of those sweetheart deals was the ACT government's secret and scandalous purchase of the headquarters of the CFMEU in Dickson. The Tradies building was secretly sold to the ACT government for \$4 million with a \$1 per year leaseback. It is absolutely shocking. And the only reason I know about it, the only reason that Canberrans know about it, is because of an anonymous tip-off the opposition received. It was not because of due diligence; it was not because the ACT government went through a tender process or a procurement process; it was not even because they made an announcement that they had made this purchase.

They tried to keep the purchase a secret, and it was only when the opposition did a title search for that building that we discovered that the owner of the building was, in fact, the ACT government. It was the CFMEU. It was not the Dickson Tradies. It was the ACT government.

Flowing on from that title search we then obtained a contract for sale and saw the extraordinary amount of money that was paid secretly by the ACT government. What is more, the settlement occurred three days after contracts were exchanged. How many business deals or property deals in Canberra settle three days after contracts exchange? It just shows the great lengths this government will go to in order to appease their mates in the union movement.

The disappointing thing about all this is that there are many good, honest, hard-working people who belong to unions in Canberra—thousands in fact. They are let down by this government and they are let down by many of their union leaders that put themselves before the organisations. We have seen that time and time again. We see that with the secret deals the ACT government does in order to satisfy their mates in the Construction, Forestry, Maritime, Mining and Energy Union.

On 16 August the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission issued a media release that I will read into *Hansard* now. The title is: "Criminal cartel charges laid against CFMMEU and its ACT branch secretary."

Criminal charges have been laid against the Construction, Forestry, Maritime, Mining and Energy Union (CFMMEU) and its ACT Divisional Branch Secretary, Jason O'Mara, in relation to alleged cartel conduct.

"The CFMMEU and Mr O'Mara are each charged with attempting to induce suppliers of steelfixing services and scaffolding services to reach cartel contracts, arrangements or understandings containing cartel provisions in relation to services provided to builders in the ACT in 2012 to 2013," ACCC Chair Rod Sims said.

The charges are being prosecuted by the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions (CDPP).

The first mention of the charges before the ACT Magistrates Court is scheduled for 27 September 2018.

The Competition and Consumer Act requires any trial of such offences to proceed by way of indictment in the Federal Court of Australia or a state or territory Supreme Court.

The ACCC is unable to comment further as this is a criminal matter now before the Court.

It goes on:

Reporting conduct of concern in the construction industry

The ACCC has recently set up an anonymous reporting portal where members of the public can report and communicate anonymously with an ACCC investigator about anticompetitive practices in the construction sector. The portal can be accessed at www.accc.gov.au/CCUreports

I reiterate the words of the ACCC and call upon Canberrans who want to anonymously report to the ACCC and contribute to any ongoing or potential investigation to visit that website: acc.gov.au/CCUreports. I do not know how extensive the alleged cartel behaviour could be. But one way or another the sheer fact that it is before the courts right now and the sheer fact that charges have been laid suggest to me that there are some very serious things taking place in the ACT. And I, for one, and I am sure many other people in Canberra, will be keeping a close eye on the courts on 27 September.

Mr Pettersson: Why were the other charges dropped?

MR COE: It is interesting we should get interjections from Mr Pettersson. I note that Mr Pettersson and Ms Cody were frantically nodding their heads as Shane Rattenbury, their partner in crime, was there giving a vigorous defence of the CFMMEU. It is interesting I should use the words “partner in crime”, because that is, of course, a special term saved for Minister Stephen-Smith, the partner in crime herself.

It is really quite extraordinary that you would have this bullying organisation put out a flyer to tens of thousands of households calling a Labor minister a “partner in crime”. But the amazing thing is that she is called a partner in crime and does not even defend herself. She does not even go public and say that it is outrageous. She does not come into this place and claim to be misrepresented. She does not come into this place and say it is all a sham. Quite the opposite; she simply cops it on the chin, seemingly apologises, and then puts forward proposed legislation to appease her accusers.

It is outrageous, and it shows just how strong the cartel behaviour is between the Australian Labor Party and the leaders of the CFMMEU. It is absolutely outrageous.

Ms Stephen-Smith: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Point of order.

Ms Stephen-Smith: I understand that cartel behaviour is an offence, and the Leader of the Opposition appears to be accusing both the union and the Labor Party of committing an offence.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Coe, I ask that you withdraw.

MR COE: Happy to withdraw.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you. You have 35 seconds left.

MR COE: Those opposite have a gross conflict of interest. It is a conflict of interest with regard to money, with regard to power, and with regard to the organisations they belong to. That is why Mr Wall's motion is so important. That is why I believe the Assembly should agree to the fact that all affiliations with the CFMMEU should be suspended.

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) (10.31): I was not going to speak today but I thought I would give it a crack because I find it quite remarkable—unsurprising, of course—that this motion has been brought today by Mr Wall. For anybody who is listening, it is a bit Captain Obvious: we all know how much Mr Wall hates unions, and this motion reaffirms that. Some would say it is an unhealthy hatred with a fair amount of venom directed towards unions in this town and the workers they represent.

It is not surprising, and it has been good to hear Mr Rattenbury and Ms Stephen-Smith talk about unions and the work they do representing people in this town. The allegations that have been made by the Liberals about the behaviour of unions in representing their members is quite remarkable as well. Mr Wall would not ever blink an eye at representing employers who might be doing the wrong thing in this town. Those employers who do the wrong thing and, if left unchecked, take advantage of vulnerable workers in this town.

In April last year Mr Wall was asking questions in here of me representing a particular contract cleaning company. He asked the question:

Minster, can you assure the Assembly that Rose Cleaning Service and Phillips Cleaning Service will continue to be paid directly for work undertaken to date for the cleaning of ACT government schools?

My response was:

If the two contractors are providing work and are operating within the law, of course they will be paid.

Later in April last year a court ruled that a Canberra school cleaning business that underpaid migrant workers—some of the most vulnerable workers in this town—and asked them to sign agreements they did not understand breached the Fair Work Act.

United Voice Union, another union Mr Wall has passionate feelings towards—or against—launched a case against company director Angelo Di Dio in the Federal Court on behalf of 22 workers in 2015 alleging in the court documents that some were owed almost \$25,000. That is \$25,000 to these vulnerable workers. Most of these workers were S'gaw Karen refugees from Thailand and Burma who spoke little English and spent two decades in refugee camps in Thailand before they were resettled in Australia.

The company, which was contracted to clean 10 public schools in the ACT, repeatedly denied these allegations. However, the court found, and it was reported in the *Canberra Times* last year, that those allegations were true, in fact, and ordered the company to pay back those employees the money they were entitled to. Of course, the union was delighted with the win and congratulated the workers for fighting a two-year legal battle for their entitlements because they wanted the truth to be told about this particular employer, whom Mr Wall represented in this place.

Mr Wall is very happy to represent people who have clearly breached the Workplace Relations Act, but when it comes to vulnerable workers he says they are not allowed to join up to the union and have their interests represented in this place by members on this side of the Assembly. It is perfectly fine for us to do that, and we will continue to do that. We are proud union members, all of us, and we will absolutely stand up for the rights of unions to organise and represent their interests in this place, as would Mr Wall on any occasion that he does.

He suggests that employers should have all the glory and be the only ones represented in this place, but then he comes in here and represents an employer who breaks the law. It is apparently okay for that to happen, but when it comes to unions and workers who are being underpaid or being treated unfairly in their workplace it is not okay for them to be represented.

This motion is completely out of order but unsurprising. It reaffirms what we all know: the Canberra Liberals are haters of unions in the ACT, and Mr Wall is the greatest hater of all. I do not support the motion and was happy to hear the support from this side of the chamber for unions in this town.

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) (10.35): When you are an opposition devoid of any ideas or plans, when you are an opposition without purpose or decision, when you are a party without unity or conviction, what do you do? You bring a motion such as this one us today. You decide to talk about the things you are against, not for.

What are the opposition against, Madam Speaker? They are against workers and their representatives. They are against unions, and it is disgraceful. Unions have helped

make this nation great. They have fought for so many of the things we take for granted now. Without the unions we would not have annual leave, penalty rates, maternity leave, superannuation, equal pay for women, sick leave, redundancy pay, workers compensation, collective bargaining and unfair dismissal protection. These are the things that we stand up for on this side of the chamber.

By bringing on this motion today those opposite are saying they are against these conditions we take for granted and are sending a clear warning to Canberrans that, if given the chance, those opposite would take away pay and conditions and undermine the protections we currently have.

The union movement has helped shape Australia for the better, and the CFMMEU and its predecessors have been part of this. Instead of working with unions to build a better city, a better Canberra, those opposite have an unhealthy obsession with the CFMMEU. Sometimes it is good; we have heard in this place praise for the former leader of this particular union, and it did not come from this side of the chamber. We have also heard an apology to that same former leader, and that did not come from this side of the chamber.

We have seen taxpayers' money wasted because of the obsessions those opposite have with the CFMMEU. While they continue with this unhealthy fixation, we will get on with governing, leading and helping Canberrans. Unlike those opposite, this Labor government will work with all of those who want to build a better and brighter city. We are getting on with the job of growing services and infrastructure as our city grows. We have a plan for now and into the future, and we are committed to making this great city even better.

Question put:

That the motion be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 9

Miss C Burch	Ms Lee
Mr Coe	Mr Parton
Mrs Dunne	Mr Wall
Mr Hanson	
Mrs Kikkert	
Ms Lawder	

Noes 12

Ms J Burch	Ms Orr
Ms Cheyne	Mr Pettersson
Ms Cody	Mr Ramsay
Ms Fitzharris	Mr Rattenbury
Mr Gentleman	Mr Steel
Ms Le Couteur	Ms Stephen-Smith

Question resolved in the negative.

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.

Waste—plastic waste reduction

MS ORR (Yerrabi) (10.42): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) in the hierarchy of waste, avoidance is the best form of waste minimisation;
- (b) single use plastic generates a significant amount of waste per year;
- (c) that the waste generated from single use plastic is slow to degrade and often harmful to the environment;
- (d) recyclable plastic often ends up in the general waste stream and options for the recycling of single use soft plastics are limited;
- (e) the ACT banned single use plastic bags on 1 November 2011, and a review in 2014 reported that 65 percent of Canberra grocery shoppers supported the ban;
- (f) a further review of the ACT's plastic bag ban was commissioned in January 2018;
- (g) the Government's commitment to reducing waste as articulated through the Waste Feasibility Study and its Roadmap; and
- (h) public support for initiatives such as the single use plastic bag ban, the "Straws Suck" campaign and the container deposit scheme demonstrate a willingness for behavioural change that lead to a reduction in the generation and increase in recycling of single use plastic waste; and

(2) calls on the ACT Government to:

- (a) update the Assembly on the status of the latest review into the ACT's plastic bag ban by the last sitting week of 2018; and
- (b) investigate further opportunities that will reduce the use of single use plastic throughout the ACT, so that less waste is generated.

We often see images of the incomprehensible impact plastic is having on wildlife, particularly in our oceans: a sea bird tangled in a shopping bag, a dolphin caught in an old fishing net, a turtle with its stomach full of plastic. In 2010 eight million tonnes of plastic went into the ocean. This in itself is a terrifying concern.

But when we consider that every 11 years the amount of plastic produced doubles—and the durability of plastic means it can take up to 600 years to break down in our oceans or landfill—we realise that the amount of plastic will grow exponentially year on year. Based on this level of production between 2017 and 2028, we are expected to produce as much plastic as we did between the 1950s and now.

It is not just our oceans feeling the devastating impacts of plastic pollution. Our waterways, our parks, our streets and our neighbourhoods all suffer from litter and rubbish, largely made up of plastic material. Chip packets, bottles and bags and packaging clutter up our drains and pollute our green spaces. There is a very real and

very concerning risk to both our environment and our wellbeing. This is why it is so important for us as a community to reduce our waste.

When it comes to the environment, our first principle must always be: do no harm. In the hierarchy of waste, avoidance is the best form of waste minimisation. Not producing a unit of plastic means not having to dispose of that unit and not having to wait for it to degrade. It means one less unit of plastic entering our water system and it means one less unit of plastic breaking down into plastic debris and potentially entering our food supply chain.

Of course, fish are not the only way plastic is getting into our food supply. A recent study found that nearly all major brands of bottled water contain tiny particles of plastic. It seems quite ironic that we purchase bottled water as a healthy alternative to other bottled beverages, yet it contains an average of 10 plastic particles per litre, each larger than the width of a human hair.

Consumer advocate Choice reported in 2014 that while the risk is low there is growing evidence that food can be contaminated by harmful chemicals in certain types of food packaging made from plastic. We are yet to fully understand the impact that plastic in our food supply is having on us. However, there is agreement that certain chemicals found in plastic act as endocrine disruptors in the body and cause a range of health problems. Issues such as infertility, obesity, breast and prostate cancer, heart disease and diabetes may be caused by even low levels of exposure to certain chemicals in plastic.

Interestingly, our conservative commentators have argued, in their staunch opposition to the banning of single-use plastic bags in supermarkets, that our reusable bags present a public health risk. But these claims were discredited by an example in San Francisco which looked at emergency room data that found that food-borne illnesses rose by 46 per cent after a ban on plastic bags came into effect. These claims were discredited by a San Francisco health officer who stated that the claim was not warranted and the report had failed to even test the hypotheses that the increase in gastrointestinal food-borne illnesses and deaths was due to reusable bags. But of course the conservatives can simply brush this to one side, as they have done with the best available science on climate change.

But the fact remains that the waste generated from single-use plastic is slow to degrade and often harmful to the environment. It is for these reasons that avoidance must be our priority. Recyclable plastic often ends up in the general waste stream, and options for recycling of single-use soft plastics are limited.

We often make the mistake of thinking that if something is recyclable it will be recycled. However, most people are mortified when they hear the plastic bottle they are holding contains less than 10 per cent recycled material and, in many cases, as little as six per cent.

Drink manufacturers do not use bottles made from 100 per cent recyclable material. This is for one of two reasons: either they feel customers will be turned off by the cloudy nature of these bottles or because of the relative costs they face. The bulk of

the plastic we recycle is shipped offshore to developing countries to make synthetic fabrics for clothing, carpeting and other textile-based products. The reality is that these products often end up in something like the \$5 T-shirt you buy at a discount retailer that only lasts a couple of washes before losing its shape. Presently, much of this material will eventually end up as landfill. However, more and more there are retailers asking their customers to return the unwanted clothes so that the material can be reused once more.

The growing demand for clothing, the greater ease with which plastic bottles can be used to produce synthetic textiles and the low price of oil have meant that drink manufacturers continue to produce plastic bottles with at least 90 per cent new material. And every time one of us buys a drink in a plastic bottle 90 per cent of that is new waste that we must try to keep out of landfill.

Given that in 2015 Australians purchased over 726 million litres of water, it is clear that our first principle must be: do no harm. This problem is only compounded by the fact that pumping water out of the ground, packaging, transporting and chilling the water creates around 60,000 tonnes of greenhouse gas per year. But when you consider that Australians are importing water from as far away as Fiji or France, the environmental consequences are enormous.

The most obvious solution is to prevent the waste in the first place. A terrific side effect of this is that it is significantly cheaper for you in the long run. The average price of bottled water per litre is nearing \$3, whereas the cost of ICON water is typically less than 1c per litre. Sydney Water states that if you are drinking eight glasses of water a day tap water will cost you less than \$1.50 a year compared to around \$2,600 for bottled water.

A common rebuttal to the need to take environmental action is that to take action is most costly and that we are always faced with the prospect of having to trade off our financial wellbeing in order to improve our environmental wellbeing. However, here is a practical example of significant savings derived from environmental action. And it is hardly the only case, as I have discussed in previous motions I have put to the Assembly.

Of course we all get caught short and sometimes need to buy a bottle of water or allow ourselves a sugary bottled treat. And it is an unfortunate reality that for the time being single-use plastic remains a part of our lives. This is why the ACT government is taking an active role in managing waste. Earlier this year we introduced a container deposit scheme. Less than two months into operation the scheme has already collected one million items. As an added benefit, around 10 per cent of the proceeds generated by the scheme have been donated by the community to charities such as the Salvation Army and Saint Vincent de Paul. It will not be long before we can walk into our local K-Mart, Target or Big W and walk out wearing the bottles we recycled previously using the container deposit scheme.

The ACT is also a leader in banning single-use plastic bags. I appreciate that the shift away from single-use bags in supermarkets was an inconvenience at first. It requires behavioural change, which is what has led to the frustrations experienced elsewhere

when trying to adjust to a ban. It is an ongoing discussion that needs to be had between governments, retailers and the community, and I am very much heartened by the fact that we as Canberrans are continuing this conversation with a review of the plastic bag ban. I very much look forward to how this review might further improve environmental outcomes for the community.

I would like to acknowledge that there are areas where reducing or eliminating our single-use plastic becomes tricky, and we must always understand the difficulties that groups in our communities might face. I am a strong supporter of the straws suck campaign. To use a plastic straw once and throw it away creates an enormous amount of waste. Where it can be prevented, it should be. However, we need to appreciate that there are people in our community living with disabilities that require access to plastic drinking straws. In these instances we need to ensure that they are made readily available. However, I would also encourage everyone to consider straws made from less damaging plastics to mitigate this.

One initiative I encourage everyone to try is Plastic Free July. The initiative challenges everyone to choose to refuse and to take measures to try out how they can reduce their single-use plastic usage. I would like to thank my Labor colleagues who have taken on the challenge of Plastic Free July with me. Ms Cheyne adopted using a reusable straw, and I believe she continues to use it. The Attorney-General was already well adept at minimising his plastic waste but committed to continuing to reduce his use of soft plastics. Mr Steel has made a valiant effort in adopting reusable dog waste bags but admitted to being unable to make the changes he wanted to enact through July but has committed to trying to keep going in the future.

The Chief Minister purchased a reusable coffee cup. I spoke with the Chief Minister just recently about this and he admitted to me that while he was grumpy for the first few days it really was easy to make the behavioural change, and he uses this cup every day now, even if it means he has to walk into the office every morning because he forgot to take his cup home with him.

Well done to everyone who took the Plastic Free July challenge, and I hope that we continue to take steps to reducing waste. Of course you do not need to wait until July 2019. You can, as Mr Steel has told me he will be doing, take the challenge every day. Through our actions we can all make a meaningful difference in reducing our waste, keeping our city clean and keeping more material out of landfill.

This motion calls on the government to investigate further opportunities to reduce single-use plastic throughout the ACT. I encourage all Canberrans to explore this for themselves. Start collecting your soft plastics and taking them to your local supermarket to recycle them. Reduce your consumption of bottled drinks and enjoy the added benefit to your hip pocket from the container deposit scheme.

I encourage everyone in this Assembly to support this motion not just in the way they vote but also through their actions. I commend this motion to the Assembly.

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) (10.52): I certainly support Ms Orr's motion about reducing plastic waste. This is a very important topic. Single-use plastic comes at a high cost to the community and the environment. There are viable alternatives that provide better outcomes. Ms Orr has given a few examples that she has been able to encourage in her own sphere of influence. Certainly, it highlights the fact that there is a responsibility to address this significant problem at a number of levels: individually, collectively and as a government.

There is definitely a role for government to play. The ACT ban on single-use plastic shopping bags is but one example of this. Introduced in November 2011, it was a great first step in reducing plastic waste in the ACT. The 2014 review of the ban found that it had reduced plastic bag waste to landfill by about one-third and reduced the number of lightweight plastic bags found as litter in streets and waterways in the ACT.

We now see other states and territories implementing similar bans and national supermarket chains voluntarily implementing an end to free single-use plastic shopping bags. While this is great progress, there is still much more we can do. I am interested that we have seen moves by major supermarket chains to do this. In part they have done it because of a failure by governments in other jurisdictions to act, to take that leadership role and to address what, up until this point, has been a market failure. I think that is a poor reflection on some of those governments, given the general levels of community support for this.

I am certainly looking forward to being able to release the "unfantastic plastic" review of our ACT ban that I commissioned late last year from the Office of the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment. I asked the office to do that because I wanted to ensure that it was working as well as possible and to have it reviewed independently. All the commissioner's reports come to the Assembly and the Assembly will have access to that information.

The government will certainly examine with interest the recommendations arising from that review. I have no doubt that there will be opportunities for the ACT to improve the effectiveness of this regulatory measure. I certainly support the continued improvement of our efforts. That will be a discussion for this place to have, and for the government to have, once that report is available.

Waste avoidance certainly needs to be our highest priority for reducing waste, followed by re-use and then by recycling as we implement the waste feasibility study road map. That is a very important point to make because there is a large amount of natural resource and energy that goes into producing plastics.

Plastics have obviously been one of the great revolutions of modern society in terms of the convenience and the adaptability they provide. It is only now that we are getting that greater and deeper understanding of the true impact that plastics are having on our planet. Avoidance is the most effective strategy, because it avoids that use of natural resources in the first place to produce those plastics. But then the re-use and recycling are important follow-up steps to make sure that when that plastic is produced we get maximum value out of it.

Reducing waste, and in particular reducing organic waste to landfill, is also important for reducing our greenhouse gas emissions to meet our net zero emissions by 2045 target. Sending organic material to landfill is a waste of valuable material that could be composted and used to nourish topsoil. By increasing diversion of organic material from landfill, we can reduce emissions and improve our local soils.

The ACT government's highly successful Actsmart business recycling program continues to support ACT businesses by providing free advice, education and signage to assist with reducing waste and increasing recycling. There are currently 1,004 businesses participating in the program. With dedicated support from the Actsmart team, accredited businesses have all achieved reductions in waste to landfill, some by over 90 per cent. These programs encourage business clients and the public to look at ways of reducing waste generation and recycling of soft plastics.

Similarly, the Actsmart schools program actively encourages waste-free lunches to reduce single-use packaging in lunch boxes, encouraging students to avoid using cling wrap and instead opting for reusable containers and beeswax wraps. Some schools have also commenced sorting and collecting soft plastics and taking these to collection points at supermarkets.

I have to say that the way many of our schools across the territory have embraced this program and made an extraordinary impact in rolling out what they have learned from it is really inspiring. I have been to a number of schools and seen the active rollout of this program. Students certainly embrace it. They often are the ones who are most energetic about it. It is not that they have to be told to do it. Once they are given the knowledge, they really get stuck into it and are very creative.

It gives me great hope that over the coming decades, as these students come through the decision-making structures, whether it be in government, in private companies, in the service sector, they will really bring about a significant change. That does not mean we should leave it to them. We must get stuck into it now. But I have great optimism about the future in that regard.

As Ms Orr mentioned, the ACT government launched the straws suck campaign a couple of months ago to encourage businesses and the community to rethink their need for single-use plastic straws. The straws suck campaign delivered by Actsmart involves taking a pledge to reduce the number of single-use straws being used. There are currently 24 businesses signed up to the campaign. Community members can sign up to this pledge as part of the Actsmart online carbon challenge.

In the context of that campaign, it is worth reflecting on a few of the facts about single-use straws. An estimated 10 million plastic straws are used in Australia every single day. When some people first read that, they think it is a typo. They think it must mean every year. But in fact it is every single day. It is an extraordinary figure. That straws take up to 200 years to degrade in the environment and will never actually biodegrade underlines the impact of that process. Plastic straws are in the top 10 most littered items. Plastic straws used today will outlive your children's children's children. It gives you a sense, putting it in those terms, of how long-lived these

plastics are for what might be literally 10 minutes in your drink, never to be used again, and discarded into the environment with that incredibly long-lived presence.

That is why we launched this campaign. While straws are just one small part of the plastic waste problem, the campaign offers an opportunity to begin the conversation about plastic waste with community members and local businesses. Through influencing consumer and business behaviour, we can make alternatives to plastic mainstream and encourage broader conversations and action to reduce other plastic waste trends.

Some people have said, “Why focus on straws?” Aside from the statistics I have just given about the sheer volume of waste and the long-lived nature of it, I think straws are one of those things that people can relate to in the sense that they know that we all use them at times. There are also good alternatives out there, whether it is businesses purchasing bamboo straws, which are available, or providing stainless steel straws.

The very first organisation we launched the campaign with was Bentspoke Brewing in Braddon. They purchased a couple of hundred stainless steel straws. The cost of them was not high. I have since seen the owners of Bentspoke and talked to them about how it is going. They said that their customers have embraced the campaign very well. They like the stainless steel straws. Not too many people have stolen them as souvenirs; so that is a good outcome as well. I think they have demonstrated that it is possible to do it differently.

I appreciate and laud those businesses that have signed up to the campaign. I thank them for their leadership in the community and their embracing a better future that is more sustainable. It is critical that we act now to reduce plastic waste, both for the health of the world’s oceans and waterways and to care for our environment in the ACT. I am certainly proud of the work that the ACT government has been able to do to reduce plastic waste. I am committed to continuing to improve our work in this area for the sake of our community and future generations.

As members will have seen, I have circulated an amendment underlining some of those steps that the ACT government has already been able to take. Whilst I absolutely agree with Ms Orr’s motion, I think it is also relevant to add these factors for the record in the Assembly so that those reading the debate in years to come will see the steps that we have already taken. But I also note in proposing this amendment and in supporting the motion that we know we have much more work to do.

This amendment highlights the ban on plastic bags, the street level recycling bins in town centres and the installation of new drinking fountains in town centres and other areas to reduce plastic bottle usage. For me, that is one of those win-win initiatives. It not only encourages people to bring their own container that they can refill for free and avoid some of those costs that Ms Orr spoke about, including the incredible cost that we pay for water—if you buy it in a bottle, the price per litre is really eye-watering—it also encourages people to avoid sugary drinks, which tackles some of the other agendas that the government has around improving people’s healthy lifestyles and helping to combat the trend to obesity that we are seeing in our community.

Of course, we have just launched the container deposit scheme under Minister Fitzharris. She may speak to that today. It is something that is very popular amongst our community. I think it will make a significant difference, particularly on the litter front. I also think that when people return bags full of plastic bottles and the like to the drop-off points, perhaps it will start to remind them just how much plastic waste is accumulated. I note the Actsmart work, both in terms of reducing waste, particularly in the commercial sector, but also the important waste education role that they play.

I thank Ms Orr for bringing this motion to the Assembly today and for giving us the opportunity to speak to it. I am really encouraged by the community conversation that is occurring on this. I would like to acknowledge also the role that the ABC program *War on waste* has played in igniting the public imagination on this and in sparking the debate. It is bringing the issue into people's lounge rooms in a way that is very practical, very real. It has a degree of humour and it has enabled people to understand the significance of waste and the challenge that we face to address it. It highlights, literally, the sheer wastefulness of some of the systems in the way that they discard valuable resources with little care.

In addition to supporting Ms Orr's motion, I commend my amendment to the Assembly. It is in two parts. I seek leave to move the two parts of my amendment together.

Leave granted.

MR RATTENBURY: I move the amendments circulated in my name:

- (1) In paragraph (1)(f), omit "January 2018", substitute "December 2017".
- (2) Insert new paragraph (1)(i):
 - "(i) initiatives in successive Parliamentary Agreements between the Greens and the ALP have resulted in action to reduce plastic waste, including:
 - (i) banning plastic bags;
 - (ii) new street level recycling bins in town centres;
 - (iii) installation of new drinking fountains in town centres and other areas to reduce plastic bottle usage;
 - (iv) a container deposit scheme;
 - (v) additional ACTsmart funding to reduce waste in the commercial sector;
 - (vi) increased waste education;"

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee) (11.04): I am really pleased to speak today in support of Ms Orr's motion about plastic reduction. Talking about the reduction of plastic is not a waste of time; it is a waste of our planet's resources. The ACT government is Australia's most environmentally conscious government. We are working towards a 100 per cent renewable electricity target. We are working to encourage increased take-up of battery storage and innovation in renewables. We are working to encourage zero-emission vehicles, starting with our public transport system and our transition to zero-emission vehicles action plan.

We are working to make Canberra a more environmentally friendly, and cleaner, city. This includes tackling waste, particularly plastic waste. Australia has been captivated by the excellent ABC show, *War on Waste*. I know some of those on the opposite side of the chamber cannot stand up in this place to support the ABC, but *War on Waste* is an excellent educational program and is clearly one of the most popular shows on Australian TV for a reason: Australians are interested in working to reduce waste. People care about the health and wellbeing of our environment.

A recent airing of the show put the spotlight on single-use plastics and their detrimental impact on the environment, particularly straws and plastic bags. This is helping to raise awareness about the importance of reducing plastic waste and encouraging governments around the country—local, state, and federal—to take responsible steps to reduce waste.

The ACT government has made huge progress on waste minimisation. As outlined in the ACT waste management strategy, *Towards a Sustainable Canberra: reducing waste and recovering resources to achieve a sustainable, carbon-neutral Canberra 2011–2025*, the ACT government has a goal of zero recoverable waste sent to landfill. This means working to reduce waste across several areas.

With regard to garden waste the ACT government is rolling out our green bins program throughout the ACT, which has been incredibly successful. They are also very popular in the community and provide a great addition to people's gardens. I have a fairly large garden at my home in Kambah, and I became an early adopter of the scheme as Kambah was part of the pilot with Weston Creek. It is an easy way of disposing of prunings, leaves, grass clippings and other green waste. That project was one of Labor's key commitments at the 2016 election.

Another commitment was, of course, to introduce a container deposit scheme. The CDS is an excellent waste recycling initiative. Since 30 June people across our city have been able to collect containers and return them to various locations across Canberra for a 10-cent refund. Providing incentives is one of the most effective methods to increase the rate of recycling, particularly with drink containers. Research undertaken by the City of Sydney saw that a refund scheme for drinking containers was overwhelmingly the most motivating incentive for people to recycle.

This is important because drinking containers, often made of plastic, make up around 25 per cent of ACT litter by volume according to the 2015-16 national litter index. A key indicator of the success of the CDS is the fact that only a few days ago, less than two months after the launch of the scheme, more than one million containers have been returned, including 186,000 plastic containers. The millionth container was deposited by my Kambah neighbour Emily Scott. Well done, Emily. It is great to see local members of the community participating and recycling.

