



Debates

WEEKLY HANSARD

Legislative Assembly for the ACT

NINTH ASSEMBLY

24 OCTOBER 2018

www.hansard.act.gov.au

Wednesday, 24 October 2018

Domestic Animals (Dangerous Dogs) Legislation Amendment Bill 2018	4127
Schools—workplace safety	4132
Schools—freedom from discrimination	4148
Questions without notice:	
Schools—asbestos	4165
City Renewal Authority—targets	4166
Clubs—proposed diversification support fund	4167
Clubs—proposed diversification support fund	4167
Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse— recommendations	4168
Schools—WorkSafe investigation	4170
Animals—dangerous dogs	4172
ACTION bus service—network	4173
Canberra Hospital—emergency waiting times	4175
Health—elective surgery	4176
Canberra Hospital—emergency waiting times	4177
Canberra Hospital—emergency waiting times	4178
Government—space industry policy	4178
Supplementary answer to question without notice:	
ACT Health—workplace culture	4180
Paper	4181
Government Agencies (Land Acquisition Reporting) Bill 2018	4181
Women’s sport	4183
Domestic and family violence	4198
Adjournment:	
Environment—climate change	4215
Belconnen Community Service	4216
White Ribbon—reproductive rights	4217
Council on the Ageing ACT	4218
Girls takeover parliament	4219
African Australian awards night	4220

Wednesday, 24 October 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.

Domestic Animals (Dangerous Dogs) Legislation Amendment Bill 2018

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

Title read by Clerk.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (10.01): I move:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

I rise today to speak to the Domestic Animals (Dangerous Dogs) Legislation Amendment Bill 2018. At its core, this bill is designed to address issues of responsible dog ownership. It is an attempt to address our crisis in dog management in the ACT, and I am disappointed to have to stand in this place yet again and call out the Labor-Greens government for their complete abrogation of their basic duty to keep Canberrans safe. They just do not seem to care about injuries to Canberrans. But the Canberra Liberals do care. It is a core responsibility of government to keep their citizens safe; yet this Labor-Greens government looks the other way as the number of attacks by dogs increases year on year.

A month ago I asked Minister Steel to provide dog attack figures for last year. In response, Minister Steel was not quite sure because, inexplicably, the collection method of data had changed, but there were at least a staggering 133 dog attacks on people to the end of June—on Canberrans. That is two attacks every three days. The number of dog attacks more generally, which may involve other animals or pets, has gone through the roof. There were 485 reported last year, an increase of 25 per cent from the year before. And that is well up from 93 attacks five years ago. So there has been on average a 30 per cent increase in dog attacks year on year over the past five years.

This massive increase in dog attacks is a major public health and safety crisis—nearly 500 attacks by dogs in a year. And it is not just a human health and safety issue. In the past five years, hundreds of innocent domestic pets have been killed and mutilated. It has been a major animal welfare failing of this government, and it is every day.

Just last weekend someone posted on a Facebook page:

“BEWARE AT GORDON ADVENTURE PLAYGROUND” my two small dogs (on leads) have just been attacked by a strong, vicious dog NOT on lead.

The dog owner went on to discuss the fact that the playground was full of small children and expressed their dismay at what could have happened if a child was attacked. And this is a fear I hear over and over again.

On 8 November 2017, in Lyons, the two dogs that attacked a woman had been seen loose at the suburb's early childhood centre only moments before. The woman was hospitalised after the dogs attacked her, injuring her arms and legs. A witness said he heard screams and rushed over to see the dogs attacking the 32-year-old woman. "They were really, really going at her. They mauled her pretty badly," he said. He and other members of the public got the dogs off the woman before police and rangers arrived and caught the dogs. Children were about to arrive there for before-school care when the dogs attacked.

We are a first-world country. We are the capital of our nation. Our children and our residents should not be fearful of dog attacks in their local playgrounds and streets. Parents should not feel the need to post warnings on social media sites about these issues. This is not a recent issue. This is something the Canberra Liberals have been pursuing for a number of years. While this government tries to paint itself as responsible and proactive, it has, in reality, effectively done nothing except release some reports and give platitudinous and self-congratulatory speeches.

On 18 September 2014 Alistair Coe spoke in support of the government's Domestic Animals Amendment Bill. Prophetically, Mr Coe said:

... like all pieces of legislation this bill will need to be enforced properly.

Sadly, as we now know, the government failed to enforce that bill properly in 2014 and every year since, and as a consequence hundreds of Canberrans have been injured in dog attacks.

As the situation continued to deteriorate and even more dog attacks were reported, again it was the Canberra Liberals who called for action. In March 2017 Mr Doszpot prepared a motion which was to try to get the government to seriously address what was becoming a major public safety issue and a major community concern. In March 2017 Mr Doszpot implored the Labor and Greens members of this place to support a series of recommendations to improve dog management. The Labor-Greens government watered down the Canberra Liberals' proposals, and effectively nothing happened.

Ms Le Couteur famously said, in meek support of the government's do-nothing approach to the growing level of dog attacks:

I am not convinced that even higher penalties will work, and I am reluctant to commit to even higher penalties without substantial community consultation. What is the real world impact?

We know what happened to get the government to take an interest. It was the death of a Canberra resident. Within days of that tragedy in 2017 the then minister finally

announced the government would consider a range of legal amendments, and extra staff were promised at domestic animal services. Where are we at now? What is the current record of the government? Are they now going to make sure our parks and streets are safe, that we and our pets are safe from attack?

On 3 July just this year a female police officer was seriously injured after being viciously attacked by a dog while doing her job. She suffered a bite to the hip, calf and hand, the latter causing nerve and tendon damage. She was admitted to hospital and had surgery. The dog was seized after the attack. As I have heard too many times, it turns out that the dog had previously caused multiple injuries after an attack on a person at the same premises less than a month earlier. And apparently the dog was not registered. The question arises: why was action not taken against the dog and its owner on 18 June? Could the serious attack on the police officer have been prevented by earlier action? This is a common pattern. A dog seized after a serious attack, it is later revealed, had previously been involved in other attacks.

I asked a question of the minister on 19 September 2018 in relation to a dog attack on Mr Daniel Meyers in Spence in 2016. Mr Meyers suffered severe injuries, including the loss of a finger, part of his hand, and nerve damage. Surprisingly, or perhaps not surprisingly, it turns out that the two dogs that attacked Mr Meyers had come to the attention of DAS previously. The dogs were not registered, and the owner had previously been issued a warning notice. One of the dogs was put down four months later, and the second dog was held by DAS for 514 days. Again, questions arise. Why was action not taken against the dogs and their owner on the earlier occasion? Of course, we now know that the dog which killed someone in Watson had also previously come to the attention of DAS on a number of occasions.

Are the government trying to solve this public health and safety issue? No, they are not. This year they have sat on a review into the management of dogs in the ACT for nearly six months. On 17 September they released their independent expert review report, which they had received in April. Perhaps I am suspicious, but I think the report was only released publicly because the Canberra Liberals were presenting the exposure draft of this bill. The government did not want to be caught out and look like they were sitting on their hands. The Maxwell review, as it is known, contains 33 recommendations. This review, together with wide public consultation, forms part of the input that I have used, that the Canberra Liberals have used, to form this bill before the Assembly today. It seems that we have to do the government's job for them.

If you are attacked by a dog, what does the government expect you to do? If you look at the website you will find the following:

If you are attacked

If you, or your dog, are attacked by another dog, immediately phone Domestic Animal Services—

via the Access Canberra contact centre. And it gives the phone number. Whilst DAS do a great job under difficult circumstances, the problem here is that 11 per cent of urgent calls to domestic animal services about dog attacks drop out. And 62 per

cent of general calls to domestic animal services drop out. What about reporting a roaming dog? This could potentially be the precursor to an attack. It could be an attack waiting to happen. More often than not, a call about a roaming dog goes to a recorded message, which has no options which relate to roaming dogs.

There was a case of a woman from Tuggeranong who saw a roaming dog menacing an elderly pedestrian. She went inside her house and phoned Access Canberra and was put on hold. By the time she was finally connected to an operator, after a lengthy delay, she was not able to answer the question about where the dog was at that moment because she had gone inside her house. As a result, her report of a roaming dog, an attacking dog, was not logged.

In the past five years, hundreds of innocent domestic pets have been killed and mutilated by dog attacks in the ACT. It is a major animal welfare failing of this government. In the first five months of this year alone 124 pets have been reported to have been attacked—Jakk, Rocky, Coco, Rex, Biscuit, Max, Buddy, Indy, Cooper, Bear, Duke, Toby. I could go on and on and on—all loved pets, all beloved family animals and companions, attacked and mutilated or killed.

Mr Steel was quoted in the *Canberra Times* as saying that we are presenting today a deliberately cruel piece of legislation. Where is the cruelty in trying to stop pets on leads being mauled to death in a public street—mauled, to die a slow and painful death as their owners watch on and do everything that they can to save their pet? A deliberately cruel piece of legislation?

Mr Steel: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I would seek your guidance in relation to standing order 183 that the debate shall be confined to the components of the bill.

MADAM SPEAKER: I am not going to make that a point of order, Mr Steel. The bill is contentious. Stop the clock. There is no point of order, Mr Steel. Ms Lawder.

MS LAWDER: Obviously Mr Steel does not like the direction of the discussion today. The point I was making is that there is no animal welfare interest in allowing beloved pets to be mauled in public or on people's properties, in their own backyards. It is expensive but that is usually the least concern of the owners of those pets.

In the past, dog management reforms that were presented were opposed by Labor and the Greens because of the real-world impact. Ms Le Couteur was concerned about this real-world impact. Aside from the human deaths and injuries, poor animal welfare is one that the human real world impacts. I would be interested in Ms Le Couteur's reflection on the animal welfare implications of having pets killed and mutilated in their homes or backyards or when being walked in public and why she and the rest of the Greens, Mr Rattenbury, have not called the government to account for its neglect of these animal welfare issues.

Today I present a bill to try to improve dog banishment. Some of the elements of our bill are as follows: the victims of dog attacks should be informed about the outcomes of an investigation, data should be collected and stored more effectively and dog rangers should be given increased and clearer powers to seize dogs that pose a risk to

public safety. Many victims of dog attacks have complained that they are not informed about the status of an investigation into a dog attack. The opposition has previously raised this issue with the government, on behalf of constituents. But the government did not seem to think it mattered. Under this proposed law, domestic animal services will be required to inform the victim, the dog owner and the responsible minister of the outcome of the investigation within 14 days of its completion. The registrar will also be required to collect data and document an investigation.

Our laws also address the conditions under which a dog is seized, tightening them to require that a dog that seriously injures or kills a domestic animal must be impounded during the investigation. Our laws make provision for this by distinguishing between domestic and non-domestic animals. It means that a dog that innocently kills or injures a non-domestic animal will not be captured by the legislation, despite Mr Steel trying to claim otherwise in the media today.

I would like to thank Mr Steel for his contribution to the public debate on our proposed dog management changes. In his comments yesterday he finally provided a clear understanding of what the government's real intentions are when it comes to dog management. It is nothing to do with public safety or animal welfare. Even worse, it continues to encourage irresponsible dog ownership. His statement exposed this government's callous underbelly in this policy space. It is about money, like all things with this government. He fears having to build a warehouse to house dogs that are seized. And, of course, that is not true. A well-run administration would not fear the consequence of this bill. It is Mr Steel's administration that thinks it is okay to keep dogs in the pound for months, not mine.

Mr Steel gave an example of a little dog jumping up on someone or killing a small lizard on a footpath. It would not be seized. I do not know if Mr Steel has a dog, but it would appear from this that if he was a dog owner he would be an irresponsible dog owner. If he had a dog in a public place he should have that dog under control. It should not be possible for his dog to jump on someone or kill something. That is the point. Dog owners need to be responsible.

He says dogs could be euthanised for killing any animal kept on a premise, including a chicken or a mouse. In fact, yes. If your dog comes into my backyard and kills my rabbit or my chickens, you do not have control of that dog. That is the point. You are not a responsible dog owner. That is the point of these laws. A responsible dog owner would not allow their pet, their dog, into someone else's backyard to kill their pets. You should be held responsible, Mr Steel, if your dog kills my neighbour's pet. It does not matter if it is a rabbit or a chicken, or their pet cat or their pet dog. That is the point. If you let your dog wander, if you are an irresponsible dog owner, how do you know if it is killing something in someone else's backyard?

I believe Mr Steel is wrong when he says we are out of step with community values. Sixty-nine per cent of respondents to our survey believe that dangerous dogs who have attacked people should be put down. Of course, Mr Steel is new in his job, whereas we, the Canberra Liberals, have been working in this space for a long time.

Perhaps Mr Steel could have taken up my offer to discuss these matters and then he would not have put such erroneous comments out in the media yesterday.

I wrote to Mr Steel on 24 August, on his first day as minister, saying, amongst other things, that I would be happy to meet with him as soon as possible to discuss how we can together progress issues relating to dangerous dogs et cetera. I have had no response to my letter. Mr Steel could have approached me to ask what might be in the final bill presented today, but no. They have a long history of inaction on dog management.

The Canberra Liberals have a long history of action to make Canberra safer. We will continue to consult widely and bring on more legislation. We will continue to bring forward changes to make Canberra a safer place. We will continue, unfortunately I believe, to face more dog attacks. What people say to me over and over again is that they are concerned that a dog that attacks another dog is often only inches away from attacking a child or a frail, elderly person, for example. This is the comment I hear over and over again.

People do not expect that dangerous dogs will be held in the community. They do not expect, for example, that dangerous criminals do not go to jail because the jails may be overcrowded. They do not expect that sick people cannot go to hospital because the hospitals may be overcrowded. Wait! Sorry, actually that is already happening. What we do expect is that the government will provide the basic services to keep Canberrans safe, and that is what this bill is intended to do.

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

Schools—workplace safety

MS LEE (Kurrajong) (10.22): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) all teachers deserve to work in a safe environment in ACT schools;
- (b) a Worksafe investigation concluded in September 2018 that the ACT Education Directorate has failed in its duty of care to teachers in Canberra government schools;
- (c) Worksafe has been investigating reports of teacher abuse going back at least two years and reports of injury in Canberra government schools had been reported for several years prior to that investigation;
- (d) despite teachers and staff reporting on numerous occasions of violence and injuries suffered as a result, the Directorate failed to put in place adequate procedures to appropriately deal with those reports; and
- (e) the extent of teacher abuse is unknown as much may have gone unreported; and

(2) calls on the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development to:

- (a) acknowledge that the evidence provided over at least the last two years and highlighted by the Worksafe report, shows that current practices have

- failed to address the underlying problems affecting teacher and student safety in ACT schools and must be addressed as a matter of priority;
- (b) apologise to staff, students and families for failing to provide them with a safe school environment;
 - (c) report to the Assembly by the last sitting week in November 2018 on its plan to implement the enforceable undertaking it gave to the Work Safety Commissioner; and
 - (d) update the Assembly on a quarterly basis on the progress of the implementation of measures to protect Canberra's teachers and students.

Last Monday, 15 October, the education minister held a media conference in which she was supported by the general secretary of the ACT Education Union. The purpose of the media conference was to advise Canberrans that for the last two years WorkSafe ACT had been conducting an investigation into activities within the ACT Education Directorate. It found systemic and repeated failures to ensure the safety of an unknown number of teaching staff at an unknown number of ACT government schools. The WorkSafe report, called an enforceable undertaking proposal, has a publication date of 28 September 2018. Presumably, it is the date that the minister and/or the Education Directorate was handed the WorkSafe report or its contents were made known to them.

The WorkSafe report found that between February 2016 and October 2018 the territory did not comply with its primary health and safety duty, pursuant to section 19 of the Work Health and Safety Act, in that it did not do all that was reasonably practicable to ensure the health and safety of its staff by applying inconsistent or inadequate controls to workplace hazards associated with student behaviours, failing to adequately adjust controls following incidents and failing to provide adequate training to staff.

The WorkSafe report then goes on to say that, as a result of those failures, staff were exposed to risk of injury. By way of supporting evidence, the WorkSafe report provides examples of incidents where staff were exposed to risk of injury, including injuries of staff in three schools. Madam Speaker, we may never know how many staff were injured; we may never know how many schools were involved.

What we do know is that, for at least the last two years, WorkSafe has been investigating injuries, and what we do know is that the problem of teacher abuse and injury has been known to the Education Directorate and to the union, and perhaps to the minister, for much longer than that. There are no words strong enough to condemn what has been allowed to happen under the watch of this education minister. Equally, there can be no excuse for why this was allowed to occur, not just once, not just at one school, not just to one teacher, and not just for one period of time, but to a number of teachers on a number of occasions at a number of schools.

If we go to the scant evidential examples outlined in the WorkSafe report and focus on just one case in school A, it tells us that over a period of months in 2016 a staff member, a learning support assistant referenced under the pseudonym of "Melanie"

received multiple injuries from kindergarten-aged students identified as having complex needs and challenging behaviours.

The WorkSafe report goes on to say that Melanie reported incidents involving multiple injuries, which ultimately resulted in a psychological injury and an accepted compensation claim. The WorkSafe report says that the incident reports went through the territory's incident management system and were responded to by the school but that proposed amendments to controls were not communicated effectively or implemented in a timely way, that the risk assessments and associated controls were inadequate and that Melanie continued to be subjected to harm.

We could be excused for thinking that this was just a lapse of protocol, because the incident reports were done and the directorate knew about them. But when you read the detail of what happened to Melanie, a learning support assistant with 10 years experience in disability education and previous experience in nursing, you discover that she was attacked and bitten on no less than 34 occasions, all of which were recorded. She was bitten on the arms, the stomach and the leg, and that was day one. Melanie then endured a further six months of this.

Melanie is quoted in the media as saying that even though the Education Directorate were aware of what was happening—were made aware 34 times, no less—they provided no advice to her and the only assistance they offered was compression bandages to reduce the depth of the bites. That lack of support, that lack of protection, led to Melanie contemplating suicide, unable to work, frightened of children and suffering nightmares about being eaten by crocodiles. Melanie is today, two years after the nightmare, in a mental health facility.

But apparently that is okay, because the government defends its lack of empathy, its lack of action, by saying all injured persons identified in the WorkSafe report have been supported through workers compensation arrangements and that Melanie was receiving regular payments for time off work due to injury. The Education Directorate says that it “sincerely regrets” incidents of violence in some ACT schools; “sincerely regrets”. What an insulting response to Melanie, who has suffered the most horrendous treatment that anyone could imagine you could receive in a workplace. Expressing sincere regret apparently makes it okay. If this were a reality TV show, you would call the storyline implausible.

There is little point in highlighting the other examples in the WorkSafe report because they are the recorded ones, the one we now know about. But how many have gone unrecorded? How many teachers, how many learning support assistants, how many staff members have kept quiet, seeing that it was useless to complain and perhaps fearing the loss of their jobs? We may never know, but if it is anything like the issues of staff bullying in ACT hospitals, there are many silent and frightened staff out there and we want to hear from them.

I am not sure whether the minister, as a committed union member, is so embarrassed and so ashamed that she cannot apply an objective standard to what has happened and so can only see the WorkSafe report as some sort of groundbreaking victory. She says proudly that she is going to share with other jurisdictions the learnings and strategies

that will apparently fix all of this. Is this really something that we, as a community, should be proud of? She is quoted as saying, “We now have a nation-leading occupational violence management plan.” She does not say how embarrassed or how ashamed we are that it happened in our schools, in an education system that we claim to be superior to any other in Australia.

I see no evidence of the minister being ashamed by this, and clearly the union think the same, because they are quoted as saying that, while tackling violence against teachers would be “a difficult journey”, “we now have fewer people in schools accepting the unacceptable”. We now have, apparently, a nation-leading occupational violence management plan and we have apparently had it since July last year. Perhaps that is a good thing. It has apparently resulted in a doubling of reported incidents of violence to around 1,500 a year. But how many teaching staff were left exposed and unsupported in the interim? Fifteen months after the introduction of the policy, why do we have these horrendous incidents continuing to happen to our teachers?

There are a number of serious issues attached to last week’s WorkSafe exposure. Firstly, it was not the Education Directorate that brought this to light. It was WorkSafe. Would any of this have come to light if WorkSafe had not intervened? Secondly, the WorkSafe enforceable undertaking commits the Education Directorate to a range of actions that you would have to think should have been established practice already, particularly given we have apparently had a nation-leading policy in place for 15 months.

We are told that there will be more training of teaching staff. All staff will attend two wellbeing expositions. Schools will learn how to better report incidents. Madam Speaker, are these not procedures that should exist in an environment that has good leadership and a culture of a safe and supported working environment? There is also the Labor Party’s tried but too often not true solution of throwing more money at the problem—for sensory spaces, for developing templates for reporting and for P & C workshops raising the profile of the risk of occupational violence in the education sector. On the face of it, these initiatives are not a bad development. But the question remains: why is this necessary in the first place? Why is the education sector exposed to so much violence?

In April 2015 the issue of a student with complex needs and challenging behaviours came to the attention of the then education minister—you, Madam Speaker. You were faced with the news that an ACT school had constructed a cage-like structure to ensure the safety of the student, the teachers and fellow classmates. Unlike the attitude of the current education minister, I am told that you, Madam Speaker, were immediately on the front foot, acknowledging the problem, accepting it was a failure of the system, and setting about establishing an expert panel, chaired by Professor Anthony Shaddock, to review policy and practice.

The report that followed, *Schools for all children and young people: report of the expert panel on students with complex needs and challenging behaviour*, was published in November 2015 and Ms Burch took no time to announce that the 50 recommendations from the panel would be addressed and accepted by government,

announcing funding of over \$7 million to start on the work. The government then set about establishing the implementation committee to ensure that progress was made.

The issues that were the catalyst for the Shaddock expert panel review are at the heart of the latest WorkSafe investigation. The Shaddock review identified that ACT school leaders believed that the proportion of students with complex needs and challenging behaviours was increasing for a variety of reasons. It identified that other students were threatened by physical violence and distressing situations. Students with a disability were also affected by other students' behaviour. Teachers noted instances of violence and destructive behaviour and concerns about their own ability to respond effectively to protect student safety.

The Shaddock report reflected competing perceptions of supporting the right for every child to attend a mainstream school, against some parents' concerns about their own child's learning being disrupted and their physical safety threatened. It also identified gaps in policy and training, and it proposed developing a range of options for primary school students with very challenging behaviours.

It suggested the development of policies and procedures for the placement of students in learning support units and the development of a cohesive strategy for alternative education programs. The Shaddock report dedicated a whole chapter to protecting student and staff safety. It suggested that staff needed clear guidance, training and a practical understanding of effective strategies. I note in passing that the report also proposed the engagement of 20 school psychologists. Madam Speaker, that was three years ago.

In October 2016 the ACT got a new education minister. In 2017 WorkSafe started their investigation and in July 2017, in what appears to be too little too late, the Education Directorate thought it necessary to have an occupational violence management plan. The minister calls it nation leading. The fact that it resulted in an increase in reporting of teacher-directed workplace violence may be a good thing. But it overwhelmingly demonstrates that, despite the Shaddock report, despite the 50 recommendations, despite the implementation working group, despite the additional training, despite the millions of dollars given to fixing this issue, the system is still broken and previous strategies are not working.

We still have teachers who are in mental health facilities because the system failed to protect them. Frankly, the teachers' own union has little to be proud of if it took three years and a WorkSafe intervention to get protection for their members. If I were a member, I would be very disappointed at the lack of support.

Where were they when Melanie reported injuries on 34 separate occasions and was only given compression bandages as the best option to protect herself? Where were they then? I am not for one minute suggesting that a quick fix lies just around the corner. It does not. But like so many current problems in education, we have to first acknowledge the problem. We have to accept that we have not got it right, and I am not convinced the minister knows how to do that. The facts are that we have a significant and growing number of young students with challenging needs and

complex behaviours and we have an overarching desire to educate all ACT students in an inclusive environment, but we have to accept and ensure that at no time should there be a compromise of anyone's safety.

WorkSafe has directed more money to be spent on a number of initiatives, including policies and procedures, but previously well-intentioned policies and procedures have been found wanting in the past. So why do we think another policy, another couple of millions of dollars, will improve the situation? We have committed additional funds, but do we seriously believe this will solve the problem? It is the universal Labor Party fix-it-all: throw some more money at the problem.

We have heard for years that if only more federal money was spent on education we would not have underperforming schools. We need to rethink how we deliver education in the ACT. We need to objectively assess why we are failing our teachers and our students. It is, after all, Canberra students, Canberra teachers, Canberra families and the Canberra community that are being affected. Where is the responsibility on the part of the ACT education minister in all of this?

The WorkSafe report focuses on teacher injury, but what assessment has been done on student injury? What work has been done to address those concerns? We have had silent teachers too scared to comment, and I have no doubts that there are parents in our community who are worried about their children.

