



Debates

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

Visitors

MADAM SPEAKER: I acknowledge our visitors to the chamber: the Hon Andrew Little MP, Minister for Justice; Mr David Hawkins, Senior Private Secretary to the office of the Hon David Little MP; Her Excellency the Hon Dame Annette King, the New Zealand High Commissioner; and Mr Mike Ketchen, Counsellor of the New Zealand High Commission. Welcome to the ACT Assembly.

Petition

The following petition was lodged for presentation:

Planning—Coombs peninsula—petition 31-19

By Mrs Jones, from 275 residents:

To the Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory

This petition of residents of the Australian Capital Territory draws to the attention of the Assembly that the Coombs Peninsula is an important public asset, shared by all the residents of Coombs, as well as the home to wildlife such as the pink-tailed worm-lizard and platypuses.

Despite the importance of it to the community and the understanding that it would not be developed, the ACT Government now plans to allow approximately 30 dwellings to be built on the Coombs Peninsula.

Your petitioners therefore request the Assembly protect the Coombs Peninsula from multi-dwelling development.

The Clerk having announced that the terms of the petition would be recorded in Hansard and a copy referred to the appropriate minister for response pursuant to standing order 100, the petition was received.

Motion to take note of petition

MADAM SPEAKER: Pursuant to standing order 98A, I move:

That the petition so lodged be noted.

MRS JONES (Murrumbidgee) (10.03): I seek leave to table an out-of-order section of the petition.

Leave granted.

MRS JONES: I present the following paper:

Petition which does not conform with the standing orders—Coombs Peninsula—
Proposed development—Mrs Jones (284 signatures).

The Coombs peninsula is one of the very few open spaces in the Molonglo Valley. It is an important public asset shared not just by residents of Coombs but by the wider community. The peninsula is home to wildlife such as the pink-tailed worm-lizard and a family of platypuses.

As has been discussed in this place at length, planning in Coombs has been far from perfect. The shops are sitting almost totally empty, apart from Ajijo, who does a great job of serving the community. There are barely any trees, and the suburb has been developed to within an inch of its capacity.

The government now wants to take away the last remaining open natural space. This paper petition was signed by 275 residents, and the out of order petition that I have tabled has 284 signatures. Together, these two petitions with exactly the same wording total 559 signatures, and demonstrate that the people of Coombs want their nature park at the Coombs peninsula to be protected from further development.

With an additional 30 dwellings to be built, the minister is sacrificing the last little bit of natural space that the people of Coombs have to enjoy. This is despite the importance of this space to the community, and despite the fact that many residents bought in the area on the understanding that that area would not be developed. That is why I have sponsored these petitions to call on the Assembly and the government to protect Coombs peninsula from additional multi-dwelling development.

MS LE COUTEUR (Murrumbidgee) (10.05): I thank Mrs Jones for bringing forward this petition. I will not speak at great length because I appreciate that we will deal with these items later today, under notice No 4.

The Greens support the reservation of this space as natural space. We have supported this for a very long time. Back in the Seventh Assembly, when the development of Molonglo was being planned, this area was set aside. That is why it has not been developed yet. We can all remember the Conservation Council taking the government to ACAT on the subject.

In our view the peninsula should be rezoned and protected for environment and recreation reasons. It is a small site, surrounded by the Molonglo River reserve on three sides. What happens on the site will impact on the reserve. It has an area of pink-tailed worm-lizard habitat, which should be protected, because the lizard is vulnerable both nationally and in the ACT. It is in a place where the peninsula is very narrow, only 200 metres wide. Lastly, as Mrs Jones pointed out, this is a great recreational asset for the people of Molonglo. As she said, there is not an over-abundance of natural recreation space in that area. We will have more to say about it in a few hours.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Planning and Urban Renewal—Standing Committee Reference

MRS JONES (Murrumbidgee) (10.06): Pursuant to standing order 99, I move:

That the petition relating to the Coombs Peninsula be referred to the Standing Committee on Planning and Urban Renewal.

I will not speak further to any great extent. I simply say that because the two petitions, which have precisely the same wording, total well over 500 signatures, it is only right that a committee be able to look into this matter.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Magistrates Court (Infringement Notices) Amendment Bill 2019

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

Title read by Clerk.

MS LE COUTEUR (Murrumbidgee) (10.08): I move:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

This bill will amend the Magistrates Court Act 1930 and the Magistrates Court Regulation 2009. It provides a framework for a clear and transparent process for dealing with infringement notices. It will give people who have been issued with an infringement notice the opportunity to enter into an infringement notice management plan to enable them either to pay the infringement penalty by instalment or to participate in an approved community work plan or social development plan in lieu of paying the infringement penalty.