In addition to improving waste recovery, one of the key parts of the waste management strategy is to simply encourage less waste to be produced in the first place. Part of this is banning single-use plastic bags, among other issues. We have all seen the recent fiasco of the backflip of Coles supermarkets on reducing plastic bag

waste, which shows more work still needs to be done to encourage good behaviour amongst some of Australia's largest plastic polluters.

Fortunately, jurisdictions like the ACT, South Australia and Tasmania already have regulations in place to limit the prevalence of single-use plastic bags. Indeed, we in Canberra have been coping with bringing our own bags to the shops for almost seven years now. To see Coles backflip on their commitment to reducing plastic waste then backflip again was both confusing and disappointing.

The facts are clear: banning single-use plastic bags works. Whilst a new review of the ACT plastic ban will be taking place soon, according to the most recent review in 2014, plastic bag waste was cut from 266 tonnes before the ban to 171 tonnes, an approximate alleged 36 per cent reduction, as Minister Rattenbury has mentioned.

It is great that this motion calls for an update on the program so the ACT government can continue to monitor plastic use in Canberra and look at further ways we can reduce their use. Indeed, more can be done. Recently momentum has grown to get rid of single-use plastic straws through the straw no more campaign and others around the country. This is something the ACT government has been supporting, and we are not alone. As reported by the ABC, Scotland has announced plans to phase out plastic straws. Even companies like McDonalds are currently exploring the phase-out of plastic straws over the next few years, which would certainly be a welcome development if it occurs.

I thank Ms Orr for bringing this motion forward. Our government wants to make our community cleaner. Waste avoidance—reducing the need to produce waste in the first place—is the easiest way to minimise the waste we produce as a community. The ACT government has already achieved many successes in reducing waste through our green bins program, the recently introduced container deposit scheme, and by being one of Australia's first jurisdictions to ban single-use plastic bags, something that did not cause the sky to fall in.

There is more to be done. As outlined in the waste management strategy new ideas can be introduced to continue to reduce waste and make our city even more environmentally friendly. Labor is always committed to the values of sustainability. Reducing plastic waste continues to enhance the ACT's reputation as a clean city. We should continue to be working to make progress with a goal of becoming a territory that generates much less waste, that improves the recovery of our resources, that provides a clean environment and that works towards becoming carbon neutral. These are all goals the ACT government can achieve. I thank Ms Orr for bringing this motion forward today.

MS FITZHARRIS (Yerrabi—Minister for Health and Wellbeing, Minister for Transport and City Services and Minister for Higher Education, Training and Research) (11.12): I also thank Ms Orr very much for bringing this important motion forward. I know how passionate and knowledgeable she is about this with her personal dedication through plastic-free July and advocacy right across the Assembly. I can attest to many instances of our colleagues reducing their use of plastic.

I will provide a short insight into how the government continues to explore ways to avoid, reduce and reuse waste in the ACT. Our waste management strategy from 2011-25 articulates this commitment. It is clearly focused on generating less waste in the ACT and working towards full resource recovery. The strategy also outlines how we will work towards ensuring that our city remains a clean environment and a carbon neutral waste sector. I have been working closely with both Ministers Gentleman and Rattenbury on this.

The strategy outlines our waste management targets of achieving up to 60 per cent of waste being diverted from landfill by 2025 and a carbon neutral waste sector by 2020. These are among the most ambitious in the country. The recently completed ACT waste feasibility study examined options to help us achieve those targets. The study has presented a pathway to lift our resource recovery rate from the current levels of around 70 per cent to 87 per cent. Its recommendations are also designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by diverting organics—that is both garden and food waste—from landfill.

The study included a number of options: promoting better waste management behaviour within our own community; including food waste collection in the popular green bins kerbside service; supporting local industry to find more ways to produce and use recycled products; and exploring the conversion of residual waste to energy.

Consultation on the study's road map concluded in July. Initial community feedback has been very positive and a consultation report is being prepared. The study recommendations are consistent with the waste hierarchy, placing waste avoidance ahead of technical recycling solutions. While the ACT landfills employ best practice management, landfill should only be a destination for waste that cannot be recovered and recycled. That is our long-term objective.

I will now specifically address the issue of reducing the use of single-use plastic. As others have noted, plastics are estimated to be a very small amount by weight of the approximately 250,000 tonnes of waste going to landfill in the ACT each year. However, as we know, plastic can take hundreds of years to degrade, so we need to lead the way in encouraging avoidance of all plastic waste where possible.

Most rigid plastics can be recycled in our yellow-lid bins at home or out in the community. Soft or film-plastics, however, cannot currently be put through our recycling system in the ACT. While the major supermarkets are collecting soft plastics, including plastic bags which they recycle at commercial recycling facilities, we must all play a role in mindfully and deliberately reducing the amount of single-use plastic we purchase, use and throw away.

The ACT government is looking into how its own soft plastics can be recycled. Transport Canberra and City Services recently sent a bail of soft plastics generated by Capital Linen Services to Victoria for processing. In return, the directorate purchased a new park bench made from soft plastic for the staff to use. While this is a small first step, TCCS has since formed an internal soft plastics working group which is exploring opportunities to see soft plastics generated by ACT government directorates recycled.

The working group is also exploring ways to ensure that the ACT government's own procurement practices support the plastic recycling markets. We are investigating options for buying items such as bollards, benches or even asphalt made from recycled plastic products. While soft plastic recycling opportunities are being more fully explored, the government encourages the Canberra community to take personal action. Again, this is consistent with the waste hierarchy: avoid and reduce waste, reuse and recycle.

To support this, the territory delivers ongoing education, as has been mentioned, about reducing, reusing and recycling. Some examples include local school students and residents seeing how Canberra manages recycling by visiting the recycling discovery hub at the Hume materials recovery facility. The hub has recently been upgraded, and over 1,000 people have taken a tour since it relaunched in April.

Despite opposition from the Canberra Liberals, the government recently implemented the popular and effective container deposit scheme. The CDS aims to facilitate better recycling behaviours. It will support individuals and community groups to reduce litter and actively participate in recycling by placing a value on many single-use drink containers.

The CDS commenced, as has been noted, at the end of June this year, and we recently celebrated the millionth container milestone—one million containers. This clearly demonstrates that Canberrans are keen to do the right thing and keep plastics out of landfill. It also clearly demonstrates how out of step the opposition were with the Canberra community to oppose such an important and popular recycling and litter reducing initiative.

The government is also actively engaged at the national level. We are working collaboratively with other jurisdictions to find ways to phase out problematic and unnecessary plastics. The last meeting of the environment ministers endorsed a target of 100 per cent of Australian packaging being recyclable, compostable or reusable by 2025 or earlier. Along with other states and territories the ACT is working with the Australian Packaging Covenant Organisation to explore potential solutions to achieve these ambitious targets.

The ACT is also a member of the Queensland-led interjurisdictional working group to work with retailers to introduce a voluntary phase out of heavyweight single-use boutique plastic bags. The government has developed new waste regulatory frameworks and is now implementing the Waste Management and Resource Recovery Act 2016 to achieve better waste management and resource recovery. The regulatory framework responds to our need to improve our performance and meet community expectations about reducing waste generation, increasing recycling and resource recovery and improving the overall management of waste practices in the ACT.

Knowledge about what is happening to waste is critical to the development of appropriate waste policy and processes and devising waste reduction strategies. This legislation will enable the government to gather data on waste so we can better understand what happens to our waste and respond accordingly.

I also acknowledge, as others have, the community effectiveness and knowledge-building from the ABC's program *War on Waste*. It has highlighted in sometimes shocking visual terms exactly how much waste we generate in our country. It has done an enormous amount to increase community awareness and community activism. People are taking action right across the country on the basis of that. It is a highly engaging and effective way that our public broadcaster is both informing our community and encouraging us all to do better.

I welcome today's opportunity to outline the actions that the government is taking to reduce single-use plastic and reducing waste. There are challenges, as there are in every other state and territory across our nation, and there is more to do. But we are totally committed to actively exploring these opportunities to improve our policies, our regulation and our education and community awareness to achieve the three Rs: reduce, reuse and recycle.

Ultimately, this will contribute to significantly improved environmental outcomes. We look forward to keeping this Assembly updated on this important work, and I thank Ms Orr again, for this terrific motion today.

MS LEE (Kurrajong) (11.20): I welcome the opportunity to speak on this motion although, like so many that come from the government backbench, I am not sure that it is not simply putting up a motion for the sake of it. In this instance, perhaps, this is little more than virtue signalling. I recall that earlier in the month Ms Orr was calling on her own government to report on something that they should have already reported on, and I see we are doing that here again today. I guess that when you think you have a winning formula you stick to it.

The ACT banned plastic bags on 1 November 2011. We were the second jurisdiction, after South Australia, to do so. Since then, the Northern Territory and Tasmania have also banned single-use plastic shopping bags. In recent months we have seen comments from other jurisdictions talking about such a move, as well as seeing major retailers, Coles and Woolworths, making what we can term a half-hearted attempt at doing so. Aldi has always sold only the supermarket plastic and polypropylene bags.

As we know, the ban applies to all retailers in the ACT, and it affects single-use, lightweight, polyethylene polymer plastic bags, the thin plastic bags with handles that were typically supplied at supermarket checkouts, the same ones that everyone used as bin liners, to store leftover food in or to pack a lunch in. They were, in reality, anything but a single-use plastic bag.

The ACT's plastic bag ban was reviewed in 2012 and 2014, including through community surveys. Interestingly, while a majority of Canberrans in the 2014 survey supported the ban, an article written by Kirsten Lawson in the *Canberra Times* in June that year questioned the real benefits of it. The article said that in the six months in the lead-up to the ban in November 2011, about 26 million lightweight plastic bags were distributed in Canberra. Two years later, in the six months to November 2013, people bought about four million boutique bags, the shop-branded, heavy plastic bags. By weight, the reduction in plastic bag use was a little less dramatic, with 182 tonnes of

plastic going to landfill before the ban and in October 2013 about 114 tonnes sent to landfill.

When you go into any store, be it a chemist, a supermarket or a clothing store, you are given, or sold in most instances, a plastic bag. At the supermarket, it is particularly noticeable that if you buy fruit or vegetables you have thin plastic bags to put those loose fruits and vegetables in. You then go to the checkout, and if you have not remembered to bring a plastic bag the supermarket will happily sell you another one. The recent actions by Coles and Woolworths to ban plastic bags was not well regarded and was seen widely as less an environmental benefit and more a profit-making exercise. I doubt whether it has resulted in fewer plastic bags in circulation.

It is because of this observed frequency of plastic bags in circulation that, since my election to the Assembly, I have asked in the annual reports and estimates hearings about evidence of the plastic bag ban success. While there were surveys in 2014, there has been nothing since, as Ms Orr's motion reflects. The Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment has repeatedly had little or nothing to say about it. We know that there has been a reduction in plastic bags to landfill, or last time we checked there was, but that was about three or four years ago. We know that heavy-duty plastic bags are still the most commonly seen carrier for foods from supermarkets and clothing stores. And we know that, despite what Canberrans believe, we still throw out a significant amount of plastic.

So how much has really been achieved? That same *Canberra Times* article in November 2014 quoted Mr Rattenbury—speaking as a Greens Assembly member; sometimes I get confused—calling for an extension of the ban so that only compostable plastic bags or reusable plastic bags would be allowed. He pointed out that the thicker plastic bags remain as pollution for thousands of years. That was in 2014. Today those thicker plastic bags are the ones now so popular in retail outlets.

What tracking have we done of them? We know that little research has been undertaken to understand what might have changed in light of those bags being banned. I know that earlier Mr Rattenbury mentioned that he is, obviously, also looking forward to the commissioner's review of our plastic bag ban, a review that I must confirm is one that is being undertaken under his direction, yet even today there is no indication of when we will see the outcomes of this elusive review.

The other part of Ms Orr's motion refers to the ACT waste management strategy. This was first raised by former minister Simon Corbell in 2011. Like so many other grand announcements that are the hallmark of this government, we have the big announcement with warm and fuzzy ideals—in this case, less waste generated, full resource recovery, a clean environment and a carbon-neutral waste sector—and then almost nothing. That was seven years ago.

A long, protracted study was undertaken. Over the years many questions were asked as to progress with the strategy, including regular questions from the ACT conservation council. Finally, in early May this year, the results were published and a management plan finally released. This is the *Roadmap to improved resource*

recovery. It includes targets of 90 per cent of waste being diverted from landfill by 2025, but we know that that figure has plateaued at around 70 per cent for the past decade.

During estimates this year, I asked the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment about this plateau. I asked if she could give a brief update on the current recovery rates, on how we are tracking, and on how she thought that the ACT could meet that 90 per cent by 2025 target. I asked because there had been no studies, and there was only a peripheral mention of it in the 2015 *State of the environment report*. She suggested that the question was complex and took it on notice. I would like to be able to provide her answer now to the Assembly and to my colleagues here, but all she said, in addition to outlining the commission's legal obligations, was that waste would be one of the many environmental issues reported on in the 2019 ACT state of the environment report. If I were cynical, Madam Assistant Speaker, I would suggest that she is unable to answer because the government clearly just does not know.

Perhaps the commissioner does not want anything from the 2019 report made public before the whole report is ready to go, and I understand why she would not want her comments to be taken out of context. In any event, we do not know whether or how we will meet those targets, and simply publishing the data in various reports will not make it happen.

If we are struggling to report on how we are to get closer to a waste reduction level and it has not moved for over a decade, I doubt that we are going to get much joy asking the government to investigate further opportunities to reduce the use of single-use plastic throughout the ACT so that less waste is generated. It is a noble sentiment, but noble sentiments, glossy brochures and percentages plucked out of the air will not get us there.

Ms Orr has already started her own campaign, I see. I thank her for updating the Assembly on her efforts to get the Chief Minister to use reusable coffee cups, and congratulate her on her success. If she wants another challenge, I would ask that perhaps she should speak to Ms Fitzharris to ask why so much thin sheet plastic is used along the light rail construction corridor. I assume it is not the soft plastic that she spoke about earlier. There is no doubt that it is going to be directed to landfill, and the volume and frequency of its use will certainly add waste to wherever it is sent.

Yes, the ACT must manage its waste better. Yes, we need to protect our waterways. And yes, we need to reduce what goes into landfill. More importantly, we must be able to report accurately and frequently on how we are progressing on those targets.

MS LE COUTEUR (Murrumbidgee) (11.28): I am in the somewhat rare situation of agreeing with virtually everything that all the speakers have spoken about so far. It is really good that this Assembly recognises that we have a plastic problem. Australia, I understand, is responsible for over 13,000 tonnes of plastic litter each year. I want to say the word "litter" again. I am not talking about plastic waste as a whole; I am talking about the bits that are just rubbish, waste and litter, lying around.

Members may also be aware that in June this year the Senate released the report of its inquiry into the waste and recycling industry in Australia. One of its recommendations was that we should phase out petroleum-based, single-use plastics by 2023. Obviously, that is an excellent recommendation and it would solve a lot of the problems which members have identified so far in the discussion. It would be a real shift, because currently we have convenient plastic products which we use once and throw away, and they are ubiquitous throughout Australia.

One thing I should say as part of this debate is that plastic is not intrinsically evil. The problem is, however, that it is really convenient, it is really cheap and it is really durable. It is waterproof, and it solves a lot of problems; thus we use an awful lot of it. When you drop it, it does not break, like glass does. But because it is so easy to use, it leads to some of the problems that members like Ms Orr have talked about. The impact on marine life is appalling.

My first look at that was when I visited India in 1997, from memory. India in those days had not changed an awful lot from the days of the British raj. A lot of towns were red fort towns. There would be a fort in the middle and there would be a moat around the town. That was your traditional way of building a defensive town. That moat was filled with water. At every single one of them, you could not see the water; they were 100 per cent covered in plastic. Everywhere we went, it did not matter who it was; they just chucked plastic out of the window. It was much worse than anything you would see in Australia. That was because they had only just come from a culture where they did not have plastics. You had your meal on a banana leaf, you chucked it out of the window and in a week's time, in the humidity and heat, it had biodegraded. We are not in that situation anymore, so we have to change our relationship with plastics.

We have two issues. We have the resources that are used in making plastics and we have the part that we are concentrating more on in this particular debate: what happens when we dispose of it. Because plastic is so versatile and cheap, we have adopted it in lots of single-use, throwaway consumer products.

We have been talking in the past couple of days about the Multicultural Festival. It was in the *Canberra Times* again today. What do we have at the Multicultural Festival? We have the ACT government giving away free bottled water in throwaway plastic bottles. We have many organisations doing that. You name it; we have plastic on it. Our medical system is full of single-use plastics. If you go on a plane, all the food is wrapped in single-use plastics. What about clothing? There are a lot of poly-type jackets, which, I must admit, I really love wearing. Sometimes they have been made of recycled plastics but often they are made of single-use plastics.

A lot of people are looking at technological solutions to our plastic problems. These range from better recycling techniques and biodegradable plastics made from algae or starch, to using mutant bacteria to consume plastic waste. The Environment Centre runs regular monthly workshops on plastic-free wraps, and things you can do to avoid having plastic in your life. I have made the odd beeswax wrap. I suspect that these technological changes are not going to be the only part of the change that we need, but

they will be part of it. Sometimes they have perverse environmental impacts, such as additional greenhouse emissions and resource consumption.

What we need to do to solve this problem is to have action taken by everybody. There need to be technological advances, so that the things that are currently being done using single-use plastics can be done in other ways. There needs to be individual behavioural change. Being the oldest member of the Assembly, I can say that when I grew up my mother always washed any plastic bags we had. They were hung out on the line to dry. That is how I was brought up, and that is what I still do with any plastic bag I get. I wash it and reuse it. I generally shop for my fruit and veggies at the farmers market, which is pretty much 100 per cent bring your own, including the very light plastic. Change is not that hard for individuals, once we get used to it.

We also, though, need civil society changes. We need to send the message that Ms Orr and other members have talked about, with regard to the problems—I nearly said “evils”, but maybe I should just say “problems”—of plastic. We all have to know about them. We all have to see those horrific photos of birds’ stomachs entirely full of plastics, of whales’ stomachs virtually entirely full of plastics, which are just heart-rending, so that we are motivated to know that we need to change.

Civil society can do that very well. The commercial sector needs to work on it. They do not have to provide the single-use plastics. There are alternatives. And government needs to work on it. One of the things government can do—which in some cases is the last resort, but that does not mean it is wrong—is that they can actually ban things. The plastic bag ban is a good example of how this can work.

Ms Lee talked about how well the plastic bag ban had been working in the ACT, and I look forward to the commissioner for the environment’s more authoritative report on this, which I understand will be coming out soon. On an observational basis, it appears to be successful. One of the reasons it was successful is because it was a ban. It was quite clear to people what the expectation was: that you would not get a plastic bag. I remember that when it was introduced, while doing stalls for a year or so, a lot of people were telling me how impossible it was. Nobody bothers saying that anymore. We have learned how to live without a plastic bag at every supermarket check-out.

Interestingly, Coles and Woolies recently said they would adopt a ban on plastic bags at their check-outs. Coles have gone back on it, and Woolworths have not. There are probably a lot of reasons why it has not worked as well for them as it did for us. Part of it is that it is obviously just a token. Given that if you go to Coles or Woolies, you will see single-use plastic everywhere, I think people get a bit annoyed. They think, “These people aren’t for real. If they were for real, they would be doing more than that.” If we are for real, we have to do a lot more than just ban plastic bags, but it is the first step.

I will talk very briefly about one of the bits of plastic that I personally find hardest to get out of my life. I am a seven-day-a-week subscriber to the *Canberra Times*, as I have said before, because I want to do my bit to support daily journalism in the ACT, and that is the only way to do it. But it is wrapped up in plastic. I put that plastic

in a bin and I take it to Coles or Woolies eventually, but I do not think that plastic should be there. There is also plastic around the *Chronicle*. Living in a multi-unit building, I do not get the *Chronicle*, which is probably a plus from my point of view. But many people get the *Chronicle* left on their front lawn, wrapped in plastic. They cannot just put it in the recycling bin because the paper is wrapped in single-use plastic. It is one of our real plastic problems. I do not want to see the death knell of the *Chronicle*, but I actually do not know any other solution to that. They are not delivering as many as they used to. They could put them in letterboxes, like they used to. (*Time expired.*)

MRS KIKKERT (Ginninderra) (11.39): I thank Ms Orr for bringing this motion before the Assembly today. I wish to say a few words in response. Ms Orr's motion notes correctly that, too often, recyclable plastic ends up in the general waste stream. I made this point last week in this chamber in relation to the lack of recycling bins at suburban shopping centres. As I said then, the ACT government has formally acknowledged that not only are there no recycling options at any local shops but that it has no plans to provide any in future.

This is despite the fact that the current ACT waste management strategy clearly states that the ACT government will "establish public place recycling". A lack of public recycling bins at shopping centres that are maintained by this government leaves residents confused about the current government's commitment to preventing recyclable materials, including but not limited to plastics, from entering the general waste stream.

I note that Mr Rattenbury in his proposed amendment raised the issue of recycling bins in town centres. I spoke with the Clerk not too long ago about proposing an amendment to that, but I am not too sure if it will be ready in time for tabling. I will go ahead and make my speech. If it is not ready in time, that is okay.

This is certainly a good thing, but it completely overlooks, as this government often does, the important role of local shops in many Canberra suburbs, including those in my electorate of Ginninderra. Why didn't Mr Rattenbury add local shops to his amendment? As I mentioned in my petition last week, there are nine rubbish bins at Charnwood shops, yet there are no recycling bins. Providing recycling options in large town centres whilst completely ignoring local shopping centres is an insult to Canberrans who choose to support the small business owners who invest in their suburbs.

I take this opportunity once again to speak up on behalf of the residents who shop, eat and train at their local shops. I am confident that Canberra residents care about protecting our environment. At school we teach our children how recycling helps to accomplish this, and provide recycling bins at schools. Yet this government confuses the message by not providing any recycling options at local shopping centres and admitting that it has no plans to provide any in the future. I certainly hope that this will change.

MS ORR (Yerrabi) (11.42): I thank everyone for their contributions to the debate today. It is safe to say that we would all like to see action taken that results in a

positive impact on our environment, particularly when it comes to single-use plastic. The crux of the motion is: how can we reduce our single-use plastic, and particularly the amount that is generated, so that it does not become waste? It is good to recycle, and it is great to reduce the amount we are using, but, in the first instance, we need to look at how we avoid generating waste in the first place. It is important for the environment, as we have all noted in our speeches, because there are significant impacts, not just for our waterways but for our landfill and other parts.

The other part of the motion that I wish to draw members' attention to is that it is not just about what we have done. We have had quite a bit of debate about the things that we have done in the past. It is also about looking for opportunities in the future, because this is a big task, and we all need to get on board and do it.

The community have shown that they want to see action in this area. We have noted how *War on Waste* has sparked the imagination of people. Someone stopped me at an event the other night to give me their ideas, based on *War on Waste*, of everything we could do in the ACT. I have also seen businesses embracing the straws suck campaign. I know there are many businesses, including one in particular, Frankies at Forde, who have already moved to using only keep cups and not using disposable cups.

What has come up in this conversation is that we need bigger, bolder actions, which I wholeheartedly support. I would like to go for gold on this issue; I think that is probably the easiest way to say it. But we do need to acknowledge those small behavioural changes that individuals, groups and organisations make, because at the end of the day it all matters. What may be a small, symbolic gesture—changing to a keep cup, for example—also raises awareness of the wider issue that is out there, and gets more buy-in from the community to take those bigger, bolder actions.

It is important that we have that support going forward. I will continue to bring forward motions in this place asking for more action in this area, because it is important for our environment. We have to look after our environment so that it can look after us.

Amendments agreed to.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

Youth—P-plate driver restrictions

MISS C BURCH (Kurrajong) (11.45): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) young Canberrans commute to and from places of employment late in the evening and early in the morning, particularly those who are shift-workers and those employed in the hospitality and trades industries;
- (b) there are few other safe transport options available at these times of day, and a curfew on P-plater drivers may prevent many young Canberrans from working;

- (c) an exemption process would be costly, bureaucratic, and confusing, and would place an unfair burden on responsible P-platers;
 - (d) the ACT Government advocates assigning a designated driver when heading out for an event or a night on the town. P-plater drivers are often relied upon as designated drivers right across Canberra;
 - (e) peer passenger restrictions would prevent P-platers from acting as designated drivers, and would place an unfair burden on many families;
 - (f) the “What We Heard” survey reported that 50 percent of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed with restrictions on first year P platers from driving between midnight and 5 am; and
 - (g) accident statistics show that over 66 percent of P-plater deaths on ACT roads took place outside of the proposed curfew hours. In 2016, only 2 percent of all crashes, and 20 percent of fatal crashes occurred between the hours of midnight and 5 am; and
- (2) calls on the Minister for Justice, Consumer Affairs and Road Safety to categorically rule out:
- (a) the implementation of a 12 am-5 am curfew for P-plater drivers, as this would significantly impact the ability of young Canberrans to participate in employment, and is not supported by accident statistics; and
 - (b) the implementation of passenger restrictions for P-plater drivers.

I think we can all agree that one fatality on our roads is one too many and every death on ACT roads is an absolute tragedy. However, the government’s proposed changes to P-plater laws would unfairly punish young Canberrans and restrict the freedoms of provisional drivers without significantly improving the safety of young drivers on our roads.

Minister Rattenbury announced earlier this year a raft of proposals to reform current L and P-plater licensing in the ACT. Some of these measures are very sensible, such as boosting minimum driving hours, which would bring the territory in line with other jurisdictions. However, some of these proposals go too far and would unfairly disadvantage young Canberrans.

The first of these unfair proposals is a curfew for provisional drivers from 12 am to 5 am. Under this proposal all P-platers would be prohibited from driving in the early hours of the morning unless an exemption has been obtained by the driver. While we do not have any details yet on what an exemption process would look like we do know that the proposed curfew is a radical change from current laws and would result in the ACT having the most restrictive laws in the country.

The second of these unfair proposals is a ban on driving with more than one peer-age passenger at any time of the day. Again, this is a dramatic shift from current ACT laws where we do not have any restrictions on peer passengers and is far stricter than any laws of other Australian jurisdictions.

Today I am calling upon Minister Rattenbury to rule out these harsh and unfair changes to Canberra’s P-plate licensing regulations. These two new proposals would

unfairly punish young Canberra drivers. They go much further than they need to and they are not likely to have a significant impact on road safety in the ACT.

We have already seen a number of members of the government backbench such as Mr Steel, Ms Cheyne and Mr Pettersson publicly stand up against these changes, and I hope today that they and other members of the Assembly will support this motion.

The proposed curfew for provisional drivers would significantly disadvantage young Canberrans and would unfairly penalise the many young Canberrans who do the right thing. In particular, these changes would have a significant impact on young people's ability to maintain employment across a number of sectors, including hospitality, the trades and shiftwork.

For many young workers in the ACT, finishing a shift in the kitchen at midnight or working a night shift means that commuting in the early hours of the morning is inevitable. Getting your P-plates provides access to these job opportunities that may have previously been unobtainable because buses certainly do not run that early, and other options like walking and riding are unviable or unsafe. In particular, young Canberra women rely on their freedom to drive at any time of the night as a safe means of travelling around our city.

While the government has raised the idea of exemptions for employment, any exemption process is likely to be complicated, bureaucratic and costly and will dissuade young people from seeking employment in these industries in the first place. The simple fact is that these changes will hurt young Canberrans. We all recognise that we are transitioning to a 24-hour economy, and those opposite recognise this as well as they finally extend the bus timetables later into the evening. But to exclude the youngest people in our city from employment opportunities by virtue of their age is not fair and is not justified.

Importantly, however, this is not just age discrimination and this measure would also have significant impacts beyond youth unemployment as a number of P-platers are not just in this younger demographic. We have heard from numerous parents who are also P-platers who are concerned about the need to rush their children to emergency departments at 3 am or who participate in demanding shiftwork late at night or simply do not want their freedom taken away by the government.

As I have stated, one death on our roads is one too many and road safety should be a key priority for government. However, reform should be about equipping drivers with the skills and knowledge they need when they are learning to drive rather than punishing the well-behaved majority once they are already on our roads. To that end, the Canberra Liberals support some of the government's proposed changes such as increasing supervised hours for learner drives.

Minister Rattenbury seems to suggest in his discussion paper released earlier this year that P1 drivers need more time to gain experience on the road before they are capable of driving between the hours of midnight and 5 am. If the length of time spent on learner plates is to be extended, is not this already being achieved? This can also be achieved by incorporating mandatory hours of supervised night driving into the

learner system, as has also been proposed by the minister. In the minister's own consultation process, 50 per cent of people either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the new curfew policy.

What also raises serious concern is the proposed restrictions on driving with friends if you have your P plates. Under Mr Rattenbury's proposal you will not be permitted to drive at any time of the day with more than one peer-age passenger between the ages of 16 and 24 when you are on your P1 licence. While New South Wales does have passenger restrictions for provisional licence holders their restrictions only apply during certain hours. Not only is the minister's proposal more restrictive than that in any other jurisdiction in Australia, it raises any number of concerns including for those who choose to carpool and for those who wish to nominate designated drivers.

Having a culture that promotes designated driving is widely recognised as being fundamental in combatting drink driving. By making it extremely difficult for designated drivers to do their friends a favour on a night out, you are inevitably encouraging young people to take risks, you are making nights out unsafe, you are making transport more difficult and you are making our roads more dangerous. The blanket ban for all times of the day is ludicrous, from a party who claims to want to encourage fewer cars on our roads, and you would think that Mr Rattenbury would be trying to encourage more young people to car pool.