There are serious issues in ACT education. For too long we have cruised around them. We need to acknowledge them. We need to own the problems and take responsibility for finding solutions that are acceptable, measureable and sustainable, but it starts with acknowledging that there is a problem. The honourable thing for the minister to do is to make a public apology and to take full responsibility. (*Time expired.*)

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 Sport and Recreation and Minister for Women) (10.38): I thank Ms Lee for bringing this motion to the Assembly today. I begin by correcting a couple of statements Ms Lee made. The Education Directorate or my office have not seen a report from WorkSafe. Of course we are not hiding from this issue—the information and data was asked for by Mr Wall at my first estimates meeting. This work has been occurring for some time and we have been working very hard to try to address this very difficult issue, rather than finding out about it by reading it in the *Canberra Times* a couple of days ago.

No-one should expect to be injured at work, and nor should they be. And our teachers and staff are no exception. People work in education because they want to make a difference. They want to make a difference in young people's lives, and they usually get to do that. As most people know, schools are generally happy and safe places where students love to learn and engage with their teachers and friends. On occasion, however, there are incidents in which children—some of whom are vulnerable, are dealing with many issues beyond the school or have some special needs—might lash out and hurt a teacher or school staff.

How do we reconcile the commitment to welcome every child into our schools regardless of background and circumstance, including those with complex needs or challenging behaviours, with supporting the staff to do what they love—teach and facilitate learning—in a safe and healthy environment? That is the challenge we are dealing with. The Education Directorate works very closely with school principals, staff, the Australian Education Union, allied health professionals and experts, and it has strategies in place to navigate these issues, as schools are places for learning, not violence.

As members will be aware, on 28 September 2018 the Director-General of Education entered into an enforceable undertaking with WorkSafe ACT on behalf of the territory. For those who would like to review it, the enforceable undertaking is available on the Education Directorate website. The Education Directorate has acknowledged that WorkSafe ACT has made allegations about its duty of care to staff at Canberra public schools, citing examples in three schools where staff received soft tissue and skin injuries as well as reported psychological issues. I reiterate that every worker has the right to be safe at work and to return home safely after work, and I deeply regret the occasions when this has not occurred.

Without speaking about individual cases, I can assure members that injured workers have been supported through workers compensation arrangements, including incapacity benefits and medical and rehabilitation expenses. As I said yesterday in this place, addressing occupational violence in education has been a priority for me since I became minister, and I take this opportunity to thank the Australian Education Union for proactively raising this with me as soon as I was appointed.

There are 47,945 students across Canberra's 87 public schools and 6,814 staff, including 3,735 teachers. We want to make sure that our schools remain inclusive places where every child has the right to an education and where every teacher and staff member gets the chance to do what they are passionate about and support all students, regardless of how they learn. Equity, access and inclusion are key principles of the future of the education 10-year strategy. Developed after comprehensive consultation with our community, these principles have been confirmed by education experts as being key to achieving excellence.

While Safe Work Australia notes that workplace violence is most commonly experienced by emergency first responders, correctional services and those in the health and aged-care sectors, we also see a degree of it in our schools. This growth of occupational violence in human services, including in education, is occurring nationally and is likely to have been under-reported. Because of this, the Education Directorate's overarching occupational violence policy and management plan have been developed to guide our response to this important issue and encourage the reporting of incidents. The reporting of an incident is not a judgement on a school staff's ability—quite the opposite. The policy and plan were developed jointly with the Education Directorate and the Australian Education Union working group to ensure that the voices of teachers and school staff were clearly heard.

I am confident that the work I do and the work the Education Directorate implements will be scrutinised closely by the Australian Education Union, as well as by Unions

ACT, to ensure that it reduces occupational violence in our schools. Support documents and products for classrooms were also developed and, as a result, more than 2,600 staff have been receiving team teaching training about behaviour management, such as the importance of de-escalation strategies.

Improved accessibility to an online incident reporting system since 2015 has also resulted in increased reporting of incidents. The Education Directorate has worked hard to promote a culture of reporting. This has meant that incidents which have previously gone unreported are now being appropriately reported. This is beneficial to all involved so that appropriate strategies and supports can be put in place and so that the government has better visibility of incident trends.

In December 2016 the Education Directorate formalised its occupational violence safety management system project. This program of work included work, health and safety and due diligence training for all principals by former WorkSafe ACT commissioner Mark McCabe. Approximately \$8 million has been spent on addressing occupational violence in schools since 2016, and the government recently committed \$2.37 million to fully implement the directorate's occupational violence policy and management plan.

The work so far has focused on training, strengthening support systems for our staff and enhancing school learning environments. We are seeing a trend that shows that what we are doing is working to increase awareness and is having a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of our staff. Through the undertaking we have acknowledged the significant work that has already been undertaken and have agreed to continue to implement the Education Directorate's occupational violence policy and management plan; share our experience and learnings with education systems elsewhere, acknowledging that this is a national issue; and work with parents to build safe communities so that they have a shared understanding of the problem and learn how we are working to minimise and respond to violence in schools.

So much is happening in schools to address this important issue. A further four full-time employees and external experts are being engaged to help strengthen the implementation of risk assessments to include a list of reasonable practical steps to eliminate or minimise risk to the safety of individual staff; establish assurance mechanisms so that the controls contained in the relevant risk assessments are adequate; review the mandatory work, health and safety training package and provide role-specific work, health and safety training to teachers and LSAs; strengthen site-specific work, health and safety training based on the site-specific work, health and safety risk assessments; and undertake a whole raft of other work that will directly support workers in our schools, in addition to students in our schools.

In the order of \$300,000 will be spent on the enhancement of sensory spaces in schools to support students and manage their behaviours, as well as monitoring incident reporting for trends and reporting monthly to the executive responsible for work, health and safety and the education governance committee on trends and actions.

During question time yesterday I offered, if I had not done so already, to table the Education Directorate's management occupational violence policy, as well as the occupational violence management plan. I will table those now and reaffirm that the Education Directorate will work very closely with WorkSafe as it implements this undertaking. I table the following papers, of which I have copies available for distribution:

Managing Occupational Violence Policy, published July 2017.

Occupational Violence Management Plan, July 2017.

The ACT government has undertaken to report on the strategies of the enforceable undertaking and their implementation in the Education Directorate's annual report, and the directorate's audit committee will also monitor the implementation of the enforceable undertaking.

I move:

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

"(1) notes that:

- (a) the ACT Government employs 6814 staff in the Education Directorate supporting 47 945 students;
- (b) all school-based staff deserve to work in a safe environment;
- (c) managing occupational violence in human services contexts like schools is complex and engages competing rights;
- (d) in November 2016, in response to concerns raised by the Australian Education Union, the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development instructed the Education Directorate to prioritise improvement to its management of occupational violence in schools;
- (e) in June 2017, in the 2017 Budget the Government allocated \$951 000 to improved management of occupational violence in schools;
- (f) in July 2017, the Government and Australian Education Union launched its first occupational violence policy and management plan;
- (g) as at 22 October 2018, staff at 55 of 87 government schools had undertaken occupational violence training, with the remainder to have completed the training by the end of term 4, 2018; and
- (h) a key part of the occupational violence policy and management plan is improved reporting of incidents, which the Government is observing as part of a changing culture about responding to occupational violence;

(2) further notes:

- (a) WorkSafe ACT has alleged that the Education Directorate has not complied with its primary health and safety duty based on investigation of circumstances in three schools during 2016 and early 2017;
- (b) the Government has voluntarily entered a work health and safety enforceable undertaking that:

- (i) acknowledges significant prior work to improve occupational violence management in schools, including \$7.67 million of initiative; and
 - (ii) reinforces the Government's ongoing program of work in response to occupational violence, including \$2.375 million of initiatives; and
 - (c) the enforceable undertaking details three strategies as part of the Education Directorate's ongoing program of work, including:
 - (i) continue to implement the occupational violence policy and management plan;
 - (ii) share the ACT's experience and learnings with other Australian education systems; and
 - (iii) work with parents to build a shared understanding of occupational violence in schools, its impact and how to minimise and respond to it; and
 - (d) the enforceable undertaking includes a requirement for audit and public reporting on its implementation, and compliance monitoring by WorkSafe ACT; and
- (3) calls on the ACT Government to:
- (a) reaffirm its commitment to the safety and wellbeing of staff across the ACT education system;
 - (b) report on progress implementation of the strategies in the enforceable undertaking in the Education Directorate Annual Report, as required by the undertaking; and
 - (c) update the Assembly following completion of all strategies in the enforceable undertaking.”.

I hope the amendment provides some more detail and information on what the ACT government is doing to address this difficult issue in our schools. We have not been sitting around waiting to read about it in the *Canberra Times*; we have been working proactively for a number of years now on how we resolve working alongside the Australian Education Union, with WorkSafe and our school communities, to ensure that together we move towards a significant culture change in our schools where occupational violence is unacceptable and we maintain the inclusive nature of our schools. I commend to the Assembly the amendment to Ms Lee's motion.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong) (10.49): Yesterday in this place we discussed the value and importance of our teachers, and everything that was said in that debate is again relevant to this discussion today. As I said yesterday, the Greens recognise that to get the best possible education our children need the best possible teachers and great leadership from our principals. We also recognise that modern schools are increasingly complex environments and we must ensure that our teachers feel supported to effectively teach children and young people with diverse needs, including students experiencing a disability or a learning difficulty, gifted and talented students, and students at risk.

That is why the outcomes of the recent WorkSafe ACT investigation into occupational violence in ACT public schools are so concerning and must be taken

seriously. Our teachers cannot work effectively with students if they do not feel safe in their work environment, and we cannot attract and retain the best teachers in our system if staff do not feel adequately supported and protected in our schools.

Every work environment comes with some level of risk, but there is an obligation on every employer to ensure, as far as practicable, that their workplaces are safe and that those risks are mitigated. Schools are no exception. We must also recognise that those teachers who do the crucially important, and often very rewarding, work of teaching students with complex needs are often subject to a greater level of risk. I think the examples outlined in the work safety report underline that.

As the minister for education mentioned yesterday, there are often two sets of competing rights in these situations: the rights of the staff member to be protected from occupational violence and the right of the student to access a quality education. These rights are both important and can both be met if the right supports and strategies are in place. But meeting that balance can be very challenging; the practicalities of it can be very difficult, given the variety of situations and sometimes the unpredictability that can be attached to some of those behavioural issues.

The Greens believe that no-one should feel unsafe or be injured at work, and we must be better at managing those risks to prevent these kinds of incidents in the future. We recognise that the findings of the WorkSafe ACT report are concerning and warrant strong action. At the same time, we also need to recognise the range of improvements and investment around occupational violence that have already been implemented, as outlined in the enforceable undertaking agreed between WorkSafe and the Education Directorate.

While the undertaking outlines over \$7 million worth of investments that have already taken place, it also recognises the need to do more, with an additional \$2.37 million committed for further activities. The majority of this investment relates to the full implementation of the directorate's new occupational violence policy and management plan. The activities under this plan include strengthening risk assessment processes; more and better work health and safety training, with specific training on occupational violence; improving communication and reporting systems; and enhancing sensory spaces in schools to support students with complex needs, to enable de-escalation of potentially violent situations.

There is also a commitment from the minister to share the learnings and resources of this work with other jurisdictions. I think this is a recognition that this is a challenging issue for all schools and the outcomes of this process may be able to help others to improve their processes in this space.

While Ms Lee's motion raises an important issue, and one worthy of debate in this place, it does fail to recognise the significant amount of work that is already underway and the directorate's commitment to further improvement. I listened very carefully to Ms Lee's speech, and she did a thorough job of highlighting the problem, but in her entire set of remarks I did not hear one single comment on what might be done to rectify those problems.

Ms Lee asked why the education sector is exposed to so much violence. That is an important question. Certainly from my experience, the integration of students with behavioural difficulties into the mainstream school environment does mean that there are students with behavioural issues more commonly in our mainstream schools. I think there is a tension there, because there is clear recognition that having those students integrated into our schools can produce significant positives, both for those students and their families and also for other students, who learn a great deal about diversity, who are exposed to challenging situations, and who, in my experience, are incredibly empathetic to and supportive of having those students in their environments.

Ms Lee also asked why initiatives like sensory gardens are necessary. Sensory gardens are a specific response, recognising ways of positively supporting students, as are a range of other measures that have been put in place.

To not hear one single suggestion about what should be done differently is disappointing. I know—as outlined in the WorkSafe report, which Ms Lee has a copy of—that there have been extensive efforts to address these problems. But they are wicked problems. They are not easy to solve. That is why we will be supporting the minister's amendment to Ms Lee's motion, to provide the full context of this issue—

Opposition members interjecting—

MR RATTENBURY: That is the recognition that occupational violence is found to be an issue and that work is being done to address it. It is very easy to walk into this place and give a sarcastic speech that makes all sorts of snide remarks about the problems and actually wants members to be ashamed and embarrassed. That is what Ms Lee asked for; she asked for people to be ashamed and embarrassed but did not provide a single positive solution in response.

I heard the little comments that were made when I said that the Greens will be supporting the amendment. We take this seriously. We recognise that there is an issue of occupational violence. We want it to be resolved as well as it possibly can be. But we also have to be honest in recognising the significant effort that has been put in, both by the directorate, with a contribution from the union, who have been actively involved in trying to work on this problem, and by individual staff. This is a very, very difficult space, and we need to be fair in our comments in recognising the nature of this challenge.

While I absolutely support—and I do absolutely support—Ms Lee's desire for transparency and reporting on progress on this issue, there are existing reporting mechanisms which will allow for adequate scrutiny. I think it is important that the minister comes back to the Assembly to report on the conclusion of the process so that both this Assembly and the Canberra community can have confidence that each item has been followed through. This requirement is included in the amendment. And, of course, there will be ample opportunities along the way, at things like annual report hearings and in this chamber, for members to ask questions about specific measures if they want to. Come in and ask those questions: "Has such and such a particular

initiative been followed through?" Where is it up to? What is the time line?" Ask those questions. That is what people are supposed to do. Sweeping comments such as we have seen in this chamber today do not further progress in this space.

The Greens recognise that this is an issue that is of great importance to the Canberra community. Our teachers work hard to provide our young people with the best opportunities for their futures, and in return we owe it to them to provide a safe and supportive working environment. While I am concerned at the level of intervention that WorkSafe has seen necessary to undertake on this issue, I believe that the enforceable undertaking that the directorate has agreed to indicates a genuine commitment to improvement.

On one level I am encouraged that WorkSafe has taken this so seriously. There has been criticism in this place at times that WorkSafe has not done enough to scrutinise issues of workplace safety. We have seen some concerning examples across the city. So on one level, I am quite encouraged that WorkSafe has pursued this so strongly. The important part now is for the directorate to actually respond to the areas that have been identified as shortcomings.

The undertaking outlines a significant investment and a range of practical activities that will help teachers and staff to feel safe at work and prevent these kinds of incidents into the future. I do believe that the minister's amendment provides a way forward that recognises the seriousness of this issue and ensures that the government will be accountable for its commitment to improvement.

Teachers are a crucial part of our education system—and our society as a whole, for that matter. They play a central role in the lives of children for the formative years of their development. The importance of teachers is something that cannot be understated, as we discussed during the debate on the matter of public importance yesterday afternoon. That is why providing sufficient support, professional development and resourcing for our teachers is fundamentally linked to good educational outcomes for our children. There is more work to do on this issue. I believe we have a pathway to achieve better outcomes for our students and teachers. The Greens will be supporting the amendment.

MS ORR (Yerrabi) (10.58): I am pleased to rise today and speak to Ms Lee's motion and Ms Berry's amendment. This government believes every child has a right to a good education and support for the personal challenges that some students face. At the same time, everyone has the right to feel safe at work and go home safely from work, including, of course, our teachers and other staff within schools.

The ACT government is committed to creating safe and supportive learning environments for all students and staff in 87 schools. The government's future of education 10-year strategy is guided by the principle of equity, access, inclusion and student safety. We want our schools to be inclusive places for all children, while ensuring that our teachers and staff are safe. An important way of achieving this is by appropriately managing complex needs and behaviours, sometimes from vulnerable students who are dealing with many issues beyond school.

Some practical ways the complex needs and behaviours are addressed include supports provided within schools, such as the support at preschool team, disability education support, positive behaviour for learning and social-emotional learning programs, network student engagement teams and the new school psychology services. I also remind members that five new psychologists were engaged to support students in Canberra public schools this year, and a further 10 will be engaged to start in our schools in 2019.

The framework to engage all high school students, the continuum of education support model, has been introduced, and that includes the provision of flexible learning options and alternative education projects. Supports provided within the general community include child and family centres located at Tuggeranong, Gungahlin and west Belconnen; the child development service in Holder; national disability insurance scheme providers; and supports provided by the wider ACT mental health system, including ACT Health, Headspace and the Australian Child and Adolescent Trauma, Loss and Grief Network, and the Australian National University.

A partnership between selected ACT primary schools and ACT Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services is providing a mental health early intervention program to children in year 1 to year 3. And we are building the capacity of learning support assistants through internal professional learning opportunities and access to certificate IV education support training through the CIT.

I would like to also recognise and acknowledge the work occurring in the Catholic and independent school sectors to manage students with complex needs and behaviours.

Along with managing complex needs and behaviours, infrastructure improvements have been made. Over the past year more than \$80 million was invested to deliver many infrastructure and capital works improvements in Canberra public schools, including the creation of withdrawal and sensory spaces at 12 schools. These are available to all students and may assist children to manage their behaviour and safely withdraw if they require time away from busy school environments.

Indoor spaces include tents, teepees and soft furnishings. Examples of outdoor sensory spaces available include a sensory garden at Charles Conder school, with carefully chosen plants, musical instruments and a mist tunnel; a secret garden courtyard at Arawang Primary School, with a forest mural wall; an internal courtyard attached to the LSU at Richardson Primary School, with clumped bamboo planting and rocks; a junior playground area with sensory experiences such as a clatter bridge in Amaroo school; and a compact sensory seating area outside the LSU at the University of Canberra Senior Secondary College, with vertical planting walls and hanging pod chairs. These and more spaces are being provided in our schools to assist students and staff to manage behaviour.

Minister Berry has already spoken about the occupational violence policy and management plan and the work underway to implement this. It incorporates additional

training for staff, a review of risk management processes, support for learning support assistants to undertake a certificate IV at CIT in education support, and new sensory spaces in schools, just to list a few. I am very pleased to see that the directorate will also take its experience and learnings and provide forums for educators to help grapple with incidents of occupational violence. The lessons being learned in the ACT should be shared nationally to help reduce the incidence of violence.

The Education Directorate will also work with the ACT Council of Parents and Citizens Associations to deliver workshops that contribute to the building of strong and safe communities for learning. The workshops focus on ensuring the safety of staff, students and families and meeting the diverse range of student academic and wellbeing needs. This community-wide approach also echoes what we heard in the future of education conversations about engagement and creating positive school communities.

The minister has publicly stated many times that she has committed to support school staff to be safe and confident in doing what they are most passionate about, which is teaching our students. We should be proud of our approach to inclusion and equity in schools, and we are meeting the challenges of occupational violence in schools.

MS LEE (Kurrajong) (11.04): I know everyone in this chamber was shocked at the news that WorkSafe had been forced to intervene to restore and protect the safety of staff in our schools. I would like to think that everyone in this chamber was equally appalled that it has taken two years for this investigation to be completed, that it took the minister over 12 months before she managed to get a policy plan in place—a plan, I might add, that we have no evidence yet is working. And I had hoped that everyone in this chamber would be just as appalled that at no time has the minister offered an apology to our teachers for her abject failure to ensure a safe working environment for them and obviously for students also potentially in harm's way in our schools.

Unions in all professions talk passionately about the rights of workers to return home safely each night after a day's labour, and it is an absolute and important right in our modern society. But for the minister to dismiss these shocking findings by saying, as she did yesterday in answer to a question and again just now—and backed by Mr Rattenbury—that dealing with staff being repeatedly attacked in their classrooms is a difficult thing to manage because of human rights implications is mind-numbing. To suggest that human rights are under challenge if a staff member needs to take reasonable steps to make sure a kindergarten student does not bite them, because that is part of the child's right to a decent education, is beyond belief. Yes, it is a human right for every child to access a decent education in the ACT. It is not a human right for any child to attack and bite a teacher at any time. And it is a breach of human rights for a teacher to be subject to violent attacks in a classroom time and again.

The lack of action by the minister, who we now know was aware of this sort of thing, is equally beyond belief, and there can be no acceptable explanation for it, no acceptable explanation for the lack of action by the directorate and no explanation for the lack of action by the union, whose primary task is to represent their members and make sure they are working in a safe environment. They must have known teachers

were being hurt in the work environment. Apparently they raised it with the minister when she was appointed.

Where were they when Melanie reported, on no fewer than 34 occasions, the violent attacks she was being subjected to in the classroom? Where were they when Melanie was given nothing more than a compression bandage in response to the horrendous abuse she suffered? How must Melanie feel today, hearing that the Education Directorate was conflicted because the minister presumably was more concerned about the rights of the child to bite and bite again than they were about ensuring Melanie's safety? Let us not forget the pregnant teacher kicked in the stomach or the several other staff who were attacked during 2017, six months after the minister was told violence in the school workplace was commonplace.

Once again we had an amendment circulated whilst I was on my feet. Once again we have an amendment that has an "omit all" clause. It seems the minister could not even bring herself to agree to my first paragraph:

... all teachers deserve to work in a safe environment in ACT schools.

Once again we have a minister who is hell-bent on hijacking private members' day.

The Canberra Liberals will not be supporting the amendment. Nowhere does the minister acknowledge her failure and the failure of her government to keep our teachers safe. She has completely dropped my call to issue a public apology to our teachers and once again, as is so common with this government, slips away from the responsibility for transparency by not even putting a date to report back on progress.

Once again we have the Greens choosing to support their coalition partner rather than protect our teachers. It is appalling but unsurprising. Mr Rattenbury, in his speech, said that he understands the seriousness of occupational violence in our schools but that he had to be, to use his word, "honest". I would hope that he is not alleging that I have not been, because that is a serious assertion that I take very, very seriously—if that is what he is saying.

To have this appalling lack of governance on such a wide scale and not once have the minister appear contrite, embarrassed, ashamed, apologetic, to not once have the minister take full responsibility for the shocking violence that has occurred under her watch, is downright appalling. No, she thinks it is just fabulous that the ACT has this whiz-bang violence management policy, and we are leading the nation.

I have to note that the Education Directorate's specific violence management policy was published in July 2017. But when you go to the detail in the policy it references a 2012 document, the ACT public sector managing occupational violence policy, and that policy says that it is a requirement for all directorates to have an occupational management plan to manage risk. The grand nation-leading policy of 2017 is nothing of the sort and in fact is five years past when it ought to have been produced, according to the ACT public sector managing occupational violence policy. Minister, I suggest it may pay to occasionally read your own policies.

At the very least, a public apology is warranted. This education minister may not have inflicted the violence that is happening in our schools, but it is this education minister that has an opportunity and an obligation to try to fix it. It may not have started with her, but if she fails to acknowledge the seriousness of the problem, suggests the union is taking care of it and does nothing more than say that she has initiated a nation-leading solution, she should hang her head in shame.

It is within her power to take responsibility, to take leadership and fix the problem. And the honourable thing to do is to take responsibility for the horrendous treatment Melanie and other teachers have suffered in ACT schools and to offer a sincere public apology, on behalf of the government, for what has happened.

If she does not, if she continues to shift blame and rely on spin, it is a clear demonstration of a complete failure on her part as the minister for education—an education minister that has turned her back on our teachers, our students and our community. Neglect, sloth and incompetence are all actions that demand a display of contrition, a demonstration of responsibility. And the minister is guilty on all counts.

Question put:

That the amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 11

Noes 8

Ms Berry	Ms Orr	Miss C Burch	Mr Parton
Ms J Burch	Mr Pettersson	Mr Coe	Mr Wall
Ms Cody	Mr Ramsay	Mrs Dunne	
Ms Fitzharris	Mr Rattenbury	Mr Hanson	
Mr Gentleman	Mr Steel	Mrs Kikkert	
Ms Le Couteur		Ms Lee	

Amendment agreed to.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

Schools—freedom from discrimination

MS ORR (Yerrabi) (11.16): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) the recent reports on the recommendations from the Federal Government's Religious Freedoms Review, including recommendations to entrench discrimination in the provision of education; and
- (b) that according to a recent national poll, an overwhelming 74 per cent of Australians oppose laws allowing religious schools to select students and

teachers on the grounds of their sexual orientation, gender identity or relationship status;

(2) further notes:

- (a) the significant emotional stress that Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer (LGBTIQ) communities have endured in recent years including the unnecessary marriage equality postal survey and the attacks on the Safe Schools program;
- (b) that the ACT has a strong track record of advocating for and protecting the rights of LGBTIQ, and all Canberrans, to live free from discrimination; and
- (c) that the ACT aspires to be the most LGBTIQ inclusive city in Australia; and

(3) calls on the Assembly to:

- (a) condemn the potential for discrimination against students and staff in our education system on the basis of their sexual orientation, gender identity or sex characteristics;
- (b) seek immediate, formal confirmation from the Federal Government that it will reject any Religious Freedoms Review recommendation that enshrines or expands discrimination in the provision of education; and
- (c) ensure ACT law protects Canberrans from discrimination in our schools.

Protecting LGBTIQ Canberrans from discrimination in our schools and right across our community is an important part of our role as representatives in this place. I am proud to be part of a Labor government that advocates for the rights of the LGBTIQ community by creating an inclusive, progressive city for all of us to call home.