The bill also provides a formal mechanism for an infringement notice penalty to be waived. The purpose of the bill is to ensure that the payment system for infringement notice offences can take into account the circumstances of people who have been issued with infringement notices and who are on low incomes or are otherwise disadvantaged. I am hopeful that the changes this bill will introduce will result in more socially just outcomes for people who are issued with infringement notices and increase the amount of fines that are recovered by the territory.

This bill broadly mirrors the provisions of the Road Transport (General) (Infringement Notices) Amendment Bill, which was passed in the Assembly in 2012. This bill was introduced by my Greens colleague at the time, Amanda Bresnan. It applied to traffic and parking infringements. Here is what Simon Corbell, the then Minister for Police and Emergency Services and Attorney-General, had to say about the legislation at the time:

We think there is great value in allowing people who have incurred fines, particularly where they have incurred fines because of a problem—for example, arising from alcohol, drugs or other issues—to be able to engage in rehabilitation around their alcohol dependency or around their drug dependency as a way of not only paying off the fine but also preventing them from actually incurring future fines. That is a win-win. That is a win for the community, a saving for the community, and one that we should have close regard to.

As Mr Corbell's words suggest, the bill was important in its recognition of infringement notice fines. For some people, they might simply be nuisance payments. But for those struggling with homelessness, addiction, illness or other problems, they can be enough to trigger a cascade of significant consequence, including a worsening of their existing challenges. Conversely, if dealt with differently, there is an opportunity for a positive outcome for individuals and for the community as a whole. That is Mr Corbell's win-win.

The bill I am tabling today seeks to extend that same recognition and treatment to other categories of infringement notice offences. This could be, for example, a littering fine, a fine for not picking up after your dog or a fine for fare evasion on public transport. Sadly, it is predictable that there will be people who will respond to this proposal with statements along the lines of, "Don't do the crime if you do not want to pay the fine."

In that vein, I note that the Greens are not suggesting at all that there should be no consequences for breaking the law. It is, however, both absurd, as well as tragic, that a fine resulting from a relatively minor offence could be the catalyst for a major financial or stress-related tipping point in someone's life.

The Law and Justice Foundation of New South Wales research program has identified what anyone with some common sense would probably conclude: people who are socially or economically disadvantaged are more vulnerable to attracting fines and less likely to have the means and capacity to pay them. Many of these people spend more time in the public realm than the average person, further increasing the likelihood of being fined for a number of offences, for example, consuming alcohol in a bus interchange or littering.

Infringement fines also have a disproportionate financial impact on people on low incomes. A \$180 fine for fare evasion on Transport Canberra, for example, represents two-thirds—two-thirds!—of a weekly Newstart payment. The reason that that Newstart recipient might be failing to pay for their bus or tram ticket may be because they are living in poverty arising from the total inadequacy of this allowance.

The sudden financial shock of a fine does not only affect low income earners. In 2012, the ACT government convened a panel to consider the range of ACT programs designed to assist lower income Canberrans and to develop an evidence-based target and assistance strategy. In the introduction to the report, the chair of the panel, who incidentally is the ACT's current Attorney-General, noted that there was "a specific focus in the work of the panel on low income households that currently sit just above

the concession safety net and are not in receipt of direct government financial assistance.”

The report goes on to describe this cohort further:

They are normal, low to middle-income families and individuals who are living pay to pay but find themselves unable to cope financially with changes in their circumstances ... often the changes are sudden, for example a large utility or medical bill.

Reducing the shock of a large fee or fine by smoothing out payment options, with even more time to pay or instalment options, would greatly benefit this cohort ... Volunteering may also be a viable option to repay government fines.

I could not put it better myself. It is really great that the Greens did the work in the Seventh Assembly to make sure that this type of treatment is applied to people in receipt of fines for traffic and parking offences. That part of the system has been working well for seven years. Now it is time to extend that treatment to all fines.

It is hard to get a handle on how many people are struggling to pay fines. We do know, however, that fines in the ACT are not always being paid. Data provided by the government in response to a question on notice shows that between 1 July 2017 and 28 October this year, the Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate had a total of 303 infringements that had not been paid, with 300 of these related to offences under the Domestic Animals Act 2000. The remaining three were issued under the Litter Act 2004. Each of these was cancelled after review.