I also note the amendment to be moved by Mr Rattenbury in which he is calling on the government to consider implementing evidence-based road safety improvements for young drivers, which brings me to my next point. The fact of the matter is that the evidence simply does not support the introduction of a P-plater curfew.

The ACT continues to report the lowest road fatalities, as a percentage, in the country—a number which continues to fall. Of fatal crashes in the ACT in 2016, only 7.14 per cent were provisional drivers. This compares to 12 per cent in New South Wales and 19 per cent in Victoria. This is despite Canberra having the most relaxed P-plate laws in the country. Only two per cent of all accidents occur between the hours of 12 am and 5 am, and 80 per cent of fatal accidents occur outside those times.

The minister's discussion paper also states that a blanket curfew for P1 drivers in the evening would result in a 44 per cent reduction of 17-year-olds in fatal crashes at night. However, following this logic, the Assembly should note that if we banned all cars at all times we would have an expected 100 per cent reduction in road fatalities.

The point to be made here is that there is a very clear element of compromise that is necessary to deliver a responsible licensing scheme in the ACT and to ensure the safety of drivers on our roads. And the minister no doubt agrees with this because, in his discussion paper, the recommendation is to permit one other peer-age passenger in the car rather than a total passenger ban. This is despite an expected 21 per cent reduction in fatal crashes if there were a total passenger ban.

I would also like to note that of all the demographic groups one of the groups most disproportionately over-represented in accident statistics is those who are over 80. A study, just out in New South Wales only last week, also shows that middle-aged men

are among the most dangerous drivers on our roads. Would it be appropriate then to impose curfews or passenger restrictions upon the elderly or the middle-aged? I certainly do not think so. So why is it appropriate to unfairly punish provisional drivers?

I would like to reiterate that I have no doubt that we all agree that one fatality on our roads is too many and every death on our roads is a tragedy. But the proposed changes to learner licensing will go a long way to improving driver safety, without unfairly punishing young Canberrans and restricting the freedoms of provisional drivers.

I call on the minister to heed the advice of his Labor colleagues and rule out these two unfair restrictions which would hurt Canberrans and unfairly penalise the majority of young people who do the right thing. I hope that the Labor members who have rightly called out these proposals will continue to stand up for young people and support my motion today.

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) (11.54): I appreciate the opportunity to talk about road safety today, particularly the safety of young drivers. Sadly and tragically, young drivers are significantly over-represented in road crash statistics in serious injuries and fatalities caused by road crashes. But it is great to have the opportunity to talk about it today. That is the very point of having a consultation process—it enables someone like Miss C Burch to put her views very publicly on this matter. That is why we started with a discussion paper.

In adopting the national standards that have been recommended to all Australian governments we wanted to canvass the Canberra community's views. I am conscious they are a significant change and we wanted to test how the community felt about this. Miss C Burch, Mr Steel, and various others have had that tremendous opportunity to give their feedback.

Before I talk in more detail about the proposals the government has put forward and particularly about the evidence that supports these proposals, I want to talk about some broader road safety context, especially the way we perceive and talk about road safety and the consequences of road trauma. In particular, I want to note the comment in Miss C Burch's motion that says "only" two per cent of crashes and 20 per cent of fatal crashes occurred between the hours of midnight and 5 am in 2016. That claim requires some further context; it is quite selective, and I will talk about that in a moment.

More importantly, that language, especially the word "only", is language we should never use when talking about people's lives. This is a widespread problem. People are somehow able to disassociate road safety statistics from people's real lives. Some people internalise and accept that driving means that people will die or be injured and that this is acceptable. It is reflected in some of the feedback we received during the consultation. People said things like, "Why are we changing this law when there are only a few deaths a year?"

That is exactly the opposite of what the vision zero road safety philosophy represents. It is exactly the attitude we need to combat. It is why there are specific road safety advertisements that attack the attitude by which people think that any number of road deaths is acceptable. None of them is acceptable, and we cannot use words like “only” when we talk about injuries and fatalities in the road system.

Miss C Burch said any road death is a tragedy, but she is the very one who used the word “only” when talking about fatalities on our roads. Road trauma is often covered in a similar way in the media: road crashes are seen as events. Actually, road trauma is a leading killer of people in this country. We need to change the way we talk about road trauma with language and action that reflect that road trauma is more than just numbers. These numbers are people, people who have lost their lives or sustained life-changing injuries. These are people who have family, friends, colleagues, neighbours, dreams and aspirations. The ripple effect is felt across the community every time “only” one person is killed or injured.

There tends to be a focus on fatalities. But we must never lose sight of the fact that a serious road accident can change a person’s life forever. So when we reflect on injuries we must not assume that someone got a bit bandaged up and went on with their lives. These injuries are often catastrophic and certainly life-changing. Using language like “only”, makes these people appear faceless and distant. It is easy for those who have not known anyone who has suffered through road trauma, to refer to them as “only” a number.

One of the friends of the ACT government, road safety advocate Peter Frazer, whom I have met on a number of occasions, lost his daughter in a preventable road crash. One of the ways he campaigns now is to emphasise the name of his daughter and of other people who have lost their lives to road trauma to make sure they are remembered as people. He says Sarah, his daughter, was not influential or important, but she meant the world to those who loved her.

The changes the government is considering implementing have worked in other jurisdictions in reducing the injuries and deaths of young people, and the pain and suffering of those who know and love them. If the changes save “only” one life, then those changes are worth it.

I take this opportunity to offer some clarifications. The first is that this is a consultation process. That is the very point of asking people. I know some in this community are cynical about consultation processes in the sense that they are prejudged. That is not how I operate. I have never operated like that as a minister, and I never will operate like that as a minister. I assure the Canberra community that we went out there and asked genuine questions conscious that this is an area where we are proposing significant change and on which people have strong views. We only ever need to read the letters to the editor section or listen to opportunities for people to call into talkback radio to know this excites great opinion.

I will also clarify a few issues about the so-called curfew proposal that is being discussed. Firstly, it is important to note that the ACT lags behind other jurisdictions

in terms of its graduated licensing scheme. We are close to if not the most lax jurisdiction in the country. The graduated driver licensing reforms I have put out for consultation are the improvements recommended nationally by road safety experts and that have been accepted in some form by all other jurisdictions. It is interesting that these have been described as radical by media and others when what we are seeking to do is bring the ACT into line with other jurisdictions.

I also note that the restrictions that have been canvassed in the discussion paper—for example the restricted late-night driving and the limited peer-age passengers—would apply only to first year P-platers. Miss C Burch in her remarks today talked about all P platers. We are focussing on the most risky period of driving when the restrictions will have the best road safety benefits.

Let's talk about this in the context of freedom. People go from having no licence to having an L-plate, where someone has to sit next to them every time they get in the vehicle and drive it, with extensive restrictions, to having first-year P-plates, then having P2 plates with fewer restrictions and then having a full licence. That is why it is called the graduated licensing system: we gradually give people a more permissive licence that accords with their increasing levels of experience.

It is also important to note—this has always been envisaged—that if the proposal were implemented it would exempt first-year P-plate drivers who needed to drive for reasons such as work, study, or emergency trips to hospital. This is how this sort of initiative operates in other jurisdictions. As Miss Burch noted in her comments, that is exactly what the consultation paper asked people to give us feedback on. Anyone who has listened to my media interviews would be conscious that I have been really explicit in saying we need to make sure this is practical and does not unduly restrict people's ability to get about.

Miss Burch in her motion and publicly has claimed that there is no evidence for the proposal to support restricting first-year P-plater driving times at night as has been canvassed in the discussion paper. This claim is not only factually wrong, but it undermines all the work that road safety advocates are doing to try to advance evidence-based policy to help the community understand and accept road safety interventions to ultimately prevent serious injuries and the loss of lives.

Let me talk about some of the evidence that has been put together on this. Younger drivers may be fully licensed, but they are a high risk category due to their cognitive development, their relative inexperience behind the wheel, their risk-taking choices and their pattern of driving behaviours. Due to inexperience, provisional drivers of any age pose a high risk of being involved in crashes, especially during the first six months of independent driving.

In the ACT provisional drivers represent only 6.5 per cent of all active car licence holders, but they accounted for 14.3 per cent of drivers involved in fatal accidents in the five-year period 2011-15. It is worth reflecting on what other jurisdictions have found. In New South Wales, a 2011 Auditor-General performance review found fatal crash involvement rates for young drivers under 26 declined by 51 per cent from 1999-2000 to 2009-10 compared to a reduction of 35 per cent for drivers aged

26 years and over. This reduction in crash rates coincided with the introduction of the revised GLS in 2000, in this case, a minimum of 120 hours' logged experience over 12 months on L-plates.

In Victoria, a GLS evaluation found 42.5 per cent fewer drivers aged 18 to 23 years were involved in fatal or serious injury crashes in the decade since the GLS was introduced in 2007-08. I can go on with other examples from Queensland and Western Australia. All of these jurisdictions have brought in various changes.

As has been noted in my amendment—and I think Miss Burch touched on this in her remarks—in the ACT between 2006 and November 2017, 15 young drivers aged 17 to 24 have been killed, with five of those drivers' deaths occurring between midnight and 5 am. Similarly, for the period 2011-15 eight vehicles were involved in fatal crashes between the hours of midnight and 5 am. Five of those drivers were aged 17 to 24, and three of those five had at least three passengers in their car. These statistics go on. Between 2006 and November 2017, cars driven by young drivers aged 17 to 24 killed 23 other drivers, cyclists, passengers or pedestrians on the roads. Ten of those deaths were between midnight and 5 am.

There are a number of other elements to the proposals other than those that have been focused on today around the curfew and the peer-passenger restrictions. I will not go into details of those, being conscious of the time. I will turn to the specific ask from Miss Burch and my amendment.

I want to be really clear that I do not intend to rule anything in or out on the floor today. We are in the middle of a consultation process. We have received extensive feedback and we are working through that now. But I assure members that there will be changes. The elements on which we were consulting was not a final package; it was never intended to be, so I reject the tone of some of the commentary contained in the motion.

As my amendment makes clear, we are listening very carefully to the public feedback. We need to make sure that we come up with a scheme that is practical. We need to come up with a scheme that the community can accept. There are differences in the community on this. Miss Burch cited the figure the government publicly released; we have been very transparent about this. In the what we heard survey report 50 per cent of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed with restrictions on first-year P-platers driving between midnight and 5 am. But, interestingly, 40 per cent agreed or strongly agreed. That shows our community has diverse and, frankly, opposite view on this.

As the minister responsible for this policy area I now need to think through what is a good outcome for a community given the very different views that are out there and some very practical suggestions that have come through. My amendment notes that we are listening very closely to the community. That is why we ran community consultation and we expect to shape the package to reflect both the best road safety evidence and the community views out there.

I thank members for the opportunity to discuss this today, I am aware that members have strong views on this. We will be seeking to find a way through this that is a really good package that promotes road safety but produces a practical outcome.

I am happy to report back to the Assembly. I do not have an exact time line on it yet. The directorate is still working through the community feedback we received, and I have not received a full analysis of that yet. I am working on the details, and I look forward to sharing that with members of the Assembly over the coming months as we work through it. I move the amendment I circulated in my name:

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

“(1) notes that:

- (a) the ACT Government is committed to the ‘Vision Zero’ road safety philosophy; that is, realising zero deaths and serious injuries on our roads;
 - (b) the probability of being involved in a motor vehicle accident is highest during the first months after provisional licensing. In the ACT, provisional drivers represent 6.5 percent of all active car licence holders and account for 14.3 percent of drivers involved in fatal accidents. Late night hours are identified as a high risk time for drivers aged between 17 and 24;
 - (c) in line with ‘Vision Zero’, and with best practice safety recommendations from Austroads, the ACT Government is considering a broad package of road safety reforms for young people;
 - (d) the proposed reforms align with the top level model within the *Australian Graduated Licensing Scheme Policy Framework*, endorsed by the Transport and Infrastructure Council, and designed to encourage and guide improvements in graduating licensing schemes for all states and territories;
 - (e) the ACT Government has undertaken extensive consultation on the proposals. Consultation opened in April this year, with over 4500 responses to the consultation from the community and stakeholders. This feedback will inform future decisions on graduated licensing reform. The Government expects to make implementation decisions early in 2019;
 - (f) young Canberrans commute to and from places of employment late in the evening and early in the morning, particularly those who are shiftworkers and those employed in the hospitality and trades industries;
 - (g) the ACT Government recognises that there are few other safe transport options available at these times of day, and will ensure that road safety reforms don’t prevent P-plate drivers from working; and
 - (h) the ‘What We Heard’ survey reported that 50 percent of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed with restrictions on first year P platers from driving between midnight and 5 am. 40 percent agreed or strongly agreed;
- (2) calls on all Members to support the ‘Vision Zero’ approach to road safety, and to consider implementing evidence-based road safety improvements for young drivers; and

- (3) calls on the Minister for Justice, Consumer Affairs and Road Safety to report back to the Assembly by the last sitting day of 2018 on progress on proposals for road safety reforms for young people.”.

MS CODY (Murrumbidgee) (12.08): I want to take a moment to stand here as a mum of two boys with P-plates and one with their Ls and an aunt of a young girl with her Ls. I thank Mr Rattenbury for the work he has been doing and the consultation process that has been occurring. Whilst this contribution will not be long, I want to record my views on this important matter.

Road safety is no laughing matter. Too many people die or are injured on our roads. We need to make them safer: safer for the transport workers who are exposed to one of Australia’s most dangerous workplaces; safer for the young people over-represented in our road tolls; safer for everyone. This is a difficult issue and I am glad to see a vigorous debate. I thank Miss C Burch for the opportunity to put my views forward.

It is not just young people who are on P-plates, and it is not just young people and P-platers who work shifts, but both groups are more likely to work at night. They also have a tendency not to do their paperwork, so I can see an argument against an exemption scheme.

When it comes to passenger limits I also have concerns. As I said, I have two boys right in the middle of the group that we are talking about here. Young people, like older people, like to party. The idea of designated drivers has probably been one of the greatest social reform on road safety in the decades of the road safety campaigns. My youngest son uses the fact that he lives on campus at a university out of town to earn some extra money on weekends by being the designated driver for his friends going out drinking. So passenger limits can put at risk those who may choose not to use a designated driver, and I am not overly comfortable with that risk.

But as I said earlier, I thank and acknowledge Minister Rattenbury for his work on road safety, and I look forward to seeing him continue to advocate for road safety in the future.

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra) (12.10): I also will be brief. I want to thank Miss C Burch for putting this motion before the Assembly today and giving it wide attention. A number of the points that she has raised are very valid ones. I have been particularly glad to hear the contributions today. I expect I will hear some further contributions from other colleagues shortly which will further underline views that many of us in this place have.

I completely understand the intent of some of the proposals that have been put forward. This is really about safety and people’s lives. Minister Rattenbury has made that abundantly clear today.

While I will be supporting Minister Rattenbury’s amendment, I want to stress that I think that Miss C Burch raised some very important points in her motion. I will absolutely be supporting, without pre-empting it, the further motion to come from

Mr Steel. It really is about taking community feedback into account and making sure that we are listening, particularly to the people whom this affects the most. I was very pleased to hear Minister Rattenbury's comments today that he is listening and that there will be changes. However, given the attention that this has had, I thought it would be helpful in this debate to put on the record some of the comments that I have personally received about this.

Members in this place know full well that participation in things that the government puts out for comment is not necessarily high on a lot of people's agendas. But the number of people who have commented on this, both directly to my colleagues and also through the surveys, really points out that this is such an important issue, particularly around the curfew.

I want to read to the Assembly a few of the comments made to me. One is that it severely limits options around work outside of uni hours when public transport is not an option. It also seems to imply that P-platers cannot be responsible instead of taking the course of punishing those who do break the law. Another said that there need to be exceptions in place for some of these. What about young people who work or have carer roles? This person had some further concerns about supervised hours. Someone then responded to that and said that the danger of a compromise and allowing people to drive to or from work but banning other trips is: how on earth do you police that? That is an incredibly good point.

I had a comment from someone on Twitter who said, "This is not a good idea. P-platers may be the designated driver-carer or helping out a friend or family. Aren't the issues speeding and drinking?" Someone else chimed in and said, "Or they could be finishing or starting work during these hours. I agree with limiting the vehicles but not sure that the hours are such a great idea."

Let me go to some other comments I received. One agreed that many young P-platers work in clubs and pubs and finish late. One said that education is the key, not more restrictions. Another person said to me, "That's just dumb. Like any drivers, there are good ones and bad ones. I've seen people with full licences without curfews doing really dumb things. All it will result in is people not using P-plates after the curfew and then taking the risk of getting a fine for not displaying them."

That is just a handful of comments that I have received, and I know that many of my colleagues in this place have received them. They really do point to most of the key issues with the policy put forward. I am very pleased that Minister Rattenbury said that there will be changes. I sincerely hope there will be changes to this particular aspect.

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee) (12.15): I would like to thank Miss C Burch for bringing this motion forward today. I want to start by saying that our government is committed to ensuring that our roads are safe. We need to continually look at ways to improve safety on our roads, including reviewing our licensing arrangements.

The challenge of regulating for safety on our roads must reflect a practical and evidence-based approach to road safety. But as a proudly progressive and inclusive

government, we also have a responsibility to take very seriously the impact of any reforms so that they do not present an unfair or unjustified disadvantage or discriminatory effect for any part of our community.

It is important to review licensing conditions from time to time, to ensure that our road safety regulations are up to date and to hear from the community about their views. That is why I support the idea of consulting on our P-plate licensing scheme, particularly with the group most affected, in this case young people.

I have been pleased for the your P-plates discussion paper to go out to canvass views from the community and seek their feedback. I want to say from the outset that I support feedback from the community being properly considered so that a package of reforms can be brought forward for consideration by government. But we have not reached that stage yet, which is why I think it is reasonable to give Minister Rattenbury time to review that feedback so that he can bring forward a package of proposed P-plate licensing reforms to be considered on its merits through the rigour of normal government decision making processes.

When considering road safety measures, including reforms to P-plate licensing to improve safety, this needs to be balanced with the right of responsible young drivers to freely move around our city. I have taken the opportunity early to flag concerns with certain restrictions to P-plate licensing so that they can be considered as part of the government's decision-making process. I know that a number of my Labor colleagues have done the same today and at other times.

My concern really is about the proposal for curfews for P-plate drivers between the hours of 12 am and 5 am. I think that curfews will have an adverse effect on young people's day-to-day lives. This is a reasonable concern to have. We live in a human rights jurisdiction here in the ACT, and regulations which could potentially have an impact on freedom of movement throughout our city is something that does need to be considered very carefully. I believe strongly that a curfew would impact on the right of young people to move freely around our city.

It is a well-known fact that young people go out at night. We should not be stopping them from doing so. The reality is that there are not many alternative modes of transport for young people to move around our city late at night. Public transport is either infrequent or non-existent during these hours. I note that even the London underground, until Labour Mayor Sadiq Khan took office and introduced 24-hour lines, shut down during the early hours of the morning, in a city as large as London. In our city of Canberra, I cannot see 24-hour buses or light rail running regularly during those periods in the near future to provide a safe alternative for young people moving around our city, so driving is often the safest mode of transport for young people on their Ps to move around our city at night.

During the consultation on the discussion paper, I heard from many young people who wrote to me and posted on Facebook to tell me their views about the proposals as well as participating in the government's consultation. I have been encouraging them to do that as well. I can confidently say that after hearing from many young Canberrans, there is significant concern about proposed P-plate curfews.

Young people believe that imposing a curfew would restrict their freedom of movement around our city. But it is not just young people who are concerned. Many P-platers are not young people, and they need to move around at night as well. Half of the entire community that has been polled—young people, middle-aged people and the old—are concerned about what a curfew means.

Every one of us who drives has had to have P-plates at one time in our lives. It is part of the story of growing up, gaining independence and taking responsibility for oneself. Many of us can remember taking part in late-night study sessions on campus, getting home from our part-time jobs or sometimes even being labelled the deso on a night out. All these commitments may require at least one person with access to a car when other forms of safe transport are limited.

A curfew on the next generation of young drivers, to many in our community, signals a loss of freedom, a loss of independence, and a loss of responsibility. But I think that what has really resonated in the community is the inherent unfairness of policies like curfews. We know that the majority of young drivers are doing the right thing on our roads at night. We know that dangerous driving occurs throughout all age brackets on our roads, and that accidents and tragic deaths occur at times of the day which would not be subject to a curfew. And we know that it is only a small minority of people who are doing the wrong thing, yet a P-plate curfew would treat all P-plate drivers as second-class citizens.

The thing that has struck me in the feedback to me on this issue is the variety of journeys that many young people may make at night. I have heard of many of them, whether it is getting up early and driving to rowing on our lakes; driving to the airport to catch the 6 am Virgin flight out of Canberra; being the designated driver responsible for getting your mates home safely; coming home from your boyfriend's or girlfriend's house to avoid their parents in the morning; or, of course, driving to and from the graveyard shift at work.

These are all valid journeys. It would be extremely difficult for any exemption scheme to capture the array of quite legitimate journeys that young people make at night. We also need to be careful that an exemption scheme would not place judgment on these late-night journeys. An exemption scheme would also not address the fundamental principle, which is that young people should have freedom of movement around our city. It would also do little to reduce the discriminatory effect of the curfew reforms proposed. I really do think that an exemption scheme would also be costly, bureaucratic and confusing for motorists and police. The last thing that we want in our city is for P-platers with an exemption to be pulled over regularly by the police to check their papers. That is a police state, Madam Speaker. We are better than that in the ACT. When these types of regulations were introduced in other jurisdictions like New South Wales, led by campaigns by the *Daily Telegraph*, we have stood up for civil liberties and resisted changes which infringe on those liberties unfairly.

I want to go back to that period of P-plate change in New South Wales. Our party, the Labor Party, in the Assembly resisted the Canberra Liberals' push to bring in the same

P-plate restrictions that we are discussing today. It is interesting to see the Liberals' change of policy in their motion today. I am sure that Mrs Dunne was fully supportive of her then Liberal colleague in the Assembly, Mr Steve Pratt, who was the spokesperson on road safety. It was the Canberra Liberals who were the original advocates for greater P-plate restrictions in this Assembly and who showed a lack of respect for P-platers in the ACT.

In a press release from the Liberal Party tabled in this place by then Labor backbencher Mr Gentleman, the Liberal spokesperson said:

... P-plate drivers have little respect for the laws governing driver behaviour and are little concerned about the dangers to themselves and others ... The Opposition has been calling on the ... Government ... for stricter ... licensing conditions for P-platers and therefore urges the government to examine ... Night time curfews placed on P-plate drivers."

It has been the Liberals all along that have been pushing government to look at greater restrictions on P-platers in our city. I seek leave to table these documents.

Leave granted.

MR STEEL: I table the following papers:

P-plate drivers—Copies of news articles from the Canberra Liberals website, by Steve Pratt MLA—

Opposition calls on Government to review youth driving regulations, dated 24 October 2006.

Pool crash proves P-plate program failing, dated 31 July 2007.

In contrast, the consistent position of our side has always been to have the utmost concern for the evidence on road safety reforms and for civil liberties. I note that our then Labor transport minister, Mr John Hargreaves, in response to questions from the Liberals, on 9 December 2004 said:

I have received advice that curfews would be problematic in the ACT given the necessarily reduced levels of public transport during curfew periods and lack of support from the community. Curfews would be unlikely to significantly impact on crash rates as the vast majority of crashes occur on weekdays between 6am and 8pm.

So Labor has always held a consistent position, supporting and encouraging young people to gain experience and take responsibility without infringing their rights and responsibilities.

Madam Speaker, in conclusion, I want to say that the trauma of a road accident on victims and their families should not be treated lightly. I know that very, very personally. But reforms to P-plate licensing to improve safety need to be balanced with the right of responsible young drivers to freely move around our city. I believe there is merit in making sure that our youngest drivers gain more experience before

they graduate to their Ps, and other road safety measures need to be considered, including recommendations from Austroads. That is why I think it is entirely reasonable to give the minister for road safety an opportunity to reflect. I move:

Omit paragraph (3), substitute:

“(3) noting that the Government will take into account the community’s feedback, calls on the Minister for Justice, Consumer Affairs and Road Safety to report back to the Assembly by the last sitting day of 2018 on progress on proposals for road safety reforms for young people.”.

(Time expired)

MRS DUNNE (Ginninderra) (12.25): I am a bit like Ms Cody except that I have trained five young people to drive over the years. My husband I take this very seriously. All of them have turned out to be good drivers, and diligent drivers, although they have had their moments, as we all have had.

As a parent who takes this responsibility very seriously, I welcome the proposal for boosting the minimum hours of driving, but I also think that there should be provision in that for ensuring that young drivers get the widest possible experience of driving, in the widest possible circumstances, while they are still under supervision.

One of the things that I think would be a particularly retrograde step here—I know it is not being suggested—is the speed limits which are in place on L-plated drivers and P-plater drivers in other jurisdictions. That means, for instance, that the first time a driver gets to drive on a freeway at the legal speed limit is probably three or four years into their independent driving, not under the supervision of a responsible driver in the first place.

Over the years of teaching five people to drive, we have always insisted that our children learn to drive in a manual vehicle, although getting experience in driving automatics as well. It is a different driving experience. I am pleased to see that as they get older, our children have opted to drive manual vehicles and buy manual vehicles. It makes you a much more engaged driver, and you have to pay more attention to what is going on on the road rather than having the slightly more set-and-forget approach that you have when driving an automatic vehicle.

We also took the opportunity, at every opportunity, to give them experience in driving in different vehicles on different road terrains, making sure we took them into the country and taught them to drive on dirt roads and the like, and on country roads generally, which are different. You cannot learn to drive just on Canberra’s relatively wide lanes and be an experienced driver.

The issues raised by Miss Burch are very important ones. I do agree up to a point with Mr Steel, Ms Cody and Ms Cheyne that these proposals are a significant infringement on the capacity of young people to go about their lives. It is also a significant infringement upon their parents. If you have a 5 am shift at McDonald’s and there is a curfew, that means mum and dad have to continue to get up and take you to work. If there is a ban on peer passengers, it means that you cannot take your siblings to dance

classes, around the corner to visit a mate or any of those things. Your capacity to do that is restricted.

As young people grow up and acquire their licences, and they are living at home, they do become an essential part of the family transport plan. As a mother of five children, I have relied upon my older children from time to time to take my younger children places when the need arose. It is empowering for them. It gives them a sense of responsibility. It also takes the pressure off the family.

We need to take a look at this from a holistic point of view. That is not to discount the issues of road safety. I believe that the issues of road safety are primarily addressed in the training of young drivers. I would welcome an open discussion about the sorts of competencies that should be ticked off before a young driver can get a licence or before a young driver graduates up the process of getting a full licence.

In some jurisdictions—this may not be applicable here in the ACT, but for instance in Germany—you cannot get a full licence until you have passed tests which show that you are capable of driving in ice and snow. That is not an issue for us here, but we do have serious issues in relation to country roads. City kids often do not know how to drive on country roads.

One of the things that we do know is that while the ACT's road toll is relatively small, there are a large number of people from the ACT who die on New South Wales or other interstate roads, often on country roads. I think that is simply because they are not used to driving on those and they do not drive to the conditions. This is one of the things that we should be doing: addressing the issue of competency.

In relation to Mr Steel's amendment, I think it is a bit cute really. Mr Steel has really nailed his colours to the mast. He has said, quite frankly, that for the Labor Party, these issues in relation to curfews and bans on peer passengers at any time would be an infringement of rights and they will not hear of it. Mr Steel is saying that the minister needs to come to his own ideas, but I think I detected a metaphorical half nelson there, saying that if Mr Rattenbury comes back with this in place he will be one unpopular member of the cabinet.

It is quite clear where the Labor Party stand on this. They should be prepared to say openly that Miss Burch is correct, that we should rule out these things. These are ruling out two elements, essentially, of a much larger panoply of things. Yes, there should be a conversation about how we improve the driver training of our young people, but at the same time there are some things that we are not prepared to countenance.

As a parent of someone who had ACT P-plates but who studied interstate, I can say that the number of times my daughter was stopped on the highway going from here to university at Wollongong was quite phenomenal. She was being stopped by police because she was apparently speeding, to be sent on her way because they realised that she had ACT P-plates and was not bound by those rules. And she did become the designated driver for her colleagues. University was pretty cheap for her, because she never drank when she went out. She was always the designated driver because she had

ACT plates, she had an ACT licence, and she was legally able to be the designated driver when they went out on the town in Wollongong. These are things that we need to take into account.

I thank Miss Burch for her motion today. I note the tone that is coming from the ALP. I think that the ALP would be better served if they just fessed up and said, “Miss Burch is right; let’s rule these things out”; but let us have a conversation about the wider way of ensuring that our children are the safest drivers possible.

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 12.34 to 2.30 pm.

Questions without notice

Clubs—community contributions

MR COE: My question is to the Treasurer. This morning the media reported that one of your ministers made a stunning backflip on his attack on community club contributions, saying that clubs would retain control of the distribution of the current allocation. However, the government will “increase the required amount of contribution, and a portion of that additional amount will go to the Chief Minister’s charitable fund”. Treasurer, will the assets of the Chief Minister’s charitable fund be on or off the books of the ACT government?

MR BARR: I believe they will be off the books of the government. The grant is to an organisation that members are aware of, Hands Across Canberra, but there is a governance structure in place. I will ensure that the accounting treatment that will therefore then be in place will reflect the appropriate arms-length nature of the organisation. My understanding is that, under current Australian accounting rules, that would mean that it would sit off the ACT government books, but I will confirm that for the member and advise the Assembly.

MR COE: Treasurer, are you proposing that the additional two per cent will go directly to the Hands Across Canberra managed fund, or will it go via the ACT government?

MR BARR: There are a number of elements contained within that question that presume an amount and a process that are not correct. I am not making an announcement of government policy today, and the Leader of the Opposition would be aware that he should not be seeking an announcement of government policy through a question, but I would certainly point out that the assumptions around the percentage rate and the process, or suggestion, that he has in his question have no basis in fact.