In recent weeks national political headlines have been consumed with reports surrounding the federal government's religious freedom review and its recommendations. After Australians said yes to marriage equality in November last year, a group of conservative parliamentarians and lobbyists pleaded with the then Turnbull government to review religious freedoms in Australia.

The religious freedom review was commissioned in a move by the federal coalition government to pander to conservative parliamentarians who feared marriage equality would impose restrictions on the practice of religion in Australia. We have now seen parts of the review's report and, unsurprisingly to most, it found that no-one in Australia has had their right to practice their religion impinged or removed as a result of marriage equality. However, it is with disappointment and a level of disbelief that two key recommendations from the review were aimed at attacking LGBTIQ Australians and their families.

The recommendations I am referring to from the religious freedom review have significant potential to cause harm to students, teachers and staff in schools here in Canberra and right across Australia. Recommendation 5 of the review specifically

seeks to discrimination against teachers and staff, based on their sexual orientation, gender identity or relationship status. The report recommends:

The Commonwealth should amend the Sex Discrimination Act 1984 to provide that religious schools can discriminate in relation to the employment of staff, and the engagement of contractors, on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity or relationship status provided that:

- The discrimination is founded in the precepts of the religion.
- The school has a publicly available policy outlining its position in relation to the matter and explaining how the policy will be enforced.
- The school provides a copy of the policy in writing to employees and contractors and prospective employees and contractors.

The seventh recommendation of the review continues the attack on LGBTIQ young people by specifically seeking to discriminate against students. It states:

The Commonwealth should amend the Sex Discrimination Act to provide that religious schools may discriminate in relation to students on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity or relationship status provided that:

- The discrimination is founded in the precepts of the religion.
- The school has a publicly available policy outlining its position in relation to the matter.
- The school provides a copy of the policy in writing to prospective students and their parents at the time of enrolment and to existing students and their parents at any time the policy is updated.
- The school has regard to the best interests of the child as the primary consideration in its conduct.

If enacted in legislation, both of these recommendations will be hurtful and harmful to LGBTIQ Australians. When discussing the review's recommendations, it is important to acknowledge that the current Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition have both spoken out against these recommendations. However, we know the conservative wing of the Liberal Party, including the ACT's Senator Zed Seselja, will continue to push for the changes intended by the recommendations. That is why it is important that all members in this Assembly affirm their support for students and staff in Canberra and ensure that ACT law protects LGBTIQ Canberrans from discrimination.

We know Australians are opposed to laws that would allow religious schools to discriminate against students and teachers on the grounds of their sexual orientation, gender identity or relationship status. A Fairfax-Ipsos survey found that 74 per cent of voters oppose laws to allow religious schools to select students and teachers based on their sexual orientation, gender identity or relationship status. That is a clear indication that the religious freedom review recommendations are not in line with the views and values the majority of Australian voters hold.

The Canberra community does not support discriminating against the LGBTIQ community, and we as their representatives must also stand against it. We know LGBTIQ communities here and around the world have endured significant emotional stress and trauma over many decades. I believe it is important to recognise that, while many of us here today stand up and advocate for LGBTIQ Canberrans, this is not an easy debate for many of those people to listen to.

We are all aware of the harm caused to LGBTIQ Australians as a result of the politicisation of the marriage equality postal survey last year. Young people across the country found themselves coming to terms with their identity and sexuality in the midst of a debate about whether they should be accepted based on the person they love or may love in the future. Other LGBTIQ people were subjected to repeated judgement and were forced to prove why their love is equal to everyone else's.

Despite the negativity surrounding the postal survey Canberrans made sure their voices were heard—an incredible 74 per cent of Canberrans recognised that all love is equal and voted yes for equality.

Another example of Canberrans displaying pride and respect for the LGBTIQ community can be found in the petition I tabled in the Assembly in November 2017 where 1,483 Canberrans overwhelmingly supported schools respecting, welcoming and celebrating diversity and encouraging children to be themselves. Those petitioners called on the Assembly to support the government's efforts to ensure all children are safe and supported at any school.

Canberrans have shown time and again that they value an inclusive and diverse community, so today members should represent their views and support this motion that seeks to remove any discrimination against Canberra's LGBTIQ students and teachers that exists within the law.

I am proud to be part of a Labor government that advocates for the rights of the LGBTIQ community by creating an inclusive and progressive city for all of us to call home. ACT Labor has a strong track record of advocating for and protecting the rights of the LGBTIQ community through legislating marriage equality in 2013; establishing an office of LGBTIQ affairs; establishing an ACT LGBTIQ ministerial advisory council; supporting teachers and families to foster safe and inclusive school environments; and most recently our strong 2018-19 ACT budget commitment of \$2.6 million over four years for programs and grants to support the Canberra LGBTIQ community.

However, this motion relates to one area where we need to make an important change. In a city that prides itself on being Australia's most inclusive, we as members need to ensure that ACT law protects Canberrans from discrimination in our schools. Students should not face discrimination based on their sexual orientation, gender identity or sex characteristics. Canberra's schools must be free of discrimination in all forms. The potential for discrimination towards LGBTIQ students as a result of our existing laws does not provide a guarantee to families and the wider community that our schools will always be safe and inclusive environments.

Regardless of whether students or staff have faced direct discrimination on the basis of their sexual orientation, gender identity or sex characteristics, the sheer fact that it could legally occur is something we must seek to fix immediately. Today this Assembly has the opportunity to call on the federal government to formally rule out the implementation of any recommendations that seek to discriminate against the people we represent. As stated in the motion, we seek immediate, formal confirmation from the federal government that it will reject any religious freedom review recommendation that enshrines or expands discrimination in the provision of education. Canberrans deserve to be confident that students, teachers and school staff can live their day-to-day lives in an inclusive and respectful environment.

Every Canberran has the right to be safe at work, and our teachers are no exception. Teachers in Canberra's schools provide world-class, quality education to set our young people up for life. This ACT Labor government values teachers right across the territory's education system, and we are committed to providing them with the best support possible to do their valuable work. In supporting our teachers we must make sure they are protected from discrimination in their workplace, and members in this place cannot claim to respect and support teachers while at the same time supporting the recommendation from the religious freedom review. To propose that an employee can be denied employment based on their sexual orientation, gender identity or sex characteristics is absolutely deplorable. Discriminating on this basis is as unacceptable as any other form of discrimination.

As representatives of Canberra's teachers, we in this place must take a stand against those in federal parliament and their lobbyist influencers who are trying to stop teachers from educating our next generation of Australians. Regardless of whether a teacher works in a government, non-government, faith-based or independent school, they should be valued for their commitment to providing education and not degraded for their personal identity.

I value teachers for the work they do each and every day. I know my colleagues on this side also do, and I call on those opposite to join us by supporting all teachers, irrespective of their sexuality, gender identity or sex characteristics. It is the responsibility of government to protect its citizens, and I know this is something the ACT Labor government is committed to. I firmly believe the ACT law needs to be reviewed and amended to remove any potential for harmful discrimination towards LGBTIQ Canberrans.

As a proud member of the LGBTIQ community, I believe it is important for me to advocate for and represent other LGBTIQ Canberrans. As representatives of the Canberra community we all have the responsibility to keep the ACT discrimination free.

This motion I have brought forward today is quite simple: all Canberrans should be able to feel safe and included right across our city. Young people in our schools should not face discrimination on any grounds, and teachers and staff in our schools should be able to go to work without fear of discrimination in their workplace. Canberra is proud to be Australia's most progressive and inclusive city. Therefore, we

must ensure that ACT law protects LGBTIQ Canberrans from discrimination in our schools and the wider community. I hope all members will stand against discrimination by supporting this motion, and I commend the motion to the Assembly.

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Social Inclusion and Equality, Minister for Tourism and Special Events and Minister for Trade, Industry and Investment) (11.27): I thank Ms Orr for bringing this motion forward today. It comes in the context of a pretty crass political exercise by the federal government in relation to both the commissioning of the Ruddock review and then also the way in which it has become public. It is certainly disappointing to see that the leaked Ruddock review recommended an entrenching of discrimination against LGBTIQ students and teachers in Australia's schools.

We know why it was not publicly released before the Wentworth by-election. We know the impact now of the leaking of those recommendations on the result of that by-election and we know community attitudes around Australia to any attempt to further entrench discrimination in our education system. The full Ruddock review should be released now, but it should have been released months ago.

Personally, I am very disappointed that the type of discrimination that has been talked about since the leaking of those recommendations is arguably still possible under our territory's current discrimination laws, despite the considerably stronger protections that are in place in the territory's Human Rights Act.

The impact of these exemptions is significant in practice. Around one-third of Canberra's students attend schools that could potentially legally discriminate against them on the basis of sexuality, gender identity or relationship status. The number of teachers and other staff who can be lawfully discriminated against is just as confronting.

In 2017, 41 per cent of all in-school staff full-time equivalent positions in the ACT were in Catholic or independent schools. So if you are an LGBTIQ teacher, the proportion of teacher positions that could be unavailable to you because of discrimination is substantial. The potential for discrimination also creates stigma and can lead to mental health issues such as depression and anxiety.

A recent report into the needs of same-sex attracted students noted that to avoid potential discrimination and abuse, many same-sex attracted young people hide their sexuality, not sharing it with teachers, counsellors or their peers. Many are worried about what would happen to them if someone in the school or the wider community found out about their sexuality.

I know this from personal experience as a student in the ACT education system in the 1980s and 1990s. I hope that in the years ahead, Madam Assistant Speaker, this will not be an issue for students in our education system. I want to acknowledge this morning that many, if not nearly all, religious and independent schools in the ACT system do not wish to discriminate and do not seek to use provisions that currently exist within territory law, and indeed within federal law, and are in fact at

the forefront of fighting against discrimination and fighting for inclusion for their students.

One example, the Canberra Grammar School, under the leadership of Principal Justin Gerig, absolutely refuses to discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity and aspires to provide a genuinely inclusive learning environment in his school. I want to take this opportunity this morning to commend Mr Gerig, and his entire leadership and teaching group and the school community, for their stand in support of all students at their school. However, the fact remains that religious and independent schools retain the legal ability to exclude LGBTIQ students and employees simply because of who they are. These schools will not be fully inclusive until this right to discriminate is removed.

Sadly, this is not a theoretical problem. This morning I would like to share with the Assembly an example that has been brought to light as a result of the recent public discussion in the last two weeks. This relates to Fred, a qualified teacher who had taught at a conservative Christian school for a number of years. He had excellent references and was very well qualified. Yes, he got on well with students and staff at the school. He left for 18 months and in that time his heterosexual marriage ended. He started a new relationship as a gay man.

On his return, his interview for reappointment went very well, but Fred was not offered casual teaching, a casual contract or part-time work. Other teachers less qualified than Fred were offered positions. Fred felt devastated. He is a well-qualified teacher with solid references. He was not given a reason for not being re-employed. Madam Assistant Speaker, this discrimination should not and must not be acceptable, especially not in our schools and especially not in Canberra. We are the most LGBTIQ inclusive and welcoming city in Australia. We have demonstrated that time and again.

In relation to community attitudes towards these exemptions that currently exist, a recent national poll showed that 74 per cent of Australians oppose laws that allow religious schools to discriminate against students and teachers. This shows the strength of public sentiment on this issue. I note that amongst those three-quarters of Australians who are opposed, a majority of voters for all major political parties in this nation—so including people who vote for the conservative side of politics—oppose these laws.

Given a 74 per cent national vote, I think it is very clear that the result will be even higher in the ACT, particularly given the result here on the marriage law postal survey, which was a full 12 percentage points higher than the national result on that particular issue of discrimination. As a proud human rights jurisdiction, we have to ensure that the correct balance is struck between the freedom to live free from discrimination and freedom of religion. It is possible to strike this balance, but we are not there yet. That is why I confirm today that the government will introduce legislative amendments next week to protect students and teachers from discrimination, including on the basis of sexuality, gender identity, race, pregnancy or intersex characteristics.

Further, to ensure that any other areas of discrimination against LGBTIQ Canberrans in our legislation are identified, we will undertake an extensive audit of our laws and develop a further reform package to close any identified gaps or loopholes. We will also take a broader look at the entire exceptions framework under the territory's Discrimination Act in the context of the ACT Law Reform Advisory Council's recommendations regarding the opportunity for further reform.

We will act because this community does not want discrimination on the basis of sexuality entrenched in our statute books. We will act because we are clear on our principles. We know that Canberrans are inclusive and welcoming and do not accept any form of discrimination. I am confident that removing such potential for discrimination from territory law has the overwhelming support of Canberrans, but, importantly, it is the right thing to do. I commend Ms Orr's motion to the Assembly.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong) (11.36): Of course the Greens will be supporting this motion today. As a member of the Greens and a member of the Legislative Assembly elected to reflect the views of the most progressive community in Australia, I and my colleague Ms Le Couteur are passionate about standing up for all Canberrans in matters of discrimination. The ACT Greens have a long and proud history of being at the forefront of these matters. Whether it is the call for marriage equality, for greater representation of women in government and local employment, or increasing support to the multicultural, refugee and newly arrived community, our actions in this space and our views on these matters are well known.

The parliamentary agreement between Labor and the Greens over the past 10 years also highlights our ongoing commitment to confronting these issues practically and tangibly. As a Greens minister of this and the previous Assembly, I have been proud to be part of the work that this ACT government has done to break down discrimination and improve equality in our community.

As minister for education in a time of rising conservatism, and under the most conservative commonwealth government in recent times, I was both saddened and angered to see the utter vitriol directed at LGBTIQ students and families in the safe schools debate. Clearly, that level of personal discrimination entirely justified the safe schools program. I was again proud to be part of a government that fought back and insisted on the continuation of that program and actively worked to ensure its ongoing role in our local education system.

I was also proud to bring forward amendments to the Assembly in 2016 that further sought to protect all Canberrans. Racial vilification was expanded in 2016 to apply to vilification on the grounds of religious conviction and disability. Also in 2016, the grounds of unlawful discrimination were expanded to protect against discrimination on the basis of attributes such as employment status, immigration status and being a victim of domestic and family violence.

The ACT government as a whole threw its support behind the push for marriage equality and we were justified in doing so by the majority vote of our community, in the face of commonwealth inertia and unfortunate bigotry in some elements of the

debate. This work to fight against the barriers and unjust challenges facing people in our community has not ended with these actions.

The Justice and Community Safety Directorate, in coordination with other relevant directorates, has continued to monitor cases and examples of discrimination that are still occurring. I, like the Chief Minister, was disappointed to learn that the issue of gender and sexuality discrimination may still be allowed in religious or independent education systems. I can assure members that these loopholes have been closely examined. As the Chief Minister has flagged in his remarks, we will move quickly to address those matters.

I was also disappointed, but not surprised, that there were members of the federal Liberal Party that saw this recent exposure of the Ruddock review as an opportunity not to address the issue but instead to suggest that these should be areas that should continue. I have been very heartened by community polls nationally that show the majority of Australians do not support having these sorts of discrimination measures in our legislation. I think that gives further impetus to this Assembly to act quickly in order to reflect community views.

I think that community views were really captured in the poll on marriage equality. I think this demonstrates that our community is a tolerant community that does not see a place for these sorts of discriminations. That gives me great heart that Australians do get this in that very simple way. It just does not pass the pub test as they see it, to use that way of how to measure things now. They actually want all Australians to be recognised equally.

Unfortunately in these debates, we do see members of the LGBTIQ community having their basic rights discussed in the national media as though those rights are somehow less than others. I know it is hurtful for people. That is why it is so important that, as members of this place, we take the opportunity to state our views as community leaders and then fight back against those comments and that sort of political analysis.

That is an important part of having a discussion like the discussion today. I welcome the fact that Ms Orr has brought this motion forward, in the context of some of the recent discussions, so that we again have the opportunity to put our view that we do not accept any analysis that suggests some lesser rights for members of the LGBTIQ community. I would like to assure all members that this is certainly not a response that the Greens support. As I say, that is why it is important that we have that opportunity to state it today.

Beyond today's debate, and beyond the next tranche of amendments to be considered, I will also be working closely with my cabinet colleagues to ensure that there are no other such loopholes available when it comes to issues of employment, education or access to services. I welcome the Chief Minister's announcement today of the further work that will be done by the government.

It does not matter whether or not these loopholes have not been used; the fair and just society we live in has moved beyond that "don't ask, don't tell" situation. We need to

be proactive in our consideration as legislators and leaders in our community to ensure that we make clear statements, that we are thorough in our examination of the territory's legislation to ensure that these sorts of historical references are removed and that we are clear in our commitment to this equality.

Turning to the specifics of today's motion, I certainly welcome the text that Ms Orr has spelled out in the motion. When it comes to "calls on the Assembly", we certainly condemn the potential discrimination against students and staff in our education system on the basis of their sexual orientation, gender identity or sex characteristics. We seek that immediate and formal confirmation from the federal government that it will reject any religious freedoms review recommendation that enshrines or expands discrimination in the provision of education.

I must confess at this point that one of the challenges for this legislature is knowing exactly what the federal government is going to do, but that is not a reason for us not to move to fix our own laws. We should do that. If we find that the moves by the federal government somehow require further action, we can take that as we need to.

Paragraph (c) of Ms Orr's motion asks for this Assembly to ensure that the ACT will always protect Canberrans from discrimination in our schools. Certainly, I will be working with the Chief Minister, as the minister responsible for the Discrimination Act, to bring those amendments to this place and to guide them through the Assembly in as timely a manner as we can. The Greens are pleased to support this motion today.

MR COE (Yerrabi—Leader of the Opposition) (11.44): I rise again to speak on a motion calling on the federal government to do something, albeit an important issue. I would like to echo the comments made by my colleague Elizabeth Lee, and reiterate that we are, of course, yet to receive this report. We are yet to see this religious freedom report which is the basis of the motion today. It is very difficult to form a considered view on a report from which we have only seen snippets. I accept that those snippets have drawn headlines and drawn a considerable response from many in the community. It is very hard to say with any accuracy what the implications of the recommendations will be or whether these are the final recommendations of the committee that Mr Ruddock has chaired.

The opposition would prefer an approach that ensures that the best interests of all children are put first. Expulsion on the basis of sexuality would not be consistent with this approach.

Of course, religious schools are part of a thriving multicultural community in Canberra, whether they be Catholic, Anglican, Christian, Islamic or of another faith affiliation. Parents who send their children to these schools are aware of the values of these institutions and either explicitly or implicitly support them. As mentioned by Ms Lee in a recent *Canberra Times* report on this matter, our experience in Canberra is that the cultural attitude of Canberra's schools is one that is very warm and welcoming of all people. I am not aware of any occasion where a student has been expelled or suspended, or received any form of discipline, on the basis of their sexuality. I certainly hope that remains the case.

Mr Pettersson: What about teachers?

MR COE: With regard to teachers, I am not aware of any such circumstance, notwithstanding the fact that the Chief Minister did just give an example. I was not aware of that example, but I acknowledge that there may be others. From a personal understanding, I am certainly aware of many non-government schools where the opposite has taken place. I note that the Chief Minister made mention of the Canberra Grammar School, but I am aware of numerous other schools, and I expect there are dozens of occasions, where it has not at all been noteworthy and has gone under the radar without any attention whatsoever.

I note that the Prime Minister has recently said that the federal government will be seeking to prepare amendments to existing legislation to make it clear that no student in a non-state school can be expelled on the basis of sexuality. I know that these changes will be broadly supported amongst Canberra's school community.

The opposition awaits the opportunity to view the final report from the expert panel into religious freedom at the commonwealth level. I take this opportunity to repeat what I have already said: that I think the vast majority of schools in the ACT, if not all, have been exemplary citizens in this space.

Religious schools, whether they be Islamic, Anglican, Catholic or any other faith, play a vital role in our community. We have to make sure that we support them in the work that they do. I think much of this motion that has been brought forward by Ms Orr, as significant as it is, is probably premature, given that we have not actually seen the report. But in light of that, we are happy to have this discussion today.

MR RAMSAY (Ginninderra—Attorney-General, Minister for the Arts and Cultural Events, Minister for Building Quality Improvement, Minister for Business and Regulatory Services and Minister for Seniors and Veterans) (11.48): I am pleased to support this motion. This is another opportunity to reaffirm our values as a government, as a party and as a community. Those values, I believe, are clear. We believe that all people are entitled to respect, to dignity and to the full protection of the law.

I thank Ms Orr for bringing on the motion today. It calls on us to resist the latest in a litany of inevitably futile attempts to roll back the groundswell of support for our LGBTIQ community. We will continue to work to eliminate discrimination in all its forms. We will continue to resist efforts to legitimise discrimination, whether it is because of a parliamentary vote or a postal ballot or under the pretence of enhancing freedom.

Madam Assistant Speaker, we are a strong community when everyone is valued, when everyone belongs, and when everyone has the opportunity to participate fully. Schools can play an absolutely critical role in shaping how our young people will go on to participate in society. They are, obviously, places of education, but they are also places where young people form their identity and develop their values, often lifelong

values. They are places where our young people can be hurt through exclusion or discrimination, and those hurts can have years, if not decades, of ongoing impact.

Ensuring that our schools are inclusive and that students and staff are protected is absolutely critical to building a society which is strong and coherent, and having people who have the greatest possibility to live strong, meaningful and healthy lives. Schools are also places where there is an enormous power dynamic. That power dynamic can be open to abuse. The laws that govern our education system need to recognise that that power imbalance does exist, and therefore our laws need to ensure that our schools, which reflect a diverse range of viewpoints, empower all students to participate fully in their diverse communities.

As this motion notes, equality should not be considered to be particularly controversial anymore. It is strongly supported across our country, and even more so in our territory. The attempts to reinstate the same discrimination that we reversed with marriage equality and with anti-discrimination laws are farcical not only in their fixation on the sexuality of one group of people but also in how clearly futile they are. Each rearguard action to make discrimination legal and socially acceptable results in an even bigger failure to achieve that desired result. In direct contrast to that, our resistance to those efforts is showing strong results. We are, together, proving that Canberra is a city that clearly welcomes the LGBTIQ community, and our collective work is making a real difference in people's lives.

In February last year I told members of a heartbreaking situation caused by the discrimination in the marriage laws prior to the yes vote. At that time, two brothers who I know well faced a stark contrast in their ability to express their deep commitment to their partners. For one, I had the wonderful opportunity several years back of helping to plan and then conduct the wedding ceremony for him and his now wife. For the other, whose love is just as deep, the gender-based limitations of the marriage act at that time meant that no such ceremony was possible for him and his partner. That is no longer the case. I have now had the privilege of officiating at both brothers' marriages, and I am proud to be part of a government that has consistently and vocally supported their right to equality.

We are making important, significant, moving and meaningful progress, but we cannot and we will not lose focus on the steps that are needed to ensure equality for all who are here. As Desmond Tutu has said:

Freedom and liberty lose out by default because good people are not vigilant.

We will remain vigilant. Today I am proud again to stand with this government in support of our LGBTIQ community. I am proud to support measures that will ensure that our schools empower all students to participate fully in our society. No change to our discrimination laws can afford to enshrine prejudice, no matter what freedom the change purports to protect. A new label for prejudice and discrimination against people on the basis of their sexuality or their gender does not change what it is. Canberrans reject the vision of religious freedom that endorses discrimination and exclusion.

I certainly do not stand to minimise the importance of religious freedoms. It is important, however, to recognise that our religious practices operate in a social context. An important feature of the ACT's anti-discrimination framework and debates about competing views of rights is that we have a Human Rights Act. From the perspective of human rights, it is clear that the power differentiation in our schools justifies careful and considered attention to how students will be treated. It is unacceptable that students would be discriminated against because of their sexual orientation, their gender identity or their sex characteristics. Further, signalling that students are somehow less welcome, by discriminating against staff for the same reasons, is equally unacceptable.

The role that schools play in our society is one that comes with great power. Students' lives are profoundly affected by experience in our schools at crucial and formative times. Institutions have a profound responsibility to ensure that they place those students, and their wellbeing, first and foremost. We can, and we will, have schools that offer diverse religious and cultural education without institutionalising discrimination. Indeed, support in this Assembly for today's motion is support for ensuring that our schools empower students to express their diverse beliefs and their diverse personalities as part of a cohesive and inclusive society.

Today's motion is an opportunity, and it is also a call to action. Our longstanding efforts to promote an equal and inclusive society have already borne results. We will continue to make sure that we work to make Canberra a safe city for all its residents and to eliminate discrimination in all its forms. I commend the motion to the Assembly.

MR PETERSSON (Yerrabi) (11.56): Today I stand in support of all LGBTIQ students and staff at independent or Catholic schools. No-one should be made to feel ashamed, or even threatened, because of their sexuality or gender identity. The way we as a society talk about gender identity and sexuality has a massive impact on LGBTIQ Canberrans, especially young Canberrans who may still be coming to terms with their identity.

When the federal government perpetuates a narrative that there is something wrong with a person if they are not heterosexual or if they do not identify with the gender of their birth, that is especially damaging. In legitimising the circle of debate on this issue, which is in fact just hateful talking points from far-right homophobic conservatives, the federal government has effectively dehumanised and devalued a significant proportion of our community. This is a disgrace.