The reason why people do not pay fines is not, to the best of my knowledge, recorded by the government. One can only guess, however, that the reason that many people do not pay is simply because they just cannot afford to. During the same period, Transport Canberra and City Services entered into 16 payment plans with fine recipients. While this is welcome, and it is very welcome, it is not because there is any obligation for the directorate to do this. As it stands, the Magistrates Court Act does not include any requirement to offer part-payment options or payment plans, although it does allow extensions of time.

It is noteworthy that during the past three years Transport Canberra and City Services has not pursued any of these infringements in the courts. Indeed, it appears that there are in fact significant numbers of unpaid fines owing to the territory. In 2016 the *Canberra Times* recorded that the ACT government had taken court action only twice for unpaid fines, in 2014 and 2015. The predecessor to Transport Canberra and City Services, territory and municipal services, issued 296 fines worth just under \$73,000 in 2014 and 2015. Of these, a staggering 180 fines, worth approximately \$51,000, went unpaid.

Perhaps one reason for the high number of unpaid fines is that the ACT does not have its own debt recovery unit. Another reason might be that there is an informal process of waiver taking place, and clearly that is the case in TCCS to some extent. That is something which obviously has been acting in a positive fashion. But perhaps it is just too difficult and not worth the bother for the government to pursue the issues in court.

In 2017 the *Canberra Times* reported that a Justice and Community Safety Directorate spokeswoman said that the government was considering reforms to strengthen the system, including stronger measures to follow up on non-payment. She went on to note that this work “will also address the needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged people who may have received infringements”. This work may have been conducted or it may not have been. We have not been able to find out about this. It has proven very difficult to get a clear picture of who has responsibility for what when it comes to administering infringement notices. We have asked unsuccessfully for a number of briefings on the subject.

What we do know is that the Magistrates Court provides a broad framework for infringement notices that are issued based on offences contained in a raft of different acts. We also know that the Chief Minister supports the infringement system as it stands for traffic and parking offences. On 28 November 2018, the Assembly passed a Greens motion which called for, amongst other things, the government to investigate the potential for introducing income-based infringement notices. The government responded on 22 August 2019.

In tabling this response, the Chief Minister praised the current approach to managing infringements with parking or other motor vehicle offences. He noted that payment plans assist Canberrans on low or fixed incomes to give, “plenty of scope for people to pay off infringements in a manageable way that will not overburden family budgets”. Regarding community work or social development programs, the Chief Minister told the Assembly, “There are some great examples of programs that see people give back to our community or help them develop useful life skills, like better household budgeting while reducing their liability for infringements”.

Our colleagues in the community sector also endorse this approach. I have been in touch with Canberra Community Law and Care Inc, both of whom believe that the infringement notice management system has worked well for traffic and parking offences and should be extended to cover all infringement notice offences. If the government is able to apply payment plans, community work and development programs for the payment of traffic and parking fines, it should surely be able to cope administratively with treating the offences covered by the Magistrates Court Act in the same way.

Madam Speaker, I do not believe this bill is controversial. It simply seeks to build on the success of an existing scheme by providing a clear and consistent framework for managing infringement notice offences, regardless of what directorate or what part of the government is responsible. I commend the bill to the Assembly.

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

Human Rights (Workers Rights) Amendment Bill 2019

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

Title read by Clerk.

MS CODY (Murrumbidgee) (10.21): I move:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

A long, long time ago in a parliament not very far away, the Australian government—I believe Mr Fraser had just become Prime Minister—ratified an international convention recognising workers rights as human rights. While nobody in this chamber is old enough to remember how good Australian workers had it at the time, and many were not even born, I am the daughter of a proud BLF member—and for anyone who has met my dad, Tim, he is generally keen to explain it.

Since that time, there have been a lot of changes in the Australian workplace, some for the better for working people, many for the worse. We banned racism and religious discrimination in the selection and promotion of workers, but we still see it here and there, rarely in advertising, but often in outcomes. The same could be said for sexism. The gender pay gap has been remarkably resilient. Women, on average, are still paid less, have less secure work, and are more subject to bullying and harassment.

Today, Australia has stagnant wages, falling job security, and an increasingly punitive workplace culture. The best force for the advancement of workers' economic and social interests, trade unionism, faces one of the most hostile organising environments in Australia's history.