MR PARTON: Chief Minister, what specific governance arrangements will be put in place to oversee this new fund?

MR BARR: The government will announce that when we announce the conclusion of our consideration on that matter. There is a series of governance arrangements in place in relation to the charitable fund. For the benefit of Mr Parton and others, the fund is modelled on the Lord Mayor of Melbourne's fund. That has been in operation for more than a century now. That is the basis for the fund. It is to support and encourage philanthropy and to support community organisations in this city, in the same way that the Lord Mayor of Melbourne's fund has supported activity in Melbourne and in Victoria more broadly. That fund in Victoria has been in place for more than a century. It has received support from all sides of politics, including at local government level, clearly, over a very long period of time. The governance arrangements are clear in relation to the fund. As to mechanisms for payments to go into the fund, when they are announced we will also be clear in relation to the governance of those particular transfers into the fund.

Land—sections 74 and 76 Watson

MS LE COUTEUR: My question is to the minister for planning and relates to land release of sections 74 and 76 Watson. Minister, the local community is concerned that these blocks are the last opportunity to provide a community heart for north Watson which could be something like a central park, shops, pedestrian and bicycle paths or even an overflow school to support Majura primary. Will the land release look at options for creating a community heart or will the land just be sold for housing?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Ms Le Couteur for her question. Of course the concerns of Watson residents are in our minds as we go forward with releasing land into the future and, indeed, the concerns of Canberrans right across the ACT. These particular areas are a good opportunity, of course, for housing in the ACT and will provide an opportunity for people who are looking to move into the northern area of Canberra.

In regard to the facilitation for community parks, it is certainly hoped that the precinct codes applications will allow for community parks. I have not talked in detail to the directorate about what we would see there but I am certainly happy to talk to them about that.

MS LE COUTEUR: Minister, many of the Watson community want a master plan that will coordinate the land release with any other surrounding development. Is that the government's intention? If not, what is the process going forward?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Ms Le Couteur for her supplementary question. No, there was no intention for a master plan of that area. We are going through our detailed master planning process at the moment. I think that was raised yesterday in discussion about a number of master plans that still need to be completed.

We will be looking to complete those first before we look at any further master plans for those areas. At the detail stage, we will be looking at variations to the Territory Plan that will allow for residential in those areas. There will be a lot of opportunity for the community to have input into those areas.

MR PARTON: Minister, why do ongoing planning decisions reduce green space and community-use land?

MR GENTLEMAN: They do not.

Government—disability services

MR STEEL: My question is to the Minister for Disability, Children and Youth. Minister, how is the ACT government celebrating and supporting the leadership of people with a disability?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Steel for his question and congratulate him on his election to the ministry by his colleagues in caucus. I look forward to working with him.

The ACT government is proud to be able to support the next generation of disability leaders through a range of programs and scholarships to equip them with the skills they need for the future. The ACT government recognises the importance of ensuring that people with disability have the tools and the opportunities to advocate and provide leadership on issues that are critical to their lives.

To this end, the government has funded a program for emerging leaders with disability called “Being proud by practicing: strengthening youth voices in the ACT”. This program, run by women with disabilities in partnership with People with Disabilities and Advocacy for Inclusion, aims to engage and build the skills of a new generation of leaders. Investing in leadership skills now will have long-term benefits for individuals, the community and government.

The ACT government also recently sponsored two individual leadership opportunities. Ms Clare Moore, the new CEO of Women with Disabilities ACT, is being supported to participate in the future shapers program. This is a 12-month leadership development program focusing on transformational leadership growth and big picture strategic thinking run by the Disability Leadership Institute. Ms Carol Jennings is one of a number of women being supported by the ACT government to participate in the She Leads Diploma of Leadership and Management which is being run by the YWCA. I congratulate both women on these opportunities and wish them all the best with them.

There is more work to do in recognising the value of the diverse experiences that people with disability bring to leadership roles and to celebrate the achievements of people with disability who are already in those roles.

MR STEEL: Minister, what opportunities are there for community organisations and individuals to promote awareness and understanding of disability issues and encourage support for the dignity, rights and wellbeing of people with disability?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Steel for the supplementary. This government is committed to empowering people with disability to be leaders, as I said, and not just

on disability issues but across our community. We also realise that each of us, as individuals, businesses, communities and community organisations, has a role to play in leading the way to ensure that our city is welcoming and inclusive for people of all abilities.

The ACT government is committed to supporting activities and individuals who seek to do exactly that. The second round of disability inclusion grants has just closed. I understand that we have had a large number of applications from across the community and businesses, highlighting the Canberra community's desire to be more inclusive and welcoming for people with disability. I look forward with interest to the outcome of that process.

Nominations are now open for the 2018 Chief Minister's inclusion awards, which provide an annual acknowledgement of the outstanding achievements of businesses, organisations and individuals who have demonstrated their commitment to inclusion. I would like to encourage everyone in this place, when you see an exemplary example of inclusion of people with disability, to submit a nomination so that we can all recognise and celebrate Canberra's inclusivity.

We can also celebrate the contribution, skills and achievement of people with disability, raise awareness of disability issues and connect people with disability to the community later this year when we mark the International Day of People with Disability, or I-Day. Applications are now open for I-Day grants to support events and programs which celebrate and acknowledge the contribution, skills and achievements of people with disability and encourage people with disability and the wider community to connect, participate and get involved.

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, what is the ACT government doing to enable participation for people with disability in decision-making and in the civic life of our city?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: The ACT government recognises the importance of ensuring that people with disability can participate in the decisions and deliberations which affect them. This strengthens the civic life of our city. The ACT disability reference group is the advisory group to the ACT government. With a minimum of 50 per cent representation by people with disability, alongside carers, sector representatives and advocates, the disability reference group advises the ACT government on ways in which the ACT can be a more inclusive community for people with disability.

The disability reference group's work plan has four priorities: recognising the importance of improving our health, justice and employment outcomes for people with disability, and reinvigorating the ACT's commitment under the national disability strategy. I always welcome their advice and look forward to continuing to work with the disability reference group.

Another example of how the ACT government is supporting the participation of people with disability in decision-making and in the civic life of our city is through the diversity register. Launched in June this year by the Deputy Chief Minister, the

diversity register connects people with diverse experiences to government and non-government board vacancies.

People with disability are invited to submit their details to the diversity register to be considered for boards and committees across the ACT. The diversity register also acts as a central portal of information about development and training opportunities for ACT citizens to learn more about the important role of governance and accountability.

Improving how we involve people with disability in decision-making and in the civic life of Canberra is an ongoing process, and I look forward to seeing the changes these steps make to the lives of people with disability in our community and, indeed, to our community as a whole.

Clubs—diversification fund

MR PARTON: My question is to the Minister for Regulatory Services. Minister, I refer to your recent announcements on new taxes and charges for licensed clubs. You plan to introduce a gaming machine diversification fund levy and increase the community contributions charge. Some clubs will have to pay an additional \$300,000 as a result of these changes. What research has the government done on the impact of these changes on the viability of vulnerable licensed clubs?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Mr Parton for his question. There has been extensive consultation with the clubs themselves. I think the important thing to remind the Canberra Liberals about this is that the work that has been done, specifically the work that has led to the diversification funding, has come from Neville Stevens in his consultation with the clubs.

The government is specifically working to try to make sure that we have a strong, viable club sector that is working strongly for the community as a whole. As part of that, I appointed Neville Stevens. He has worked with each individual club, as well as with the clubs groups. The recommendation for the diversification fund, which will be ring-fenced and will be feeding back into the clubs, will ensure their ongoing sustainability for a future model of business rather than a past model of business that the Canberra Liberals want to hold on to.

That came from the clubs themselves. The government will be matching that dollar for dollar over the first three years. I am very pleased that that work has been done so consultatively and is supported by the clubs themselves.

MR PARTON: Minister, how do you expect licensed clubs to diversify away from poker machines when you keep introducing new taxes and charges and raising existing taxes, charges and rates?

MR RAMSAY: I refer Mr Parton to the answer to the previous question, which is that the diversification fund is itself working to enable clubs to move beyond that. What we have also done, I remind Mr Parton, is provide tax rebates to small and medium clubs as well as grants to the small and medium clubs. That is all part of the work to make sure that the clubs are able to stay in their business heading forward.

We are pleased to be able to continue building the club sector, knowing the important role that clubs play in building a strong community.

Mr Parton has said that the clubs have as their core business poker machines. I was stunned to hear Mr Parton say that that is their core business. I always thought that the core business of the clubs was to support the community: the sporting groups, the ethnic and cultural groups and the broader community as a whole. We clearly differ. The people on the other side will decide that the core role is to maximise revenue that is coming from poker machines. That is not the view of the government. The view of the government is to make sure that we will support the clubs to move beyond a business model that is stuck in the past and build them for the future.

MR WALL: Minister, how many employees of licensed clubs are expected to lose their jobs as a result of new taxes and charges and continued increases to existing taxes, charges and rates?

MR RAMSAY: Again, I refer to my previous answer, which related to what the government is doing: building and helping the clubs be strong for the future so that their workers are secure by making sure that there is diversification available; and we will continue that. We will make sure that clubs are involved in that. We will make sure that workers are involved in that. One of the areas of the diversification fund itself—

Opposition members interjecting—

Ms Orr: On a point of order, we are barely into the answer to the question and the opposition has interjected the whole way through. I would like to be able to hear the minister's answer.

MADAM SPEAKER: It is difficult to hear the response to the question when there is that level of interjection. Minister.

MR RAMSAY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am pleased to be able to have some clear air to re-emphasise that one of the key areas for the diversification fund is to be able to support workers as they continue to build their skills and build their future employment as we make sure that the workers make sure that—

Mr Parton: On a point of order of relevance, the question was very clearly: how many employees will lose their jobs? We have got nowhere near that.

MADAM SPEAKER: I think it is referring to the general policy that was in the substantive question, which was about the changes and the impact on the taxes. I do not believe there is a point of order. He is talking in the broad sense.

Mrs Dunne: On the point of order, Madam Speaker, standing orders require that when a question is asked—and in this case the question was: how many employees of licensed clubs will lose their jobs?—then the minister must be directly relevant to that question, not the question that was asked two questions previously. Could I ask you to reflect on Mr Parton's point of order in light of the standing orders.

MADAM SPEAKER: I can reflect on it, and in the answer there is reference to the work that has been done with the clubs to make them more diverse in their income and sustainable. Minister, you have 42 seconds.

Mrs Dunne: I am sorry, Madam Speaker, on the point of order, Mr Wall's supplementary question was: how many employees of licensed clubs will lose their jobs as a result of the new taxes and charges and increases to existing taxes, charges and rates? The question was: how many will lose their jobs? I ask you to ask the minister to be directly relevant to that question.

MADAM SPEAKER: I am not proposing to, Mrs Dunne. He is on the policy area and the impact of the new charges and taxes and I cannot, other than being relevant, direct the minister how to answer the question.

Mrs Dunne: On the point of order, Madam Speaker, you can, and there is practice in this place for sitting down a minister who is not directly relevant.

MADAM SPEAKER: I am aware of that practice, Mrs Dunne.

Mr Gentleman: On the point of order, Madam Speaker, you have given your ruling. Mrs Dunne is trying to debate that position. If she wishes, there is an opportunity for her to do that by substantive motion.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr Gentleman. Minister, you have 42 seconds left.

MR RAMSAY: In conclusion, I reject the premise of Mr Wall's supplementary question.

Clubs—community contributions

MR HANSON: My question is to the Minister for Regulatory Services. Minister, currently many veterans organisations receive support through the community contributions of our clubs. Can you guarantee that every veterans group that currently receives support will continue to receive the same level of support under the new scheme?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Mr Hanson for the question. The strange contradiction that comes from the Canberra Liberals on this one is that they want the government to be able to guarantee particular grants, particular amounts, which are currently within the discretion of the clubs, and at the same stage they would like us not to take over any of that discretion. The only way that the government could guarantee that what has happened in the past continues to happen would be for the government to make sure all of the money came in—

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

MADAM SPEAKER: Stop the clock.

Mr Hanson: to be directly relevant, I have asked a very simple question. An answer yes or no would suffice. If the minister cannot guarantee it then he should say so.

MADAM SPEAKER: There is no point of order. The minister has one minute and 23 seconds left, and he may get to a more explicit response to your question, Mr Hanson.

MR RAMSAY: Explicitly, I wonder whether the Canberra Liberals would like the government to take all of the money; they have been running a scare campaign saying that we would be doing that. We are not doing that. I am pleased that the ongoing discretion will stay with the clubs, and the clubs will be able to make the decisions, as they have in the past, in future years as well.

MR HANSON: Minister, can you guarantee that veterans groups will receive the same support without additional costs or administrative burdens imposed by the changes?

MR RAMSAY: I refer Mr Hanson to my previous answer.

MS LAWDER: Minister, can you guarantee that veterans groups will not be discriminated against or miss out under your new scheme?

MR RAMSAY: I can guarantee that as clubs exercise their discretion, they will be exercising their discretion in the way that they have in the past.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Pettersson.

Mr Coe: A great guarantee that is.

Mr Ramsay: It is not up to me to be telling the clubs what they are doing, is it? Isn't that what you are saying?

MADAM SPEAKER: Members across the floor, can we stop. Mr Pettersson is on his feet for a question.

Crime—robbery

MR PETTERSSON: My question is to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services: what update do you have on aggravated robberies, particularly against licensed clubs?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Mr Pettersson for his interest in safety across our community. Unlike those opposite, we do not set out to scare Canberrans. Unlike those opposite, we work hard. In this place yesterday Mr Coe spoke about crime in his contribution to part 1.6 of the approp bill. In making that contribution he showed why he is so unfit to lead and unfit to govern. He did no research. He did not bother to look up the latest updates provided by ACT Policing on aggravated robberies. Instead, he ran out an outdated scare campaign. And he was wrong.

Since February this year there have been no aggravated robberies against licensed clubs in the ACT. This is because ACT Policing have been taking action. Mr Coe just does not understand; either that or he is cherry-picking his facts. Numbers need to be in context, and you cannot just pick the facts as you like. Spikes occur from time to time in categories of crime, but you need to look carefully to see if it is a long-term trend or a temporary increase. It is often the case that, given the relatively low crime rate in this city, these spikes occur because of a small handful of individuals.

As I have said time after time, we live in a relatively safe city, but we are not immune to crime, which is why ACT Policing do a very important but practical and difficult job.

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, what steps have ACT Policing taken to tackle aggravated robberies?

MR GENTLEMAN: Often the best work of ACT Policing goes unseen. However, in recent weeks ACT Policing has been able to show how successful a force they are. Through a strategic, targeted and methodical approach, they have been able to apprehend individuals associated with a number of aggravated robberies across Canberra. Because of data, analysis and hard work, police have been able to link a number of historical crimes together. This has paid dividends.

Last Friday ACT Policing issued a press release about one individual who had been charged with six charges relating to aggravated robbery and burglary, with offences dating back to 2010. The day before, ACT Policing announced that another individual had been summonsed with 22 charges, which included charges for aggravated robberies from 2009 and 2018.

As the police noted, this was a good result, but only the beginning. To quote from the ACT Policing media release from 17 August this year:

The operation remains ongoing and ACT Policing's Crime Disruption Team are investigating a number of leads.

MS ORR: Minister, why is it important to strengthen ACT Policing's strategic analysis capabilities?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Ms Orr for her interest in community safety, too. It is very important that police have the strategic analysis capability to target crime and identify risks. This can also help prevent crime from occurring and deal quickly with emerging issues. This capability is something that the Chief Police Officer spoke at length about during her appearance before the estimates committee. I encourage everyone to look carefully at that evidence. This capacity also helps front-line officers and improves their effectiveness.

The government, in the most recent budget, provided \$2.6 million to expand ACT Policing's capacity. I am confident that this investment will help keep Canberra one of the safest cities in the country as we grow.

Clubs—community contributions

MRS KIKKERT: My question is to the Minister for Disability, Children and Youth. Minister, the Adoptive Families Association of the ACT supports and encourages Canberra families that are in the process of adopting or have adopted a child. They also support a growing number of families that include children on permanent care orders. The association is run by a small committee of volunteers. As president Karin MacDonald has publicly stated, the association's activities are supported by community contributions from the Southern Cross Club. Minister, if some or all of the Southern Cross Club's community contributions are taken into a central fund, who will provide financial support for the Adoptive Families Association?

MR RAMSAY: Given that that specifically relates to the work around the community contributions fund, I think it is more appropriate for me to answer that. Again I note that with the community contributions fund we have consulted on that, with the intention of being able to maximise the benefits for the community.

What we have also announced, to clarify it for members of the opposition, if they have not quite picked up exactly what we have announced, is that the requirements that are placed on clubs at the moment to contribute eight per cent will be staying in place, and clubs are able to determine how that is going. We will make sure there is some tightening of the rules around that, so that there are not the perverse outcomes that I have referred to publicly before. But the clubs will have that responsibility and that authority to make determinations as to how that is distributed. Clubs will still be able to make contributions beyond what is legally required of them. The government is not going to set a maximum as to what clubs are able to give to community groups. We are seeking to maximise that. The whole intention of this is that groups that benefit will be able to continue to do so, and groups that have not yet been able to benefit will also be able to benefit.

MRS KIKKERT: Minister, does this government have the capacity to fully fund the Adoptive Families Association if its current access to community contributions is lost or reduced?

MR RAMSAY: It is one that sits between us. Fundamentally I reject the premise of the question.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, are you prepared to go on record that the Adoptive Families Association of the ACT will not be financially worse off under any changes this government is proposing to the community contributions scheme?

MR RAMSAY: The changes to the community contributions scheme still enable clubs to have the discretion to make determinations. What happens with clubs' determinations will be a matter for clubs. We are seeking to maximise the benefit to community and community groups.

Clubs—community contributions

MS LEE: My question is to the Minister for Regulatory Services. Currently over 60 schools in the ACT in both the government and non-government sectors benefit

from cash and in-kind support from ACT community clubs. Minister, is that support at risk under your proposed changes, and what assurances can you provide schools?

MR RAMSAY: I can give assurances that the government is maximising the benefit to the community out of the changes to the community contributions fund.

MS LEE: After that enlightening response, Minister, what additional requirements will be placed on schools in order for them to continue to receive support from local clubs?

MR RAMSAY: The changes that will come, as we have announced, are that we will continue to refine the community contributions fund. We will not be placing obligations on to the schools or other community groups—

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MR RAMSAY: but it will be refining what the clubs are able to do to make sure that it is maximised for the benefit—

Mr Coe interjecting—

MR RAMSAY: We have seen, as has been stated in this place, some very perverse outcomes that have happened through the community contributions scheme.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MR RAMSAY: We will make sure that those—

MADAM SPEAKER: Can you resume your seat, please. Mr Hanson and Mr Coe, your colleague at the back could be having difficulty hearing the answer with your chatter. Minister.

Mr Hanson: Just on your guidance there, I do not think it was a ruling, Madam Speaker. You have made much of the *House of Representatives Practice* and that we take our lead in this chamber from the House of Representatives. I was actually watching the House of Representatives before coming down here and observing the performance—

Members interjecting—

Mr Hanson: I was. I was watching the House of Representatives and I was watching the level of interjection there from the opposition up in the House of Representatives, Madam Speaker. I think you should actually note what happens in the House of Representatives. There is a level of interjection. It is a robust chamber. At times it does require—

MADAM SPEAKER: Is there a point of order or a point—

Mr Hanson: I am seeking your guidance, Madam Speaker. There is a level of interjection that does occasionally require ministers to raise their voices. If we are going to take our lead from the House of Representatives, why are you not consistent in allowing the opposition a level of interjection consistent with that in the House of Representatives whereas you impose the practice of the House of Representatives in determining what is a point of order in the favour of ministers.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr Hanson. Twenty-five members is somewhat different from 150 members, or thereabouts. I do let a level of interjection play. I do. I do pull you up—

Mr Hanson: Yes, but it is not consistent with the House of Representatives, Madam Speaker. That is my point.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, please do not test me.

Ms Stephen-Smith: On the point of order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: It was not a point of order, apparently; it was guidance.

Ms Stephen-Smith: Sorry, on the conversation, I was also watching question time in the House of Representatives before I came down to the chamber. The Speaker in the House of Representatives actually threatened to expel the member for Wakefield for having conversations while a member on the other side was trying to ask a question.

MADAM SPEAKER: Is there a supplementary question? Mr Parton.

MR PARTON: Minister, will clubs be forced to sever their ties with local schools?

MR RAMSAY: No.

Municipal services—Giralang nature play park

MS ORR: My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services. Minister, can you update the Assembly on the recently completed Giralang Community Nature Play Park?

MS FITZHARRIS: I thank Ms Orr very much for the question. I know how passionate she is and how involved she has been in this great project. The government is also dedicated to investing in our suburban areas and creating community hubs of activity and safe public places where families and friends can meet and enjoy time together. Recently nature play spaces have been created in suburban areas, including in Finn Street in O'Connor, Telopea Park in Barton and the Tuggeranong Town Park in Greenway.

In last year's budget the ACT government provided a \$100,000 initiative to construct a new play area in Giralang adjacent to the area of the local shops. The government, with much assistance from Ms Orr, undertook extensive community consultation with

the local community and actively involved them in the decision-making process. The feedback received was overwhelmingly positive. After two months of construction, Ms Orr herself opened a new recreational space in Giralang ready now for the community, and particularly the school, to enjoy. Key features of the new park are a small bike trail, a dry creek bed, balance beams, an amphitheatre terrace, trees and other plantings, climbing logs, a solar clock, a seating area and much more.

MS ORR: Minister, how was the community involved in the design and construction of the park?

MS FITZHARRIS: In effect, this is an exemplar project for community design, led by a local MLA, Ms Orr, over many months of consultation and work not only with the local Giralang community, but with the primary school and the University of Canberra students and lecturers. It really is an exemplar project. Many groups have been actively involved in the design and decision-making process, and the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive.

What makes this park so special is that not only was it envisioned by the Giralang community but it was co-designed and partially delivered by them. Students from the local schools have worked with Wellspring Environmental Arts & Design to create artwork for the timber maze poles, and over the past few weeks they were painting and stamping the colours into the poles. Giralang nature play park was not only envisioned by the Giralang community, local year 3 and 4 school students have also been working with Wellspring Environmental Arts & Design to design the artwork for those poles. University of Canberra landscape architecture students also played a role in producing design concepts for the park.

It is just wonderful to be able to include the community in this way. I particularly commend Ms Orr for her work in leading the consultation on this project in her local community in Giralang.

MS CHEYNE: Minister, how will the park connect with the Giralang shops?

MS FITZHARRIS: I thank Ms Cheyne for the supplementary. The saga of the Giralang shops has been ongoing for some time, and I know for the local community how important it was that were new investments and new connections in this suburb. That was certainly at the forefront of Ms Orr's mind as she worked with the community on delivering this great project.

We are also excited to inject some of Canberra's history into the new public space and connect the old with the new. Tharwa bridge is the oldest standing bridge in the ACT, first built in 1895. The ironbark timber from the bridge has been reused in the new space as bench seats, bridges across the dry creek bed and retaining walls. People who use the shops and the nearby park will no doubt appreciate the way these heritage aspects have been integrated into the Giralang park.

The new park is a joint collaboration between the ACT government and the developers of the shopping precinct. Further works that will be completed by the developer include car parking, additional seating, a shade structure and landscaping,

which will be delivered as part of the shopping centre redevelopment program in this financial year.

The creation of this recreational space was driven by the community and its local representative and I am really thrilled with this outcome. Local students have worked hard to bring their own vibrancy and colour to the park, and I hope everyone who visits Giralang nature play park enjoys the real community feel that has been created.

Clubs—community contributions

MRS DUNNE: My question is to the current Minister for Health and Wellbeing. Minister, licensed clubs are the biggest supporters of community and junior sport in the territory. What research has ACT Health done into the impact of the funding of community sport by ACT licensed clubs on the health and wellbeing of Canberrans?

MS FITZHARRIS: I certainly know that ACT Health works with many partners, and we are leading, in a collaboration between ACT Health and the Chief Minister's department, an extensive piece of work on preventive health and healthy and active living. I have no doubt that under the reforms announced today by the Attorney-General, we will continue that work, and that the community will continue to be actively involved in the health and wellbeing of Canberrans. I foresee there only being an increase in community contributions to groups supporting the health and wellbeing of our community.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, what research has ACT Health done into the impact of funding of junior sports by licensed clubs on reducing the level of childhood obesity in the community?

MS FITZHARRIS: It is the lead directorate for the significant policy framework on preventive health, which is the towards zero growth framework, and the subsequent extensive investment through the healthy weight initiative which has continued, particularly with funding in last year's budget. There is extensive whole-of-government work on support for community sporting groups and community clubs into many measures that we have in place to support the health and wellbeing of our community and also to encourage healthy eating among community groups. I am not aware of research particularly related to how the community contributions impact on that.

MR PARTON: Minister, has ACT Health costed the increase in health promotion grants needed to replace funding from licensed clubs for community sport, should it not be there?

MS FITZHARRIS: As my colleagues have previously answered, I utterly reject the premise of that question, but I am delighted to continue to see health promotion grants and health innovation grants being awarded in our community, and some excellent proposals coming forward. I believe the health innovation grants are out as we speak, and the health promotion grants were announced just a few months ago. We will continue to strongly support health promotion grants in our community.

Clubs—community contributions

MS LAWDER: My question is to Minister Steel—no, just joking. Actually, it is to the Minister for Regulatory Services. I refer to the latest changes to the community contributions scheme that were announced today. You have flagged an additional charge of one or two or yet-to-be-determined per cent of net gaming revenue for clubs, with the funds raised going towards the Chief Minister's charitable fund. Minister, what consultation occurred with licensed clubs, and which clubs, before you announced this latest change?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Ms Lawder for the question. I note that there are a number of assumptions already in that. I restate that the amount that will be increased on top of the eight per cent has not yet been determined, and the proportion of that which would go to the Chief Minister's charitable fund has not been determined. But given that the opposition does not seem to worry at this stage about accuracy or simply stirring up a lot of fear around the place—which it seems to be doing again today—this has been open for considerable consultation with each of the clubs. Clubs have been invited over the past month to make their views known. They have done that.

Ms Lawder: A point of order, Madam Speaker, as to relevance. The question specifically asked about the announcement that came out this morning and what consultation occurred before the minister announced this latest change.

MADAM SPEAKER: I heard the minister referring to a consultative process. He has a minute to expand on that, perhaps, for the benefit of members.

MR RAMSAY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I draw to the attention of Ms Lawder that an options paper was distributed as part of the JACS conversation with the community, with clubs and the broader community. What has been announced today sits within one of those four options given in one of the sections of that paper. There was broad consultation. Any club that wanted to was able to contribute to that conversation and quite a number did. So, too, did other groups beyond the clubs.

We have had significant conversation over the past month. But putting it in context, it is not as if what we have been talking about in terms of a review of the community contributions is new; it is in the parliamentary agreement. Since day one of this term of government we have said we will be doing that. I have talked in this place a number of times about the consultation we would be doing; I have talked about it broadly in the community a number of times. (*Time expired.*)

MS LAWDER: What consultation did you undertake with licensed clubs before you identified option one, as you have this morning, as your preferred option?

MR RAMSAY: The consultation that took place with the community groups and with the clubs as part of that JACS consultation.

MR PARTON: Minister, to what extent are the proposed changes to the community contributions scheme prompted by efforts to get revenge on clubs for their campaign in the lead-up to the 2016 election?

MR RAMSAY: So that I can, pointedly, directly respond to the question: none, zero, nothing. But putting it in context, what it is that we have done is made very clear that what we will be doing is working for the benefit of the community as a whole.

It is interesting again that around this time last week we were debating a similar topic in this place and Mr Parton and Mr Milligan both talked about the fact that yes, sure, there are things about the scheme that need to be refined. The government is committed to the fact that it is improving on the scheme.

We do not believe that it is appropriate for Qantas club memberships to be paid for and classed as a community contribution. We do not believe that it is appropriate for staff mobile phones to be paid for out of community contributions. We do not believe that simply noting that something was a Bunnings payment is transparent enough for it to be classed as a community contribution. We do not believe that balloons for a prize night should be classed as a community contribution when it comes from the privilege that clubs have to be able to operate electronic gaming machines in the territory.

We will continue to work with clubs to help them as they build for the strength of the community. We are increasing the transparency. We are increasing the benefits to the community and we are increasing the overall strength of the community. We are happy to do that. We will continue to do that, notwithstanding the fact that there is fear, there is scaring that will continue to happen from the opposition. We are used to that. We expect it but it is deeply disappointing.

Access Canberra—staffing

MS CHEYNE: My question is to the Minister for Regulatory Services. Can the minister outline how the budget is growing the staffing at Access Canberra to better serve a growing city?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Ms Cheyne for the question. It is a pleasure to talk about the way that Access Canberra continues to build growing services for a growing community, including the way that we deliver an increase in on-the-ground staffing in Access Canberra to make sure that we are keeping up with the demands of a growing city.

In this year's budget we are providing funding for new staff across a number of different areas of Access Canberra. There are going to be five new call takers for the Access Canberra contact centre to increase its capacity to take calls from members of the community throughout the day. This is going to build on the previous efforts that we had to bring down the call waiting times in the contact centre, which are already paying dividends. I note for the Assembly that the average wait time last week was down to two minutes and 43 seconds. There will be a number of new concierge positions in Access Canberra service centres to guide customers through their transactions and ensure that they have everything they need.

We are also increasing the number of staff who are performing Access Canberra's regulatory functions. This is going to include two new specialist WorkSafe inspectors to continue ensuring that our work sites across the city are safe and continue to be safe. There will also be two additional building licence inspectors to ensure that builders are doing what they can under the building code.

The government is growing the staffing in Access Canberra to increase the services that we provide for our growing city.