I am glad that the federal government has now come out in support of closing the loophole in the law that allows for discrimination against LGBTIQ students at non-government schools. We should, and we will, move locally to ensure the same things for kids and teachers. The federal Liberals can show that they have truly had a change of heart if they expand their legislation to include teachers and other staff at schools. Otherwise this is simply lip-service to the notion that we are all equal and all deserve the same rights.

Of course, it should be no surprise that hard right conservatives in the ACT will not support such a move. There should be no surprise at all that the ACT has such hard right conservatives. You can see now from the debate before us that the Canberra Liberals do not welcome this debate. They seek to delay. They are concerned, but they want to wait, whatever that means. They would rather carry on about the rights of others than raise the fact that LGBTIQ kids are, at a minimum, five times more likely to commit suicide than their heterosexual peers or that gay teachers are getting fired right now in the ACT. It even happened to one of my teachers.

The federal government likes to say that it is standing up against discrimination by banning schools from expelling kids for who they are. The fact that teachers and other staff are still at risk under the proposed federal legislation says a lot about their values. They know they cannot pick on gay kids; that is a bridge too far. But they think they can get away with marginalising gay adults. So they will just keep trying that.

One of the better quotes in the last week came from federal Labor MP Terri Butler:

A gay teacher doesn't teach gay maths. They just teach maths.

Those that have a problem with gay teachers in classrooms often subscribe to the insidious, wrong and downright outrageous notion that gay people are predators or that they will spread their sexuality to those they teach. It is disgusting; it is wrong.

The federal Liberals say that Labor brought this legislation in, that federal Labor moved the bill that allowed discrimination back when they were in government last. I respect my colleagues on the hill, but they got it wrong. They are working to change it; they admit that they made a mistake. That is a measure of leadership.

We are seeing a reckoning today. Religious beliefs about gay people from thousands of years ago are not instructive as to how we should treat LGBTIQ Canberrans in the education sector. We know that people are born as they are. We know that some people's journeys to discovery are not straightforward. Discrimination against gay people is no more acceptable than discrimination against people of colour, women, the young or the old, those of differing parental or marital status, those of differing employment status, those of differing religious views or the disabled. And while people have a right to their faith, they do not have a right to discriminate against someone for being born who they are. It is time to change our laws to protect our LGBTIQ community.

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee—Minister for City Services, Minister for Community Services and Facilities, Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Minister for Roads) (12.01): Over the last two weeks Canberrans have had an open and honest discussion about discrimination, since the leaked Ruddock review on religious freedom suggested more discrimination is needed. The ACT is the most LGBTIQ welcoming and inclusive jurisdiction in Australia, and Canberrans do not stand for discrimination.

As a human rights jurisdiction the ACT is committed to ongoing reforms to promote the equality of all Canberrans. I promised the community at the last election that

I would fight for a more inclusive community. So just as we are committed to ensuring freedom of religion, so too are we committed to ensuring the rights of children and the right to equality for all Canberrans.

The suggested recommendations of the Ruddock review will impact tens of thousands of Canberrans—how they live their lives, where they work, their mental health and the opportunities they will receive in their lives. Far too many LGBT students, teachers and other staff members are in a vulnerable position. They can be lawfully discriminated against simply because of who they are. This is an unacceptable situation. There is no place in the ACT for religious schools to mistreat LGBT students, teachers and other staff. There is no place for religious schools to contribute to serious mental health conditions in our city. As a progressive Labor government we must act. Limiting the right of religious schools to discriminate will promote the right to equality and the right that children have to care and protection during their education.

This impacts people in our city; it is not an abstract debate. A recent *New York Times* article on religious freedom laws includes a profile of a Canberra teacher, Hugo Walker, who resigned from his teaching position at a private school in Canberra in 2013 after he came out. Hugo Walker was 52 years old when he came out as gay to his family and his bosses at a private Christian school where he worked. It was July 2013 and Mr Walker had been a teacher at the school in Canberra, Australia's capital, for nearly 14 years. He taught science and Japanese. He had an impeccable record, but he tendered his resignation that September, the end of the school term. If he had not, the principal would have fired him—legally. He was furious. Mr Walker said of the principal's response to his coming out: "It was probably the most stressful three months of my life".

The mental impact of discrimination is felt across our community. Young, gay, transgender and intersex people are five times more likely than the general population to attempt suicide in their lifetimes, according to national figures from the National LGBTI Health Alliance.

Discrimination and bullying remains a serious issue for the LGBTIQ community in Australia. The impact on vulnerable students of being treated unfavourably at school on the grounds of sexuality or other protected attributes such as gender identity can be serious and can cause long-term harm. The impact of this secrecy, shame and isolation of LGBTIQ students in the school environment can contribute to serious mental health issues such as depression and anxiety. Just as our society recognises the importance of sufficient mental health support and significant awareness of mental health issues, we should not be adding more discrimination and mental health issues to our community.

Being the most LGBTIQ welcoming and friendly city in Australia means the ACT must ensure all our students can learn in classrooms that are free from LGBTIQ discrimination and that they are taught by the best teachers available, including LGBTIQ teachers and not just cisgender heterosexual teachers.

The response of the Australian community to the released Ruddock report has been incredible. The vast majority of Australians do not support a right to discriminate against students and teachers within our schools based on their sexual orientation. It is clear that many religious-based schools in the ACT do not support that discrimination either.

Australia has recently voted to remove discrimination in our marriage laws, not to extend discrimination. As a community we all have a role in preventing the serious harm that discrimination can cause to vulnerable young people and families, and we will remove unjustified discrimination in our laws, where required, to ensure LGBTIQ Canberrans are protected. I applaud the Chief Minister's comments about reviewing the Discrimination Act, and I look forward to seeing the amendments when they are introduced to the Assembly.

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 Sport and Recreation and Minister for Women) (12.06): I thank Ms Orr for bringing this motion forward today. It is an important issue for our community and for this government and something we have been working very hard on to ensure our community is as inclusive as possible. Of course, it is also something I have been working on as education minister.

The ACT government has a proud record of advancing the cause of equality and resisting discrimination. All ACT schools, both government and non-government, are diverse environments that reflect the differences in our community. Students present in our schools with a range of personal characteristics, including diversity in gender identity and presentation, sexual orientation and intersex status. Everybody in our community is a little bit different, and that is what makes us beautiful.

All children should be encouraged to be themselves without experiencing prejudice or hate. Because of this, all schools have a duty to provide a safe, respectful and inclusive environment free from bullying, harassment, discrimination and violence. The government will not accept any of this in any of our ACT schools.

ACT Labor have a strong history dedicated to respecting, welcoming and celebrating diversity, and we are delivering on this in government. For example, leading into the last election the ACT government responded to the federal government undermining the safe schools program by committing to directly fund a new program that meets the needs of students and school communities. In the 2017 budget we delivered on that commitment with \$400,000 to enable the continuation of a safe and inclusive schools program in ACT schools.

Early in 2018 the government launched the safe and inclusive schools initiative to equip schools with access to the resources and support to provide a safe and inclusive environment for LGBTIQ people. The goal of this program is to build the capacity of ACT schools and education programs to develop and maintain safe and inclusive environments for all students. School leaders and communities are free to choose from

the range of supports the safe and inclusive schools initiative can provide, and each of these can be tailored to best meet the needs and cultural context of particular school environments. The initiative is not mandatory and schools do not need to become members. Schools simply access the support if they need it, when they need it. Importantly, it is available to all ACT schools—government and non-government—who seek to utilise it.

It is absolutely vital that the ACT laws protect members of our community from discrimination. The federal government's religious freedom review has highlighted the possibility that our laws may require strengthening. I was distressed to hear the conversation about a person's identity or sexuality again talked about publicly for no good reason other than what looked like a dummy spit because they had lost the marriage equality debate and Australia had said we welcome an inclusive community. The ACT outdid itself again as the most inclusive state or territory in this country.

Having that conversation publicly again would have been very hurtful for LGBTIQ people in our community, and I am deeply saddened for them because of that. I am keen to ensure our laws are strengthened, particularly if the federal government moves to enshrine or expand discrimination in the provision of school education. It is completely unacceptable; ACT Labor does not accept that at all.

All members of this Assembly should be supporting this important motion today. I thank everybody who has spoken on it, particularly Chief Minister Andrew Barr, who has led this work on equality for LGBTIQ Canberrans for so many years now. I thank him and recognise the difficulties and personal challenges that have come from his work in that space. I thank Ms Orr for giving us the chance to talk about and reflect on the work that has already happened and the work that needs to continue to bring equality for all people in our community.

MS ORR (Yerrabi) (12.11), in reply: Thank you to all my colleagues in the Assembly who have spoken in support of the motion. I am a little disappointed that we did not have all members of the Assembly stand up to support the notion that children and teachers are not discriminated against, especially given the earlier motion asking for teachers to be supported, when some quite passionate words were spoken by those opposite.

Mr Coe may view this motion as premature, but I note that discrimination is not simply about if it does or does not happen; it is also about whether it can happen. We need to close any loopholes that allow for discrimination so that members of our community feel safe and included. As to the implied idea that we cannot make a considered view at this time, it is fair to say that the considered view of me, my colleagues in the ACT Labor Party and the ACT Labor-Greens government, as well as the Canberra community, is that our community should be free of discrimination full stop. I hope all members of this Assembly also share this view and will support the motion today. I do not believe it is untimely; it is always timely to stand up against discrimination.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Sitting suspended from 12.13 to 2.30 pm.

Questions without notice

Schools—*asbestos*

MR COE: I have a question for the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development. Minister, on what day were you notified about the potential for asbestos at Harrison School?

MS BERRY: It was the same day that the Liberal Party called a media conference.

MR COE: Minister, why did you say in your press conference, immediately following our press conference, on 30 August that there was only one garden bed contaminated with asbestos?

MS BERRY: Because at the time that was the advice that I had and the matter was being investigated. Had the Canberra Liberal Party just waited for a moment instead of rushing off to get a moment in the spotlight I could have absolutely given them all the information that they had required, which was what I had intended to do.

Opposition members interjecting—

MS BERRY: Thank you for all the interruptions; it is great. It is not very helpful. If you want an answer to a question you have to allow me to actually answer the question. You should not have to raise your voice in this place to actually respond to a question from the opposition, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Members, the minister is replying to your question.

MS BERRY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As I said at the time, there was an investigation occurring on where the asbestos was in the school. At the first point of the advice that I received, it was that it was only in one place. Further investigations occurred, as would be the normal practice.

Of course the presumption was that there was no asbestos in this school. There should never have been any presumption that there was. Harrison is a relatively new school. There should not have been a presumption that there was asbestos but, as a matter of caution, investigations were conducted following the email from a parent that raised the concern, and the school took appropriate action; a perfect response, according to the Work Safety Commissioner.

MS LEE: Minister, who booked the asbestos testing: a centralised area of the directorate or the school, and why was the booking request made?

MS BERRY: I just do not have the information available for the Assembly on where it actually came from, understandably: this was something that occurred well over 10 years ago. The investigations were like looking for a needle in a haystack on who was actually responsible for depositing this product at this school. Those investigations are continuing by WorkSafe.

City Renewal Authority—targets

MS LE COUTEUR: My question is to the Chief Minister as the minister responsible for the oversight of the City Renewal Authority. At a recent presentation I attended, the authority outlined its stretch targets for the city, which included a 30 per cent tree canopy cover, eight star NatHERS energy ratings, 90-plus walkability score and low carbon precinct design. How is the authority going to deliver on these wonderful ambitions?

MR BARR: Through hard work and resources over the coming years.

MS LE COUTEUR: Will this require changes to other government agencies' requirements, like the Territory Plan or the TCCS design standards, to help them achieve the authority's excellent goals, and will these goals be spread out for the rest of Canberra?

MR BARR: There may be a requirement for some further changes in relation to, for example, the Territory Plan. Clearly there are some areas within the City Renewal Authority's precinct that also have federal requirements as in they are designated land and the National Capital Authority would also be an interested partner and regulator in relation to certain activity.

The broader question of extension of those goals to the rest of the city will need to be considered in the context of further stages of the ACT's broader policy objectives in relation to carbon neutrality, for example, both in government operations and more broadly for the city.

MS CODY: Chief Minister, what early work has the City Renewal Authority done to improve amenity in the city?

MR BARR: I think members would be aware of a number of precincts within the vicinity of this building that have recently been upgraded. Some work is already underway in relation to projects that have been a long time coming and have been somewhat fraught in relation to being able to coordinate public sector and private interests. An example of that is the works around the Sydney and Melbourne buildings, buildings of historical significance to this city. The challenges there are: multiple owners; considerable market failure, free riding, if you like; no-one with a particular interest in undertaking work outside of their own particular precinct. In this context—

Mr Coe: It is called public land.

MR BARR: This relates to the private lease areas within the building. There is public land that is already being improved; it had already been improved. There are private areas that, because of the nature of those buildings, required significant coordination, cooperation and agreement. We are seeing progress in relation to those areas as it relates to the laneways as well as to the precinct around Northbourne Avenue.

Opposition members interjecting—

MR BARR: Those opposite can continue to catcall, but we will point to the fact that there are actual tangible outcomes being delivered now, and that is considerable progress on what has occurred in the past. We will get on with the work because it is a good outcome for Canberra, it is a good outcome for that precinct and it certainly reflects a priority of the government to ensure that we get on with the delivery of these important works. *(Time expired.)*

Clubs—proposed diversification support fund

MR PARTON: My question is to the Minister for Business and Regulatory Services. Minister, last week you spoke about the government's decision to establish the diversification support fund in the clubs space. Minister, when will the fund be established?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Mr Parton for the question. The fund will be established through legislation that I will be introducing into the Assembly in the near future as we try to ensure that our clubs are enabled and empowered to support the community, as is their proper calling and their proper purpose.

What we have announced is that we will be providing that support to clubs to be able to move away from a reliance on electronic gaming machine revenue. We will be seeking to support the clubs themselves and, obviously, the clubs' workers. As we move through that time of change, that will require legislation. That will come through at an appropriate time in the business of the Assembly.

MR PARTON: Minister, will appointments to the governing board of the fund be referred to an Assembly committee?

MR RAMSAY: That will be a matter that will be contained in the legislation.

MR WALL: Minister, will membership of the governing board be remunerated positions?

MR RAMSAY: That is a matter that we will announce in the future and in relation to the legislation that we will introduce in the fullness of time.

Clubs—proposed diversification support fund

MR WALL: My question is also to the Minister Business and Regulatory Services. United Voice have written to a number of clubs in the ACT requesting access to conduct a survey among staff on shift this week stating:

United Voice will be on the governing board of the Diversification Support Fund as part of the government's gaming machine policy.

Minister, are United Voice acting in their capacity as a board member of the diversification support fund or are their actions independent of government?

MR RAMSAY: As to the suggestion implicit in the question that there is some sort of secrecy going on or whatever, I remind members of the Assembly that when I tabled the response to the Stevens report into helping clubs through diversification I said that there will be union representation on the governing board of the diversification fund and workers will be able to apply for support and training to improve their skills. So the matters happening at the moment have been very clearly tabled. There is no board at the moment—

Mr Wall interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Wall! Allow the minister to answer the question.

MR RAMSAY: There is no board at the moment, but we have made clear that there will be union representation on the board, as is appropriate for the nature of the board that we will have.

MR WALL: Minister, are United Voice receiving any funding to undertake this activity either from the diversification fund—potentially from the diversification fund once it is established—or from government directly?

MR RAMSAY: No.

MR PARTON: Minister, is it compulsory for clubs to provide access to United Voice to undertake these activities?

MR RAMSAY: I understand that United Voice is in contact with the clubs, and that is a matter between United Voice and the clubs themselves.

Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse—recommendations

MS ORR: My question is to the Attorney-General. Can the Attorney-General provide an update on implementation of the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Ms Orr for this important question. This week specifically it is particularly important for us as a community to demonstrate that we acknowledge our collective failures to protect children and that we take responsibility by taking action. The national apology that was delivered earlier this week was an important step in the process of taking responsibility but there is certainly much more to do.

This government is hard at work implementing a number of changes to meet these recommendations. Already, we have supported the establishment of the national redress scheme to provide counselling and support to survivors of sexual abuse. We have also reformed our criminal laws to ensure that historic sex abuse cases can be prosecuted effectively and that witnesses and survivors are supported appropriately throughout that process.

One of the key recommendations of the royal commission was that there be no exception to reporting obligations in relation to child abuse and specifically that there be no exception for abuse disclosed within a religious confessional. We take this recommendation seriously and we have engaged Justice Julie Dodds-Streton to review the legal issues around implementing this recommendation and to provide us with a foundation for ensuring that child protection comes first in our legal system.

Justice Dodds-Streton is an experienced former Federal Court and Victorian Supreme Court judge. She will provide the ACT government with a thorough foundation for implementing the recommendation. Ensuring the protection of children now and in the future is our top priority. These reforms, and those we will implement, are an important reflection of our acknowledgement of past failures and our commitment to take responsibility and to take action.

MS ORR: Can the Attorney-General give some examples of how these changes are already improving child safety?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Ms Orr for the supplementary question. This government has engaged with the royal commission throughout its existence and has acted on findings prior to its final report. Already there is a stronger framework for reporting and investigating allegations of abuse. The ACT's reportable conduct scheme requires organisations to report all allegations of misconduct involving a child to the Ombudsman.

The scheme originally covered services like school, childcare and out of home care. From 1 July 2018 that scheme has been expanded to cover religious organisations and their facilities and programs, for example, sporting or youth group services. The expansion of the reportable conduct scheme emphasises our view that all institutions caring for children must be accountable and they must take steps to prevent abuse.

We have also taken steps to ensure that the criminal justice system holds offenders accountable. In February this year, stronger offences for historic sex abuse and grooming were passed in this chamber. Those offences give police and prosecutors better tools to bring to justice offenders who target children. Our approach to child safety is comprehensive. We will ensure across government that the royal commission's recommendations are indeed put into action.

MR PETTERSSON: Can the minister inform the Assembly about the resources that are available to support survivors who have and will continue to come forward?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Mr Pettersson for the supplementary question. The royal commission and the brave survivors who have come forward during the process have brought to light failings and they are entitled to our support. We can expect that more people will come forward as the process of reform continues. It is critical that those people are supported with the right services, particularly in relation to seeking redress under the new national scheme, and that is why in this year's budget there is \$400,000 for counselling and support services that will be provided locally.

We also provided the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre with \$120,000 in funding to assist people who are seeking redress. In addition, the Community Service Directorate and the Victims of Crime Commission are being provided with additional staff to support local implementation of the scheme. These resources are part of the almost \$14 million that the ACT government has committed over the next four years to fund redress.

Over the 10-year lifetime of the scheme, the government estimates that up to \$30 million will be provided to help survivors rebuild their lives and to ensure that the institutions take responsibility for their failings. Survivors will have access to legal advice, to counselling and to administrative help working through the redress process.

The ACT will keep working hard to ensure that our response to the royal commission puts children first and that our services are always oriented towards supporting survivors.

Schools—WorkSafe investigation

MS LEE: My question is to the minister for education. Minister, you have recently announced funding for the ACT council of P&C associations to run workshops for parents to establish a shared understanding of the problem of increased violence against ACT teaching staff. The WorkSafe report highlighted the preschools in which teachers have been subjected to violence and suffered injuries as a result. What communication did the school and/or the directorate have with the families of the other children in those classes where the incidents occurred?

MS BERRY: If it is appropriate for me to share that information in this place, I will. However, it is not normally the practice to provide personal information with regard to incidents such as the ones that Ms Lee has referred to.

MS LEE: Is this the first time that those parents have been made aware of the WorkSafe investigation and what is happening in their schools, and what support do schools and/or the directorate provide those families?

MS BERRY: As I said, if it appropriate for me to share information in this place then I will.

Mr Hanson: It's not personal information.

MS BERRY: It is not up to you to decide whether it is personal or not. I will seek advice on whether it is appropriate to provide, but I would expect that appropriate support was provided to everybody involved in all of those incidents, particularly the teachers who were injured. I will—

Mr Hanson: Well, has it is the question.

MS BERRY: I have said I will seek advice on that, so you do not need to keep interrupting, and I have answered the question.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, what protections and assurances can you provide to parents that their children are safe in ACT schools given the accelerated incidence of injuries to teaching staff?

MS BERRY: Because awareness has been raised around this issue, there has been an increase in reporting, which is absolutely appropriate. The government's policies and plans that are in place to ensure the safety of children and all staff that are working in our schools are appropriate. Of course, there is a significant culture change that needs to occur in our schools, and that cannot happen overnight. This is something that has been happening for decades and decades. It is not a judgement on a teacher or a school staff's ability to do their job to ask for help and to report these incidents. I have called for school staff to report these incidents as they occur so that a proper strategy can be put in place to ensure that there is no risk to a teacher or school staff at school and that schoolchildren—

Mr Coe interjecting—

MS BERRY: And that children are supported in schools through the work that has been implemented following the recommendations by the schools for all report. All of that work is continuing and will continue until we see that our teachers and school staff can attend school without being injured and that our schools are happy and welcoming places, as they should be.

Mr Parton interjecting—

Ms Berry: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, yesterday a point of order was made about a reference to me being a bad boss, and Mr Parton just called that out again.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, I missed it, but if you did—

Ms Berry: It was Mr Parton.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

Ms Berry: Just to clarify, it was Mr Hanson yesterday. Mr Parton has followed his wonderful lead and repeated the call.

MADAM SPEAKER: I did not hear it, Mr Parton. Mr Wall.

Mr Wall: Madam Speaker, I believe the comment was “You don't want to be a bad boss,” which is vastly different from the words that led to the ruling that you made yesterday.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Parton, do you want to offer some clarification about what you said?

Mr Parton: I said, “You don't want to be a bad boss.”

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you. That is not particularly flattering—

Mr Hanson: On the point of order, Madam Speaker, I asked yesterday, after withdrawing, that you examine whether “bad boss” is actually unparliamentary or not. Have you had a chance to have a look at that?

MADAM SPEAKER: I have had a look at *Hansard*. There was reference in a debate that referenced other parliaments and an example of being bad in the sense of IR, but it has not been used in this place across the chamber. Your reference yesterday, the interjection, was to the minister, implying that she was not managing her portfolio and she had no interest in her portfolio and these matters of violence against teachers. I took it as a reference to her character. Therefore, yesterday I considered it to be unparliamentary and out of order. If you want me to trawl *Hansard* over the past 10 years for the term “bad boss”, I am happy to do it, but it will take some time.

Mr Hanson: Madam Speaker, in your guidance there, you just said that it was unparliamentary because I had implied that she was not doing a good job as a minister. If the standard by which we are going to be judged is that the opposition is not allowed to imply that a minister is not doing their job adequately, then I would suggest that much of what an opposition would say would be out of order. It is extraordinary that any implication of a minister not doing their job is going to be unparliamentary.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, I will ask you to resume your seat, please. It is around context. Yesterday I considered it to be an imputation on the minister’s reputation. In fact, on any day, on both sides of the chamber, I could rule just about any bit of language to be out of order, certainly disrespectful. I think I have been in this chair long enough to say, “Can we show regard and respect across the floor?” It is not just those on my left; those on my right are known to be disrespectful as well. There is theatre and there is animation in this place, as there ought to be. But sometimes I will make a call. And I will make the call, Mr Hanson.

Animals—dangerous dogs

MS LAWDER: My question is to the Minister for City Services. Minister, in an article in this morning’s *Canberra Times* you expressed concern that the pound would become overcrowded if more dangerous dogs were seized. Last year there were 485 reported dog attacks. Reported dog attacks have increased on average 30 per cent per year over the past five years. Minister, does DAS have adequate staff and infrastructure to cope with this growing problem of dangerous dogs if it continues to increase at that rate?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. Yes, we have increased the number of animal rangers at Domestic Animal Services to meet the needs of our growing city. We will continue to monitor that. Of course, under the opposition’s proposed legislation, hundreds of dogs would need to be seized while investigations took place. We do have quite legitimate concerns about what the capacity of DAS would be should that bill be passed. We will certainly be raising that during the

debate. I look forward to hearing the community's and community organisations' views on that bill.

MS LAWDER: Minister, which is crueller: impounding a dangerous dog or allowing innocent Canberrans and their pets to be mauled by dangerous dogs?

Ms Berry: Madam Speaker, a point of order, that question is asking the minister for an expression of—

Ms Lawder: Which he did give to the *Canberra Times*, I must say.

MADAM SPEAKER: I am going to allow the question. Again, every day some of the questions are asking for an opinion. There is lots of preamble and I will call it at times. But, minister, on your feet to answer the question.

MR STEEL: I reject the premise of the question.

MR PARTON: Minister, are you saying that if there is any increase in the number of dangerous dogs, as seems to be the trend, you will not have adequate resources to deal with that increase?

MR STEEL: No. We have increased resources to Domestic Animal Services through an increased number of animal rangers at our DAS facility. Of course, if there were a change to legislation which were to mean a massive increase in the number of dogs that were required to be seized during an investigation, then that would have an impact on the resources of the directorate.

ACTION bus service—network

MR PETTERSSON: My question is to the Minister for Transport. Minister, can you inform the Assembly how the new bus network that you announced last week will benefit Canberrans?

MS FITZHARRIS: I thank Mr Pettersson for the question and I am delighted to update the Assembly on how the new bus network, announced recently following extensive community consultation, has resulted in an updated bus network for our city. It is the biggest investment in buses in decades in Canberra so we can get more Canberrans catching the bus.

A number of changes have been made to the new network, which will be complemented by a range of services to support bus travellers, thanks to the community's feedback. The new network of buses, with light rail, will make it easier for Canberrans to get where they want to go, offering a genuine alternative to driving seven days a week, including, importantly, more services in the evenings on Saturdays and Sundays.

At the moment, only about four per cent of trips around our city are on public transport, compared to 78 per cent by private vehicles. We simply must change this.

The government has been working hard to deliver on our commitment to build a city-wide integrated public transport network that can move people around our city efficiently and effectively and meet their needs.

The government has already committed \$43 million for the addition of 80 new buses to our network. To get more people using public transport, we will be providing a month of free travel on the new bus network next year for MyWay card users.

More than half of Canberrans will be in walking distance to a turn up and go rapid bus or light rail service and the seven-day bus network will be more reliable and easier to use, importantly, Madam Speaker, with the same route numbers and the same routes, whether it is a Tuesday, a Sunday or a public holiday.

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, can you advise the Assembly how feedback received during the consultation period was incorporated into the final design of the network?

MS FITZHARRIS: Those opposite continue to accuse me of denying that the community's concerns were legitimate in stating that I had no intention of either listening or responding to those concerns. These statements were and remain unjust, unfair and quite simply incorrect.

Through the consultation 13,000 individual pieces of feedback were received. Many community consultations were held right across the territory and many changes have been made in response to the feedback. We have listened. We have made 37 changes across the 58 routes on the regular network and added an additional 78 school services following consultation on the draft network.

I will give examples of just a few of these changes: we have extended a proposed rapid service from Tuggeranong to Belconnen instead of terminating in the city to ensure that people travelling from Tuggeranong to Belconnen do not need to change buses. We will also add direct local connections to Woden from Weston Creek, provide better coverage in south-west Belconnen and add new peak bus routes from the south of Tuggeranong.

The government will also provide new customer service officers to help school children and adults alike feel safer and become more familiar with using interchanges. We will also improve signage, particularly in the rollout of the new network. In addition to improving the regular bus network which school students are currently most likely to use, the updated network also includes 78 more dedicated school services.

We will recruit a specialist school bus services liaison position to ensure that buses continue to meet schools' needs. This will sit alongside the very successful school transport liaison officer position, which has worked very well both for the government and for school communities to focus on active travel and car park congestion around schools.

Currently the overwhelming majority of students do not use the bus at all to get to school. The combination of the improved regular network and the school-only

services is designed to encourage more young people to start using the bus. (*Time expired.*)

MS CODY: Minister, can you further outline the next steps for the implementation of the network?

MS FITZHARRIS: I thank Ms Cody for the question. Transport Canberra will continue to engage, as they always do, with the community in the transition to the new network. With the new network now settled, the team at Transport Canberra will finalise the timetable before the end of the year and an improved journey planner will also help customers understand and use the new network. This will also be available later in 2018. Further information will continue to be made available to help ensure that everyone can transition to the new network and new customers can start using it easily.

As part of the consultation, the community asked us to improve infrastructure and customer service. We will invest in more customer service officers and the new electronic ticket machines, which have started to be rolled out across the territory; they are not yet operational but we are excited to see them start to be located in interchanges. We will also improve footpaths and signage around schools as part of the very successful active streets for schools program.

We have also committed to increasing and renewing the Transport Canberra bus fleet as well as building the Woden bus depot. The development of this network represents one of the biggest investments in Canberra's buses in decades. The government will continue to increase its investment in our bus fleet, bus infrastructure and bus network services, and our commitment to great public transport services for Canberra as our population continues to grow.

We are proud of our investment in public transport and we know that it is only this side of the chamber that has always supported public transport and always will.

Canberra Hospital—emergency waiting times

MRS DUNNE: My question is to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing. On 15 August 2017 you told the Assembly that "Canberra Hospital emergency department waiting times are coming down". You repeated this claim a number of times between August 2017 and February 2018. However, the annual report just published clearly shows that waiting times were going up in Canberra Hospital in 2017-18. Why did you mislead the community about Canberra Hospital emergency department waiting times?

MS FITZHARRIS: I did not.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, was it the case that ACT Health did not tell you waiting times were going up or you did not understand the advice that you received or did you just misrepresent what was happening to the Canberra community?

MS FITZHARRIS: None of the above.

MISS C BURCH: Minister, were you relying on the lack of publicly available data on emergency department waiting times to hide the fact that waiting times were going up?

MS FITZHARRIS: No; and I did not.

Health—elective surgery

MR HANSON: My question is to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing. On 15 February 2018, you advised the Assembly:

When it comes to timeliness of elective surgery ... We are heading in the right direction—

The figures in the 2017-18 annual report show that this was not correct. Minister, why did you advise the Assembly on 15 February 2018 that we are heading in the right direction with regard to elective surgery when this was not the case?

MS FITZHARRIS: I recall that those questions were directly related to the recently released *Report on government services*, which is released at the end of January and the end of February every year. That is quite historical data. Based on the elective surgery blitz, which was conducted in 2015-16, that has certainly been the case because we were able to remove a number of long-wait patients from the elective surgery list.

That certainly has an impact on the median timeliness of elective surgery. What we have done this year is make further investments, announced in both February, in the context of the mid-year budget update, and also in this year's budget, to significantly increase not only elective surgery but also emergency surgery resources for ACT public hospitals.

I look forward very soon to releasing the first quarterly performance report for this financial year, which will demonstrate the momentum that has been gained from the investment in February and further investment in the June budget. This will show that we are now on a sustainable path to make sure that we significantly improve timeliness, not only in elective surgery but also in our emergency departments.

MR HANSON: Given all the work that has been done, can you explain why the waiting times in the annual report are getting worse?

MS FITZHARRIS: I will refer Mr Hanson to my previous answer.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, did you base your decision to mislead the community about elective surgery waiting times on the lack of publicly available data?

MS FITZHARRIS: I did not mislead the community.

Canberra Hospital—emergency waiting times

MISS C BURCH: My question is to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing. On 15 August 2017 you said in response to a question from Mr Coe on emergency department waiting times:

I am regularly briefed by Canberra Hospital and by ACT Health on the performance of the emergency department. There is internal information directly sourced from the emergency department on a daily basis, and I am pleased to say the broad trend is that emergency department waiting times are coming down.

The annual report for 2017-18 shows that this was not the case. Will you table within three sitting days the briefs that you received from the Canberra Hospital and ACT Health in July and August 2017 about emergency department waiting times?

MS FITZHARRIS: In response to the question, on 15 August 2017—I would note that that is some five to six weeks into the beginning of the 2017-18 financial year—I do not think I could possibly have known at that point, in August 2017, six weeks into not only the 2017-18 financial year but certainly, as has been discussed—

Mr Coe: You said “with confidence”. There was a trend.

MS FITZHARRIS: Six weeks into a financial year you cannot predict the trend for that coming year.

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members, please! You asked the question. Allow the answer.

MS FITZHARRIS: What we do know about last year and last year’s flu season, which peaked in those months, was that it was one of the worst flu seasons on record and I stated six weeks into that financial year “pending all things being equal ...”. But all things were not equal. All things were not equal as that flu season unfolded. The worst flu season in years right across the country did impact, as is reflected in the annual report for this year.

MISS C BURCH: Minister, will you table within three sitting days any other information you received from the Canberra Hospital and ACT Health in July and August 2017 about emergency department waiting times?

MS FITZHARRIS: I will take that on notice.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, why are you not prepared to produce the documents that you claim show that the emergency department waiting times were coming down in August 2017?

MS FITZHARRIS: I did not say that.

Canberra Hospital—emergency waiting times

MRS KIKKERT: My question is to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing. I refer to a statement by Simon Judkins, the President of the Australasian College for Emergency Medicine on 14 July 2018. Dr Judkins said he visited the Canberra Hospital four weeks ago and saw patients being treated in the corridors of the ED and being cared for by rostered corridor nurses. Dr Judkins said, “We were quite shocked. We haven’t seen this in a while. This sort of practice is a sign of a system under stress and a system not working.” Minister, why is the ACT health system not working when it comes to emergency department waiting times?

MS FITZHARRIS: It is, and I had a very productive meeting with Dr Judkins recently and we committed to continuing to work with the College for Emergency Medicine. I know that that is a very high priority for the new CEO of Canberra Health Services.

MRS KIKKERT: Minister, why do waiting times in the Canberra Hospital emergency department continue to get worse?

MS FITZHARRIS: I refer Mrs Kikkert to my previous answers on these matters.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, how long has the Canberra Hospital had rostered corridor nurses working in the emergency department, and do you anticipate continuing the practice?

MS FITZHARRIS: I will take the question on notice.

Government—space industry policy

MS CODY: My question is to the Minister assisting the Chief Minister on Advanced Technology and Space Industries. Minister, what significance does October hold for the space industry, and what are the implications of this for Canberra?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Ms Cody for her interest in advanced technology and space. I can say that space is often regarded as the final frontier, but also as so much more. It excites, thrills and inspires young and old alike. It helps drive an excitement for STEM and creates the next generation of technology that will help further our endeavours.

There has been one agency that has been at the heart of much of humankind’s quest to explore the vast unknown, exploring what some have dubbed the new ocean. Canberra has held a special relationship with this agency for much of the time that it has been around.

Sixty-one years ago this month, Sputnik became the first artificially created satellite to orbit our planet. This sparked the space age that led President Eisenhower to create the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, NASA as it is now fondly known. NASA opened its doors 60 years ago, on 1 October. It is worth reflecting on some of

the objectives in the original legislation that created it: the expansion of human knowledge of phenomena in the atmosphere and space; the development and operation of vehicles capable of carrying instruments, equipment, supplies and living organisms through space; and the establishment of long-range studies of the potential benefits to be gained from the opportunities for and the problems involved in the utilisation of aeronautical and space activities for peaceful and scientific purposes.

As it celebrates its 60 years, NASA has truly delivered, from the moon landing to the rovers on Mars; from the space shuttle to the pioneer satellites carrying plaques through the unknowns of space in case they are encountered by extraterrestrial life; and, of course, the images of our galaxy that have been produced by the Hubble space telescope. Happy birthday, NASA.

MS CODY: Minister, will Canberra be celebrating the 50th anniversary of the moon landing?

MR GENTLEMAN: Yes, without NASA we would have neither the Canberra Deep Space Communication Complex, fondly known as Tidbinbilla, nor tracking stations at Orroral Valley or Honeysuckle Creek, all of which played roles in the Apollo program, a program that led to humankind setting foot beyond our planet for the first time.

Without Canberra, the world might not have seen this famous occasion or heard Neil Armstrong's famous words. The success of *Apollo 11* depended on the remarkable precision and coordination among the engineers and specialists who supported the operations. The men and women of Honeysuckle Creek developed a body of knowledge in Canberra upon which we can advance our current space and spatial science capabilities.

The government is looking at a number of ways that we can mark the 50th anniversary next year and not only showcase the moon landing but also highlight our city's leadership in Australia's space industry. This includes upgrading the walking tracks between Orroral Valley, Honeysuckle Creek and the Orroral geodetic dome, as well as interpretive material around the Ngunnawal understanding of the sky.

This year's heritage grants also supported a number of Canberrans and groups to help celebrate this achievement, including through an art exhibition and short film documentary. Questacon will also be holding a major exhibit next year, including the highlighting of Canberra's involvement. As I said, these are just some of the ways that we will be marking this important event. I look forward to sharing further ways we will be marking the anniversary and the role our city played.

MS ORR: Minister, what is the significance of the space sector to Canberra?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Ms Orr for her question. While NASA and the moon landing played a significant role in both the territory and the nation's space sectors, Canberra's leadership extends beyond this. The first commonwealth building in Canberra was the dome at Mount Stromlo to house the Oddie telescope. We are also the home of the design and manufacture of Australia's first cube satellite. We host a

number of multinational companies with space capabilities. These include Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman and Airbus Defence and Space.

Our universities—ANU and UNSW—lead Australia in space research and innovation. Yesterday we had the ANU announce InSpace, a new institute that will bring together a range of disciplines such as law, science, technology and innovation in the space sector, another important step in helping to keep our leadership, but also attracting the world's best and brightest to our growing, vibrant and inclusive city.

One in four jobs in the Australian space industry is right here in Canberra. This is a sector that is growing globally. It is worth approximately \$420 million and is growing by 10 per cent each year. This sector is also helping other sectors deliver benefits to our everyday lives.

While I hope the commonwealth makes our city the permanent home of the Australian Space Agency, we are and will continue to be the home to the Australian space industry. Canberra is the space capital, and this government will continue to promote, grow and help the industry. We will work with the sector to help find new frontiers, inspiring the next generation to turn young Canberrans' dreams into reality.

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

Supplementary answer to question without notice ACT Health—workplace culture

MS FITZHARRIS: Yesterday in question time Mr Hanson asked me a question regarding the restructure of ACT Health, claiming that I have said nothing about improving culture as a rationalisation for the restructure. Madam Speaker, when I announced this change back on 23 March, I said that one of the reasons for the restructure was to ensure that we have a strong, positive and respectful culture within both organisations. On 31 July, I said that it is my expectation that the new leadership of both organisations will have a very strong focus on organisational culture.

Let me give another example. In response to a question from the opposition in question time on 8 May, I said:

... a positive culture, particularly in a health organisation, is everyone's responsibility. I have taken some clear decisions to significantly improve the governance of the organisation and, with it, my clear direction to the interim director-general and to the senior staff is that they lead by example in establishing a positive and healthy culture within ACT Health and across all of its facilities.

Improving workplace and organisational culture was just one of the many reasons for the restructure, as I have outlined on many occasions in this place. Mr Hanson's implication that improving workplace culture within ACT Health was not one of the reasons is cherry-picking my statement from yesterday, demonstrating once again the Canberra Liberals not listening to multiple statements in this place. It is plainly wrong, and I draw the Assembly's attention to this fact.

Paper

Madam Speaker presented the following paper:

Estimates 2018-2019—Select Committee—Stromlo Leisure Centre pool—Clarification—Letter to the Speaker from the Minister for Health and Wellbeing, dated 22 October 2018.

Government Agencies (Land Acquisition Reporting) Bill 2018

Debate resumed from 1 August 2018, on motion by **Mr Coe**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

MS LE COUTEUR (Murrumbidgee) (3.18): The Greens will be supporting this bill in principle. I understand that the ALP and the Liberal Party have agreed to defer the detail stage to next week to allow the ALP to put forward amendments, and the Greens will also support that deferral. It is, of course, very sensible to give members time to actually look at and read amendments before debating them.

I would like to thank Mr Coe for bringing this bill forward. It is exactly the sort of thing the Greens would have done if we had more private members' business. The need for more transparency about ACT government land acquisitions has been really striking over the past couple of years. There have been three separate Auditor-General reports basically on that subject. There is clearly a need here.

First, we had the report on certain land development agency acquisitions in September 2016. Members will recall that this looked into three land acquisitions: one at Glebe Park and two at West Basin. The conclusion of the report says:

Transparency, accountability and rigour have been lacking in the processes used by the Land Development Agency for acquiring the three sites and two associated businesses ...

Second, in February this year we had the report on the sale process for the land in Dickson commonly known as the Tradies car park. While this was a land sale process, part of the price paid by the winning tenderer, the Tradies club, was two pieces of land near Dickson pool, so in fact it was also a land acquisition. What did the Auditor-General have to say about the acquisition side of the deal? Again, I will quote:

There is a high risk that ... the commercial terms of the sale of Block 6 Section 72 resulted in the Territory paying above valuation with conditions that offered no ... additional value to the Territory but benefited the Tradies.

You might ask what this has to do with transparency. To get the information about this acquisition, Mr Coe had to use a private members' motion to require the government to produce the documents. The Greens, of course, supported the Liberals

on this, but the point is that this should not have been necessary; there should have been more transparency from the start.

The third report came out in June this year. It was into the former LDA's purchases of rural land to the west of Canberra. I will give two quotes from the Auditor-General for this one. The first is this:

Probity was lacking, and there were probity risks, in some of the actions of the former Land Development Agency ...

The second is this:

The former Land Development Agency committed \$43 million ... to purchase 3,378 hectares of rural land ... as a potential future urban development front. However, there is no certainty of future urban development.

I pursued these rural land acquisitions pretty much from the point at which I was re-elected in 2016. The lack of transparency was a major problem. I will not go through all the details, as I have been through them before in the Assembly and in committee hearings, but I will make two points to illustrate the problem.

First, the existing annual report process did not give anywhere near enough transparency. In fact, for the first two acquisitions, the total information provided in the Land Development Agency annual report for 2015-16 was the district the land was in and the date the acquisition was approved. There were no block details, no purchase price and no reason for the acquisition.

Second, I have struggled to get information through the annual reports and estimates hearings. I have been trying at many hearings. I have been told the information was highly confused, was inaccurate or that it was information held by a previous minister and thus could not possibly be retrieved by the current minister. You name it. There has not been transparency. There have been reasons, but there has not been transparency on this.

I want to briefly touch on the amendments that the ALP is working on and that I assume we will debate next week. I am willing to consider amendments because there are times when the minister knows important information about how directorates work that we on the crossbench and those on the opposition benches do not know. It is possible that there are places where the bill needs correction to fit with how the public service actually works. However, I would like to make it abundantly clear that the Greens will look at the amendments in the context of the damning findings of the three Auditor-General's reports that I have touched on. The Greens will only support amendments that respect the principles of transparency and good government, not amendments that are just intended to wind back transparency.

To conclude, I would like to thank Mr Coe for his constructive approach on this issue over the past eight months. Mr Coe's office has been working very cooperatively with my office on this since the original bill was tabled back in February this year. I am particularly pleased that the reporting will now be to the community rather than just to

the Assembly. This was a Greens suggestion—rather late in the piece, I admit—that has been taken up by Mr Coe. I congratulate Mr Coe and his office and staff on the way this process has been managed.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Detail stage

Clauses 1 to 6, by leave, taken together.

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

Women's sport

MS CODY (Murrumbidgee) (3.25): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) the extraordinary growth in the profile of women's sport in the Canberra community;
- (b) the ongoing success of Canberra United, the Canberra Capitals and women's national league teams such as netball, cricket and ice hockey;
- (c) greater encouragement for girls' and women's participation in many sporting codes;
- (d) the opening of elite pathways in traditionally male-dominated codes such as the Australian Football League (AFL), Rugby Union, and Rugby League;
- (e) the contribution of clubs to local sport and sporting organisations through their own revenue and the community contributions scheme; and
- (f) the disappointment and outrage expressed in the AFL women's community about future fixtures;

(2) further notes:

- (a) significant investments in community and professional sporting facilities funded by the ACT Government, including at Stromlo Forrest Park, Football Park Phillip, and the Melrose Football Precinct;
- (b) the ACT Government has set a requirement that triennially funded peak sporting bodies have at least 40 percent women's representation on their boards by 2020 and is working with sports towards this outcome;
- (c) community clubs also have a key role to play in achieving gender equity in sport through their contributions;
- (d) ongoing improvements and development of women's changing facilities under the ACT Government's female friendly design guidelines and infrastructure funding commitment; and

- (e) the ACT has secured games in the 2020 International Cricket Council World Women's Twenty20 World Cup; and
- (3) calls on the Government to continue to promote both community and professional women's sport by:
 - (a) ensuring equity in access to sporting facilities and opportunities for all ages to participate;
 - (b) working with community and professional sporting organisations to promote programs that deliver women's sport; and
 - (c) investigating ways to increase the share of the Club Community Contributions Scheme that goes towards women's sport.

I stand here today excited by the fact that there has been an extraordinary growth in women's sport not only in the ACT but across Australia. The ACT has had the proud and ongoing tradition of supporting the success of women's sport. We have had the success of Canberra United, the Canberra Capitals, women's national league teams such as netball, cricket and, one of my favourite sports, ice hockey.

It is a proud moment that I get to stand in this place to talk about some of the achievements we have had in promoting women's sport in the ACT. I just mentioned women's ice hockey. It was a very proud moment for me as a young teenager to be able to go from figure skating to playing ice hockey in not only the women's team but also the men's team. In those days there were not a lot of us women playing ice hockey and I am so glad to see, having watched the Canberra Pirates play a number of times now, that the sport is not only growing but being supported by the ACT government. I wish the Canberra Pirates well in their upcoming games and all the best for next season. I know they have had a tremendous season this year, and next year I hope will be even better.

This is also a really good opportunity to remember the encouragement we all need for promoting and ensuring that women and girls continue to play and be involved in sport. As I just mentioned, I played ice hockey as a young teenager, but I also played a lot of non-traditional women's sports. I played football. I played Rugby Union. I rode horses. I played field hockey. I was always lucky enough to be encouraged not only by my family and my peers but by all the people I played with. Some girls are not as encouraged, and it is a timely reminder today with this motion to continue to support all girls in whatever form of sport they undertake.

I will reflect for a moment on a wonderful young woman I have had the pleasure of getting to know since being elected to this place. Kiara is a very enthusiastic motorsport woman. She did dance and calisthenics for many years and then went to her mother and said, "I'd like to drive go-karts." What an incredible story. She is going gangbusters out at the Canberra karting Mark Webber circuit. I heard recently she had several podium finishes and is getting PBs racing around that track.

It is wonderful to see that there are many other women that Kiara races with, but still there is a stigma attached to supporting women and girls in non-traditional sports. I know Molly Taylor spends a lot of time supporting women and girls to get into rallying, and there are other women in motorsport who want to encourage young

women and young girls to be involved. But it is also up to us to ensure that that encouragement does not just stop when they grow.

Kiara is now in high school and still loves driving go-karts and hopes to continue in the motorsport field. I hope that we across the community can help to encourage young women and girls like Kiara to do that.

I will also talk about the opening of elite pathways in the traditionally male-dominated sports like AFL, Rugby Union and Rugby League. The ACT has had some fantastic success, as has Australia, with women's Rugby Union in particular. We had a success at the Commonwealth Games with our women's sevens bringing home gold. I have a connection to one of those women, Louise Burrows. She is an amazing athlete and recently at the age of, well, somewhere around my age was still playing for Australia. That is an amazing achievement considering that male elite sportspeople often do not make it to their 30s.

Louise is another fine example of what can happen when you support and encourage women and girls to do whatever they like to do in the sporting fields. I had the privilege of playing with Louise in Rugby Union when we were much younger, and she certainly is an amazing player. Her tenacity has seen her reach the heights of her career for Australian Rugby Union.

The AFLW has been magnificent, and as a foundation member of the AFLW Giants I have been amazed to see the crowds grow and to watch the support we have for the sport in Canberra. I note that one of the teams I have a lot to do with—the Woden Blues—only a short time ago was lucky to be able to field one team to play in the men's competition. It is now fielding several men's teams, a women's AFL team as well as five women's netball teams. That is an amazing story of what support and encouragement do for women and sport across the Canberra community.

We have had many debates recently about the community contribution scheme that has been introduced and how good that has been for local small and sometimes large sporting groups in our community. Many members of the community and many sporting organisations contacted me through the consultation period about the community contributions scheme. They told me many stories about the help and support they have had through that scheme, and it is a really wonderful scheme.

I know the Woden Blues have an opportunity to go to their local club in Weston Creek and enjoy a beer after the game and support their club while their club supports them. I am glad Minister Ramsay will be bringing forward some legislation soon to hopefully strengthen those community contributions.

Although I am talking about Canberra-specific support for women and girls, I do not want the recent outrage when the Australian Football League looked at reducing the number of games and teams in the AFLW League to go unnoticed. We saw amazing crowds in the initial year of the AFLW across the board, so much so that at the very first AFLW game many people had to stand around outside the stadium because they were unable to get access. More people went to the first AFLW game than went to

many other games at the beginning of the men's season. It is very short-sighted of the national AFL members to change that.

I have had an amazing year. I have had an amazing two years, but this year I was really excited to announce the fact that we are hosting a number of games at Manuka Oval of the 2020 ICC women's world Twenty20 cup. We will host a number of top women's games where we will see international players take to Manuka Oval on more than just a one-off occasion.

This is a great opportunity for women and girls to get out there and support their local heroes, to get out there and see some fantastic games and to see an international cricket cup being played at Manuka Oval. I thank the ACT government and Minister Berry in her portfolio as minister for sport for the work they undertook to ensure that we get opportunities like these to support women who play a vital role in our community.

My motion calls on the government to ensure quality, equity and access to sporting facilities and opportunities for all ages to participate; to work with community and professional sporting organisations to promote programs that deliver women's sport; and investigate ways to increase the share of the community clubs contribution scheme that goes towards women's sport. These are all extremely important initiatives that I am proud that the government has taken great leaps to implement. But there is always more work to do.