MS CHEYNE: Minister, how will the increased numbers of concierges and contact centre operators increase the level of customer service that Access Canberra provides?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Ms Cheyne for the supplementary question. The government is committed to providing a good customer service experience for everyone who interacts with Access Canberra. That is why we are growing the number of concierges and contact centre operators within Access Canberra. Our contact centre operators are some of the most knowledgeable public servants that we have. They answer calls on everything from vehicle registration and the maintenance of outdoor fitness equipment to waste issues and European wasp nests.

We are hiring five new call takers to help with an increasingly complex series of inquiries that Access Canberra now answers. This will help to reduce wait times to speak to our staff by having more operators available, providing the capacity to answer around 1,700 additional calls each week. In addition to this we will be employing extra concierges for our service centres. These friendly and knowledgeable staff help Canberrans as they arrive in our centres to ensure that they have what they need, the correct forms and fees, and can even help people lodge online in the shopfront if it will save time. That means that people do not need to wait to see someone at the counter just to check that they have everything they require. It also helps to ensure that transactions can be done in a timely and efficient manner.

This builds on other work that we have been doing to improve the experience people have, such as introducing a call-back function for the contact centre, installing touchscreens to allow online lodgement in service centres and continually improving Fix My Street so that people can lodge complaints and provide information online. This government continues to invest in our contact centre and our service centres to grow the service we provide.

MS CODY: Minister, can you outline how the extra building and WorkSafe inspectors will allow Access Canberra to better undertake its regulatory functions?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Ms Cody for the supplementary question and her for interest in workplace safety and the regulatory functions of the government. Access Canberra has many highly skilled and knowledgeable staff in its various inspectorates. As part of this budget, we are increasing the number of WorkSafe inspectors and building inspectors to meet the needs of our growing city.

WorkSafe is looking forward to recruiting two extra inspectors. It is anticipated that one of these will have specialist mental health qualifications to bolster WorkSafe's ability to respond to mental health injuries and risks. The other inspector will help WorkSafe's on-the-ground presence to ensure that Canberra workplaces are, and remain, safe.

Through this budget, Access Canberra will also boost its ability to improve building quality in the ACT. We have listened to the community, who have said that they would like quicker resolution of building complaints. So these two inspectors will help support Access Canberra's new rapid regulatory response team who aim to assess and finalise building complaints as quickly as possible. This team will help to free up our other building inspectors to deal with the more complex issues, as well as clearing the cases on hand.

The government is investing in Access Canberra to ensure that it has the staff, the skills and the tools needed to effectively regulate the areas needed in Canberra. It is why we are making changes to the building licence regime to test builders' knowledge. It is why we are hiring new inspectors. And it is why we will soon start a new program of auditing building certifiers. We are continuing to grow the capacity and the capability of Access Canberra so that it can meet the needs of this growing city.

Clubs—community contributions

MISS C BURCH: Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister for Regulatory Services. Minister, the clubs community contribution model is one way that our community clubs support a wide range of sporting, cultural and other community activities. Many community organisations have said that they rely on clubs' in-kind donations of room hire waivers to host their meetings. Minister, what alternative venues for community groups will your government provide if clubs are no longer a viable option?

MR RAMSAY: Madam Speaker, I reject entirely the premise of the question.

MISS C BURCH: Minister, will you guarantee that clubs will continue to have in-kind donations of rooms and facilities fully counted as community contributions under the scheme?

MR RAMSAY: As is clear in the discussion paper that has been released, we are looking at a number of areas which have been raised by the report that we have received from the Auditor-General. We take seriously the Auditor-General's report. I do not know if the Canberra Liberals do but we certainly do. We take seriously the reports that have been provided by others as well.

We will continue to look at that evidence that has looked at the boundaries in relation to in-kind donations and the boundaries in relation to the definition of community contributions. We will work with that. As Mr Parton and Mr Milligan said in the chamber last week, there are areas where this scheme should be tightened. There are areas where this scheme should be improved.

On that point, I agree with those members of the opposition. On the scare tactics that are clearly underlying every single question in question time, I reject them.

MR PARTON: Minister, will you guarantee that no community organisations will be worse off given that the new community contributions tax will eat in to the above eight per cent community funding that most clubs make?

MR RAMSAY: I guarantee that clubs are still able to make contributions above the eight per cent.

Clubs—community contributions

MR WALL: Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister for Regulatory Services. Minister, I refer to the latest announced changes to the community contributions scheme, where you have flagged that an additional one per cent of net gaming revenue for clubs with funds raised will go towards the Chief Minister's charitable fund. Given your recent backflip, as reported this morning, will you guarantee and give certainty to the clubs that you will not revisit the issue of changing the existing eight per cent model?

MR RAMSAY: I note that there is again an inaccuracy in the preamble to the question, which talks about a one per cent increase. As I answered earlier in question time today—I am not sure if Mr Wall was listening to the questions or simply guiding through—the amount of the increase has not yet been determined; nor has the percentage within any increase that would go to the Chief Minister's charitable fund. What we will continue to do is make sure that there is a benefit—

Mr Coe: Madam Speaker, I raise a point of order. Mr Wall's question was explicitly about the first eight per cent, not about the additional percentage or amount. While Mr Ramsay might want to give the same answer as he has given to other questions, the question is: will the eight per cent remain in place? I ask that he be directly relevant.

MADAM SPEAKER: Minister, you have a minute left to go to that point of the question.

MR RAMSAY: I can guarantee, as we have announced today, that the eight per cent amount will remain. That is the government's policy. It is obviously not something that this government can ever bind any future government to. For the time of this government I can guarantee that that eight per cent will remain.

MR WALL: Minister, can you now guarantee to clubs and community organisations across the ACT that there will be no change to the existing eight per cent community contribution and any proposal is now off the table?

MR RAMSAY: Noting that within the eight per cent, as I have answered in the previous question—again I am not sure if Mr Wall was listening—we were paying attention to the in-kind and the definition of what is a community contribution, it is very clear that we are looking at that at the moment. That was also in the

announcement. That was also in the discussion paper. I would encourage Mr Wall to have a read of what the discussion paper says. I would encourage Mr Wall to have a read of the Auditor-General's report. I would encourage Mr Wall to look at the evidence of what has been happening.

The government is very clear that what we are doing is maximising the benefit to the community. There is a privilege that clubs have in the operating of electronic gaming machines. We have announced today very clearly that, of the options that were provided in the discussion paper, without any particular preferred option, we have now decided which of the options in that section of the paper we will be following through. I encourage Mr Wall to look with anticipation at the strong benefits that are going to be coming to the broader community from this government's work.

MR PARTON: Minister, will you guarantee no retribution towards clubs as you did the last time that clubs stood up for their members?

MR RAMSAY: I reject the premise of the question.

Budget—housing and homelessness

Opposition members interjecting—

MS CODY: Madam Speaker, I was just waiting to be able to hear my own voice, let alone the answer to my question. My question is to the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development: what initiatives in the 2018 ACT budget provide funding for better housing and homelessness services in the ACT?

Mr Coe: There was a speech on this yesterday.

MS BERRY: Good; I am glad you paid attention to the speech yesterday. I thank Ms Cody for the question.

Mr Coe: Well, read it again.

MS BERRY: I enjoy reading and talking about housing in the ACT to ensure the chamber hears what is going on in housing in the ACT. This year's budget is delivering tangible outcomes for the housing and homelessness sector and improving the level and quality of support provided. The government will continue to focus on early crisis intervention and prevent chronic homelessness for key groups, including women and children escaping domestic violence as well as migrant families, with front-line homelessness services to receive \$6.5 million over four year. OneLink operating hours will be extended to improve the cooperation of services and responsiveness to Canberrans who are seeking help from accommodation services as well as other supports.

Some \$2.1 million has been allocated to modernise Housing ACT's tenancy and application services. This upgrade will enable existing tenants and people to get access to essential services online and via their mobile devices, such as submitting applications and managing maintenance requests. I have already seen earlier versions

of the Housing ACT app which is being developed, and it is really great. It looks good and it is really easy to use, which is important.

Improving the energy efficiency of public housing properties and reducing power bills for tenants has also been a priority in this year's budget. An amount of \$5.7 million is allocated over the next three years towards the energy efficiency improvement scheme to provide energy efficiency products and deliver energy efficiency upgrades to approximately 2,200 public housing properties.

The year's budget is also delivering real outcomes and support for housing and homelessness services, including the announcement that stamp duty will not apply to first homebuyers with a household income of up to \$160,000 from July next year.

MS CODY: Minister, how will these initiatives help to improve housing affordability and continue to reduce homelessness?

MS BERRY: Many of these initiatives in the budget will improve housing affordability and reduce homelessness. Building on the success of Common Ground in Gungahlin, the government has allocated \$250,000 to undertake the design of a second Common Ground in Dickson. Common Ground has been a fantastic project that has a social mix to support in a supported environment people experiencing homelessness as well residents on low incomes. This will increase the supply of affordable housing and free up crisis accommodation leading to long-term sustainable housing.

The government has committed \$4.4 million to deliver another dedicated and culturally appropriate housing complex for older Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders. The provision of culturally specific accommodation has proven to be successful in the first Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander older persons accommodation, Mura Gunya, in Kambah. The government has been working collaboratively with the elected body to deliver these important projects that allow tenants to maintain connection to their family, community and culture.

The government has also provided \$200,000 in the budget to commence development and feasibility studies into purpose-built supportive housing facilities for people who are experiencing long-term mental health issues and housing difficulties. In 2016-17 one in every five people identified mental health issues as a reason for seeking homelessness assistance in approaching a homelessness service, demonstrating the need to provide purpose-built supportive housing facilities for people experiencing long-term mental health issues.

All these programs are working to support housing and reduce homelessness in the ACT.

MR STEEL: Minister, how is the government tracking against its election commitments and the parliamentary agreement in relation to housing and homelessness?

MS BERRY: I thank Mr Steel for his supplementary. The government is delivering on all their commitments to Canberra and the parliamentary agreement. As

I mentioned, we are delivering the election commitment to build another Common Ground in Dickson and developing the work for a purpose-built supportive housing facility and support services, such as MyHome. The housing and homelessness summit was held in October last year, where I participated in a range of conversations with the community. I look forward to releasing a new housing strategy later this year.

The government is delivering on the commitment for a second purpose-built Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander older persons complex, strengthening support for specialist homelessness services for key cohorts and working with ACT Shelter to deliver a report on trauma-informed care.

There is also a commitment to fund professional development and training for specialist housing and homeless service providers. The government is delivering on the commitment to the Early Morning Centre in the provision of essential services. An amount of \$100,000 was allocated to extend the operating hours at the Early Morning Centre.

Finally, the public housing renewal program is delivering on the government's commitment to renew public housing in the ACT. As of July this year, the program had delivered a total of 780 new homes to public housing tenants in the ACT.

The government is delivering on its promises that it made through the ACT Labor Party's election commitments and the parliamentary agreement. I look forward to seeing all these projects rolled out into the community.

Mr Barr: Madam Speaker, further questions can be placed on the notice paper.

Youth—P-plate driver restrictions

Debate resumed.

MR PETTERSSON (Yerrabi) (3.34): As a government, we must encourage young people to fully participate in our community, whether this be through their jobs, community activities, sporting events or social events. Unfair restrictions on young people do the opposite of this. That is why restricting P-plate drivers from driving between midnight and 5 am is unfair. That is why limiting the number of peers that a P-plater can drive is unfair. And that is why overly onerous logbook systems are unfair.

I am and will always be opposed to unnecessary burdens being placed on young people. Whilst as a government we should always prioritise the safety of all Canberrans, we should focus on practical community support and reforms, not radical knee-jerk policy changes.

There are many changes being considered—some good, some less so but all part of an important mix. A complete ban on young people driving at certain times tells young people that we do not trust them. If you think that 16-year-olds are mature enough to vote then surely 17-year-olds are mature enough to drive past the bedtimes of local politicians.

I think we can all agree that we should focus on increasing the training provided to young people when they are first learning to drive. If safety is the main concern then surely more training is the answer.

Many young people are shiftworkers whose shifts finish after midnight, especially if they work in hospitality. Young people who are enrolled in the trades may have to start work earlier than 5 am. Young people who play sport often start training early in the morning. When young people go out to parties or to clubs in the city it is very common practice for one person to be the designated driver and to drive their friends home. This is, after all, a practice we encourage. In all these circumstances alternatives to driving are impractical and often expensive.

I do not think exemptions are the solution either. Applying for exemptions is an unfair burden. Why are we placing the burden on young Canberrans? No-one plans to get sick and make a midnight dash to the hospital. No-one knows when a relative will ask for a lift to the airport. And what if your shifts change at work? I want to reiterate that I am not fundamentally opposed to changes in our licensing regime, but I want our changes to be sensible and I want our community to support them.

I think placing an overly large requirement on supervised driving hours is unfair and unwise. We have seen in other jurisdictions what happens when these supervised hours are implemented: families simply forge logbooks. And often those families that are most likely to forge them are the individuals that most need help with driving. Really, what is the point? That is not to say that more hours with supervision are not beneficial. That is beneficial, but the logbooks are not without their problems.

I think it is also worth pointing out that these systems are often designed with a conventional family unit in mind. How would 100 hours of supervision affect a single parent? How would it affect a family on a tight budget that struggles to put petrol in the tank? How would it affect a family with twins? That 100 hours is now 200 hours for the parents.

I want our roads to be safe. I want young people to learn to drive in a safe and supportive environment. I want young people to be valued and respected parts of this community. There are still many questions that are yet to be answered about what a final mix of changes would look like, and I hope we get the balance right.

MISS C BURCH (Kurrajong) (3.37): Safety on our roads is a key priority, and I thank all members for their contributions today on this important issue. As I think we have all said, one death on our roads is too many. However, I would like to reiterate Mrs Dunne's comments that the focus needs to be on equipping young drivers with the skills and knowledge that they need to be safe on our roads while they are learning to drive, before they are unsupervised on our roads, rather than unfairly punishing them and restricting their freedoms once they already have their licence.

Mr Rattenbury spoke about the fact that there is still ongoing consultation around these proposals. I would like to acknowledge that, unlike much of this government's so-called consultation, consultation on this particular issue has seemed somewhat genuine, at least until now. Mr Rattenbury reiterated that young people are

disproportionately over-represented in crash statistics. However, he failed to acknowledge that there are other demographic groups who are also over-represented. In New South Wales in the past year drivers in their 40s outnumbered 17 to 25-year-olds in fatal accidents. Analysis of accidents in Queensland from 2004 to 2009 found that drivers in their 90s were just as likely as those in their early 20s to be involved in accidents. And, as I stated earlier, middle-aged men are shown to be the most dangerous on our roads.

My point remains: if the minister truly wanted to improve road safety for all road users, why are restrictions not being placed on these demographics as well? Why are young people being unfairly targeted by this government?

I thank Mr Steel for his history lesson in Liberal Party policy and his ridiculous assertions that parties cannot change policy positions over the course of a decade and a half. I also reject Mr Steel's claim that the Labor Party have always held a consistent position on this issue. I remind him that we only have to go back five years, not 14 years, to find the last time that these issues were discussed in this place, when Mr Gentleman—yes, a Labor minister—put forward a proposal which included the introduction of passenger restrictions.

Quite astonishingly, a number of members of the Labor Party have spoken out against these changes and have today in the chamber expressed quite strong opposition to these measures, and yet they have all said that they would not be supporting my motion. This demonstrates just how easily those opposite continue to say one thing but do another.

This reflects a broader story in ACT politics. It is a story of growing nanny state-ism, more burdensome rules and regulations and greater restrictions on our everyday freedoms. But it is also a story of a Labor government constantly at the mercy of the ACT Greens. It is a story of a Labor government that are so desperate to cling to power that they will throw our young people, young workers that they so often claim to protect, under the bus just to appease the Greens. That is assuming that they have not already cut the buses.

Question put:

That **Mr Steel's** amendment to **Mr Rattenbury's** proposed amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 12

Noes 9

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

Amendment agreed to.

Question put:

That **Mr Rattenbury's** amendment, as amended, be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 12		Noes 9	
Mr Barr	Mr Gentleman	Miss C Burch	Ms Lee
Ms Berry	Ms Le Couteur	Mr Coe	Mr Parton
Ms J Burch	Mr Pettersson	Mrs Dunne	Mr Wall
Ms Cheyne	Mr Ramsay	Mr Hanson	
Ms Cody	Mr Rattenbury	Mrs Kikkert	
Ms Fitzharris	Ms Stephen-Smith	Ms Lawder	

Amendment, as amended, agreed to.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

Local shopping precincts—maintenance

MS LEE (Kurrajong) (3.46): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) suburban shops play an essential role in local Canberra communities offering a wide range of food, beverages, dining options and community health services;
- (b) local shop owners are small business operators who work long hours to ensure quality service, flexibility of opening hours and choice for local residents;
- (c) a large number of shopping areas are poorly lit, run down, the target of graffiti vandals and lacking basic and regular maintenance;
- (d) many local shops lack appropriate parking spaces and policing of parking infringements; and
- (e) too few local shops have appropriately maintained and working toilets, sufficient seating and shade areas; and

(2) calls on the ACT Government to establish and publish a schedule of regular maintenance of local shops and report on the budget allocation for such maintenance by the end of the sitting period in October 2018.

Madam Speaker, when you think of your local shops, the shops you go to to grab a paper, coffee or your favourite takeaway, or perhaps to visit your GP or to pick up your dry-cleaning, you want to think of a warm friendly place, a convenient place, a place where you get to know the shopkeepers by first name. Nostalgic, perhaps, of times gone by, but there is a reason why in Canberra most suburbs have a local shop even when bigger shopping centres and precincts are pretty close by and, on any objective measure, would provide a convenient go-to for everything you need.

Dickson is one of the biggest shopping precincts we have in Canberra. You would think there is not much that Dickson does not have to offer for locals. Yet it did not stop Downer residents passionately lobbying for a refurbishment of their beloved Downer shops, a mere kilometre away. What we do not want to see is our local shops becoming run-down and losing basic amenities because this government has let this core municipal service fall through the cracks.

Whilst individual shopkeepers and landlords who own the shops have a responsibility, and an incentive, to make sure their shops are the best they can be, there is a limit to what they can do when it comes to parking, road maintenance, community safety, street sweeping, lighting, footpaths and public amenities.

Canberra is community. I have seen time and again how Canberrans respond when local community groups take the initiative to create a buzz. An example that immediately comes to mind is the Light Up Lyneham festival, which is now in its second year, a festival that I spoke about in this chamber only last week. When you see more than 700 Canberrans come together on a cold winter's night with homemade lanterns to follow the Canberra prosperous mountain lion dance troupe around the wetlands, it is quite a sight to behold.

Another example is the pop-up market at the Red Hill shops which was held last year. I am sure that my fellow Kurrajong members will know that Red Hill shops are small, quaint and relatively quiet—even more so now with the current development. But during the pop-up event you could hardly move with the hundreds of Canberrans crammed into the common area, trying local handmade doughnuts, buying dog treats, and enjoying local wines and beer at the pop-up bar.

I bring this motion to the Assembly today because I, and many of my constituents, greatly value our local shops and have seen a number of ways they can be improved to bring the community even closer together. Recently, I asked for suggestions from my constituents on how we could improve our local shops. This issue clearly struck a chord with many. The responses I received were, to say the least, numerous and diverse. What this clearly told me was that my constituents are concerned about some of the neglect they have seen at their local shops and that they want to see improvements—from general maintenance to more community amenities to bring local residents together.

Whilst the feedback was as varied as the local shops we have in Canberra, there were a number of issues that seemed to come up time and again. I address some of these today. The first is parking. This government would tell you that the light rail will fix everything. But tell me how many local shops—not major shopping precincts but local shops—are on the light rail corridor. Local shops, by their name and by their nature, are your local, so many Canberrans will be in a position to walk or cycle to them.

However, exacerbated by the bus network being slashed, many Canberrans who either live too far away or who have mobility concerns may have no option but to drive to

their local shops. Lack of parking is one issue that came up frequently, but so was the fact that parking infringements were not being monitored or enforced.

Shopkeepers rely on a revolving door of customers. People who park at the short-term spots at their local shops all day because their workplace is nearby are depriving local shopkeepers of many customers who drive in, circle for a car park and then leave when they cannot find one. The design and layout of parking spaces and the lack of road maintenance leading into and out of the shops are issues of more than inconvenience. They are issues of safety.

The Yarralumla Residents Association and locals have said for quite some time now that the design of the parking on Bentham Street is a risk to safety. The feedback I get is that Bentham Street must be the only street at local shops to be both a parking lot and a main thoroughfare. Given the perpendicular parking design, most people will park front to kerb. There is a real risk that cars on both sides will reverse out at the same time and may reverse into each other.

When doorknocking, I have had many residents tell me about witnessing small prangs and near misses arising from exactly this situation and that it is only a matter of time before they see a big accident. As one resident told me:

Parking is so difficult and hazardous that sometimes, if I need more than I can carry, I will drive to Curtin to shop rather than attempt to shop at Yarralumla.

Another Yarralumla resident told me:

There is a serious shortage of parking which will be exacerbated when the Canberra Brickworks development is completed. The YRA and individual residents have made representations on many occasions to the government with minimal result. For a suburb paying the rates which we pay, the level of expenditure on maintenance and infrastructure is well below expectations. The quality of our local government is incredibly disappointing.

Of course, parking issues are not limited to Yarralumla shops. A Deakin resident told me:

The car park in Hannah Place is not a park and ride, but the proximity to Parliament House and the Barton offices makes it one.

Narrabundah residents are also fed up with issues of parking. One resident tells me:

There is often no parking available for anyone who needs to shop at supermarket, chemist, bakery, newsagent, et cetera, of a weekday between midday and 2 pm or even later. The parked cars tend to spill over into adjoining streets that can be too narrow for cars to park on both sides of the road.

A Campbell resident asks the government to:

Develop the rear car park to better provide for car parking and to improve safety around the existing shops, goods receipts and administration areas.

The resident also asks the government to:

... reduce the median strip in the front car park to better enable car traffic flow.

Another Campbell resident says:

The parking area behind the shops is good for overflow parking but needs a facelift and lighting at night. The residents of Campbell have been neglected for too long. Considering the development at C5, Campbell shops are going to get busier and busier.

The second issue is of maintenance of amenities and basic upkeep. It was more than ironic, and certainly an embarrassment for this government, that at the Light Up Lyneham festival some of the streetlights at the Lyneham shops were not working. The palpable irony that the Light Up Lyneham festival lacked lighting at the local shops would be almost laughable if it were not such a clear token of the lack of maintenance our local shops have seen under this government. Luckily we had hundreds of handmade lanterns to show us the way. The streetlight issue has now been logged on the fix my street portal. But the fact remains that this government has allowed too many local shops to degrade for too long.

Uneven paving, the lack of lighting or faulty lighting, and graffiti work that remains uncleaned for too long all reduce the utility for shoppers and make local shops look tired. If your shops look tired you are less likely to shop there. This impacts small business owners and it also impacts the pride we all take in our suburb.

Some of the local shops in my electorate have a high rate of shop vacancies. If this government is not making every effort to ensure that local shops are attractive to budding entrepreneurs and established small business owners, this tells us just how much this government thinks of hardworking small business people. I recall some years ago that there was a noticeable drop-off in lawn mowing around the city. Residents and visitors clearly noticed the neglect and were not happy about it. I see and hear that same response now.

Of course, the ultimate neglect is the Giralang shops, which have laid empty for years. But I am sure that each member in this chamber, from all electorates, can also tell a story about a local shopping centre that has started to see more and more vacancies. A Campbell resident says, "The Campbell shops are run-down," and notes that one suggestion would be to see a "refurbishment of the Campbell shops children's playground to improve safety for children".

Madam Speaker, whilst I am on Campbell shops, I must give credit to my colleague Jeremy Hanson, who, in his capacity as a member for Molonglo as he was then, lobbied hard to get the public toilets established there. This is something that I know made a difference to many Campbell residents as it is raised with me on occasion by locals when I hold my mobile offices there.

Of course, former member for Kurrajong, and our colleague, the late Steve Doszpot was instrumental in assisting local shopkeepers to create the green space in Kingston

that we see today, a community space that is valued by many locals in the inner south. A Narrabundah resident notes issues in addition to parking concerns:

Toilet upgrade and better lighting for better security at night time are my main concerns. Narrabundah is a low socioeconomic suburb and has been forgotten by government authority. If there is a scope for an upgrade then Narrabundah shops must be of top priority.

A resident from Yarralumla told me:

The whole area around the shops has not been upgraded for many years and is looking very tired. The pavement is very old, the bench seats are old with the paintwork flaking off, the walls around the shops also have paint flaking off and hand rails near the steps are bent due to cars accidentally running into them.

Another resident says:

There has been no maintenance of the public areas for over 15 years and a number of long standing maintenance issues are now posing a risk to public safety.

Yet another resident says:

It has been a number of years since the paving and landscaping in front of the shops was completed. The centre is now looking tired and in need of revitalisation.

I know that the ever-hardworking Yarralumla Residents Association logged a detailed list of maintenance issues on the fix my street portal. I have also on many occasions written to the Minister for Transport and City Services to request attention to basic maintenance issues. I hope that, by my moving my motion today, the minister does turn her head to these matters. Perhaps they are not as sexy or damning as what is happening at the hospital or not as sexy or damning as what is happening with the consultations regarding the bus network. These are, nevertheless, issues that impact many residents in my electorate.

The third issue relayed to me is initiative to create a sense of community. Of course, I should not be surprised, but in the midst of the feedback I received was yet another confirmation of the great pride Canberrans take in our city. A Lyneham resident is so keen to see more community facilities that he stated to me:

I would like to see a wooden table and chairs put in place at Lyneham shops outside the IGA. I would also like a gas BBQ placed there (which I will pay for). It would be a great place for people to get together. I will even pay for it myself as long as you can get the appropriate BARR-ed—

That is the Chief Minister—

up approval to see it done. I will even arrange for artists to come and put their art on the table.

Clearly, my constituents are crying out for initiatives to allow our local shops to create a real sense of community. A few of the shops in my electorate have communal seats, tables and play areas, creating an inviting environment which gives stay-at-home parents the opportunity to bring their kids for an informal playgroup; a place where parents can pop in after school to pick up treats for the kids and have a chat with fellow parents; a hub where sports groups, community groups and other interest-based groups can congregate; a sanctuary in the middle of a busy workday where workers can sit down for an hour with lunch before they have to get back to the office.

However, many local shops in my electorate lack these basic communal facilities: seats, perhaps a table, benches, toilets and bubblers. A Campbell resident said to me, “We need a water fountain, more seating and areas for people to congregate and refurbishment of the Campbell shops children’s playground to improve safety.” A Lyneham resident has said, “A water fountain or a sitting bench would be a welcome addition.” This is reference to the North Lyneham shops. The resident also noted that those shops have no public toilets. At the Narrabundah shops, residents call for a modern play area, a good public notice board and some seats in the park opposite.

Madam Speaker, Canberra is community. Of course, it is the local residents that create that community. But every motivated and hardworking group should know that their local government has their back. For too long this government has not had their back. My motion calls on the government to establish and publish a schedule of regular maintenance of local shops and to report on the budget allocations for such maintenance.

If the minister agrees with this statement and tells me that the government already does that, let us see it and let local residence groups know about it. If the minister disagrees with this statement, perhaps she should explain to the people of Canberra how she can call herself the minister for city services and not the minister neglecting city services. I commend my motion to the Assembly.

MS FITZHARRIS (Yerrabi—Minister for Health and Wellbeing, Minister for Transport and City Services and Minister for Higher Education, Training and Research) (4.01): I am pleased to discuss local shops today. I look forward to responding to a number of the issues that Ms Lee has raised and informing her of some things that already take place and reflect upon those conversations we have in this place where we actually all agree we represent the community, no matter which side of the chamber we sit on. While of course I understand that there will be politics played in that place I would encourage everybody to remember that we are here as representatives of the community and we work hard. There are many things which I hope Ms Lee learns from what I am about to say in response to this motion.

I do agree that we could publish the schedule, but I do not agree that we should establish one because we already have one. I have circulated an amendment to Ms Lee’s original motion and I move that amendment now:

Omit all text after paragraph (1)(b), substitute:

“(c) the ACT Government has a regular maintenance program for local shops, which includes litter picking, cleaning of surfaces, pruning of bushes,

lifting of trees, servicing of bins, daily cleaning of toilets, pressure cleaning of paving as required, removal of graffiti from government assets, repairs to damaged street furniture, minor horticultural maintenance of garden beds, and removal of leaves during autumn; and

- (d) regular cleaning activities occur in public areas of all local shopping centres in Canberra with service levels dictated by usage levels. The city and other high usage areas such as town and group centres are cleaned daily, while local shops are cleaned at least twice a week, depending on size and usage. Public toilets at these locations are cleaned daily;

(2) further notes that:

- (a) in September 2017, the ACT Government launched the Better Suburbs program to engage with the community and set a vision and priorities for improved delivery of city services for the next four years and up to 2030, in the form of a Better Suburbs Statement which will be released in September 2018; and
- (b) survey results from the Better Suburbs program showed that satisfaction with services for shopping precincts was highest in the central district of Canberra at 75 percent, with an average of 72 percent across all Canberra districts; and

(3) calls on the ACT Government to:

- (a) publish the details of regular maintenance of local shops online; and
- (b) consider options for the delivery and operation of public toilets in new local centres, which could include partnerships with private and non-government organisations to provide publicly available toilets with local businesses to maintain.”.

I will speak to the amendment. I also note that a question recently lodged by Ms Lee bears quite a striking resemblance to this motion. The response to that question on notice will be published in the very near future. But in the meantime I am happy to highlight many of the issues that were raised in that question, the answer to which will be published shortly.

I can assure Ms Lee and the Canberra community that we are deeply committed to improving public spaces at local shopping centres and, indeed, in neighbourhoods right across the territory. We want to keep them safe, functional and accessible as well as enhance their vitality as community and neighbourhood spaces.