We have some of the most wonderful training facilities, but some facilities and infrastructure are ageing. We went to the 2016 election with a commitment to upgrade change rooms to ensure that women and girls playing sport can get changed. I know that seems like a very simple request, but many women who play Rugby Union for the Royals complained to me about the fact they had to get changed in their cars because there was nowhere else for them to get changed. It is little things like making sure we have change rooms available for women and girls that mean that they can continue to participate.

It is also extremely important to ensure that women and girls continue to participate after having families. As we age, women tend to become a little more attached to their families when they have them. It is harder for us to get out there and just say, "Oh, someone else can look after the kids while we go and kick the footy around." Women are dedicated to doing everything they possibly can, including accessing sport. And I congratulate those clubs out there that ensure that women can continue to play sport whilst they have children.

I have a friend who plays football in Canberra and her team takes turns in looking after children so the mothers can get on the field and have a kick of the footy. They all work together to ensure that every woman in that club feels they are able to participate. It is those sorts of initiatives that clubs are undertaking off their own bat that we need to continue to support.

I look forward to the contributions members make today. The ACT government has invested a lot of time and energy and money in ensuring that sporting facilities in the

ACT are up to scratch to ensure that women can participate. I look forward to more initiatives moving forward.

I had the opportunity yesterday to talk to some members of my community—one of whom I do triathlon with—who have just taken up a new sport, golf. Golf is an interesting sport; I have been lucky enough to have a hit with some clubs and I do not know that I am very good. But the Murrumbidgee Country Club have introduced a new sport for women called swing fit.

I know it is a scary concept to get out there, get the rules right in your head and play a game of golf and enjoy it. Swing fit provides women the opportunity to go to a social gathering, play a bit of golf, learn about the rules, but also have a glass of wine or a lemonade afterwards, have some nibbles, and enjoy the social side of sport. The mental health benefits of getting out in the fresh air and walking around are beyond compare. Swing fit is a good opportunity for women to continue to be able to have fun and enjoy sport while socialising.

In closing, I again thank the ACT government for the work they have done and look forward to hearing more about what we are going to do in the future. I thank everyone who has worked with me and encouraged me over the years to participate in sport. I look forward to helping and encouraging women in the future to ensure that they can participate in whatever sport they would like to.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (3.39): I thank Ms Cody for bringing this motion to the Assembly today. I start by saying, “How about those Capitals?” I know Minister Berry shares my enthusiasm for women’s basketball. They have won several games in a row. They have had the WNBL player of the week for the past two weeks in Kia Nurse and Kelsey Griffin. They are going pretty well so far this season.

We have also seen some fabulous AFL women in the capital whom I have enjoyed watching. At this point I would like to give a quick shout out to the University of Canberra women’s Rugby Sevens team who participated in the second Australian Women’s Sevens tournament. It was a tournament that took them right across Australia to compete against other women’s university teams. They came sixth overall after five rounds and, perhaps most excitingly, captain Sammie Wood has been selected as part of the extended Australian Wallaroos team for 2018.

We have seen some great strides forward in women’s sport, especially at the elite level, over the past few years. It does not mean that there is not still much to be done. However, the motion that we have before us today is, as we have become used to here, a bit of self-congratulation for the government for what they are already doing. I guess that is fair enough. But the motion is also trying to claim the achievements of others as their own. It is something that we have become a bit used to here.

Paragraph 3 contains the usual criticism of the community contributions scheme. It is another barely disguised attack on the clubs and their community contributions scheme. It asks for the government to investigate ways to increase the share of funding that goes to female sport. Once again, it is the government criticising community clubs and the invaluable support they provide to sport and recreation. That

is not surprising from this government. Despite the clear messages they have received from the community to leave the scheme alone, here we are once again.

We have all grown up with sport. It has always been a key part of Australian life. It shapes our sense of identity, it strengthens our reputation as a nation and, of course, at the grassroots and local level it is the glue that binds many communities together. We enjoy the social and health benefits of participating in sport. Research shows that for every dollar spent on sport we save \$7 as taxpayers in terms of the spend on health. Being active not only makes community sense; it makes economic sense. But we are watching more sport than ever and fewer Australians are playing sport and engaging in physical activity. This is a trend that we need to reverse.

Over 17 million Australians aged 15 or over, or 87 per cent of Australians, participated in a sport or in physical activity over the past 12 months. Nearly 3.2 million children participated in some form of organised sport or physical activity outside of school hours. In Canberra, as at April 2018, there were some slight differences across ages, employment status and education background in respect of the participation of males and females.

There are some areas where there is a higher participation for women. This includes where participants have a disability, in the age brackets of 35 to 45 and 65 plus, when living in an adult share house, or for single adults or couples with no children. The employment status of women also affects their level of participation. For example, if they work part-time or casually they tend to have higher levels of participation in sport.

Sport is by its nature very inclusive. It is one of the many great things about it. Local clubs want people to get involved no matter what their skill level, gender, socio-economic status, education background, disabilities, or access to transport or equipment. These factors present challenges for everyone. But the volunteers, coaches and parents work to find ways to overcome those barriers.

What the government can do here is make a contribution to make sport more affordable, accessible and attractive. It is the same with youth participation and increasing how active our kids are throughout their school years. This is where the policy levers of government can be focused to support programs that make a difference.

For the government to talk about investigating ways to increase the allocation from the community contributions scheme to female sport can come across as a bit of an insult to those involved in the community contributions scheme. The 2015 KPMG national club census found the social contribution of ACT clubs to be a massive \$39 million, including direct community donations, subsidised access to facilities and volunteering.

Our clubs are already supporting women's sports. If we look at the women's sport contribution from Canberra clubs, we need look no further than the contribution from clubs such as the RUC in Turner, which supports women's sporting clubs in the inner north of Canberra, for example, the Owls women's rugby, University of Canberra

hockey, ANU women's hockey, ANU women's soccer, ANU touch rugby, inner north netball and CNBC women's lawn bowls.

I also mention the Tuggeranong Vikings who are great supporters of women's sport in the Tuggeranong area, such as the Tuggeranong Valley women's cricket, Southern Canberra Gymnastics Club, Tuggeranong Vikings Hockey Club, the Pines Tennis Club, Tuggeranong Vikings Water Polo Club and Vikings Rugby, who won the women's Rugby competition in Canberra this year.

Ms Cody's motion refers to helping develop female change facilities and highlights the government's contribution to this space, for example, \$8,400 in 2018 to one club, Capital Football, for change rooms at Hawker. That does not actually appear to be a massive commitment, but I understand and agree that the lack of suitable changing facilities can be a barrier or a deterrent to girls and women participating in sport. It is something that needs to be addressed.

We can look at other jurisdictions for examples of what they are doing to encourage women in sport. New South Wales has a women in sport strategy targeted at increasing leadership roles for women in sporting associations and organisations. Queensland has a program called "get in the game" with a specific grant program for female facilities. It is not just new facilities; it is also for retrofitting older facilities and upgrading clubrooms and change rooms where needed. They also have a program called "get out, get active" to target women who are currently not involved in sport and recreation and to make activities affordable.

Western Australia has programs focused on scholarships to provide pathways and leadership development programs to build capability and to promote female talent. Victoria has established an Office for Women in Sport and Recreation. Again, it has a focus on leadership and increasing board representation and leadership roles as well as accessing public resources and focusing on female-friendly facilities and issues around body image.

Women's sport is the fastest growing area for many codes. Big name sponsors are starting to come on board and media networks are also recognising the growing interest in these games. These changes are happening but they are slow. We need to see greater equality in women's sport in the payment of athletes and in sponsorship. We can look to some of our female athletes from Australia who have dominated the world stage: The Diamonds, the Opals, the Jillaroos, the Matildas, the Hockeyroos, the Breakers and our Olympic Rugby sevens. Despite their phenomenal success and some progress at the elite level, the funding and the monetary payment is not at the same rate as for men.

At the local sport level, they need support, funding, better facilities and proper maintenance. They need help to take their athletes and their leadership team to the next level with clear pathways and development opportunities. We need support for kids to play sport and, if they excel at it, to travel interstate or overseas to compete and strive to join professional leagues. We need support to train at world-class venues and support to elevate female leadership across all codes and all sports.

We do not agree that there needs to be an intervention in the community contributions scheme. Stop the big brother approach to private industry and telling business how to do their business but look at ways you can provide tangible support to sports clubs and the way that you can encourage more participation and recreation opportunities for all Canberrans, especially women.

This is the way that we are moving towards equality. Sometimes it seems to be taking a very long time and we would like to see the pace of change be quicker. But a big brother approach or a big stick approach is not necessarily the best way to achieve this. We are opening up more opportunities for women all the time, and that is exactly as it should be.

We need to ensure that people with an interest in a sport get the support they need, that they get the infrastructure and facilities around them. This is already happening at the grassroots level. I hope that the government will continue to enable clubs to allocate their community contributions because in most cases—I do not think it is absolutely equitable at this point—clubs are providing almost as much for men's and women's sport.

Despite the growing excitement around women's sport, only two women made the top 50 sports earners list in Australia. Largely that was due to sponsorship, not prize money or wages. In the same way, female sport receives only seven per cent of Australian TV sports coverage and nine per cent of sports coverage on the news. This is one of those chicken and egg arguments about which comes first. We know the very common phrase, "You cannot be what you cannot see." But I think many young girls and children can see the excellent sports models, whether it is in netball, basketball, football or any other of our myriad of sporting codes. They can see the examples out there.

We need to encourage them, especially when they are becoming young women and have body image questions and other questions about whether they wish to continue in sport. These are some of the very tangible things that we can do to encourage young girls to continue on the sporting path and to take advantage of their natural talent, their hard work and their training to become the very best sportsperson they can be, whether that is an elite sportsperson or playing at the community level, because everyone has a different aspiration and a different goal through their participation.

MS ORR (Yerrabi) (3.53): I thank my colleague Ms Cody for bringing this motion here today. When I read Ms Cody's motion I thought of a sports bar I know of. Near the entrance of the venue is a long rod. Draped over the rod are the jerseys of Australian athletes who have made it big in the US, players like Andrew Bogut who tasted NBA championship success with the Golden State Warriors and Canberra's own Patty Mills who did the same with the San Antonio Spurs, and fellow Canberran Dante Exum, a first round NBA draft pick, also gets a spot. As I stood there looking at this row of athletes, many of whom were connected to Canberra in some way, it got me once again reflecting on the little territory that could.

However, I still could not help but think one thing: where is Lauren Jackson's spot? Jackson's decorated career takes in an extensive range of achievements that cannot adequately be detailed here; yet a sports bar seeking to celebrate the achievements of Australian athletes, particularly those from Canberra, does not have a space for her!

This is an important aspect of the motion before us here today. This motion is essentially about culture and the role that we, as parliamentarians, have in influencing it. We, as leaders of our community, have the capacity, the platform and the responsibility to lead cultural change, and women's sport is a space where continued shifts can only move us forward. The oversight of that sports bar is not their fault. Rather, it is reflective of a culture that has left women athletes behind. We need a continued effort to shift the attitude toward women's sports and we, as leaders in our community, must continue to challenge people's views.

Recent times have brought enormous progress in women's sport. The introduction of the women's big bash league, Suncorp super netball, AFLW, Super W, and NRLW are just not an alphabet soup but a sign of a cultural shift in the way that we view women's sport. However, it should be noted that competitions like the Super W, the women's counterpart to the super rugby, did not offer to pay its athletes and when the AFL proposes a shortened AFLW season, relegating it to a token gesture replacing a tired and unloved men's pre-season competition, we need to call it out for what it is.

I am a proud supporter of the Gungahlin Jets, the home of the GWS Giant Britt Tully. This year Britt won AFL Canberra's Mary Ann Bainrot medal for best and fairest for the third time in a row. This is the first time that this has been done and will probably be the only time ever. Call me biased but I want to see a player like Britt given every opportunity to play at the peak of the game. I call on the AFLW to extend the 2019 season and give the competition the platform it needs to continue to grow. I would also like to take a moment to congratulate Maddie Shevlin from the Jets who just yesterday was drafted at pick 19 to the Collingwood Magpies in the AFL draft.

Women's participation in AFL grew by 34 per cent in the ACT-South Coast region in 2017. As more and more women take up sports like Aussie rules, Rugby and cricket, our facilities need to change to meet this new need. I recently hosted a making space initiative—actually it was the one in April this year—where we heard from Sue Cadman, another mighty Gungahlin Jets player. Sue spoke about the specific needs that women require from community facilities when participating in sport. For many of the men in the room, this came as a real surprise. But this government is taking steps to improve women's access to sport.

The motion before us today calls on the ACT government to continue to promote both community and professional women's sport. We are upgrading facilities to better accommodate women. We are improving the safety of sportsgrounds and community facilities and we are reconfiguring change rooms and bathrooms. I support the motion here today when it calls on the ACT government to continue to ensure that our sporting facilities offer access for everyone to participate in organised sport.

We are also seeking to increase women's leadership in sport. Our participation and leadership program offers assistance to clubs and organisations who wish to support participation, education and training activities that enhance opportunities for women and girls to participate in the ACT. It also seeks to increase the abilities of females to take on leadership roles in the sector. This is further supported by the ACT government diversity register, which seeks to improve women's access to board vacancies.

I support the motion's call for continued work with community and professional sporting organisations to promote programs that deliver women's sports and I look forward to working with clubs in my community, like the Gungahlin Jets, to find ways of achieving this.

There is clear evidence the government is fulfilling its obligation to improve access to sport and community participation for women, and, speaking to this motion here today, I encourage my colleagues to support the continuing efforts of the ACT government in promoting positive cultural change by voting in favour of the motion.

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 Sport and Recreation and Minister for Women) (3.58): I thank Ms Cody for bringing this motion here today for us to have a conversation about. Over recent years as a country, as well as here in the ACT, we have witnessed extraordinary growth in the profile of women's sport.

We have seen our women's Rugby Sevens team take home gold at Rio. We had a new super netball league, with matches broadcast live free-to-air. We witnessed the Matildas taking on and beating the best in the world in front of sell-out crowds and we had a new national women's AFL competition come into reality. We have had a great year again for women's sport, both here and nationally.

But this has not happened by accident. The ACT government has continued the goal to build more support and opportunities for women's and girls' participation in sport and recreation, and we have set this direction for a couple of reasons. Participation data consistently shows that girls move away from sport in their teens, and we need to turn this trend around as a means to better physical activity and mental health as they move into adulthood.

Sport offers a vehicle to improve equity and culture around gender right across our community. There are so many great leaders and role models in our local sports community, and the government believes that, with their help, we can reach out and empower more people to understand and embrace the need for gender equity.

But we cannot take our eyes off this for one moment. We have to keep striving forward and making improvements and continue with the momentum that has already been created around women in sport. This has been a consistent priority of the ACT government and, of course, mine as Minister for Sport and Recreation and Minister for Women.

In the 2017-18 budget the government increased its funding support for women's sport and, most notably, this included establishing the four-year funding agreements with both the Canberra Capitals basketball team and the Canberra United women's football team and entering a three-year agreement in support of GIANTS Netball, which is delivering community activation and an improved player pathway through the very successful Canberra GIANTS program.

These agreements are a major change in the way that the government approaches elite sport. They have given both teams greater certainty around planning, recruiting and player development, closer to that of our elite men's teams, and they offer a means to securing better sponsorship deals. As well, they help grow the Caps' and United's presence in our community and their prominence for junior players.

The ACT government committed a further \$1 million for programs which will work to encourage and empower women and girls at all levels of sport over the next four years: \$500,000 for female-friendly sports infrastructure, \$400,000 in incentive funding for sports to lead on gender equity and \$100,000 for the female sport online hub at HerCanberra. We are also investing funds into grass roots programs aimed at supporting emerging female leaders, enhancing coaching opportunities and increasing participation, including \$50,000 to work with a collective of sports to build a structured female education and leadership program.

We are also about half way to our goal of ACT sporting bodies having a minimum of 40 per cent female representation on their boards by 2020. Forty-six per cent are currently meeting this target, up from 29 per cent only 12 months ago.

Alongside this, the government has committed to and delivered a number of projects to lift the status of sports facilities in the ACT. Ms Lawder is right. We should learn from and share opportunities with other states and territories. Whilst some of the announcements or activities that the ACT government is involved in might have different names, there is a lot of similarity to what we are doing compared with what other state and territories are doing in this space.

Just last week I was happy to be joined by Ms Cody as I turned the first sod for the new Stromlo leisure centre, a \$36.6 million facility located at Stromlo Forest Park that will one day service more than 100,000 people in Weston Creek, Woden and Molonglo. Bec Cody joined me again to officially open the \$6.5 million Phillip Oval pavilion, of which the ACT government committed \$4.6 million, an upgrade that makes Phillip Oval the second-tier oval for AFL and cricket after Manuka. The Phillip Oval precinct is a great example of collaboration between the ACT government and sporting bodies to achieve outcomes that benefit the sporting and broader Canberra communities.

Last year the ACT government officially opened the state-of-the-art FIFA-standard \$6.6 million Melrose football precinct. Each of these examples offers more opportunities for participation and growth of women's sport.

On 9 August I held a women in sport forum as part of the government's renewed commitment to support female athletes and to promote greater leadership opportunities for women, to address gender inequality in sport in the 2018-19 budget, and forms part of the ACT women's plan. The women in sport forum focused on bringing the community and sporting institutions together with the ACT government to explore practical ideas to further enhance access to sports on both a professional and a recreational level for women and girls in Canberra.

The ACT government has continued and will continue the goal to build more support and opportunities for women's and girls' participation in sport and recreation. We have the chance to lead the nation on further advances for women's equity, removing cultural and structural barriers to women and girls getting involved in sport, in every sport and at every level: elite athletes, athletes with a disability, administration, juniors, school students, parents and sporting clubs. There are opportunities to support the participation and empowerment of women and girls everywhere.

I have pointed to the fact that the government's work in the sport portfolio is part of a broader picture. The ACT government continues to lead reforms for gender equity in health, equal rights and domestic and family violence. Every young girl and woman in the ACT should have the chance to get active, to feel welcome and to be safe in sport.

These are a few of the achievements that the government is committed to working towards on building a more inclusive and equitable city than it already is, and I thank Ms Cody for bringing this motion to the Assembly today.

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (4.04): I do not doubt Ms Cody's passion for women's sport; you can feel it. But I do question what she is trying to achieve with this motion. I cannot help but think that we are two years in and Ms Cody has run out of things to do. This chamber could have been debating a bill which would have delivered affordable rentals to struggling families, but instead we had to sit here and listen to the most inane, rambling, vacuous speech from Ms Cody about this meaningless, motherhood-statement, waste-of-time motion.

I applaud what Minister Berry has done in this space. She has done an exceptional job and I think that she will continue to do an exceptional job. I do not really believe this motion is going to inspire or spur her on to change her course. Of course the government should be continuing to promote both community and professional women's sport, and we support that. They are doing a good job and of course we support that. Of course we should be working with the community and professional sporting organisations, and we support that.

Where I have to call out Ms Cody is her ridiculous suggestion that somehow, after Mr Ramsay and others have imposed a further tax on clubs through the additional community contributions levy, these new taxes are going to benefit sport and sporting clubs, whether they be women's or men's sporting clubs.

I need to also point out that the vast amounts of time, money and effort that clubs pump into sporting infrastructure—although that money does not count in regards to

spending on women's sport—these facilities are used by both men and women. I need to repeat this extremely important point when it comes to the final “calls on” in this motion.

Clubs give as much as they can to the community. They are not-for-profit organisations. If you impose this additional tax, it means that the clubs are not able to give the same amount to the organisations that they have up until this point. There will be sporting organisations, whether they be men's or women's, which miss out.

Ms Cody notes the enormous support that comes from clubs to local and community sports. We all agree on that. But the other reality I wish to point out to Ms Cody is that if we continue to shift the goalposts for our clubs—if we continue to squeeze the clubs through regulations, machine reductions, increased reporting, every other thing that we can come up with—it is absolutely inevitable that clubs will close. I have said it here in this chamber before and I will say it again: once a club has closed the doors, it ain't going to be giving any support to anyone.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong) (4.07): This is an opportunity to reflect on women's sport in the ACT. I intend to keep my remarks brief given there has been a long discussion already, but there are a number of elements to this motion. Firstly, it celebrates the ongoing success of some of Canberra's women's teams, and a number of members have made reference to that already. I was pleased to hear Ms Lawder reference the 3-0 start to the season for Canberra Caps. It is great to see them back on a roll after a tough season last year. Given their proud history, it is great to see them back in the winners' circle.

Various other teams have been mentioned today: Canberra United in the W League; the AFL Giants netball teams did extremely well for the ACT this year; and Canberra women's Rugby League has made significant efforts recently to give women in Canberra an opportunity to play the sport. Across the board we are seeing a surge in participation but particularly the profile of women's sport. I think this is very encouraging.

In preparing for this motion we did a bit of research on what sort of data was around. There is a very interesting report from VicHealth in 2015. They did a report on female participation in sport and physical activity, and it was a snapshot of the evidence. It made a number of interesting findings that are very important for us to reflect on as we think about how we promote female participation in sport. This is less about the elite teams and more about just general participation.

They found that, overall, females of all ages generally have lower physical activity participation rates than males. That is probably not surprising, but it is always good to put data behind these things. Four times as many females, so 44 per cent, are choosing to participate in non-organised or more flexible physical activity offerings compared to organised physical activity at just nine per cent.

Female participation through sporting or recreational clubs is lower compared to males. Compared to men, women place more importance on the social aspects of physical activity and are less motivated by performance outcomes such as building

strength. They found motives to participate can change and evolve over time. For example, a woman may begin physical activity for health reasons however find enjoyment in the social aspect or mental wellbeing and continue for those reasons.

The report also identified barriers to women participating in sport, and I will touch on a few because they inform the policy discussion very well. Many of them are intuitive but, as always, it is good to see these things backed up by research and reports. The list includes lack of time due to family commitments, including feeling guilty for spending time away from their young children or being required to take young children to appointments including, paradoxically, sporting events.

Teenagers and adolescents are influenced greatly by body image and experience greater dropout due to social and peer pressure on appearance. Cost and the inflexibility of payment structures and time structures are also issues. The report notes that this might explain why women prefer informal rather than organised or structured sports.

It reports women being intimidated by masculine environments of sporting teams and gyms, et cetera; the fear of injury; and the lack of confidence, knowledge and belief in their own ability. That is the idea that some sports academics talk about of physical literacy: simply not knowing how to be involved in sport because of lack of opportunity. The report also mentioned, as has been touched on in today's debate, the lack of facilities, particularly change rooms for women. This report is a very helpful academic guide to some of the issues that have been canvassed in today's debate and they give us a pointer on the things that we need to do to continue to promote women's participation in sport.

I note the various measures laid out by Ms Cody in the motion about some of the things that are happening in the ACT. It would be interesting to see some data of women's participation rates in the ACT compared to other places. I suspect, like with many of these other indicators, that the ACT is probably ahead, but the general trends we see in that Victorian survey are undoubtedly reflected in the ACT in terms of the differentiation between men and women.

Certainly in the various sporting activities I am involved in we are seeing greater numbers of women. I participated in a running event on the weekend in which there were more females on the field than males, and I was pretty delighted to hear that. I suspect it was because I was in the shorter event. There was a longer event afterwards and I suspect the reverse was the case in that event. Nonetheless, I was very happy to see that. Quite a few women I knew were at the event and I was pleased to see them out there just getting in and having a go.

More and more events are being created to provide other opportunities in the fields in which I participate, of triathlon and running, where traditionally there were just long events. Newer, shorter events are being introduced which are good entry points for people to participate. That is across the genders and the age groups, but I have noticed a lot more females are coming to those events. It is great to see event organisers thinking about how to encourage people to participate and then once people realise

they can do something they go on to perhaps more challenging events or remain happy with what they are doing.

We still have some work to do in this space. I acknowledge the various initiatives undertaken by the ACT government, including by the current minister, Minister Berry. I certainly support the calls in Ms Cody's motion that we continue to ensure equity and access to sporting facilities, think about how to deliver and encourage participation in women's sport, and look at ways of ensuring that there is more funding, including through the community clubs contribution scheme.

I do not think that is the only pathway, but it is one pathway where in government policy we can take the lead in making sure we are setting parameters that encourage more funding into women's sport. The Greens are pleased to support this motion today.

MS CODY (Murrumbidgee) (4.14), in reply: Again, I should not be surprised by some of the comments today, but I am. I thank Mr Rattenbury for some of his comments. Although Mr Rattenbury spoke about the data he looked up in the Victorian report, I agree that a lot of that stuff is intuitive. I know as a mother with young children that it was hard to find the time to participate in sport. I agree with Mr Rattenbury in that triathlon in particular, my current chosen sport, is very good at segregating the time frames to allow all members of a family and children to participate.

I am involved in triathlons that often happen over a two or three-day period to ensure that everyone can participate and that there are several distances for men, women, and children; for anyone who would like to undertake sport. It is those sorts of initiatives that can help; initiatives that can ensure that women who have caring responsibilities do not continue to feel guilty when they try to participate. We must ensure that we have conversations and initiatives where women do not feel ashamed that they might miss out on a school pick-up or they might miss out on taking their child to a sport.