Local shops are indeed important community hubs and can stimulate social and commercial activity by providing convenient, up-to-date services and many local job opportunities. Upgrade of these assets and spaces has the potential to encourage people to visit their local shops more often and for longer. But this potential can be increased when the upgrade acts as a catalyst for local community and business co-contributions and all of this willingness is channelled into the design in a coordinated, holistic way.

Indeed, our most recent example, spoken about just during question time, was the government’s investment in the Giralang shops. Madam Speaker, you will be pleased to learn that there are many, many more investments just like this happening right

across the territory. In total we have 90 commercial shopping centres in the ACT, including 66 local shopping centres, 19 group centres, four town centres and of course the city centre.

The hardworking staff in Transport Canberra and City Services, far from neglecting our local shops, are responsible for and dedicated to their maintenance. They look after the public realm in 90 local group and city shopping centres throughout the city and cleaning of our shopping centres is carried out in a programmed cycle either daily or weekly. This maintenance includes litter picking, cleaning of surfaces, pruning of bushes, lifting of trees, servicing of bins, daily cleaning of toilets, pressure cleaning of paving as required, removal of graffiti from government assets, repairs to damaged furniture including seating, minor horticultural maintenance of garden beds and removal of leaves during autumn.

TCCS staff also maintain and clean 69 public toilets in urban areas on a daily basis, depending on their use. Of the 90 shopping centres around the city, 20 have public toilets which are regularly cleaned and maintained by TCCS.

I certainly support Ms Lee's comments about hardworking small business people in our local shopping centres. But I would remind the party which often claims to be the party of business that in many cases the maintenance and the upgrades of shopping centres are indeed the responsibility of shop owners. It is a shared partnership. It often surprises and staggers me that the party claiming to be the party representing business often comes in here—and of course government is responsible for some very important maintenance functions—and does not seem to recognise that there can be partnerships here in many instances.

There are also many shopping centres which are entirely owned by private companies. TCCS, I know, regularly has correspondence with them. I do that sometimes on behalf of constituents that have issues to raise about those shopping centres that are managed and owned by private enterprise. Many of those also have publicly available toilets, particularly in the larger group centres.

As I mentioned earlier, Ms Lee's motion calls on the government to report on the budget allocation for the maintenance of local shops. Every year the government spends over \$2½ million on regular maintenance and cleaning of local shops. This year we have allocated \$2.9 million.

Historically many older suburbs did have public toilets provided by the government. However, when redevelopments or upgrades have taken place many of the public toilets at these locations have been handed over to the relevant lessee. Examples of these include the shopping centres at Jamison, Manuka and Kingston.

For newer shopping centres, privately developed public toilets are provided by the asset owner as part of the development. It is important to note that the government also provides public toilets and urban open spaces at locations such as parks and sportsgrounds where private facilities are not available.

High-use areas in the public realm across the city are inspected for illegal graffiti weekly. Members would be well aware that any report relating to the presence of offensive graffiti on public assets is treated as a high priority. And offensive graffiti is generally removed within 24 hours.

Again, I know there have been many debates and comments in this place about the government's responsibility to remove graffiti from private assets. The government's response in recent years has been to establish an active team to not only help clean up after graffiti is found on public assets across the territory but to prevent graffiti happening in the first place, working with local community groups who are both keen to engage in preventing graffiti and also keen to engage in removing graffiti from private assets across the territory.

Over the last 16 years the government has had a rolling program to upgrade local shopping centres and separate programs focusing on master planning and upgrades to town and group centres. Historically, upgrades at local centres have focused on measures to improve safety, amenity and function, as well as to assist with the ongoing commercial viability of the local centres.

Twenty-three local shopping centres have received an upgrade to their public realm on unleased land over the past 12 years through this program. These include major refurbishments in Higgins, Holder, Holt, Melba, Garran, Deakin, Ainslie, Lyons, Scullin, Farrer, Red Hill, Waramanga and Chapman, and minor upgrade works in Charnwood, Tillyard Drive, Griffith, Theodore, Cook, Kambah, Rivett, Evatt, Florey, Hughes and Torrens. To round out Ms Lee's accusations, I would encourage her to recognise the significant work undertaken at many local centres. And it will not stop there.

In 2015-16 we undertook a strategic review of the current program and the delivery method. The review process included improved coordination of works across various government agencies to better target government investment. And a key outcome of the review was creating an analysis tool to prioritise upgrades and consider alternative and future funding models for upgrades to these centres.

In the previous financial year we undertook preliminary designs for shops in Duffy, Campbell, Fraser and Kaleen. Consultation was undertaken with key stakeholders, including shop owners, other government stakeholders, lease holders, businesses and local community groups, and there were targeted onsite conversations. And we look forward to continuing that work with residents in those particular local centres.

In addition to the maintenance and upgrade of some of our local shopping centres, the better suburbs program was introduced to consult broadly with the community in setting a vision and priorities for the improved delivery of city services in the ACT for the next four years and beyond. Priorities for the delivery of improved city services will be identified in the form of a community-authored better suburbs statement. The first stage of consultation was held in late 2017 and the highlighted services and aspects of our city that are most important to our community.

It is worth noting that during this first phase we asked Canberrans to provide feedback on how they rated some of the city services we provided. Over the course of that first phase we heard from over 1,200 Canberrans—eight who lodged written submissions, 175 people who attended five pop-up sessions, 43 people through your say discussion board and 300 people who engaged with posts on social media. From this consultation, we found that satisfaction with services for shopping precincts was highest within Ms Lee's electorate, which covers the central districts of Canberra, at 75 per cent, with an average of 72 per cent across all Canberra districts.

The next opportunity for the community to identify and discuss the delivery of city service priorities was through a kitchen table conversation. This encouraged families, friends and community stakeholder groups to gain a deeper understanding of community need. A representative citizens forum panel consisting of 40 community members who represent Canberra's demographic profile and 25 senior representatives from community stakeholder groups, government and industry has been held. The forum worked to identify and plan for the right mix of city services for Canberra into the future.

Feedback from both consultation activities has been consolidated and included in the better suburbs statement, which I was delighted and honoured to receive from the group just this past Sunday. I very much look forward to the final better suburbs statement, which I actually happen to have right here in front of me. I would like to note, without pre-empting the final tabling of this statement, the very complimentary words that a representative group of citizens has made about city services, because I know that the opposition, when they come in here, are looking to have a crack at the government. I understand that, but every time they do that—and it was particularly relevant to some debates yesterday with the opposition about health—they really take a large swipe at our very hardworking public servants. There are officials in city services who do some of the most diverse work in the territory.

I was so delighted that the community group that came together—nearly 60 people over the weekend—had the unique privilege of getting to know the extent and range of work that our city services team does in the ACT. If you are ever in the city very, very early every morning, they are out there looking after our city. They are cleaning it; they are sweeping it up. After major events like New Year's Eve or the Multicultural Festival there are staff in city services out across our city every day in some terrible weather—in winter and summer—cleaning our shops, and they really do a tremendous job.

I was very pleased to hear from the citizen forum their view that city services does a wonderful job of maintaining and improving assets across all its service areas. There are opportunities to improve, and we certainly recognise that because, if there were not, probably none of us would be here.

The forum, in wrapping up, worked to identify and plan for the right mix of city services for Canberra into the future. I have also asked the better suburbs citizens forum to allocate the \$1.9 million set aside in this year's budget for playgrounds and local community improvement projects. Some of those that presented to the forum

just this past Sunday did indeed have proposals to collocate playgrounds at local shops. I think there was some recognition from me, from TCCS and from the community group that being able to collocate playgrounds with areas where people already gather in larger numbers—local shops are a perfect example—would be high on their priority list. I look forward to receiving their final recommendations.

Work will start on defined projects after the statement is released, with further improvements to be based on the community-identified vision and priorities for the next four years and beyond. That will set us up very well to undertake some participatory budgeting with the community in the context of next year's budget. This forum was a great experience and very valuable for both the community and the directorate, and we look forward to sharing its outcomes.

I also want to respond to a couple of other issues. Certainly water bubblers have been extensively provided throughout the territory. We are looking to provide access to more free water bubblers and, in the context of the debates today about not only investing in our local shops but also reducing the use of single-use plastics, I note that water bubblers can be a considerable benefit. We have many in our group and town centres now, and we look forward to further investment in those.

I would also like to clarify for Ms Lee, who referred to the government slashing the bus route, and remind the opposition that the government, in fact, is making a massive investment in our bus network. Yes, it is changing. We are spending \$43 million on new buses and nearly \$40 million on new bus services. There is no definition under which an \$80 million investment in our bus network and a massive investment in light rail in any way constitutes a slashing of bus services. I certainly acknowledge that there are changes but there are not slashes; there are massive investments in our bus network. I would welcome the opposition clarifying that point. (*Time expired.*)

MS LE COUTEUR (Murrumbidgee) (4.16): The Greens will not support the original motion and will instead be supporting Minister Fitzharris's amendment. While I think that the "calls on" part of Ms Lee's motion is fine—well, it is fairly innocuous—there are two main reasons why I cannot support the motion as a whole.

My first concern is with the tone of the motion. I, like other people in Canberra, I am sure, have supported my local shops in the different places I have lived in over the years that I have lived here. But the local shops that I go to are not really the local shops that Ms Lee's motion seems to be talking about. From the sound of her motion, our local shops are derelict crime hollows; they are "run down", "poorly lit", the target of "vandals", and "lacking basic and regular maintenance". They are really not that bad.

There was a period in Canberra when I will admit things got pretty bad. During the 1990s many of the local shopping centres were in pretty dire straits. Those of us who were here then would actually agree with that. I remember that, during the Seventh Assembly, the planning committee did an inquiry into supermarket competition, and people were pretty negative about their local shops then. But the situation has changed, I think, and most local shopping centres are doing okay. Certainly, community interest in having local shops and local facilities does seem to be rising. There are new

generations of shopkeepers in many of our local shopping centres. In my local shops—or what are almost my local shops—in Farrer, things like the Fox and Bow are making local shops a destination in a way that they have not been in the past, and it is great.

Another example is one that I think everyone in the Assembly should be aware of because we have asked quite a few questions about it—that is, the Coombs shops. It is a very good example of how attitudes to local shops have turned around, and the community is wanting more of them. As I think everyone here would be aware, the Coombs shops site was sold to a developer in 2015. The developer's DA was initially rejected, but eventually work got underway in 2016. Now, two years later, the shops are still not open.

People in Coombs and Wright are desperate for local shops. There is clearly enough demand. Coombs is already supporting a medical centre, a gym and a chemist. The nearest shops are at Cooleman Court, which is 4.6 kilometres away by road from parts of Coombs. And Cooleman Court is seriously running out of parking. You will not often find me making comments about parking stresses, but Cooleman Court clearly has them.

The frustrating thing is that there is not an awful lot the government can do to fix the situation. Minister Gentleman was asked about it in a question without notice during the last sitting period—quite recently. I think there is about another year until the government is in a situation where it can force the owner to deliver.

Another example is in Ms Lee's electorate, in Downer. I lived in Downer for many years, and for some of that time the local shops were really struggling. Things got pretty grim, but they have turned around. There is a new cafe and some substantial renovations to the heritage-listed building. It is looking so much better, and the cafe is very full.

I could keep going regarding different shopping centres in different parts of Canberra. What I am trying to say is that most local shops are not abandoned and full of crime and decay, as Ms Lee's motion implies. It is really not that bad.

My second concern with this motion is that implicit in it is a push for more maintenance funding for local shops. We would all like that, but the reality of the budget is that, in order to fund more maintenance for local shops, money has to be taken from somewhere else or taxes have to go up. I have talked about this trade-off several times in the Assembly, most recently in the Transport and City Services section of the appropriation debate.

I am not at all confident that, if the community in my electorate was asked what their priority for city services funding was, the answer would be more maintenance for local shops, because that is not really something that people are complaining to me about. It is just not what I am hearing.

I am hearing a number of things shopping-wise. Firstly, I am hearing that there should be a focus on upgrading our bigger centres, the Woden town centre in particular and,

to a lesser extent, Cooleman Court in Weston—although many people in Weston think their problems would be solved if only there were local shops in Molonglo. Secondly, there should be a focus on getting new playgrounds and parks built adjacent to local shops, notably in Farrer and Waramanga. That was something that Minister Fitzharris talked about. Thirdly, there should be a lot more emphasis on maintenance in their local area—on the streetlights that do not work or on filling the potholes. People in my electorate are not complaining—to me, at any rate—about the local shops.

The more systematic way to look at it is through public participation. Minister Fitzharris talked at some length about the better suburbs process, so I will not go into this process in huge detail. I was privileged to go to part of the afternoon session on Sunday, and it seemed that it was working well in terms of participatory budgeting and deliberative democracy. That is certainly something that we need more of in this area of the budget. Members may remember that last year we passed a motion about participatory budgeting. This sort of motion and these sorts of needs are the reasons why the Greens think that deliberative democracy and participatory budgeting are the way to go to reduce the conflict about where money in that area should best be spent.

I will now turn to the amendment. It does remove from the motion material that I disagree with, and which I spoke about earlier. But it also contains two things that I actively support. The first is paragraph (3)(b), about public toilets in new local centres. This is really important because a lack of public toilets is something that I hear about from the community.

Those of us who travel around Canberra a lot may notice that in the older suburbs originally the toilets were in the local shops. Downer in fact had toilets, which closed during the period of decline of the Downer local shops. O'Connor and Lyneham also spring to mind. At some point, possibly as far back as the 1970s, this stopped being part of the NCDC's brief. I am told, for instance, by a Cook resident—Ms Fitzharris may have dealt with this matter; I am not sure—that they did not have public toilets until recently, when the ACT government installed them, following community requests.

Public toilets may not be of importance to all members, but from what I have heard from the community they are definitely of great interest to parts of our ageing population. One of the things that can happen as you get older is incontinence. I know of people who, when they are working out whether they can go out, check to see whether there is a toilet nearby that they can get to quickly, just in case. Pregnant women can also find that this is an issue. Of course, parents of children who are toilet training also find this to be a considerable issue. Many of us have been through that as parents.

In an ideal world, all centres would have public toilets, but we do have a very large number of gaps to fill in existing centres, and that would be a pretty large expense. As I said earlier, expenditure has to be prioritised between all the competing demands for city services. Public toilets for each local centre may be something that is recommended out of better suburbs, or it may not.

Paragraph (3)(b) calls for an examination of clever ways to stop the gap getting bigger, at what should be a low cost. It asks the government to consider options to get public toilets into new local centres through partnerships with private and community sectors. Shops need toilets for their staff. Some businesses make their toilets available to their own customers, but most of them do not. It may be possible, at a pretty low cost, to design new shopping centres with a set of toilets for everyone rather than each business having their own, with limited availability for the general public—or a number of sets, one of which is available for the general public. This could be a very good outcome with a limited budgetary impact.

In conclusion, I would like to point out another change that Minister Fitzharris's amendment would make to Ms Lee's original motion—that is, to put the maintenance schedule information on the government's website, rather than reporting it to the Assembly. With all due respect to the Assembly, the community, I am afraid, is far more likely to look for city services information on the government's city services website than in *Hansard*. That is yet another reason why I will be supporting Minister Fitzharris's amendment, rather than the original motion.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (4.27): I thank Ms Lee for bringing forward this motion today. Maintenance and the amenity, the look and the feel of our local shopping centres are something that most residents find quite important. Our local shopping centres are often located with other amenities around them and they have become a community hub. They may be near schools; they may have playgrounds nearby; they may be near clubs or community gardens. There could be a whole lot of different things in the vicinity.

Whether they are standalone, such as Theodore shops, for example, which has a small supermarket and not too much else around it, or whether they are one of the big shopping centres or group centres, they are important to members of the community. In the case of Theodore, many people drop by on their way home from work, maybe to get a beer or—I probably should not mention cigarettes—to pop in and pick up some milk.

People do expect maintenance to be kept up to a generally acceptable standard. I would like to say at this point that in many instances I do write to the minister, and I often get a very favourable result. I would like to commend the work that TCCS do. I have passed on my thanks to the minister at various times. When constituents have raised something with me and I then raise it with the minister, and the constituent expresses their appreciation, I pass that on to the minister, and I am sure she passes that on to the directorate. It is noticed and it is appreciated.

That does not mean there is not more that we can do. Members of our community often have suggestions themselves. About a month ago, perhaps in early July, I happened to hear part of the Chief Minister's talkback on radio. Some business owners from Endeavour House in Manuka were talking about how they wanted to put plants on their nature strip, and they wanted to work with the government to do that. The minister alluded to the fact that it is not only up to the government to do these things; there are community participation elements as well.

Another important part of that is about rubbish and litter, because that is a community responsibility. We do expect there to be sufficient bins. Whether that includes recycling bins as well as general rubbish bins for waste that goes to the landfill, there must be enough bins around. I note that there are 1,130 bins around Canberra which are emptied up to five times a week. In some places, for example, where there are lots of food places, that may need to be more frequent.

In fact, just yesterday, I got a letter from the minister in response to a constituency issue about litter around Ricardo Street in Wanniasa, which is near the Gartside Street restaurant precinct. A constituent had been concerned about the amount of littering, and I got a letter back from the minister yesterday. So there are concerns that people raise—about littering and the number of bins, about gardens and maintenance of footpaths et cetera, and street sweeping in those areas, which could incorporate rubbish as well.

Parking is another thing that is often raised with us. There was a bit of a missed opportunity at Gartside Street recently. There has been some nice work done. It looks so much better. There used to be bare earth, where there once was grass, and people used to park on the footpath. That has been improved a lot. But it has not improved the parking situation in the restaurant precinct around Gartside Street. I have lost track of the number of times constituents have talked to me about the fact that they drive there, cannot get a car park, and go somewhere else. So it has a business impact on those local businesses, and some of them, of course, are small businesses.

We also often hear about graffiti. In some cases it is a government responsibility, depending on the location. In other cases it is up to the owners or managers of the shops. I note that there are legal street art and graffiti sites, although I was a little surprised that, on the minister's map that I have just been looking at, it talks about legal graffiti sites but it points to a big concrete overpass over a street. I wondered whether that was a bit of a safety issue—encouraging people to climb up and paint legal graffiti onto a concrete overpass. I am sure it is some kind of artistic licence, rather than actually encouraging that to take place.

With respect to playgrounds, some places, such as Wanniasa shops, have a playground nearby, and they have a fence nearby, which assists to keep children away from the car park. Wanniasa shops has had a bit of a resurgence recently. It is not only about government maintenance services; a couple of new tenants in a shopping centre can make an enormous difference to a shopping centre. Coles moved in. Also, the markets at Wanniasa have made a big difference to that shopping centre. Of course, there are other great businesses in Wanniasa, such as Capital Chemist.

Playgrounds are often raised. In fact, the Calwell shops have often asked for an improvement in the playground there. It is a very paltry-looking playground and it could do with some improvement, which would make it an even better destination for families when they go to do their shopping.

Going back to the issue of graffiti, I do like the addition in some cases of murals on some of the walls. Erindale shops is another example of that. Along the bus stop side of Erindale there is a lovely mural which has improved that area as well.

Lighting is an issue that I have talked about frequently in this place. Just recently, there was an issue at the side of Erindale where the PCYC is. I am never sure which side people think is the back and which is the front. I think the area where the PCYC is located is at the back, but some people call that the front. On that side there was a big light out for a few months, which has recently been fixed. On the other side of Erindale, on the McBryde Crescent side of Erindale, there is another light out in the car park, which I noticed just this week.

These are the types of basic local services that people expect to be maintained at their local shops. There is a community component to it. There is an individual component—not dropping your litter, for example. But when it is about overflowing bins, for example, we do expect those bins to be emptied on a more frequent basis.

Local shops provide a meeting place for people. Many of them these days have cafes and coffee shops where people get together and arrange to meet each other ahead of time, as well as when they accidentally bump into each other while they are out doing their shopping. They have seating throughout shopping centres these days. You will probably note that on hot days shopping centres are busier because they provide air conditioning.

It is important that we look after the amenity of shopping centres. In many cases that is the responsibility internally of the shop owners or management, but externally there is still much that the government can do. We appear to have had an erosion of the level of local maintenance over the past few years. People would like to see that, for their ever-increasing rates, they are maintaining at least the same level of basic local services.

I would encourage the government to think about that. I, for one, in case the minister has not noticed, am an avid user of fix my street. I report many issues on fix my street. I am still concerned about the lack of a feedback loop in relation to fix my street, but it is a good way of keeping track of complaints about basic local services. I am sure it is something that we will talk about a lot more in this place over the next few years, because people expect to be able to maintain their current level of basic local services, if not see an increase in them, having regard to their ever-increasing rates.

Once again, I thank Ms Lee for bringing this motion to the Assembly and I look forward to the time when we can see an improvement in basic local services.

MR RAMSAY (Ginninderra—Attorney-General, Minister for Regulatory Services, Minister for the Arts and Community Events and Minister for Veterans and Seniors) (4.37): I was not intending to speak on this motion, but I noted Ms Lee's comments on the enforcement of parking and I thought it was important to make some corrections to the record. It seems Ms Lee has not been listening particularly closely to some of my speeches when I have spoken about Access Canberra. If she had, she would have known that a large number of measures in this budget will go to help enforcing parking in the city, so I would like to repeat them for her.

In this year's budget we have purchased an additional two licence plate recognition cameras and vans to better patrol parking across Canberra. These are in addition to the two we already have patrolling the streets of Canberra. These are particularly useful in patrolling timed spaces at local shops. In addition, there are funds for an additional four staff to operate the LPR cameras—a driver and a camera operator—and 3.25 full-time equivalent staff to resource the additional adjudications and payment plans resulting from the increased infringements.

For reference, in July our current LPR vans issued 2,173 fines to ensure safe and equitable parking across Canberra. There were 7,162 parking infringements in total in July across both our foot patrols and the LPR vans. I draw to the attention of Ms Lee and the Assembly that when parking enforcement happens with the LPR vans the infringement notices are mailed out afterwards, so people will not necessarily see the little yellow envelope and know that an enforcement has taken place. But certainly significant numbers of infringements are being enforced. I encourage people to join Ms Lawder as a frequent flyer user of fix my street to report parking issues when they arise.

The government is also commissioning a study into the implementation of smart mobility permits aimed at reducing the misuse of those permits. Currently permits are paper based, with the holder's details printed on them. The holder of a valid mobility permit is entitled to untimed free parking within all ACT government-owned parking bays. Parking inspectors currently manually determine if a permit is legitimate and current. However, they cannot detect if there are several permits with the same identification number, and the potential for fraudulent use of multiple permits results in a lack of access to disabled parking bays and potential revenue loss for the ACT government.

The newly implemented LPR cameras are a more efficient means of undertaking parking enforcement. However, they cannot at this stage detect a paper permit on the dashboard of a car. Digitising these permits will enable the new licence plate cameras to recognise the permits and therefore not issue erroneous infringements.

Technologies such as Bluetooth and radio frequency identification, or RFID, will be investigated to determine the best solution. We have also recently raised the fines for parking in an accessibility space to ensure that our local shops are accessible for those who are mobility impaired, and that now attracts a fine of \$600.

Ms Lee can rest assured that Access Canberra parking inspectors are indeed out there, ensuring there is equitable access to our local shops to ensure all of the Canberra community can stop in to grab the groceries they need, a coffee or a brunch or their favourite local takeaway.

MRS KIKKERT (Ginninderra) (4.40): I thank Ms Lee for bringing this motion before the Assembly today. I wish to say a few words in its support. As a member of Ginninderra I am proud to represent the people of Belconnen in this Assembly. Most of the suburbs in my electorate were designed around local shopping centres or, in some cases, a group centre. The local shops are typically well connected to the rest of

the suburbs through a system of footpaths that allow residents to travel to the shops on foot whilst avoiding traffic lights and road crossings. In many cases the walk to the shops may be shorter in distance and/or time than driving there.

In many suburbs residents also have a habit of stopping by the local shops on their way home from work, sport or study. This allows them to avoid some of the congestion and parking hassles that often accompany a visit to a large shopping centre whilst supporting their local community and the small business owners who choose to invest in it.

Many Belconnen residents feel justifiably possessive of their local shops. They enjoy meeting up with their neighbours for coffees at the local cafe. They appreciate the opportunity to grab fresh food and pantry staples from their local supermarkets, several of which also provide a range of gourmet and specialist items. Local chemists and medical offices provide peace of mind to those who depend upon prescription medications or have sick children. Local butchers and newsagencies, hairdressers, bakeries and other retailers are much valued parts of the local community. Ask any resident of Belconnen where to find the best pizza or Canberra's finest potato scallop and you will quickly find how committed they are to their local takeaways.

Local shop owners are important elements in the success and vibrancy of these small shopping centres. They work long and hard to provide quality services, often from before sunrise until well into the evening. They get to know the regular customers in ways that can never happen in large retail outlets. They diversify their offerings to meet local needs, and in the process they foster a real sense of community, providing a powerful alternative to the social isolation that often occurs in less connected suburbs.

It is unfortunate, therefore, that so often these local shopping centres are neglected by this government. Many of them are run down and shabby in appearance and this negatively impacts the success of the dedicated small business owners who choose to trade there. Numerous constituents have spoken to me about the problem of rubbish being left around their local shops without being cleared away. Car parks are often inadequate to handle the traffic that occurs at predictable times each day. Basic amenities that would improve the experience of all visitors are often lacking.

Let us take the example of the Florey shops. Despite its proximity to the Belconnen town centre, this local shopping centre is a very busy and important part of that suburb, experiencing a large number of visitors throughout the day. The pizza shop, in fact, sells an average of more than 30 pizzas per hour. This shopping centre also includes a small playground for families and a number of benches that invite visitors to sit and rest and extend their visit.

As residents of Belconnen have pointed out to me, the government for some reason has made the decision not to provide toilets. I have already raised the absence of toilets at a number of other local shops in the Belconnen area, and the response from Minister Fitzharris has been that toilets are generally not provided at local shops. As any mum can tell you, it is unlikely anyone is going to spend any more time than

absolutely necessary at a shopping centre that lacks toilets, no matter how new and shiny the play equipment may be.

On behalf of the cafe owner at one local shopping centre, last year I requested that this government provide a shade sail or other shade structure to improve the enjoyment of not only cafe patrons but those who purchase from the other eateries in the area. The minister's response was, in a word, no. I have also written to this government on behalf of Canberra residents who have concerns about a car park at their local shops. This U-shaped car park located near an early childhood centre allows for traffic to travel in both directions, but the lane is very narrow, making this quite difficult.

The obvious solution, according to frequent users who really understand the situation, is to alter the traffic flow to one way—a simple, affordable and informed request from residents to their current government. In response Minister Fitzharris said that directing traffic in a one-way loop was certainly feasible but, again, the answer was no. Apparently this government think that they better understand the situation than those who daily use the car park.

In addition, on behalf of residents in my electorate I have asked for simple enhancements to an existing toilet block, as well as an upgrade to the bill poster silo at another local shopping centre. In each case the response from Minister Fitzharris has been no.

In light of their pride in their local shops, Canberrans often wonder why their current government appears not to share that pride. This motion seeks to address this sense of neglect. I join with Ms Lee in calling on the ACT government to establish and publish a schedule of regular maintenance of local shops and report on the budget allocation for such maintenance by the end of the sitting period in October.

MS LEE (Kurrajong) (4.47): I thank Ms Lawder and Mrs Kikkert for their support and for taking the time to highlight some of the maintenance issues they see in the local shops in their electorates. Regarding Ms Le Couteur, I do not even know whether she was listening at all or perhaps she has selective hearing, but she has accused me of portraying our local shops as derelict and crime ridden and slum-like. I ask Ms Le Couteur, before she goes out to the community to misrepresent me, to actually read in *Hansard* what I said about our local shops.

I have said very clearly—and I say it again, mostly for her benefit, although I note she is no longer in the chamber—that our local shops are great community hubs and local residents have done amazing things at them to bring the community together. But when it comes to the “calls upon” section in my motion we get served up once again another Caroline Le Couteur special: the “I agree but I’m not going to vote for you.” I do not know why that should come as any surprise, given that that is the MO.

The minister, in her response, slammed our party—“the party of business” she called us—for asking government, not business, to do something. Clearly she also was not paying much attention to what I was saying, so I will repeat word for word what I said in my speech earlier: individual shopkeepers and landlords who own the shops have a responsibility and an incentive to make sure their shops are the best they can be.

On this, I also point out that community organisations and community councils have lifted more than they should when it comes to the upkeep of local shops. A great example I can point out is the Yarralumla Residents Association, which has an MOU with TCCS now to undertake pruning around the local area.

At the beginning of this month I submitted a question on notice seeking detailed information about the maintenance of the local shops. The answer I received back—that is the answer the minister referred to in her speech earlier—speaks volumes about the lack of care and importance this minister gives our local shops.

I asked no fewer than 10 questions, including several sub-questions, about maintenance schedules at local shops in all geographical areas in Canberra—Belconnen, Gungahlin, the inner north, the inner south, Molonglo Valley, Weston Creek, Woden Valley and Tuggeranong. Even as we in opposition regularly raise concerns about the extraordinary delays sometimes in getting answers back, I fully expected the minister would take my question on notice seriously and provide a substantive, if not detailed, answer.

What I got back just earlier today—no doubt timed exquisitely just before the debate on this motion—is woeful. If I were back to wearing my university lecturer hat, she would be getting a big fat fail for her appalling effort in this answer. The minister should be ashamed for the contempt that that answer has shown the people of Canberra, for whom their local shops are a big part of their community. The answer to the question about how regular maintenance is scheduled is one measly paragraph:

Regular cleaning activities occur in public areas of all local shopping centres in Canberra with service levels dictated by usage levels. The city and other high usage areas such as group centres are attended daily while local suburban shops are attended at least twice a week, depending on size and usage. Public toilets at these locations are cleaned daily.

As seems to be the practice now, there is a neat little summary of the answer having taken 75 minutes to compile, at a cost \$126 of taxpayers' money. I can tell the minister that she could have saved the taxpayers \$126, and I confirm that her utterly inadequate answer is delusional at best and contemptuous at worst. That answer is, in essence, suggesting that the numerous constituents who have come to me with these issues are misguided at best and misleading at worst.

The answer is a slap in the face to the numerous constituents who have been in touch with me, raising concerns about their local shops. That answer is the ministerial equivalent of telling me—and through me the numerous constituents who have been in touch with me, raising concerns about their local shops—to go jump.

My motion calls on the government to establish and publish a schedule of regular maintenance of local shops and to report on the budget allocation for such maintenance by the end of the sitting period in October 2018. I welcome one aspect of the minister's amendment to my motion—paragraph 3(a)—where she agrees to publish online the details of regular maintenance of local shops online. At paragraph 3(b) she talks about public toilets, which are of great interest to many locals. However, I also applaud the minister on her stellar cut and paste skills, because the rest of her

amendments are just that—a cut and paste job from the utterly inadequate answer to my question on notice.

Every Canberran has an interest in their local shops and every Canberran has the right to know that their government will take on the very basic of responsibilities of any local government—that is, the basic maintenance of public amenities. If she is unwilling or unable to commit to this then she has no business being the minister for city services.

Amendment agreed to.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

Budget

MR PETTERSSON (Yerrabi) (4.54): I move:

That this Assembly:

- (1) notes the strong and inclusive budget management of this government including:
 - (a) a balanced budget with a modest surplus of \$36 million this year and a positive position across the forward estimates;
 - (b) the forward projections for strong and sustained economic growth, off the back of the fastest growth for any state or territory in recent years;
 - (c) over 10 000 new jobs being created in 2017, with 80 percent of these new jobs being full time;
 - (d) unemployment at 3.6 percent in July 2018 – the lowest of any State or territory; and
 - (e) a strong focus on diversifying business and continuing tax reform to reduce stamp duty and help first home buyers;
- (2) further notes the strong expenditure growth for growing services for our growing city, including:
 - (a) \$5 billion over four years for education to deliver more schools and more school places, including a new primary school in Molonglo, an upgrade to Campbell Primary and more places for students at Amaroo, Neville Bonner and Gold Creek schools;
 - (b) \$7.8 billion over four years for health including 4000 more elective surgeries, progressing the development of Surgical Procedures, Interventional Radiology and Emergency and expanding Hospital in the Home to 3000 more patients each year;
 - (c) over \$150 million each year on public transport to help deliver Canberrans to work on time and take more cars off the road;
 - (d) duplication of William Slim Drive from Ginninderra Drive to the Barton Highway and planning and design on the extension of John Gorton Drive and a bridge across the Molonglo River;

- (e) delivering the Family Safety Hub, and investing \$6.5 million for more places for women seeking safe and secure refuge as well as \$1.7 million for the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre and Domestic Violence Crisis Service to ensure women in crisis get the help they need, when they need it; and
 - (f) improved connectivity and active travel routes, with \$10.5 million for the Belconnen Bikeway and \$4 million to improve paths around the Tuggeranong Town Centre; and
- (3) calls on this Assembly to support the progressive and principled policies in this year's budget.

All members of this place can agree a strong economy is vital for the future of Canberra. Our government has a clear plan for ensuring Canberra's economic future. The diverse range of policies and initiatives already put in place by our government are having a positive effect on our economy, along with our investment in increasing services for our growing city. Our higher education, infrastructure and tourism sectors continue to go from strength to strength, with record enrolments, investment and visitors. For a small city, Canberra has a big future, and our Labor government is working towards an inclusive, progressive and connected Canberra with this budget.

Only our ACT Labor government has a progressive, future-orientated vision for our city. In the 2018 budget our government has achieved our 2016 election promise of delivering a balanced budget. This means we are fully covering the cost of delivering services for the Canberrans that we represent while maintaining a strong level of investment in our city. This is despite the savage cuts from the federal Liberal government, who continue to swing the axe through the federal public service and threaten the relocation of hundreds or even thousands of jobs.

Thanks to the investments made by this government, our local economy is continuing to grow strongly. Indeed, this year we are projecting growth of over four per cent. This is the sort of growth that drove the creation of almost 10,000 jobs in 2017. This growth was focused on diversifying our economy, with jobs growing in education, tourism, health, retail, IT and media, defence capabilities, space and aeronautical industries and the energy sector.

It is the sort of growth that enables business. There are now 2,000 more businesses operating in Canberra than there were three years ago. Our local companies are doing more international business than ever before, as the ACT's export services have risen by 22 per cent since 2015. Our government is making the necessary investments this city requires and our policies are creating jobs and opportunity.

We have invested \$14.7 million over four years to implement the territory's business development plan to create more jobs. This includes \$9.8 million to establish a priority investment program to support growth and innovation in growing sectors such as communications technology, renewable energy, and space and satellite technology.

We have invested a further \$5.3 million for partnerships to support Canberra's job market. Of this, \$3 million supports and promotes Canberra's tertiary education sector

and \$1 million will boost the number of female tradies and upskill mature workers. On top of this, the newly established City Renewal Authority will further drive growth in the economy by supporting development in Canberra's CBD.

To ensure the territory has stable revenue, our government is implementing the necessary reforms. We are abolishing stamp duty for first homebuyers. Our government wants to make it easier for those trying to enter the property market to buy their first home. Starting on 1 July 2019, first homebuyers with a household income of less than \$160,000 will pay no stamp duty, regardless of whether they are buying an established or newly built property. By 2021-22 a person buying a \$500,000 home will be paying half the stamp duty they would have paid before we started the reform process, a saving of \$10,500.

We are also continuing to reform commercial conveyance duty. From 1 July this year commercial property transactions worth \$1.5 million or less will be abolished. This change will mean that around 70 per cent of commercial property purchases will no longer involve paying stamp duty, which will make it a lot easier for small businesses to continue to invest in Canberra. On top of this, our government has cut residential stamp duty in every budget since 2012, and this policy will continue to take effect.

We took to the 2016 election the promise to build light rail in this term of government. The light rail is on track to be delivered this coming summer. As a resident of Gungahlin I cannot wait for the first day we can catch light rail, and you can be sure I will be one of the first passengers. This is not the final step of light rail. Our government has a plan for a city-wide integrated transport network. That is why this year's budget delivered more funding for the planning and design of stage 2, connecting the city to the Woden town centre, a transport spine connecting north and south Canberra, which will make Canberra a more livable city.

Of course, growth needs to be inclusive of the entire ACT, and that is why our government has pushed so hard for a federal public service department to be located in Gungahlin. Defence Housing will be moving to the Gungahlin town centre from its current location in Barton. This department will provide a positive flow-on effect to the local businesses of Yerrabi. Up until now Gungahlin has been the only town centre without a federal public service department. This move will encourage the continued sustainable development of our city and encourage a vibrant town centre.

Canberra is a higher education city. Collectively, education and research institutions contribute \$2.75 billion a year to Canberra's economy and create 16,000 full-time equivalent jobs, when last measured in 2014. The connection between the ACT government, our higher education providers and research centres means that Canberra is in a unique position for advanced research partnerships. An example of this partnership is the space industry.

Canberra leads the nation with advanced research and technology at ANU and the CSIRO and space communication complex operated for NASA. Increased investment in this industry will continue to put Canberra on the world map as a leader in research education. The federal government's newly announced Australian Space Agency will be in Canberra for its first six months. Our government is lobbying hard for the

agency to remain here permanently. On current indicators we can remain positive that this lobbying effort will, hopefully, be successful.

A strong budget and a strong economy are a result of good investments. But the dividends those investments must pay should be reinvested in social services, education and health. Only by ensuring that our kids are well educated can we be prepared for the future, to reap the productivity dividend when our population ages.

We need to further invest in our public schools, as they have received the majority of new student growth. Currently our fantastic public schools educate the majority of Canberra's students, at a ratio of 61 to 39. Given our city's growing population, our government is building more schools in growth areas and adding to the capacity of existing ones.

In Gungahlin, the majority of my electorate, we have seen the population grow from 47,000 residents in 2011 to 71,000 residents in 2016. Our government will ensure that Gungahlin students never have to learn in overcrowded schools, even as more families move to the area. In our 2017-18 budget we pledged \$32 million for a new primary school in Taylor. It is expected to be open in 2019. This new, modern school facility will cater for up to 700 students. It will give them access to some of the best facilities in Canberra. It will have specific facilities for music, science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics.

In the 2018-19 budget we have made provision for 500 new school places across Amaroo, Gold Creek and Neville Bonner. And we are also expanding the Franklin Early Childhood School. We will immediately expand the school to accommodate current year 2 students in a new 2019 year 3 class. In another high growth area, the Molonglo Valley, our government will invest \$47 million to build a new primary school. The government will also release land in Wright for the building of a private school. Many parents seek diversity in their choices for enrolment.

To further expand our higher education capabilities the ACT government has entered into a memorandum of understanding with UNSW to build a new campus in Reid, in conjunction with CIT. This will create up to 10,000 new student places and further boost the higher education sector in this city. This will provide more opportunities for students and staff and have a huge positive flow-on effect to the wider Canberra community.

As well as tertiary education our government is providing \$608 million over four years for vocational training. The Canberra Institute of Technology currently offers 362 courses and has approximately 30,000 student enrolments each year. This includes 3,422 apprenticeship and training places and vocational places for 1,500 international students. This will mean the government is supporting almost 7,000 apprentices and trainees this year across 100 training providers in the ACT. This includes placements for 714 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and 1,910 students with a disability. Our city's economy can continue to grow with the diverse, highly trained workforce that it needs.

Everyone should lead a happy and healthy life. Our government is investing over \$7.8 billion over four years on health, including 4,000 more elective surgeries, progressing the development of SPIRE and expanding the hospital in the home program. I know the residents of my electorate of Yerrabi are very excited about the opening of the nurse-led walk-in centre in the Gungahlin town centre, which will divert minor injuries away from the ED. The nurse-led walk-in centres are a wonderful innovation, and I look forward to seeing more of them across the territory.

Tourism is a massive growth area of our economy. The government's clear vision for Canberra and focus on diversifying our economy has led to a growing number of tourists visiting Canberra. Currently 16,400 Canberrans work in the tourism industry. This area can continue to grow as visitors come to see not only our fantastic established events, festivals and cultural institutions but new initiatives as well.

The growth in small local businesses as well as our huge variety of national cultural institutions in natural and beautiful surroundings has also contributed to the rise of Canberra as a popular destination. *Lonely Planet* did not name Canberra in the top three of its cities to visit in 2018 for nothing. Improvements to Stromlo Forest Park and the Arboretum will also ensure that other major events can be held in these areas. On top of this is \$4.1 million over four years to grow visitor numbers through business events and a new events fund.

Our 2018-19 budget invests in Canberra's dynamic arts community, focusing on both local, grassroots artists and internationally renowned ones. Our government is upgrading our arts and cultural facilities with \$1.5 million in upgrades for the Canberra Theatre Centre; \$1.2 million to start the design process for the creation of a new Canberra theatre complex; \$785,000 for conservation of our historic homesteads, such as Lanyon Homestead, Calthorpes' House and Mugga Mugga cottage; and \$700,000 to support new approaches to exhibitions at the Belconnen Art Centre during development of stage 2, building on our \$15 million investment in its expansion through last year's budget. On top of this there is almost \$1 million to help support the community engagement of local artists.

Madam Deputy Speaker, as you can see, the future of Canberra is in safe hands. Our government is ensuring Canberra's budget is economically sustainable without cutting funding from essential services. We believe we must invest in Canberra. Our progress in further diversifying Canberra's economy is paying off. That is why our local economy is in such a good state even though the federal Liberal government is determined to try to further rip the guts out of Canberra's federal public service and ignore Canberra completely when it comes to federal infrastructure projects. Our 2018 budget will help Canberra to continue to grow as an inclusive, fun, livable and progressive city we can all be proud of.

MS LE COUTEUR (Murrumbidgee) (5.06): Madam Deputy Speaker, I am in awe of Mr Pettersson's enthusiasm for the budget. I am afraid I do not quite have as much enthusiasm for discussing it as he does. Mr Rattenbury and I will be restricting our comments to the budget debate, of which I note there is more to come tomorrow.

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism and Major Events) (5.07): I thank Mr Pettersson for bringing this forward today. It does provide an opportunity for ministers to take their portfolio hats off and focus on their responsibilities to their own constituencies. I would like to take the opportunity this afternoon in this debate to speak to a number of initiatives in the Kurrajong electorate.

There are many great initiatives in the budget. We are investing very heavily in growing services and infrastructure for our growing city. There are a range of new schools being delivered and upgrades to existing schools right across the city, particularly in the Kurrajong electorate. We are investing more in elective and emergency surgeries, we are providing more staff and resources for our emergency departments and there are more hospital beds so that Canberrans can access high quality health care when they need it.

We are working to deliver better places across the city and suburbs. Again with a Kurrajong member's hat on, I am very pleased to see the progress of a number of urban renewal projects, particularly within the CBD. I am delighted to see—after quite some time in the making—that a number of the London Circuit projects have been completed and there has been progress to ensure that footpaths, paving and other pedestrian infrastructure is improved to make getting around London Circuit easier.

Through this year's budget we continue to invest in the services and infrastructure that will keep our city moving and protect the very precious lifestyle that we all value so highly in Canberra.

To focus particularly on the Kurrajong electorate, I am particularly pleased that the budget has delivered funding to modernise the Campbell Primary School, with the construction of a new central building and refurbishment of the junior wing and library. In my earlier years, I lived in the suburb of Campbell. I was too old to go to the local primary school by the time we moved to Campbell, but I do know that it is a great local school. It has been helping kids reach their potential for almost 60 years. Through this upgrade, we are delivering a range of modern school facilities to ensure that for many decades to come Campbell primary can continue to do the great work it has over the last 60 years.

Across the lake, on the southern side of the city, the budget is delivering resources to start an important community conversation about the renewal of Narrabundah College. The college occupies a special place, not just for students who live within the Kurrajong electorate but for young people across the city who participate in its world-class specialist visual and dramatic arts programs. With extensive remediation work underway at the site to permanently remove old buildings containing asbestos, this is the right time to think about how Narrabundah College can best meet the needs of students into the future. The budget delivers the resources to do this important work, in partnership with the community.

Across the Education Directorate there are investments in schools in the Kurrajong electorate. Some of the oldest schools in Canberra are located in my electorate. The

government recognises the need to continue our older school upgrade program, to improve the energy efficiency of school buildings, and to improve the teaching and learning spaces for students and for teachers. This is an important long-term investment in our city's future and ensures that we continue to provide world-class education no matter whether you live in a new suburb with a brand-new school or you live in one of the central parts of Canberra with some of our city's original schools.

Another issue that people in my electorate raise with me is the need to continue to invest in the city's municipal infrastructure, to ensure that we are continuing to invest in the quality of that infrastructure, upgrading infrastructure that in some parts of the Kurrajong electorate will be approaching 100 years of age. We have heard that feedback. That is why this year's budget invests a further \$10 million to step up city services. This includes some of the Chief Minister talkback favourites, such as mowing, weeding and graffiti management, as well as a range of important projects to improve our city's waterways, lake and pond cleaning, and tree maintenance.

We know that the inner north and the inner south parts of Canberra contain a large number of deciduous trees. Through this part of the year there are a lot of leaves. We know that more street sweeping capability is important, and the government has invested in that. We know that people in the inner north and inner south particularly value their suburbs looking the best. People are continuing to see investment in city services as a very important part of the responsibilities of the territory government. That is why we have stepped up our investment in this area.

The budget also delivers more resources and facilities for community groups who are based in the Kurrajong electorate who provide specialist services for a range of Canberrans. I particularly acknowledge the investment, in partnership with Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service, to deliver culturally appropriate health services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberrans. This has resulted in a \$12 million investment to construct a new health centre in Narrabundah which will be owned and managed by Winnunga. The delivery of targeted and effective services through this centre will help close the gap in health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberrans.

Similarly, through the budget we are delivering 36 more places for women seeking safety from violence at home, including through the Beryl women's shelter. Making these kinds of investments is important as our city grows because they ensure that those in our community who are facing being disadvantaged do not fall behind.

Through a number of projects run by the City Renewal Authority, within the authority's precinct from Dickson in the north, through a park in Braddon, into the city centre and down to the lake, we are seeing some important community engagement and also opportunities to activate some of these public spaces in ways that they have not been before. This has been incredibly well supported by the local community in the Kurrajong electorate, particularly by local businesses.

It is very pleasing to see the level of engagement there is with the City Renewal Authority in the Dickson precinct associated with the new bus interchange and the light rail coming to the area, together with significant private sector investment in

renewing the Dickson group centre. We look forward to a continuation of that investment, and particularly to seeing the range of new businesses that are establishing in what will be a really integral part of the inner north of the city. Dickson has always been a major group centre with significant levels of patronage, but we are going to see more people utilising that centre as more people live close to the transport hubs and the employment hubs. It is great to see some ACT government-sponsored projects in the Dickson area coming to fruition.

As we move south into the city renewal precinct, Haig Park has been an area where there is great community interest and a lot of excitement about the opportunity to make that a better and more usable public space. I have been delighted with the engagement from key stakeholders right across the community, particularly businesses at the northern end of the Braddon precinct, wanting to engage and run events and activities in Haig Park. It is great to see that ACT government investments in improving lighting, widening footpaths and the like have made the park safer for the thousands of residents who live in and around Braddon, but we look forward to seeing further improvements in access and facilities at Haig Park.

In the city centre, as I have mentioned, there are a number of projects and programs underway to improve facilities, to run more events and to have more activity. It is great to see more people living in the CBD, and we want that trend to continue. Of course, down at West Basin, with the opening of Henry Rolland Park, we look forward to delivering further stages of that public infrastructure, a great new public park for Canberra, the first time in living memory that a car park has been turned into a public park. I thank Mr Pettersson for bringing the motion forward this afternoon to give me the opportunity to talk about matters in the Kurrajong electorate.

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) (5.17): I take the opportunity to talk to the motion that Mr Pettersson has brought to the Assembly today, calling on the Assembly to support the progressive and principled policies in this year's budget. I rise to speak to a few of those today.

To start with, I will just touch on a few important points about the work in my electorate of Ginninderra and our continued priorities in the education space, as well as how we are continuing to support women and families who are experiencing domestic and family and intimate partner violence.

In my own electorate, the government has invested in some great initiatives for our community. The Higgins oval will receive \$1.85 million of additional investment for restoration, for use by local sporting organisations and the community. This investment will go to providing new turf, new irrigation, sports lights, two combination football fields and a synthetic cricket pitch, with a pavilion and a toilet block to come later.

The government have invested in delivering on our election commitment to duplicate William Slim Drive from Ginninderra Drive to the Barton Highway, which will

reduce congestion between Gungahlin and Belconnen. This will include approximately 3.2 kilometres of new carriageways, 6.4 kilometres of new cycle lanes, and a new bridge over Ginninderra Creek. This will see the entire length of the road between Gungahlin and Belconnen duplicated to improve access between these two growing regions.

We will also invest over \$8 million to upgrade Belconnen intersections at Ginninderra Drive and Tillyard Drive, and Tillyard Drive and Lhotsky Street, as well as Kuringa Drive and Owen Dixon Drive. Installing traffic lights and upgrading each of these key intersections will make commuting faster and safer for thousands of drivers who use these roads every day, including me. These are, of course, areas that I have campaigned on, as have many people in this place—my own colleagues and, more recently, those opposite. There are areas where we continue to build on the work that we are doing to build our community as the community has learned about the different things that we are funding.

Other budget measures for Ginninderra include the new Belconnen bikeway and an expansion of the Belconnen Arts Centre and Lake Ginninderra boardwalk. I know Mr Ramsay is working with the Belconnen Arts Centre and the community out there to make sure that that upgrade and expansion goes well.

There are the Calvary Public Hospital Bruce upgrades, including an expanded ED and upgrade of the mental health unit; the establishment of a future skills academy, with two hubs at the University of Canberra and University of Canberra Senior Secondary College Lake Ginninderra; and a greater investment in mowing, weeding, graffiti removal and cleaning up our local waterways as well as tree trimming.

In education this year we continue to invest in new and expanded schools, the recruitment of more teachers, and enhancing learning opportunities to continue to strengthen our already world-class education system. We have also recognised the importance of early childhood education and the difference it can make to a child's life in promoting equity and quality learning opportunities for our children.

Members will recall that earlier this year I announced work towards a model for the phased implementation of free quality early childhood education for three-year-old children in the ACT. This year—just last week, in fact—I was pleased to release the future of education strategy, which was the culmination of work that heard from around 5,000 individuals across Canberra from school communities, including parents and carers, from teachers and students, as well as from community organisations and the broader community, to set the direction for the future of education in the ACT for the next 10 years.

In the schools that deliver that education, the government has continued to invest where it is needed. Over the last two budgets—2017-18 and 2018-19—the ACT government has provided around a quarter of a billion dollars in capital works funding for education. The 2017-18 budget provided \$117 million in capital works infrastructure funding for education. The major works included \$85 million in funding for public school infrastructure upgrades and \$24.1 million for expanding schools in Gungahlin. The 2018-19 budget provided \$133.5 million in capital works funding,

including the 2017-18 second appropriation. These major works included \$41.9 million for a new school in Molonglo, with additional funding provisioned centrally; \$19.8 million for more places in Gungahlin; and \$18.8 million for modernisation of Campbell Primary School.

On safer families, I welcome the government's further commitment this year, which goes towards making families, particularly women and children, safer. Everyone in this place knows that in 2016 we made a firm commitment through our government response to family violence. This is work that will deliver a quick fix to this problem. Those who work in the sector and with families impacted by violence know this very well.

The government also know this, and that is why we are not interested in just creating news headlines in this space. A good news headline is great, but what we are doing is committing to a long-term sustained change in the way that we deal with this issue. It will take time. By now, I am sure that the opposition understand it. The government's \$24.1 million safer families package is now in its third year. This package supports the implementation of those major commitments made through the ACT government response to family violence.

The 2018-19 budget includes a further \$9.3 million over four years for initiatives that complement the safer families package. This work is going across the whole of government and in the community because, as we have said many times, the change can only occur if we all work together across the whole service sector as well as the community.

One of the priorities for the government this year is to finalise and start to roll out the front-line worker training strategy to build that enduring core capability for front-line workers across the health, education, community services and justice sectors. But the flagship initiative that we continue to maintain solid support for across our community is the co-design and launch of the family safety hub, with an investment of \$5.96 million over four years. The first challenge for the safety hub is to look at how to better support women and families during pregnancy and early parenting. I am looking forward to making further announcements about the next phase of these challenges over coming weeks.

Additional funding for front-line services to respond to increased demand for domestic and family violence support has been provided from 2018-19 with an additional \$1.7 million over four years for the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre and the Domestic Violence Crisis Service. We also provided additional investment of \$6.5 million to our specialist homelessness services to provide additional crisis accommodation and support for women and children escaping violence.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to once again thank Mr Pettersson for bringing on this motion and giving us the chance to talk about these important issues in the ACT community and how the ACT's budget is truly a community-focused budget and will make the lives of those who live in our beautiful city even better.

MR RAMSAY (Ginninderra—Attorney-General, Minister for Regulatory Services, Minister for the Arts and Community Events and Minister for Veterans and Seniors) (5.24): I, too, thank Mr Pettersson for moving this motion. I am pleased to rise today, primarily wearing my local representative hat, in support of the motion and to speak about the way the measures in the budget will be supporting a growing and evolving population in Ginninderra, specifically in west Belconnen, where I have lived and worked for the past 20 years. Belconnen is truly a great place to live and to work. This budget will help it be even better.

First, I speak with some pride about the Belconnen Arts Centre, a wonderful ACT arts facility that will be receiving additional operating funding to support its hugely popular public programs that will be running during the disruption that is caused by the construction of the stage 2 extension. They are getting ready to run a centre that will double in size. As I announced recently, construction starts soon. This will add a new multi-use performance space and associated back-of-house area, along with new gallery spaces, an improved administration area, an additional dance studio and other facilities. This \$15 million investment was one of the government's key election commitments and we are very proud to be delivering on it.

The expansion of the Belconnen Arts Centre will continue to grow opportunities for the Canberra community to engage in the arts and creative expression. The precinct will also benefit from the further work to the bikeways in Belconnen, with the extension of the Lake Ginninderra circuit and an overwater boardwalk beside the Belconnen Arts Centre. This will be both a beautiful and a practical addition to the foreshore at Emu Bank.

I am also pleased to see a number of intersection upgrades in Ginninderra. I know that many of my local constituents will be particularly happy about the addition of much-needed traffic lights at two intersections near the Charnwood shops, which I drive through myself just about every day. It will be great to see, as the Deputy Chief Minister has mentioned, improvements to the intersections of Tillyard Drive and Ginninderra Drive as well as of Tillyard Drive and Lhotsky Street.

As Minister Berry also mentioned, it will be great to see the Higgins oval being revitalised with new turf, a new irrigation system, new lighting and a pavilion with toilet facilities. Canberra is an active city. These upgrades will provide fresh activity space for people to enjoy. They will also benefit families who are connected with the childcare centre and future residents of the retirement village in that area.

As a keen gardener, I am pleased that we will be seeing green bins rolling out rapidly across Belconnen very soon, and what good timing, with spring just around the corner. Of course, there will be, as there is for all Canberra suburbs, even more mowing, weeding, graffiti removal, waterway cleaning and tree trimming throughout the electorate.

It will also be good for the people of west Belconnen to see a number of new paths and crossings to make it easier and safer to traverse on foot as we encourage Canberrans, and notably older Canberrans, to keep moving and to make the most of

the opportunities for active travel. These are all practical, positive and helpful budget measures for the people of Ginninderra who I am proud to represent and to serve. Therefore, I commend the motion to the Assembly.

MR COE (Yerrabi—Leader of the Opposition) (5.27): I want to speak in glowing terms about the 2018-19 budget. It has been very well printed. It has a lovely cover. It is mostly accessible and somewhat accurate in its description of our debt. I do, however, want to move an amendment to Mr Pettersson's motion.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Has it been circulated?

MR COE: No, it has not.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Have you provided it to the Clerk?

MR COE: Not yet.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Perhaps you would like to keep speaking to your amendment and you can move it when the Clerk has circulated it.

MR COE: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. As Ms Le Couteur said, we are debating the appropriation bill right now. In this respect, I am in complete agreement with Ms Le Couteur's speech. Really, there is very little benefit or very little need to have this particular debate when we will have had four days of discussion on the appropriations.

It is, of course, interesting that the motion that has been moved by Mr Pettersson makes no mention of the huge impact this budget is having on Canberrans, in particular low-income Canberrans. The amendment that I will be moving notes that the government introduced a tax reform package in 2012 with the stated aim of making taxes fairer, simpler and more efficient.

Since then, the total revenue from rates, land tax, stamp duty, insurance levy, and the fire and emergency services levy has grown considerably faster than the combined growth rate of inflation and the number of dwellings. Further to this, the increase in taxation has been regressive, primarily due to significant increases in fixed charges and levies.

Most townhouse, unit and apartment owners are now paying a large portion of their rates in the top marginal bracket. To compound this situation, ACT government concessions have not kept pace with the tax increases. As a result of all this, many Canberrans cannot afford the increasing cost of living in Canberra that has been imposed upon them by the ACT government.

Therefore, I think the Assembly should send a clear message to this government that they need to stop the massive tax increases in this city. They are having a disproportionate impact on low income earners. This is a Labor Party and a Labor government that claim to be progressive; they claim to represent workers; they claim

to represent the vulnerable. Quite frankly, they do not. They are only in it for themselves.

As I mentioned yesterday, how is it that in the Anglicare survey of affordability there is not one house in Canberra that is affordable for a low income earner? There is not one single house in the private rental market that is available within the reasonable price limit of a low income earner in this city.

That is what you get after 17 years of Labor. That is what you get after a supposedly progressive government. What you get is a government that is becoming more and more elitist by the day and that is forgetting about the most vulnerable people in our community, the tens of thousands of Canberrans that are the working poor, the people that simply cannot afford to live in this city to a large extent because of the taxes, fees, rates and charges that this government has imposed upon Canberrans.

I think that this motion is largely a waste of time, given we have an appropriation debate on this very issue. However, if we are going to have this debate, which we clearly are, I think we should use it as an opportunity to send a message to the government that what they are doing is wrong and that it is having a huge impact on Canberrans.

To that end, I move the amendment circulated in my name:

Omit all words after “notes” (first occurring), substitute:

- “(a) the Labor Government introduced a tax reform package in 2012 with the stated aim of making ‘taxes fairer, simpler and more efficient’;
 - (b) since then, the total revenue from rates, land tax, stamp duty, insurance levy and the fire and emergency services levy has grown considerably faster than the combined growth rate of inflation and number of dwellings;
 - (c) the increase in taxation has been regressive, primarily due to significant increases in fixed charges and levies;
 - (d) most townhouse, unit and apartment owners are now paying a large portion of their rates in the top marginal bracket;
 - (e) ACT Government concessions have not kept pace with tax increases; and
 - (f) many Canberrans cannot afford the increasing cost of living imposed upon them by the ACT Government; and
- (2) calls on the Government to stop the massive tax increases that are having a disproportionate impact on low income earners.”.

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism and Major Events) (5.34): We finally get to have a debate, Madam Speaker. I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his amendment, and indicate that the government will not be supporting his amendment. There are numerous errors contained within both his amendment and his analysis of tax reform.

Let us be clear, Madam Speaker, that the average ACT government own-source tax revenue as a share of gross state product for the five-year period before tax reform, from 2007-08 to 2011-12, was 4.1 per cent. For the five-year period since tax reform commenced, from 2012-13 to 2016-17, the average ACT government own-source revenue as a share of GDP was 4.1 per cent—exactly the same, Madam Speaker.