It is really important that we continue to have these conversations in places like this, here in the Legislative Assembly, where we make laws and set policy around how we can fund women's sport in particular but sport in general and how we can think of better initiatives to encourage more women to participate.

As I said, I should not be surprised anymore in this place but, yet again, we heard Mr Parton's misogynistic comments about women's sport. Yes, I did call for opportunities we could look at through the community clubs contributions scheme and ways we can contribute more of that money to women's sport in particular. In 2016-17, 61 per cent of all community contributions made by the sector were to sport and recreation. But of that only about \$300,000 went to women's sport. That is a lot of money some may say, but it would be interesting to see how much of it went to men-only sport.

Ms Lawder referred to a number of teams that the Vikings, in particular, support. I know for a fact that a lot of those teams are men-only or mixed teams; they are not

specifically women's sport. Women undertake a lot of different sports, sports that are generally male dominated but also other sports that women are encouraged to play.

There are more things we can do, including ensuring that when our community contribution scheme is going towards sport it is not going to things like mobile phone payments, payments to elite players in sporting teams or payments for airport lounges. That is not what I see the scheme to be about. The scheme is there to ensure that members of our community can be supported, in the case of today's motion, to undertake sport, which is an important physical and mental health opportunity for all members of our community.

It is a shame that a motion about looking at ways we can continue to have conversations and continue to support women and girls to participate in all forms of sport is clouded by comments from the opposition. It is shamed by members of the opposition. Mr Parton, in particular, was shaming me. I am proud to stand here in this Assembly. I am proud of what the ACT government has done. I am proud of what Minister Berry has done. I am proud that I can stand there and we can turn a sod on an amazing leisure, sport and water facility in my electorate. It is wonderful, and I look forward to doing more of those things over the remainder of this term and hopefully into the future.

I thank members of the Assembly who have had positive comments about this motion. I look forward to working with the government to ensure that we continue to have conversations, that we continue to include programs to build women's sport in the ACT. I look forward to continuing to stand up for the community and fight for whatever it is that my community would like me to fight for.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Domestic and family violence

MRS KIKKERT (Ginninderra) (4.19): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) domestic and family violence negatively affects many who are exposed to it, including children;
- (b) children can be affected whether they are victims of the violence or are witnesses to it (including merely overhearing it);
- (c) several extensive reviews of published research have found that children who are affected by domestic and family violence experience significant negative impacts to their physical, emotional, social, behavioural, developmental and/or cognitive wellbeing and functioning;
- (d) these impacts may include irritability, sleep problems, fear of being alone, poor language development, impaired concentration, aggressiveness, antisocial behaviours, anxiety, depression, eating problems, low frustration tolerance, low academic performance, and being passive or withdrawn, amongst others;

- (e) these impacts are frequently compounded by unstable living arrangements as a result of fleeing the violence, leading to disruptions in home life, school, relationships with friends, and relationships with primary caregivers;
 - (f) the effects of domestic and family violence on culturally and linguistically diverse children can be further compounded by cultural and linguistic barriers as well as by discrimination and racism; and
 - (g) research suggests that children affected by domestic and family violence are more likely to become victims of domestic and family violence as adults and may also be at increased risk of perpetrating such violence;
- (2) further notes that:
- (a) the Domestic Violence Prevention Council (DVPC) recently released a report to the ACT Government summarising its second extraordinary meeting, held on 4 April 2018;
 - (b) this report acknowledges that “children witnessing and experiencing family and domestic violence have special needs, in addition to the needs of the adults around them”;
 - (c) this report finds that children affected by domestic and family violence “are often “invisible” in the ACT’s domestic and family violence system”;
 - (d) the DVPC is optimistic that improved results “could be accelerated across the ACT”, in part as a consequence of “work already underway”;
 - (e) the DVPC report recommends action in five priority areas;
 - (f) the ACT Government has already begun responding to the first recommendation by committing \$100 000 to assist the Coordinator General for Family Safety and the Children and Young People Commissioner in designing appropriate mechanisms for consulting children and young people to better understand their needs;
 - (g) this report further finds that “the full extent and impacts of the problem are not yet clear, due to limitations in ACT approaches to identifying clients and capturing case data”;
 - (h) robust data are necessary to inform domestic and family violence strategies for children and young people, including by identifying “unmet need”;
 - (i) the DVCP therefore recommends “that the ACT Government improve on the ACT’s use of data to inform strategies for children and young people”;
 - (j) the DVCP report notes that the ACT has already agreed to the National Data Collection and Reporting Framework, which will accomplish this end but will not be operational until 2022; and
 - (k) the DVCP report strongly suggests that much of the infrastructure and many of the resources necessary to accomplish this collection and use of data are already in place now; and
- (3) calls on the ACT Government to:

- (a) accept recommendation five of the DVCP report, regarding better collecting and using data and evidence to inform domestic and family violence strategies for children and young people;
- (b) commit to taking steps before the end of the 2018–19 financial year to begin implementing this recommendation; and
- (c) outline what they will be doing in response to recommendations 1–4 before the end of this financial year.

In recent years, the attention of those who research and work in the area of domestic and family violence has increasingly turned to children. Children and young people may be directly affected by violence in the home, as victims or, in many more cases, as witnesses to the violence.

Importantly, children who witness violence experience the same level of negative psychosocial outcomes as children who directly experience physical abuse. In fact, those who merely overhear family violence without ever having seen any actual acts of violence still experience the same trauma. For this reason it is best to refer to young people who have been affected by violence as this term acknowledges that all children may be impacted by the presence of domestic violence in their family, regardless of the nature of the violence.

Several extensive reviews of published research have established that children and young people who are affected by domestic and family violence may experience significant negative impacts on their physical, emotional, social, behavioural, developmental and/or cognitive wellbeing and functioning. These impacts may manifest in a large number of ways: antisocial behaviours, anxiety, depression, poor concentration, delayed language acquisition, eating problems, social withdrawal, sleeplessness, and so many more.

Children who are affected by violence in the home often struggle at school. It affects not just their behaviour and mental states but also their capacity to learn. In one study, children whose parents had reported intimate partner violence were found to have performed on average 12.2 percentile points lower than their peers.

The negative impacts of domestic and family violence on children and young people are too often compounded by the disruptions to stable home life that this violence often causes. When non-offending parents and their children find it necessary to physically flee the violence, this may certainly result in an increased sense of personal safety, but it can also result in a sense of loss and grief for the children who are separated from family members, friends, pets and schools whom they have learned to trust and rely on. It also tends to disrupt the links to community and cultural activities. Research links lack of stability in a child's life with an increased risk of contact with the youth justice system, an increased risk of future homelessness and an increased risk of future unemployment.

The effects of domestic and family violence on children and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds can be compounded by a number of factors. These include language and cultural barriers. In addition, the experience of

being a migrant or refugee is at best already destabilising in the life of a child. Children from refugee backgrounds, especially, may have even more complicating factors, including having witnessed extreme violence in the form of war and having previously been forced to flee their homes.

Obviously, these and other impacts can have lifelong consequences in the lives of many children if not adequately addressed. Research suggests, for example, that those who experience violence in the home when they are young are more likely as adults to experience violence in their own homes. The ACT's Coordinator-General for Family Safety recently stated that female children who witness violence at home double their risk of being victims of such violence when they are older.

Some studies suggest that witnessing or being the victim of violence as a child has a direct impact on later perpetration of partner violence. Other studies have called this linkage into question. In any case, we have enough clear evidence that witnessing or experiencing violence in the family negatively impacts many of the children affected by it in significant and lasting ways.

It is in the context of this increasing understanding, both here and overseas, that the ACT's Domestic Violence Prevention Council called an extraordinary meeting this past April significantly to move the conversation towards including children who have witnessed or experienced personal and family violence. The council's report, released at the end of August, makes a number of important observations.

First, young people who have experienced violence in the home have special needs in addition to the needs of the adults around them. This is an important point, Madam Assistant Speaker. For many years, we seem to have operated under the assumption that caring for the needs of the parent has automatically met the needs of the children. But children are individuals and in many, though not all, cases, they may have their own needs. Responses to violence can almost never be a one-size-fits-all.

The DVPC report's second main observation is:

Many at risk children and young people are "invisible" in the ACT's domestic and family violence system.

This observation strongly resonates within me. As I have noted once or twice in the past, I grew up in a home that was plagued by domestic violence for much of my childhood. From my earliest memories, my father abused my mother and my four siblings. This violence did not stop when we migrated to Australia but after some time our mother made the difficult decision to rescue us. She managed to save up the bond for a small flat and, with the assistance of a borrowed shopping trolley, we quickly packed up our few possessions and fled, pushing our belongings in our shopping trolley.

Very few of the people who knew me as a child would have known about this abuse. As is so often the case with domestic violence, it was not something we talked about. I certainly did not tell my classmates or teachers at school, where, as a migrant, I

struggled each day just trying to understand what people were saying to me in English. Nor did we tell our neighbours or family back home.

Though mum sometimes rang the police to ask for help when dad was outside our new flat shouting, I do not think that the good officers who responded ever really saw me or my siblings, or understood clearly the impact that all of this was having on each one of us. They dealt with my mum, but never with us kids. In essence, we children and our distress were invisible. I know from first-hand experience the physical, emotional, social, behavioural, developmental and cognitive impacts of domestic violence on children. I experienced all of them, and I did so in complete silence.

The DVPC report recommends “systemic changes” “to enable system-wide cultural change and to build the evidence base required for credible and accountable action”. The report then recommends action in five priority areas. I am happy that the government has responded quickly to the first of these recommendations, committing \$100,000 to assist the Coordinator-General for Family Safety and the Children and Young People Commissioner to co-design an appropriate framework that will allow for consulting actual children and young people in order to better understand their needs.

This design process is an important part of implementing this recommendation. As experts have noted, discussing traumatic events with a child victim can easily re-traumatise the child or even cause further harm. The Children and Young People Commissioner has publicly acknowledged this risk and is committed to developing a framework, aided by those with professional expertise, that allows for a consultation process that will protect those who have already been victimised by domestic and family violence.

The immediate response to this recommendation signals that the government understands the issue and is committed to finding a way to implement what is a rather challenging proposal. No doubt there will be obstacles going forward, but the process has been started, and no-one at this point in time can fairly question the government’s commitment.

I have moved this motion today because I hope to see a similar response to recommendation 5 in the DVPC report. As the report itself notes, an essential element in making sure that children and young people who are affected by domestic violence move from “invisible” to visible is the collection and utilisation of good data.

Currently, as explained in the DVPC report, there are limitations in the ACT approaches to identifying clients and capturing case data. This lack of data masks the true extent and nature of unmet need. This low visibility in official data about domestic and family violence occurs in part because children are not considered the primary clients from the perspective of services being delivered. Fixing this problem is identified in the report as “crucial”.

The good news is that in the opinion of the report’s authors, the ACT is in a very good position to begin implementing this recommendation straightaway. The ACT’s human services agencies have already developed a common dataset that addresses many of

the DVPC's earlier recommendations regarding collection of domestic and family violence data in the ACT. In addition, in preparation for the national data collection and reporting framework, which is meant to be operational in four years time, the ABS has already developed a framework to guide the collection of this data, including advice on implementing data collection storage and reporting.

In light of these facts, it would, in my opinion, be a shame not to move forward as quickly as possible on this recommendation. And it would certainly be a shame to put off till the launch of the national data collection and reporting framework in 2022 the crucial data collecting that will help us give visibility to the now invisible children and young people who are affected by domestic and family violence.

As one of those former invisible children, I therefore call upon this government to take decisive action, as it did with recommendation 1, and commit to better collection and use of data and evidence to inform domestic and family violence strategies for children and young people, with a commitment to begin taking steps no later than the end of this financial year. There may be obstacles, but this recommendation is neither controversial nor inherently risky.

The rest of the recommendations in the DVPC's report are likewise important. I therefore call upon the government to report back to this Assembly by the end of 2018-19 with an outline of what they will be doing in response to these recommendations. Madam Assistant Speaker, I commend this motion to the Assembly.

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 Sport and Recreation and Minister for Women) (4.33): I thank Mrs Kikkert for this motion today, which highlights the important role that the Domestic Violence Prevention Council performs for the ACT. The DVPC not only provides a very important role in advising me, the minister responsible for the prevention of domestic and family violence, which they do so wholeheartedly, with passion and drawing on their expertise, but also importantly plays a critical role for the whole of the ACT and has done so for many years.

It is important to cast our minds back to that first extraordinary meeting held in Canberra in 2015 following a number of very distressing cases of domestic and family violence resulting in the death of a number of Canberrans. This historical meeting, of course, was integral to the government's future commitments in this very important area. Like the first extraordinary meeting, the second one in April was cross-party, cross-government and across our community and gathered buy-in from all quarters. As I said, the work that flowed from the 2015 extraordinary meeting helped to inform the government's unprecedented investment in this issue.

In 2016, again, as members may remember, the government formally responded with the ACT government response to family violence and announced the safer families levy, which would raise a dedicated revenue source to commit an additional \$21.42 million to new initiatives and important reform work. This work and the additional commitments continue and has now risen to more than \$24 million over

four years. The levy has funded some really important programs such as the establishment of the Coordinator-General for Family Safety, providing new money for interpreting services, the DPP and national law reform, additional funding for front-line services to meet increasing demands and new programs such as room for change, to name a few.

As I reported in the safer families statement earlier this year, there is much progress to be proud of and much work to do. And we remain committed to continuing this important work. We as a government and as a community are striving together to meet the needs of those who are impacted by violence and we have acknowledged that the system is not perfect. It is not wrong; it is just not completely right. It is working hard for those who need it and, importantly, we know what many acknowledge that there is no easy or quick fix for such a complex and challenging issue, particularly when we know people want different solutions and not just a mainstream legal response all the time.

When I started doing this work to try to fix the issue I was told by the experts and leaders in the sector that you just cannot throw money at this and expect it to be resolved overnight; the change will take time. Ultimately it needs to be sustained work for generational change when you consider that we are talking about changing the behaviour of people in their homes.

We will not give up, though, and the point is: we need to keep trying new things. That is why reports like the recent DVPC report about improving supports for young children and people are so important, and we welcome them. The expert advice of these people from the sector is that the system could be better, and these are the sorts of things you might do to make it better, make it more robust. We cannot be afraid of these reports or shirk their findings. No-one should seek to politicise them. We do not want anyone to be hesitant of commissioning similar reports or participating in meetings like the extraordinary meeting because of the realities that it might raise.

I would also like to acknowledge that the extraordinary meeting in April was attended by a group of committed policymakers and leaders from across the ACT: several ministers, there were four in attendance at that meeting, many directors-general, CEOs and community sector leaders, front-line workers, public servants and people with lived experience. The calibre of attendees was a testament to the work that the DVPC had done in the lead-up to this meeting. But it also evident that those who attended are committed to ongoing change in how we can do better.

I move the amendment in my name, which I have had circulated:

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

“(1) notes that:

- (a) domestic and family violence negatively affects many who are exposed to it, including children;
- (b) children can be affected whether they are victims of the violence or are witnesses to it (including merely overhearing it);

- (c) several extensive reviews of published research have found that children who are affected by domestic and family violence experience significant negative impacts to their physical, emotional, social, behavioural, developmental and/or cognitive wellbeing and functioning;
 - (d) these impacts may include irritability, sleep problems, fear of being alone, poor language development, impaired concentration, aggressiveness, antisocial behaviours, anxiety, depression, eating problems, low frustration tolerance, low academic performance, and being passive or withdrawn, amongst others;
 - (e) these impacts are frequently compounded by unstable living arrangements as a result of fleeing the violence, leading to disruptions in home life, school, relationships with friends, and relationships with primary caregivers;
 - (f) the effects of domestic and family violence on culturally and linguistically diverse children can be further compounded by cultural and linguistic barriers as well as by discrimination and racism; and
 - (g) research suggests that children affected by domestic and family violence are more likely to become victims of domestic and family violence as adults and may also be at increased risk of perpetrating such violence;
- (2) further notes that:
- (a) in 2016, the ACT Government established a new Safer Families Levy to fund \$21.42 million of new initiatives to tackle domestic and family violence including the establishment of a Coordinator General for Family Safety;
 - (b) the Family Safety Hub was launched in May 2018 following a co-design process involving government, non-government, front line and policy workers, and people with lived experience;
 - (c) the first Family Safety Hub challenge took place focusing on prevention and early intervention of domestic and family violence for pregnant women and new parents;
 - (d) on 4 April 2018, the Domestic Violence Prevention Council (DVPC) held an Extraordinary Meeting to discuss the needs of children and young people affected by family and domestic violence, including sexual assault. This meeting was attended by Ministers, Directors-General, senior public servants, CEOs and leaders of community organisations, a range of stakeholders and people with a lived experience of violence;
 - (e) on 12 October 2018, the DVPC and the ACT Government jointly released the report summarising the findings of the extraordinary meeting;
 - (f) this report acknowledges that ‘children witnessing and experiencing family and domestic violence have special needs, in addition to the needs of the adults around them’;

- (g) this report finds that children affected by domestic and family violence ‘are often “invisible” in the ACT’s domestic and family violence system’, noting that this finding mirrors the experience of other jurisdictions, and is reflected in the prioritisation of children in the Fourth Action Plan for the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022;
 - (h) the DVPC is optimistic that improved results ‘could be accelerated across the ACT’, in part as a consequence of ‘work already underway’;
 - (i) the DVPC report recommends action in five priority areas;
 - (j) the ACT Government has welcomed the DVPC Extraordinary Meeting Report and has already begun responding to the first recommendation by committing \$100 000 for the Coordinator General for Family Safety and the Children and Young People Commissioner to undertake consultation with children and young people to better understand their needs and provide insights to inform and improve responses for children and young people impacted by family violence;
 - (k) this report further finds that ‘the full extent and impacts of the problem are not yet clear, due to limitations in ACT approaches to identifying clients and capturing case data’;
 - (l) robust data are necessary to inform domestic and family violence strategies for children and young people, including by identifying ‘unmet need’;
 - (m) the DVPC therefore recommends ‘that the ACT Government improve on the ACT’s use of data to inform strategies for children and young people’;
 - (n) the DVPC report notes that the ACT has already agreed to the National Data Collection and Reporting Framework for family, domestic and sexual violence. The Australian Bureau of Statistics is leading the development and staggered implementation of the framework, in partnership with all Australian governments. It is anticipated that the framework will be fully operationally nationally by 2022; and
 - (o) the DVPC report highlighted that there are several key initiatives currently being undertaken across government that will enhance existing domestic and family violence data. These initiatives will augment existing government infrastructure and resources to inform strategies for children and young people; and
- (3) calls on the ACT Government to provide a considered whole-of-government response to the recommendations in the DVPC final report for cabinet consideration and report back to the Assembly on the Government response, and progress by the end of June 2019.”.

My amendment has acknowledged some of the additional detail about the work that the government has been doing since the first meeting in 2015. I have also made some

amendments to the (3) because whilst I do not want to sit here and pre-empt the outcome of the government's consideration of this report—and as many of us in this place have our own lived experience with domestic and family violence and sexual assaults, and this is what gives us the impetus to do better—I do want Mrs Kikkert to know that the government is committed to doing our best to ensure that the final response to this report is a whole-of-government commitment and is well considered going forward.

Mrs Kikkert and those opposite will probably know that this work does not occur in just one area of government. Most of the work around domestic and family violence and caring for children occurs across multiple areas of government. Whilst I am sure that the government will respond positively to the recommendations that have been put before us by the DVPC we do need to consider the work that is currently underway, and there may a need for a staggered approach to some of the other recommendations in the report.

Just to recap briefly on the recommendations of this report, they included consulting with children and young people to enhance understanding of children and young people's needs and preferences in order to assist with designing services and responses; therapeutic services for children and young people to increase the number and availability of therapeutic services for children and young people and improve visibility and referral pathways of services; to reduce trauma and stress for children and young people who are involved in the justice system by establishing intermediaries and additional vulnerable witness measures and to improve sharing of information and evidence regarding children and young people between the ACT and federal courts; training in capacity building to improve domestic and family violence training and capacity for people who are key touchpoints for children and young people; and in data monitoring reporting to improve the data capacity of the ACT government to identify, respond to and monitor children and young people who are at risk of or are exposed to and/or experiencing domestic and family violence.

As I said, importantly some of this work has already started. Again, as the amendment notes, there is a commitment of \$100,000 of early money to respond to recommendation 1, and this work will allow the Coordinator-General for Family Safety and the Children and Young People Commissioner to work together to undertake consultation with children and young people to better understand their needs and provide insights to inform and improve responses for children and young people impacted by family violence. Of course, this work will need to be carefully considered but I am confident that the commissioner and the Coordinator-General for Family Safety will be able to do the best work in this area.

I am confident that this process will be dynamic and will be a worthwhile project. I look forward to seeing what it produces. As I found during the future of education consultation, it is absolutely vital to talk to children and young people and obtain new insights into how we can do better in developing policy and programs for the future.

This insight-gathering research project will be the first step in giving children and young people a voice in policy and service design and will generate insights to inform the family safety hub challenge in 2019, which is to co-design and focus on the needs

of children and young people. The insights we gather will provide early action and announcements in response to the final report.

In terms of what else is underway that responds to this work, I am happy to advise that the office of the Chief Digital Officer has established the ACT centre of data excellence to build data analytics capabilities across the ACT public service. As part of its first tranche of reforms, the centre of data excellence team is in-posted to the office of the Coordinator-General for Family Safety to implement a pilot project aimed at automating existing family violence intervention program manual processes. This will assist with early identification of those at highest risk of family violence by providing data more frequently, consistently and accurately to those who need it.

The office of the Coordinator-General for Family Safety is leading the whole-of-government delivery of the domestic and family violence training to front-line workers across the health, education, community services and justice sectors, and it will commence in 2018-19. A comprehensive capability framework has been developed to ensure a sustainable approach to the delivery of training to front-line workers that recognises and builds upon existing training structures and workforce needs.

As the amendment states, I anticipate that we will be able to report on the government's response over the coming months and we will also report on progress towards meeting the recommendations across all our government. I again thank Mrs Kikkert for bringing this motion to the Assembly for this important discussion today.

MS LE COUTEUR (Murrumbidgee) (4.43): I thank Mrs Kikkert for moving this motion today. I appreciate that this is an issue that she cares deeply about and, as she has just said, that she knows about this issue personally.

This is not, and it should not be—and I do not think it is in this Assembly—a partisan issue. I note and support the amendments that have been put forward by the Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, and I am hoping that they are acceptable to Mrs Kikkert, although I do not know.

Firstly, I want to praise the critically important work of the Domestic Violence Prevention Council and thank them for their report on the outcomes of the extraordinary meeting held in April this year. The DVPC is to be commended on the high level of stakeholder participation at the meeting, which included senior government and community sector representatives and several members of the Assembly, including ministers.

This is, indeed, an opportunity to continue to focus on the issue and to progress the work that commenced in 2016 with the introduction of the family safety levy, a levy which meant that, notionally at least, every household in the ACT is making a contribution. The issue of family violence is an issue that concerns all citizens. I would like to commend the Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence for her concerted efforts in this space and to acknowledge that her commitment to this has been unwavering.

I think that the true extent and pervasive nature of domestic and family violence is underestimated. The impacts of it are far-reaching. Mrs Kikkert's speech was a moving example of how it has affected one person and one family and how it has gone out from that. But I know that in Australia there are thousands, probably millions, of stories that are not the same but about the same issue. I am aware of other people in my circle of friends and acquaintances who have been impacted by family and domestic violence as children, and it has marked their life forever. They are undoubtedly still suffering from things that happened to them as children. I have to totally agree with Mrs Kikkert that it is vital to focus on the impacts for children and young people who either witnessed or were subject to family violence occurring in the home in which they lived and possibly left.

This week's apology to the victims of institutional child sexual abuse highlights the extent to which child sexual abuse has prevailed in this nation, but of course it did not include or focus on children who were sexually abused in the home. This is another quite pervasive form of domestic and family violence. It is an indicator that we still have a long way to go in this space. We all know that statistically the most common perpetrators of child abuse, including child sexual abuse, are people related to or known to the child. I fear very much that child sexual abuse in institutions is but the tip of the iceberg.

We as a community must be prepared to examine the ills that plague our society, to look at the areas which we have traditionally not acknowledged or talked about because they are too uncomfortable. That includes the perpetration of and exposure to domestic and family violence and its impacts on children and young people. It requires a focus that it does not have at this stage.

The DVPC report clearly outlines that children and young people exposed to domestic and family violence are often invisible in ACT service systems, and the supports and services that provide a crucial response to adults do not adequately recognise children and young people as clients in their own right.

This is an issue which has been ongoing in the homelessness sector for many years. Crisis support services that are set up to assist women and their children fleeing violence are not specifically funded to work with the children but, of course, as in Mrs Kikkert's situation, the women come with multiple children in tow. That is a major reason why many women actually decide to change the situation they are living in.

We know that investment and focus in this area will have the greatest opportunity for influencing and reducing intergenerational cycles of abuse and the greatest opportunity to change the trajectory for children who are growing up in households where abuse occurs. An important element of this is to ensure that the voices of children and young people are heard.