Where we have seen growth in own-source revenue, it is primarily due to growth in economic activity as well as the implementation of government initiatives. Changes to taxes, charges and levies other than general rates, stamp duty and insurance duty are not part of the tax reform process, and the government remains committed to revenue neutrality in relation to tax reform.

Tax reform involves abolishing inefficient taxes—conveyance and insurance duties—and replacing the lost revenue through the general rates system. These changes to the tax mix do ensure a more stable and efficient revenue base for the territory, and they fund the provision of high-quality government services into the future.

Where we have seen growth in own-source revenue, it has been particularly strong in payroll tax, because we have a very strong labour market. We have the lowest unemployment rate in the nation, and we have nearly 230,000 Canberrans in work.

We have very strong economic growth, the fastest of all Australian states and territories, and very strong population growth, well above the Australian average, population growth that has resulted in this city being granted a third seat in the House of Representatives under the Australian Electoral Commission's population formula. That is a pretty clear indicator of above Australian average population growth. In order to move into that situation we had to have been growing faster than the rest of the nation, and we have been. That growth has been economic growth, employment growth and population growth.

That has, of course, fed through into a stronger economy, feeding through into stronger government revenues. That is an important public policy outcome. We do want to see a growing economy, and we do want the revenue streams that will allow us to invest in the services and infrastructure this growing community needs.

What is at the heart of the amendment from the Leader of the Opposition, and what is a very clear philosophical difference between Mr Coe and his very conservative Canberra Liberals party, as compared with this side of the chamber, is that there are philosophical differences about the role of government in our community and in our society, the essential role that government should play in delivering health, education and community and municipal services that is valued and respected by this side of the chamber but is dismissed by those opposite, whose starting point would be that the private sector should deliver all of those services, that taxation is theft and that there should be no significant level of government involvement in the community and in service delivery. That is why they are in politics, Madam Speaker: to make government smaller, to do less and to leave more and more people vulnerable to the market.

I believe in markets, and the Labor Party believes in markets, but we also believe in functioning markets, equality of opportunity and ensuring that the most vulnerable are assisted. That assistance comes through free public health, free public education and a range of community and municipal services that are provided to this community regardless of people's incomes. And we seek to raise revenue in the simplest, fairest and most efficient manner.

Not every territory revenue line can be perfectly matched to people's incomes, but it can be matched to wealth. Wealth is inequitably distributed in our country, but I am pleased to say that in this city it is more equitably distributed. That is a result of decades of good, progressive public policy. That good, progressive public policy has resulted in less inequality in Canberra than in other Australian cities, and certainly less inequality in this city than in other parts of the world. That is something that we are proud of. Is there more work to do? Of course. And we need to do that work in partnership with a progressive federal government who will prioritise support for low and middle income earners over tax cuts for the big banks.

That is what his side of politics stands for. That is what they believe in: shuffling as much money as they can to the big end of town and to the richest quarter of Australians, and doing less and less by way of government service delivery for the rest. They want to drive down people's wages; they want to cut penalty rates. They are proudly in support of driving down people's wages. They claim to speak about cost-of-living issues and yet they champion a reduction in the wages and salaries of low and middle income Australians and Canberrans. That is their core philosophical belief. They have an entire society within their party, the HR Nicholls Society, aimed at driving down wages.

That is what they believe in; that is why they are in politics, Madam Speaker. We see this manifested in this amendment from this Leader of the Opposition today. There is no-one he will not attack on his way to the leadership of his party and no-one he will not squeeze out within the Liberal Party in relation to getting to that seat. We know ultimately where he stands on almost every issue before this community: on the hard right. On same-sex marriage, he was the only political leader in this country to oppose it, the only Leader of the Opposition, Premier, Chief Minister or Prime Minister in this country who opposed that reform. He is standing out there against a massive tide of public opinion on end-of-life issues in this city and in this nation. He proudly rejected territory rights on that question.

Today he comes into the chamber and moves yet another amendment objecting to this simple and fair reform of taxation in this city, reform designed to ensure that we have sufficient revenue to provide for the health, education, community, emergency and municipal service needs of this growing community.

I am very, very clear on this point, Madam Speaker. There are very fundamental points of difference between the Leader of the Opposition and me and between our respective parties. He has taken his party—as if this was possible—even further to the right on social and economic policy. That is just so far out of touch with this community and so far out of touch with the direction Australia is headed.

Look at the absolute turmoil that his federal colleagues are in at the moment over what the Liberal Party stands for. It is no longer a liberal party, Madam Speaker; it no longer holds small “l” liberal values. It is a complete conservative takeover. That conservative takeover has happened already in the ACT; that is very clear for everyone to see, from Zed Seselja’s knifing of Gary Humphries through to Mr Coe being in the position he is.

The Canberra Liberals are the A to Z of conservatism in this city. From Alistair to Zed, there is not much room right of them in mainstream Australian politics now. This amendment and his constant contributions on economic and social policy demonstrate that very clearly. We look forward to highlighting, through the budget debate and at every opportunity we get, just how conservative this opposition leader is and just how conservative he is making the party he leads that can now no longer call itself a liberal party. The amendment should be rejected, Madam Speaker. (*Time expired.*)

MR PETTERSSON (Yerrabi) (5.44): People laughed at me when I brought this motion on, Madam Speaker. They said no-one would want to speak to it. When Ms Le Couteur stood up to speak to it, I did get a bit worried. I was worried that no-one would want to speak to my exciting motion about the budget in budget week. But here we are. We have seen Mr Barr of Kurrajong speak to his local constituency; we have seen Ms Berry speak to her local constituency; we have seen Mr Ramsay speak to his constituency. Then we have seen Mr Coe speak to the complete opposite of my motion.

For those who saw the motion I moved, I would recommend it. It was a good motion. Unfortunately, the amendment does not agree with that sentiment and seeks to replace all of it, which is not something I would support. But it is an important debate to have in this place. We have spent a lot of time debating the budget, but we have not seen an opportunity for many members in this place to come forward and talk about their individual constituencies.

I am proud of this budget because we are delivering a balanced budget, with a modest surplus and a positive position across four years. We are doing this while delivering a massive piece of infrastructure in light rail in Gungahlin. We continue to have the lowest unemployment of any state or territory, just 3.6 per cent. This is down to our policies, which have created tens of thousands of new jobs in a diverse range of fields. It is not just jobs in traditional fields; we are diversifying and expanding our tourism sector, our education sector, our IT sector, the defence industry, the space industry and many more. We are delivering a positive forward position whilst increasing our investment in our schools and hospitals. We are catering for growth so that everyone can share in the prosperity of this city.

Madam Speaker, this budget speaks to our priorities. The people of Gungahlin, and indeed the entire territory, are beneficiaries of the priorities in this budget: more education and training opportunities, more diverse jobs, better health services, greater connectivity and more services for our growing city. This is what Labor stands for; this is what Labor has been delivering and will continue to deliver. I urge everyone to support this motion.

Question put:

That the amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 8		Noes 11	
Miss C Burch	Ms Lee	Mr Barr	Ms Le Couteur
Mr Coe	Mr Wall	Ms Berry	Mr Pettersson
Mrs Dunne		Ms J Burch	Mr Ramsay
Mr Hanson		Ms Cheyne	Mr Rattenbury
Mrs Kikkert		Ms Cody	Ms Stephen-Smith
Ms Lawder		Ms Fitzharris	

Amendment negatived.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Ambulance data

MR COE (Yerrabi—Leader of the Opposition) (5.51): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) the Minister for Police and Emergency Services politicised the public service by using it to craft political spin to downplay negative ambulance data and his mismanagement of ambulance resourcing;
- (b) the minister delayed answering question on notice No 662 for 100 days; and
- (c) the data revealed that 41.5 per cent of all emergency ambulance shifts were crewed below the minimum crewing level in 2016-17; and

(2) calls on the minister to:

- (a) apologise for using the public service for political spin purposes;
- (b) reassure the community that these shifts did not occur during known periods of high demand; and
- (c) present to the Assembly by the September 2018 sittings the data which shows on what date and shift type these shifts fell below the minimum crewing level.

It has become apparent from documents obtained under freedom of information that the Minister for Police and Emergency Services has misused public servants in his department for political spin. He has put public servants in a terrible position that they should not be in.

The documents reveal that, under the direction of the minister's office, officials in the Emergency Services Agency had to create eight versions over a period of 130 days to

answer question No 662. This question on notice was a very direct question about ambulance shifts, the minimum crewing level and the hours of overtime that were worked by the paramedics.

The question was placed on the notice paper on 22 September 2017. By 17 October, five days before the 30-day deadline for answers, the department provided the minister with the answer, including all the required data. All the required data was provided on 17 October for the question that was lodged on 22 September.

The data showed that in 2016-17 the ACT Ambulance Service was crewed below the minimum crewing level for 303 out of a total of 730 shifts. This means that for 41.5 per cent of all ambulance shifts there were not enough ambulances on our roads. This is a serious shortfall in our ambulance service and has a huge impact on the paramedics, the culture of the place and of course on the community at large.

Three days after receiving the answer, the minister's office requested context around the data. But the minister's office did not simply seek a better explanation from ESA, the minister's office directed the ESA how this so-called context should be framed. The minister's office said:

Could you please request ESA add an additional paragraph under the table in part 2) to give context around the numbers—ie that while we may have fewer ambulances rostered than the numbers set out in our internal policy, this does not result in a lower standard of care etc as measured by other KPIs.

The minister's office was not just requesting context, they were requesting that their spin be placed on advice that was provided by the directorate. The minister was seeking to downplay his own failure to meet his own government's policy. Instead of releasing the data, the minister chose to use the public service as spin doctors to make the figures look better.

As time went on, well past the 30-day deadline for answers, the minister's office continued the back-and-forth with the directorate. It took a total of eight revisions of the question and 130 days before the minister actually signed off on the data that he was provided with months earlier.

What changed? Only about five sentences. Despite the fact that the department did all the good work, despite the fact that they got all the data together, despite the fact that they met the time line, it took another 100 days for the minister to actually sign off on it.

It highlights the hypocrisy of the minister when he refuses to answer other opposition questions by citing the considerable amount of time that would be required to answer them. Our job as an opposition is to ask questions. That is why we have a question on notice framework. That is why we have questions without notice. It is so that we can do the bidding of our community in this place to ensure that the best possible outcomes are achieved by the government. When you ask a reasonable question about the welfare of staff and the welfare of the community at large and they refuse to

release the data and then misuse the public service, it goes to the ethics of this government.

The FOI documents show that, contrary to the minister's claims in the media, at no point did the minister's office seek to ensure the accuracy of the data. It was untrue. That claim that was made. The minister did not express concerns over the accuracy of the data. All he wanted to do was put his spin on it.

The ACT Ambulance Service is made up of many good men and women who work very hard for our community. They are generous, they are professional and they have a steadfast dedication to this city. And we in the Canberra Liberals respect them and we are grateful for what they do for our city. It is a shame then that they are not properly resourced, it is a shame that they are not backed up by the minister and it is a shame that the minister who is supposedly responsible for delivering the service is actually more interested in spin than he is in minimum crewing levels.

Unlike the minister, who refuses to listen to the needs of our front-line workers, the Canberra Liberals continue to engage with the community, including the ambos. We continue to hear from the overworked men and women in emergency services whom this government ignores. Just the other day we received this message from a paramedic:

Property is clearly more important than the lives of your loved ones. There are just eight ambulance stations, but nine fire stations. As an ambo, I know full well that the ACT Ambulance Service attends 300% more cases than the ACT Fire Brigade. Officers are fatigued, often go hungry on a 10 or 14 hour shift, have little time to rehydrate and are not supported by management. Would you like to have a Paramedic attend your child or significant other, when they have worked the last 13 hours non-stop?

That is a quote that a paramedic sent to us. The government may dismiss this. The government will put more spin on top of the spin, on top of the other eight variations. But when you have an ambo writing that to the opposition it shows that the concern is real. This is only one piece of feedback that we have received. We have heard from other ambos who are outraged that the minister would suggest doing away with minimum crewing levels or for referring to the minimum crewing level as an arbitrary figure. Does the minister truly think that requiring a certain level of care for our community is simply an arbitrary figure? It would be interesting to know what the Chief Ambulance Officer would have to say about that.

To the men and women of the Ambulance Service and to all the front-line workers in the ACT, let me tell you categorically that you deserve better than what you are getting from this government. You should be properly resourced. There should be an appropriate number of ambulance stations. There should be minimum crew levels and you should be backed up by your minister.

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

MR COE: The truth is: this government has been in power for so long that they think they can direct the public service to do whatever they want. The public service did exactly what they should do, that is, provide the data to the minister for this question on notice so that the opposition and the Canberra community can hold them to account. It is simply wrong that this government would delay the release of that data for a hundred days and then make up excuses as to why that happened.

It was only because of the diligent work of Mrs Jones and the freedom of information request that we actually got to see the full picture. It does make you wonder how many other times when you put in questions on notice do you get this sort of meddling with the figures or meddling with the context, to use the minister's term.

Whilst the doctoring of the answer is one thing the real issue is, of course, the state of the Ambulance Service and the state of emergency services in the ACT. My message to all those front-line workers is that the opposition, the Canberra Liberals, will continue to do all we can to make sure that you get a better deal to do your job. You put yourselves in harm's way and you deserve to be backed by a government. Instead, you are not getting the support you need.

If anybody in the service is listening to this debate or watching it online, please do let us know what you expect from your government. Let the Liberals know how we can support you better, because it is clear that the government does not want to do that. It is clear they do not want minimum crew levels. It is clear they do not want to actually back you up. It is clear they do not want you to have the resources that you need. Please do get in touch and let us know what you need so that we can advocate for all the services and all the resources that you should have at your disposal.

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) (6.03): I move the amendment circulated in my name:

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

"(1) notes that:

- (a) the Minister for Police and Emergency Services provided an answer to Question on Notice (QON) 662 on 31 January 2018, prior to commencement of the 2018 sitting period;
- (b) the answer provided to QON 662 enabled the Assembly to have two discussions on 14 and 21 February 2018 concerning ambulance crewing;
- (c) since August 2017, the Minister for Emergency Services has answered 12 QONs concerning ACT Ambulance Service (ACTAS), including questions relating to crewing and shifts;
- (d) a further seven questions have been answered on notice arising from the recent budget estimates hearings concerning ACTAS;
- (e) advice from ACTAS is that preparing information relating to dates and times of shifts concerning minimum crewing requires considerable amounts of staff time;

- (f) ACTAS staff should be spending their time providing support to paramedics and continuing to deliver high quality care to Canberrans;
 - (g) the information provided in the answer to QON 662 cannot be extrapolated to identify if a certain percentage of shifts were below the minimum crewing metric for the whole shift;
 - (h) the minimum crewing metric is not used by all ambulance services in the country; and
 - (i) response times and patient satisfaction are better measures of the quality of the ambulance service provided to a community;
- (2) further notes that:
- (a) ACTAS has the best response times in the nation and the highest patient satisfaction;
 - (b) notwithstanding that ACTAS is one of the best ambulance services in the country, the Minister for Police and Emergency Services requested a review of minimum crewing be undertaken, with a view of supporting ACTAS staff;
 - (c) the Government is implementing the ACTAS Blueprint for Change, designed to lead to improvements, including for staff, and enhance capabilities of the service; and
 - (d) the Government has provided additional funding to ACTAS, including for an additional two ambulances and 23 paramedics; and
- (3) calls on the Government to publicly respond by the end of the year regarding the outcomes of the review of minimum crewing in ACTAS currently underway.”.

The motion moved by the opposition is nothing more than a distraction and should not be supported. The minister has already explained the matter in this place and has also responded publicly, including through media interviews. I also remind the Assembly that the information concerned was provided in advance of this year's sitting period starting. This enabled the opposition to have not one but two debates in this place, on 14 and 21 February, on the subject of crewing within the Ambulance Service.

In addition the minister has also responded to multiple questions in this place about ACTAS and staffing. We will not be supporting this attempt to smear ACTAS and the hardworking public servants who look after our community in a time of need. No matter what Mr Coe says, accusing public servants of being politicised is a smear.

We have one of the best ambulance services in the country. ACTAS staff has the best response times in the country, along with the highest levels of patient satisfaction. This has been achieved with growing demand on ACTAS services, a demand that we know will continue as our city grows. We thank ACTAS for their great work and also recognise that they do need support.

As has already been announced, we are providing two new ambulances and 23 additional paramedics. As is mentioned in the amendment and something that I know is important to paramedics from speaking to them, five new state-of-the-art

replacement ambulances have arrived recently, fitted with new electronic stretchers. As the motion does note, there is also a review underway requested by the minister.

Let us stop wasting time on silly stunts. We are providing and will continue to provide the supports that our paramedics need. We will leave word games to those opposite.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong) (6.05): The Greens are not persuaded by the assertion in Mr Coe's motion that the minister politicised the public service. It is presented in the motion as a statement of fact. I think that, rather, it is a form of political spin in its own right, and one that obviously the minister has contested.

The opposition may well be disappointed in how long it took for this particular question on notice to be answered, and that is a valid point. I understand that the minister has provided an explanation for the delays, including the need to provide additional context to inform his answer. This reflects the usual practices of this place. The opposition are entitled to ask questions, and ministers answer them in the best way they see fit.

While ministers should always endeavour to answer questions within the designated time frames, there will be some occasions when this may not be possible. In these cases the minister should be in contact with the relevant member's office, which I understand was done in this case, and an explanation should be provided for the delay. It strikes me that, if anything, what we have here is a case of tardiness rather than a political conspiracy, as Mr Coe seems to be suggesting.

While the central issues here—ACT ambulance staffing and crew levels—are crucially important, the minister has already provided a raft of information on this subject to the Assembly and the community. As Minister Gentleman's amendment outlines, there have been 12 questions on notice on this topic in the past 12 months, all of which have been answered. We have also had two separate debates in this place on the issue and the minister has committed to undertake a review of minimum crewing as a key performance indicator. That review is currently underway.

Given all of this discussion and debate, it simply does not ring true to suggest that the minister has attempted to withhold or downplay information on this issue. Of course, at the heart of this matter—more important than the internal politics referred to in the opposition's motion—is the question of whether our ambulance shifts have enough staff to provide quality care and meet the needs of the Canberra community.

The issue is clearly more nuanced than has been suggested by the opposition on various occasions. As we have discussed before, ACTAS uses a deployment matrix to guide and inform the best placement of its resources at any one time. ACTAS also goes through periods of high demand and, of course, low demand. It is not hard to imagine that, for example, 4 am on a weekday morning is regularly less busy than, say, a weekend period, or particularly a Saturday night, for example. It makes sense to me that there would be flexibility in the use of resources, acknowledging that there are periods of low demand. Resources should always be used efficiently, and I think ACTAS are best placed to determine where those resources are best deployed.

We should also note that while crewing levels have fallen below the minimum level at times, other data measures indicate that the performance of our ambulance service remains one of the best in the country. The 2017 report on government services showed the ACT's ambulance code 1 response times were 8.5 minutes for the 50th percentile, second only behind Western Australia at 8.4 minutes, and 13.7 minutes for the 90th percentile, which is the fastest response time in the country. The next best jurisdiction for this indicator was Western Australia at 14.9 minutes.

In 2015-16 ACTAS answered 96.6 per cent of 000 calls in 10 seconds or less, the best response rate of any jurisdiction, and 98 per cent of people surveyed about their experience reported a high level of satisfaction with the service provided by ACTAS. With further investments in our ambulance service through this year's budget, we anticipate that these outstanding results will continue.

The government is upgrading the ACT ambulance fleet with new electric stretchers and loaders, as well as fitting ambulances and fire trucks with cardiac monitors and defibrillators. The minister has also committed to the recruitment of 23 additional paramedics and two new ambulances for the fleet. All of this reflects the fact that our city is growing and demand for our ambulance services is increasing. The government must continue to invest in this area in order to keep up with the growth that we know is happening in our city.

It is right that the opposition should interrogate the government's performance against relevant indicators. The review of minimum crewing levels currently underway will shed some light on whether this indicator remains an effective way of measuring ACTAS staffing levels. I will certainly be interested to see the outcomes of the review. It would seem appropriate and reasonable to wait for those outcomes before drawing any further conclusions.

If minimum crewing remains a relevant metric, I expect the review will determine what changes are needed to ensure that it is properly met. In the event that this indicator is no longer appropriate then a proper explanation should be provided as to why it is not appropriate, and it should be replaced with a more accurate and appropriate alternative. It is important that data continues to be collected and shared transparently to report on the staffing levels and overall performance of our ambulance service.

It is also right and appropriate that the opposition ask questions of the minister on this issue, and that he provides accurate and timely answers. As I said earlier, the minister has provided an explanation for the late response on this occasion, and has also provided responses to a range of other questions on this issue. I do not believe that the minister misused or politicised the public service in the answering of this question; therefore I do not think there is a need for him to apologise, as the motion asks.

Instead I believe it is important that the minister is open and transparent with the Assembly and the community about the outcomes of the minimum crewing level review. I understand that the minister has already committed to report back on the outcomes of that process and has reiterated that commitment through the amendment

today. The findings of the review will better inform future discussions on this issue and on the question of whether ACTAS is adequately staffed and resourced.

Given that that review is underway—certainly, these are comments we made during the last debate about supporting that review process so that we can be well informed—we will await the outcomes of that work, and we will be supporting the amendment moved by Minister Stephen-Smith today, on behalf of Minister Gentleman.

MR COE (Yerrabi—Leader of the Opposition) (6.11): I am not at all surprised that Mr Rattenbury has once again gone in to bat for his Labor colleagues. The reality is that not only does Mr Rattenbury blindly support them in policy, but he blindly supports them in their conduct as well.

This would have been a very easy, very clear opportunity for Mr Rattenbury to say that this was substandard, and for him to actually draw a line in the sand and say, “Yes, we’re fellow travellers, but they can do better.” Instead the strength of that coalition between the Labor Party and the Greens is on full display. Even when the minister has received an answer to a question on notice after 25 days, and then takes a further 105 days to write five sentences, and perhaps misleads people along the way with his answers as to why it took so long, Mr Rattenbury still goes in to defend them. It is, of course, no surprise.

This actually puts a spring in the step of the ministers. It actually gives an endorsement to this kind of behaviour and this kind of politicisation of the public service. If they can do this, which is to blatantly politicise the public service, and they know they are going to get away with it, it is only going to get worse. It has to get worse. How could it not? If this is the standard, if this is now acceptable, if this Assembly now rules that you can get a question from your department in less than a month, and you can then sit on it for three months and doctor it, if that is the standard that we are going to adhere to here, it is a very slippery slope.

That is something that Mr Rattenbury is, of course, willing to sign up to. It certainly adds to my suspicion about how many other questions have been doctored in a similar way. How many other times have ministers responded with an answer where they have said, “We can’t get that data,” when in actual fact they did receive the data and they just did not want to release it?

I now expect that that has happened on many occasions. I now expect that there have been dozens of times when the minister’s office has received all the data, has received a complete answer to a question that we have lodged, and the minister has then told the Assembly, “Sorry, it’s too hard to compile; it would be too resource intensive.”

This is certainly something that I think the opposition should be investigating, because if the directorates have provided information that has not been passed on to the Assembly, I hope those opposite would vote differently if a similar motion were to be brought forward again. I certainly hope that Mr Rattenbury would vote differently.

In conclusion, let me reiterate my support for the ambos of Canberra. They deserve better than what they are getting from Minister Gentleman; they deserve better than what they are getting from the Labor Party and the Greens. When light is shone onto the minimum crewing levels within the ambulance service, they deserve better than what we have heard from Minister Stephen-Smith and Minister Rattenbury. The ambos in Canberra deserve to have appropriate staffing and appropriate resources, and they are not getting them from this government.

Question put:

That the amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 11		Noes 8	
Mr Barr	Ms Le Couteur	Miss C Burch	Ms Lee
Ms Berry	Mr Pettersson	Mr Coe	Mr Wall
Ms J Burch	Mr Ramsay	Mrs Dunne	
Ms Cheyne	Mr Rattenbury	Mr Hanson	
Ms Cody	Ms Stephen-Smith	Mrs Kikkert	
Ms Fitzharris		Ms Lawder	

Amendment agreed to.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

Adjournment

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

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Animals—dangerous dogs

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (6.20): I rise tonight to pass on a story about a dog attack in Tuggeranong. I think the minister sometimes thinks I am exaggerating when I talk about the stories I receive from constituents. Perhaps she does not get the same mail I do.

Today I want to talk about a little dog called Jakk, whose owner, Corrina from Monash, has contacted me. Corrina writes:

I was out with my 2 sons at a regular playgroup we attend from 9:30-12, as we were leaving I received a phone call from our real estate agent (we are renting) that the dogs next door had gotten into our yard and attacked our dog. The status of our dog was unknown as all other neighbours who herd the incident did not want to enter our yard but could see our dog laying on the back porch not moving.

I drove home and called my husband to come straight home as Jakk was in trouble.

When I returned home there was a crowd of people out the front of the house with 2 people running out of my garage carrying Jack to their car covered in blood. I found out they were animal services and they had jumped the fence to get to Jack and got him out via the garage. They asked where to take Jack and as we have only been living in Canberra for 6 months I was unsure. They advised there was a vet in our suburb (Monash) and they would take him there.

As I spoke with the crowd of people (my neighbours whom we had never met until this day) I learned that the 3 dogs that were next door had dug under the fence and attacked Jack, then after Jack had no fight left in him they retreated back into their own yard. The animal services and neighbours had gone into the yard previously to myself getting home and covered up the hole. They advised me not to go into the yard or get the kids out of the car as the backyard was covered in blood and did not want to scare my 3-year-old or upset myself (The dogs were viciously barking in their own yard at everyone outside).

I did go into the yard with animal services as they took pictures (for evidence) and what I saw was devastating. I could see where the dogs had entered under our fence (where my 3-year-old plays) then they had cornered Jack down the side of the house as there was blood all over the fence and ground and that's where the neighbours had seen the dogs attacking Jack. Then the 3 dogs retreated and there is a trail where Jack has made it up to the top of the stairs and he tried to get inside as there were paw prints on the back door then a puddle of blood where he just laid to bleed out.

We spent the afternoon making statements with the neighbours to animal services and found out there have been many incidents with the dogs previously to us being here.

The vet rang us late in the afternoon and we picked up Jack to bring him home he had 33 stitches all over his body and 2 drains in his legs he was in immense pain but happy to see us. We spent the whole following week 24 hours a day at home (my husband took time off work to) we had to carry Jack to go to the toilet outside as he couldn't walk as his back legs were ripped apart and he was on antibiotics and strong pain killers. My husband and I had to clean his wounds 3 times a day and we even slept in separate beds to be close to Jack throughout the night.

Jack had to go to the vet every 3 days to be monitored. By the end of the second week Jack's legs were swollen and started to smell, when he went in for a check-up he was put into emergency surgery. We waited all afternoon and were unsure if he would return. We received the phone call to collect him (this was after hours). We were told he had severe infection from the bites to his legs and that his muscle and tissues in his back-right legs were severely and that we had to take it day by day. More drains were placed in his legs and he was unable to walk.

Check-ups were still every 3 days or so at the vet.

Jakk ended up losing a huge chunk of skin to the inside and outside of his back-right leg and you could see straight through his legs because all the muscle had also died. He also has a small hole in his left leg to where all the skin had died.

Still every 3 or so days check-up to the vet all the skin has finished dying and now he has large open wounds to his back legs but he is getting around on 3 legs and he is a happier dog. Jack had his 3rd surgery on the 24th to have skin flaps placed over the wounds and the smaller one stitched together. His wounds are looking good and he is becoming the beautiful dog he once was again. He is due to get the stitches out ... and shouldn't need any further surgeries as long as the wounds heal.

From the day we moved into the home the dogs barked and growled constantly at either Jack or us being outside and it was only a matter of time before someone/thing got hurt, I'm just glad that it was not my children playing outside on that day.

Animals—dangerous dogs

MR COE (Yerrabi—Leader of the Opposition) (6.26): Continuing on from Ms Lawder:

I have since found out that the neighbours had 3 dogs outside and 1 inside. The 3 outside were not de-sexed or registered or microchipped. They also had no food or water and the living conditions were extremely poor. The dogs barked constantly and the neighbours never did anything to stop them the 3 dogs always fought amongst themselves attacking even each other.

The 3 outside dogs were seized on the day of attacked but they still have the 1 inside in their possession.

One of the children have come over (3 days after) since the attack to apologise (but nothing from the parent) We are thousands of dollars out of pocket and now are going to try and ask for compensation.

We have been told that Jakk's injuries and attack is one of the worst they have ever seen and Jakk is very lucky to be alive. Luckily, He has not changed mentally and is still our beautiful loving family dog.

Unfortunately, Jakk will never have full use of his back-right leg again as it was damaged so severely and this makes us upset as Jakk's favourite thing to do is jump and run for his balls but we are very happy he is still with us as most dogs would not have survived this attack.

I hope the neighbours will be prosecuted to the full extent and do not receive these dogs back. They were negligent towards their pets and by doing so they turned vicious and I feel if they followed the rules this could have been prevented.

We are still waiting to hear from animal services of the outcome.

This case highlights the severity of each of these dog attacks. Whilst it is easy to treat them as a number—and we know there is a dog attack every second day in Canberra—the reality is that every second day a family and an animal is traumatised. Very often an attack leads to the death of the victim of the dog attack, and occasionally the dog that actually causes the harm is put down by DAS. The fact that this is happening every second day on average suggests that the government's approach is failing. They are failing the dogs and they are failing the families of those impacted by it.

This is a genuine welfare and safety issue. I commend my colleague Ms Lawder and my past colleague Mr Steve Doszpot for all they have done to bring this matter to the public's attention. We will continue to do all we can to ensure we get a better deal in Canberra when it comes to dog management.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 6.29 pm.