A focus on children and young people will assist with reducing the potential for them to go on to become either perpetrators of such violence or victims of it. We know that growing up in family violence households normalises the behaviour. Children and

young people need to get a strong message that this kind of behaviour is absolutely not acceptable, and there are other ways in which to have relationships; okay, relationships with disagreements, but there are alternatives to this sort of behaviour where there are disagreements. Children need to realise that there are alternatives and they need to realise that despite the reality they are in, while it is real, there are alternatives. They need to realise that they do have a right to be safe, even if that is not a right that is currently being afforded to them.

This is outside the scope of this motion but, in talking about this, it is hard not to think about the children on Nauru and in other detention centres where the Australian government is arguably perpetuating institutional child abuse.

Unless children and young people are supported to deal with the inevitable trauma arising from their exposure to domestic and family violence and child sexual abuse, society will continue to grapple with this wicked problem. Not only will directly supporting a child or a young person make their individual life better; it will actually make society better, because it is going to improve their chances of going on to be a participatory member of the community. We all stand to benefit from this. It seriously reduces their chances of going on and perpetuating these cycles in the future.

It is clear that in this jurisdiction, a human rights compliant jurisdiction, we must uphold the human rights of children and young people. The ACT Human Rights Act states at clause 11(2):

Every child has the right to the protection needed by the child because of being a child, without distinction or discrimination of any kind.

Again, what we are doing to children overseas does come to mind.

I note that the next clause in the ACT Human Rights Act refers to the right to privacy and reputation, which says:

Everyone has the right—

- (a) not to have his or her privacy, family, home or correspondence interfered with unlawfully or arbitrarily; and
- (b) not to have his or her reputation unlawfully attacked.

Taking these rights into consideration highlights the complexity regarding the better collection and use of data, which is why I support an amendment to a considered whole-of-government response rather than recommendation 5, which relates to using data and evidence.

I very much look forward, as I am sure the whole Assembly does, to the government's full response, and recognise the already established commitment to addressing the issues. In the minister's own words, quoted in the DVPC report:

... funding alone is not the answer. Real change requires strong leadership ...

But, of course, funding is part of the answer.

I want to add that the answer that we need in the ACT and everywhere else requires collaboration across service systems. The kids whom we are seeing in care and protection, out of home care, juvenile justice and then the adult criminal justice systems are the same children in many places. These are the same children whom we will be seeing or are seeing needing mental health supports and other health services, and they are indubitably the same children who have disengaged from education. Breaking these cycles of violence and abuse will contribute to breaking the cycle of disadvantage. Ultimately, a stronger, more resilient, fairer, more positive, more humane community will result, the sort of community that I am absolutely sure everyone here in this Assembly wants. I support the motion as amended.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Disability, Minister for Children, Youth and Families, Minister for Employment and Workplace Safety, Minister for Government Services and Procurement, Minister for Urban Renewal) (4.53): I thank Mrs Kikkert for bringing forward the motion before us today and I indicate that I will be supporting Minister Berry's amendment. It is timely for us to focus on children and young people today, the day that Australia marks Universal Children's Day as part of Children's Week, our national celebration of children's rights, talents and citizenship.

Core to the Convention on the Rights of the Child is the principle that the best interests of the child must be paramount in any decision that is made or any action that is taken that may affect children. The focal point of this year's Children's Week is article 12, that children's views and opinions are respected.

The ACT government is committed to ensuring that the voices of children and young people are heard across a range of policy areas. Indeed, I had the great pleasure of providing an initial response to the recommendations of the youth assembly recently, a session I know that Mrs Kikkert also attended. I look forward to receiving the final recommendations of the assembly shortly.

In respect of domestic and family violence, this commitment to hearing the voices of children and young people is evidenced by Minister Berry's recent announcement of new funding of \$100,000 as part of the response to the report from the Domestic Violence Prevention Council, DVPC, arising from the extraordinary meeting held in April this year. The funding is for a project to give a stronger voice to children and young people in the design of policies and services.

Jointly led by the Children and Young People Commissioner and the Coordinator-General for Family Safety, the project responds to the report's recommendation that the government undertake specific consultation with children and young people to learn from their experiences and to consider the types of services that would best empower them and promote their recovery from the impacts of violence.

As the Deputy Chief Minister and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence has already articulated, this government is absolutely committed to the prevention of domestic and family violence and to tackling it in a real and meaningful way. I know that this is a commitment shared across the community and the Assembly. I saw this on display at the DVPC meeting, which focused on the needs of children and young people affected by domestic and family violence, including sexual violence.

This extraordinary meeting, as Minister Berry has said, built on the historic gathering held in 2015 which identified key issues in the ACT relating to addressing domestic and family violence, including sexual assault, and informed the development of the new initiatives and strategic reforms underpinned by the safer families levy.

In spite of the ACT government's significant work to address domestic and family violence in our community, we know that children are still being profoundly affected by violence in the home even when the violence is not directed at them. We also know that children can be lost in the response to domestic and family violence and that the long-term trauma and impacts of violence are not widely understood by parents or the system.

In my own portfolio of children, youth and families significant work has been and is being done to ensure that we better respond to the needs of children and young people impacted by violence in their families. Family and domestic violence, alongside drug and alcohol abuse and mental health, is one of the three most frequent reasons for involvement by child and youth protection services in the lives of children and families.

It is well known and documented that children who have been exposed to domestic violence are vulnerable to trauma reactions and poorer social and wellbeing outcomes in the longer term. But our systems are still grappling with how best to respond to the risks and impacts of cumulative harm to children and young people from witnessing domestic and family violence.

Child and youth protection services works with families affected by domestic and family violence through ensuring the children's safety as the first priority. Child and youth protection services staff are trained in trauma-informed practice. CYPS works closely with ACT Policing and the Domestic Violence Crisis Service to ensure that women with children who are experiencing domestic violence are supported by CYPS to help keep their children safe.

The ACT government and community have made significant progress in how we approach family and domestic violence in the ACT. In the wake of Bradyn Dillon's tragic death in 2016, the government acted quickly to commission the Review into the System Level Responses to Family Violence in the ACT headed by Laurie Glanfield AM.

The government provided a comprehensive response to the Glanfield inquiry in the ACT government response to family violence, which also responded to the other reports. Regular progress reports against this response have been provided to the

Assembly. Part of the Glanfield inquiry, of course, specifically focused on child and youth protection services. Key themes included decision-making, quality assurance and oversight.

CYPS has invested significantly in delivering high quality family and domestic violence training to staff. The training program is run in partnership with the DVCS. A range of other partners were also present at the training program, including the Australian Federal Police, Legal Aid, Office of the Coordinator-General for Family Safety and ACT corrections. The training equips staff with the understanding and skills to respond to family violence in the context of child protection and youth justice work.

The establishment of the case analysis team in CYPS in October 2016 has been a key platform for improving decision-making and quality of case management. This team continues to provide independent analysis of individual cases at key decision-making points. The ACT government has also committed funding to develop a new client management system for CYPS, the child and family centres and the child development service.

The new client management system, known as the child and youth record information system, CYRIS, will replace a legacy client information system enabling easier exchange of information across government agencies. The new system will make it easier to collect, report and exchange information or data about matters relating to children and young people who experience domestic and family violence and develop tools that support this work. My understanding at this stage is that it is expected that CYRIS will be in place across CYPS in early 2019.

Plans are also underway to build interfaces that will improve the exchange of information about vulnerable children and young people in near real-time, including with police and education. These system improvements will assist in delivering near to real-time exchange of information about children and young people identified as being at risk in the child protection system, including those who have experienced family violence.

I recognise that all these changes and reforms are critical to improving child and youth protection services and how it responds to children and young people who are experiencing, or who have experienced, domestic and family violence. But I also recognise that the ideal and most appropriate response for the vast majority of children and young people who experience family violence is not, nor should it be, the tertiary child protection system.

Preventing violence is clearly the most effective and desirable outcome and where this is not possible, intervening early in the life of a problem must be our aim. This is why the ACT government has committed to the early support by design initiative, an ambitious 10-year plan to shift the human services system towards early intervention and prevention.

The long-term objective of this work is to improve life outcomes in three priority areas: families who have experienced domestic and family violence, vulnerable

children and their families with a focus on early childhood, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and children. This work is driven by a clear recognition that, despite considerable spending on human services, many families still experience poor outcomes. This is because much of our spending is too often targeted at the crisis end of the system where services have less of an impact on changing people's life trajectories.

We will improve this by increasing the capacity across the system to provide early support so that children and families can get the help that they need before issues, including the effects of domestic and family violence, become entrenched. The 10-year plan will shift government and non-government services to a commissioning for outcomes environment. This includes developing integrated services and systems.

The approach recognises that families do not experience their lives, including the impacts and problems of domestic and family violence, in silos. So responses and supports should not be provided through service silos either. Instead, we know that we need to work holistically with families to support their wellbeing rather than responding to isolated issues.

The early support initiative will ensure that the human services system is better equipped to work with families earlier, to respond to negative impacts earlier, and in the longer term reduce the impact and transmission of intergenerational disadvantage and improve whole-of-life outcomes. Of course, all of this will depend on better data, as both Mrs Kikkert's motion and Ms Berry's amendment reflect.

Ms Berry has spoken in some detail about the steps underway to improve the collection and use of data, and this will be critical in understanding the impacts of changes that are made, the outcomes that our service system is delivering and how we can improve services over the long term, and measure those changes.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the significant effort of people working in the family violence, child protection and service sector every day, the people who are at the front-line of our response to the significant social problem of family and domestic violence. I would also like to thank the members of the Domestic Violence Prevention Council for pulling together the extraordinary meeting.

I thank everyone who attended and participated, particularly the young woman who sat at the table that I was on as part of the round tables. She shared her own experience of the impacts of domestic and family violence on her life as a child in the system whose voice had not been adequately heard. I commend Ms Berry's amendment to the Assembly.

MRS KIKKERT (Ginninderra) (5.03): I thank those who have spoken to this motion and its intent. I am grateful for the opportunity to move it. I would be dishonest if I did not say that I was disappointed in this government's unwillingness to make a firm commitment today to implement recommendation 5 from the DVPC's report. I understand that recommendations need to be considered and responded to thoughtfully. At the same time, the ACT government has had this report for nearly two months already.

Judging by Minister Berry's amendment to paragraph 3, it sounds as if the report has not yet been discussed in cabinet in any depth. I would have thought that such discussion should be a high priority. The report is crystal clear. Kids who are witnessing and/or experiencing domestic and family violence are essentially invisible in the ACT's domestic and family violence system. A clear commitment to improving the collection and use of data is needed to help fix this problem. The ACT is well placed, we are told, to be able to do so.

The recently announced provision of \$100,000 to begin implementing recommendation 1 from the report is evidence that this government could act today if it wanted to. I am surprised that it does not see this opportunity as more of a priority. This is precisely the reason I moved this motion today: to get the government to commit to action as quickly as possible that will help remove the invisibility of the territory's children and young people who are impacted by domestic and family violence.

These kids need rescuing at all levels, and they need it now. Our children are far too valuable and important for us to needlessly delay. I know that we have kids in Canberra who are suffering in silence, as I did when I was their age. They deserve to be seen in the official data so that we can offer them the service they need. Without this data, there will be more kids suffering in silence.

I acknowledge that the government will be reporting back to the Assembly on this matter no later than the end of June. I encourage the discussions needed to take place quickly so that we might have a response long before then, if possible.

Amendment agreed to.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

Adjournment

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

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Environment—climate change

MS LE COUTEUR (Murrumbidgee) (5.07): I draw the attention of the Assembly to a very important report put out on 8 October by the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. It looked at the situation and basically said that, although we have been aiming as a worldwide community for an upper maximum of two degrees for climate change, we really need to change our aim to 1.5 degrees Celsius because that half degree would make a huge difference by significantly reducing the risks of drought, floods, extreme heat and poverty for hundreds of millions of people. Going to 1.5 rather than two could possibly prevent corals from being completely eradicated and ease pressure on the Arctic.

It is a wake-up call for all of us. The two degrees was an arbitrary concept; it is an uncontrolled experiment in our climate. The world is currently one degree warmer than it was in pre-industrial levels, and we all know that has made an impact. Right now New South Wales—which, effectively, from a climate, agricultural and geographical point of view is where we live—is 100 per cent in drought. Around the world there are hurricanes, record droughts in Cape Town, and forest fires in the Arctic, which is unbelievable to me.

The IPCC have said it is very clear. They reviewed 6,000 works and they said the change that could be caused by even half a degree more is a revelation. They can see there is a difference, and it is a substantial difference. At 1.5 degrees, rather than two degrees, the proportion of the global population subject to water stress could be 50 per cent lower. Food scarcity would be less of a problem, and hundreds of millions of people would have a lower risk of climate-related poverty.

Looking at the natural world, insects, vital for the pollination of crops, are almost twice as likely to lose their habitat at two degrees compared to 1.5 degrees. Sea level rises would affect 10 million people more by 2100 if there were an extra five-degree increase. To achieve this, the IPCC says carbon pollution would need to be cut by 45 degrees by 2030, compared with the 20-degree cut required for the two-degree pathway, and it would need to come down to zero by 2050.

The positive thing is that the ACT's goals are currently consistent with this, but we need to work harder both for ourselves and to make sure the rest of Australia and the rest of the world do the same. We have a particularly hard task because on a per capita basis our emissions are well above average for the world and average for Australia. We also consume a lot of things where the emissions are looked at from the point of view of where they are produced.

One of the things we need to look at is agriculture. I have a CSIRO report that shows that globally 1.6 per cent of human-related greenhouse gases come from farm ruminants—that is, cattle, sheep and goats. This is a significant issue. Ruminants are well-known for their methane production, and that is about 30 times more harmful than CO₂. If we are going to get our greenhouse emissions down to zero—and the IPCC makes it quite clear we need to do that as soon as possible, and definitely by 2045—we are going to have to reduce down to zero our emissions from agriculture and livestock production. The CSIRO makes clear that even at present rises we are reducing the wheat production in Australia, compared to what it would have been had we not had the existing impacts of climate change. (*Time expired.*)

Belconnen Community Service

MRS KIKKERT (Ginninderra) (5.12): I rise today to thank the good people at Belconnen Community Service for all they do to support Canberrans who live in the Belconnen district, most of whom also live within my electorate of Ginninderra. I am especially grateful for the Belconnen Community Service 10/10 project that has taken place each year in October since 2012. Early this past Friday morning, dozens of volunteers gathered at St James Anglican Church in Holt. We began the day with

freshly cooked bacon and egg rolls, safety training and a brief orientation. We were then divided into 10 teams and sent out to 10 different homes in the community for a backyard blitz.

Belconnen residents who are struggling to stay on top of their gardens are invited to apply for this program, and priority is given to applications where the occupants are at risk of eviction or homelessness due to the current condition of the garden; an overgrown garden presents a high fire risk; physical limitations prevent the occupants from maintaining outdoor areas; or current conditions prevent the family from using the outside area.

Life has a way of getting on top of people sometimes and it can be extremely difficult to get back on top of tasks. The 10/10 program is a brilliant opportunity, not unlike a number of popular reality television shows, to help people who are overwhelmed for one reason or another get back into a position where they can cope. This is a great opportunity for people in our community who need a helping hand. It is also a great opportunity for all of the volunteers who pitch in and make a real difference in the lives of others.

Volunteers this past Friday included staff from Belconnen Community Service and Housing ACT. We were joined as well by a group of students from Kaleen high school and various volunteers from throughout the community. I was also grateful that two of my staff put their hands up to labour alongside us. The team I was assigned to was sent to a house with gardens that were tremendously overgrown. All of the volunteers cheerfully went to work and tackled the difficult task of pruning, cleaning and clearing. When we had finished, the joy on the owner's face was wonderful. Her grandchildren were so happy to run around in the restored backyard.

I wish to publicly thank Mandy Green, the acting Chief Executive Officer of Belconnen Community Service, along with all her staff. A special thankyou goes to Graham McKerchar, BCS's transport program manager, who coordinates the event each year. He made sure we were well equipped with mowers, whipper snippers, gloves, skips, water and snacks, with teams well matched to each home's particular needs. I also want to thank the volunteers from ACT Housing who prepared not only the much-needed breakfast but also cooked a delicious lunch for all of us.

I believe strongly in the importance of community. This past Friday's 10/10 program is a perfect example of what happens when people band together to help their neighbours. I think many of us want to do that, but it can certainly help when an organisation like BCS makes it so easy and enjoyable to get involved. I am already looking forward to next year's project and wholeheartedly invite community-minded Belconnen residents to join us in this act of service.

White Ribbon—reproductive rights

MS CODY (Murrumbidgee) (5.16): Tonight I rise shocked. Recently White Ribbon, an organisation that many of us are aware of, decided to celebrate Queensland's decriminalisation of abortion by withdrawing their support on reproductive rights and declaring themselves agnostic on safe, legal termination.

As many people are aware, White Ribbon is an organisation of men supporting women who suffer domestic violence. Since that announcement was made, White Ribbon's CEO—he is their new CEO—issued a kind of back-pedal and declared that they will now be consulting with their stakeholders. “Consulting with their stakeholders” is an interesting term. The irony that an organisation like White Ribbon, which is allegedly dedicated to men taking a staunch position on violence against women, can flip-flop on women's reproductive rights is interesting, to say the very least.

As I said, we have been told by journalists that White Ribbon are going to consult with their stakeholders. I am unsure as to who those stakeholders may be. Their website states that 170 ambassadors who identify as men and 119 advocates who identify as women—I am sure we all know some of those ambassadors and that they are 100 per cent dedicated to the cause of White Ribbon—are standing up to support a grassroots movement dedicated to opposing men's violence against women.

I know that some supporters of White Ribbon have come out in the media and have opposed and felt betrayed and angry about White Ribbon's initial stance on this matter. I do hope that some of the recent media articles that are claiming White Ribbon have completely done a backflip on this are correct, because it would be a shame to stand here and see an organisation such as White Ribbon withdraw their support for women's reproductive rights.

I know that in February 2017 a former White Ribbon ambassador, then White Ribbon CEO Libby Davies, said that a handful of ambassadors resigned on religious grounds because White Ribbon had posted for the first time their support for reproductive freedom and that those who remained, it was hoped, did so because they either supported that stance or were unfazed.

I would like to remind members that a 2010 study published in the *Medical Journal of Australia* showed that 87 per cent of all Australians supported safe and legal access to abortion. There were some slight differences in age, gender and religious affiliation but none significant. Today I stand here and call on all the ACT members of White Ribbon to reaffirm their support for the freedom of women's reproductive rights and to thank the men that already have stood up, and who continue to stand up, to say no to violence against women.

Council on the Ageing ACT

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (5.20): I rise today to thank the team at the Council on the Ageing ACT, COTA ACT, for inviting me out to Hughes today for their annual general meeting. COTA ACT are a great organisation, and they achieve a lot for seniors across Canberra. They are a peak body for older Canberrans. They work with older people, their families and their carers to advocate for their rights and interests and improve their wellbeing.

The COTA ACT annual report shows that they took 13,754 calls on their seniors information line during the 2017-18 year. They issued 10,860 seniors cards. Over

6,000 people attended the ACT Seniors Week events. They delivered 68 talks and information sessions and assisted over 800 individuals through their housing options advisory service. And I would like to mention their little library and their street library, which have been very successfully installed in the past year.

I also thank the sponsors of COTA ACT who have made their year possible: Beyond Bank, Capital Chemist, ActewAGL, the flexibus service, Goodwin Aged Care and, of course, the ACT government.

I would like to thank and congratulate those who were on the board in the past year, including Bruce Shaw, Rick Lord, Paul Feldman, Ruth Martin, Jean Geise, Kirsten Cross, Richard Cumpston and Ewan Brown. I would like to congratulate Rick Lord, Michael Flynn and Ron Jelleff, who today were elected to the board for a two-year term.

I would like to thank Ewan Brown, who today did not recontest a position on the board after four years on the board and three years as president. Ewan and the rest of the team at COTA ACT worked tirelessly to make sure that COTA was going in the right direction, that those who needed services and information were getting them and that COTA continued to passionately campaign for our older Canberrans.

Finally, I would like to thank Jenny Mobbs and all of her staff in the COTA ACT office. These staff are there on the front line providing information and services to older Canberrans. They achieve an amazing amount of work for older Canberrans. Thank you to COTA ACT for the work they do for older Canberrans.

Girls takeover parliament

MS ORR (Yerrabi) (5.23): 11 October marked the International Day of the Girl Child. To mark and celebrate this important day I participated in the Jasiri Australia girls takeover parliament program, along with many other members of this place. The girls takeover parliament program is designed to support young women aged 13 to 25 to dismantle barriers to political participation and to encourage young women to pursue political careers. The program aims to give young women the opportunity to gain important skills in order to pursue political careers or public leadership positions by pairing young women with politicians. This year the program took place in the ACT, Western Australia and across the Pacific to support the wider participation of women in politics across the country and the Pacific region.

While the ACT is one of the few legislatures around the country to be leading the way with female representation, overall across Australia women are under-represented. In our national parliament women make up only 31 per cent of MPs and senators and approximately 19 per cent of positions on Australian boards. A 2016 Plan International Australia survey also found that five in six girls said that they thought they did not have the same opportunities as boys, and half of young Australian women said that they believed their gender was the biggest factor holding them back from becoming leaders.

In this context, this shows the importance of having a program like girls takeover parliament to encourage more women to enter public leadership positions. As part of the program I was paired with a first-year political science and international relations student from the ANU named Savannah. Savannah joined my office and learnt what is involved in being a member of the Legislative Assembly.

Savannah, like many young women, is passionate about encouraging greater participation of young women in politics. Her passion extends to ensuring young women have a presence in important political debates and public policy decisions and making sure that legislators and decision-makers take into consideration the potential impact that their policies have on the lives of women.

Savannah began the day with a tour of the Legislative Assembly, followed by joining me for meetings with constituents and colleagues in the building. Later Savannah took over my social media and assisted with speechwriting for the Assembly sitting days. Savannah provided me with feedback on how she enjoyed the day, and I would like to share her thoughts with members this evening. She said:

Being part of the program has given me key insight into what it is like to be an MLA, which has encouraged me to become more involved in ACT politics.

It has also further reinforced my belief in supporting women in their aspirations to become politically involved and engaged, and how they can make an impact across the wider community.

By sitting through the weekly meeting with Suzanne and being able to talk to her, I discovered her passion for environmentalism and recycling, which highlighted to me how someone can use their voice and position to try to encourage change across the wider community.

This highlighted to me why it is important to encourage women to advocate for change within their communities.

I would like to thank Savannah for being an incredible MLA for the day and encourage her to continue to pursue her passions for achieving gender equality and empowering women.

African Australian awards night

MR COE (Yerrabi—Leader of the Opposition) (5.26): I rise today to congratulate the 2018 winners and organisers of the African Australian awards. The African Australian awards dinner and dance was held on 22 September 2018. Elizabeth Kikkert and I very much enjoyed the evening. We heard from many speakers, including senior public officials, African ambassadors and high commissioners. However, one of the highlights of the night was listening to the wonderful musical talents of the Watoto Children's Choir. Well done to all the young performers who took part in the night.

I would like to commend everyone nominated for the awards this year and acknowledge their impact on our community. It is wonderful to have so many vibrant,

gifted and energetic people committed to building relationships and making Canberra a better place.

I would like to take a few moments to recognise this year's winners and their contributions. In particular, I congratulate Joseph Kemakolam Ikea, the recipient of the community leader award; Jonathan Downs, on being named the friend of Africa; Kagiso Ratlhaganae for being selected for the Afrocentric entertainer of the year award; Amadu Barrie for earning the volunteer of the year award; and Jane Chimungeni-Brassington on her achievement to secure the academic excellence award.

I would also like to extend congratulations to Yayesh Giday for winning the African Australian business award; Mona Moutrage in distinguishing herself with the professional excellence award; Joseph Delle, the winner of the Australian investor award; Edward Osie Nketia for his achievement in winning the sporting excellence award; and the South Sudanese Australian Community Association ACT for demonstrating exceptional spirit to win the African community of the year award. I would also like to congratulate the African Australian community ambassador, Tendayie Ganga; the African DJ of the year, Hassan Kamara; and Edith Muruka for her hard work and success in winning the community initiatives award.

Special thanks must go to the hardworking people behind the scenes who put this great event together. These people put a lot of effort into making the evening a success, and their selfless commitment to their community is to be applauded. I would like to thank all the volunteers and committee members, including Kofi Osia Bonsu, who did publicity for the event; Jackie Wairimu, who worked on the administration; Chaka Moneke, who looked after the finance; and Samuel Livingston, who looked after the media.

I particularly want to acknowledge the contribution of Charles Koker in coordinating the event and I take this opportunity to recognise his continued advocacy on behalf of the African people in Canberra. Charles has shown outstanding leadership and passion in supporting community affairs and causes. I congratulate him on all his efforts and endeavours to bring our community together.

Once again I would like to thank all the speakers, performers, nominees, winners, volunteers and coordinators who made this fantastic event possible. I look forward to working alongside the African community in Canberra. I extend my best wishes to the exceptional individuals who have made such a valuable contribution to the ACT.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 5.31 pm.