Attacking the rights of unions to organise and protect workers rights has become a source of amusement for Liberal governments. Just the other week, the CFMEU was fined \$50,000 because some of their members stood up for the right of women to have a toilet in the workplace. Nothing better can be expected of a federal Liberal government. The people of Canberra did not vote for it but, as democratic socialists, we have to accept the decision of the rest of the country. However, that does not mean that the workers of the Australian Capital Territory have to cop it. Wherever and however we can, we should be protecting workers rights. And we will.

The ACT Labor government, through the terrific work of Chief Minister Barr, Minister Stephen-Smith and, now, Minister Orr, has been ensuring that companies that work for the government treat their employees and contractors fairly. Every week, though, we see stories of wage theft in the news. It is an absolute credit to the journalists of this city that they keep telling those stories, stories of people who are ripped off, bullied or discriminated against in the workplace. One of the scariest ideas, one of the biggest problems, is that wage theft, workplace discrimination and horrible management are becoming a norm in the Australian workplace. One of the cruellest behaviours of despicable leaders is convincing people to give up on the rights they really do have.

I believe we should pick up on the idea promoted by Mr Whitlam and advanced by Mr Fraser, an idea that seemed unnecessary in the days of Mr Hawke and Mr Keating; an idea put on the “never ever” by Mr Howard; an idea that seemed unattainable under Mr Rudd and Ms Gillard; an idea dead, buried and cremated by Mr Abbott,

Mr Turnbull and Mr Morrison; an idea that is still a very good one: let us recognise that workers rights are, indeed, human rights. It will not fix all the problems facing Canberra workers, but it will set a standard and it will help many.

The content of my amendment includes four key points taken from the covenant on economic, social and cultural rights, which Australia ratified on 10 December 1975.

The first is the right to work, including the right to choose occupation and profession freely. This is not like the right to work laws that exist in some parts of America. The right to work does not extend to the right to work in insubstantial and below standard conditions. Sometimes we hear the rhetoric from fundamentalist Liberals about “freedom of contracting”. When the contract is between the powerful and the powerless, some of my cruder friends refer to it as freedom to get screwed.

Hence the second substantive point in section 27B: the right to just and favourable conditions. The word “favourable” does a lot of work in the treaty, and I have very deliberately included it here. “Favourable” goes a long way beyond fair or just. It means that people should be made better off by their work. It means that conditions should not be set at a minimum or a subsistence level, but well above that. It means that in deciding working conditions, the benefit of the doubt should be towards making the worker the winner.

The third substantive point is the right to enjoy those entitlements without discrimination. The defining examples are taken from our anti-discrimination laws. The right to not be discriminated against on each of these sits equally. I reject totally the rhetoric that says that the right to freedom of religion can be read as the right to discriminate against people based on sexual orientation. Likewise, discrimination based on social origin, colour, language and political opinion seem to be lurking in the shadows. Despite the protestation of the conservative wing of the Liberal Party, the wing that dominates the Canberra Liberals, being a bigot is not a right and is not desirable in our community. Everyone has the right to be protected from bigots in the workplace, and that standard belongs in our Human Rights Act.

The fourth and fifth substantive points will turn this amendment from theory into practice. The fourth point is the right to form and join a work-related organisation with the objective of promoting and protecting economic and social interests. The fifth is the right to not be discriminated against for doing so. Those two rights—the right to organise and protection from retaliation—are two of the least protected rights in Australia today. The status quo in Australia is a punitive response to workers organising: \$50,000 fines for demanding that women have a place to wee in the workplace; punitive investigation of union organisers; phone taps; families being stalked; endless legal bills; attempting to break the will and solidarity of our unions; and harassment of delegates at every turn. On the other side of the lake they are debating going even further, creating endless paperwork and threatening to replace union officials or deregister unions for filing paperwork late.

We must step up where the federal government has failed, and where it is continuing to fail, in recognising the human right to have a union represent workers. We must also step up on a second point. Internationally, human rights law recognises the right

to organise for the promotion of economic and social interests. The rules as they stand today in Australia allow for very limited promotion of economic interests through enterprise bargaining but are actively hostile to the promotion of social interests.

When I think of the greatest achievements of trade unionism in Australia, anti-discrimination laws, superannuation, workplace health and safety and gender equality come to mind. Those are economic interests. But when I think of the proudest moments, social interests join the lists: the green bans of Sydney; the refusal of the wharfies to load the pig iron that was destined to make bombs for imperial Japan; the moratoriums opposing conscription during the Vietnam War; the great strike of 1917; and the coordinated effort to disrupt trade with South Africa which long preceded the official sanctions that ended apartheid. These are some of the greatest things Australian trade unionism has done for society and the world, and it is a great stain upon this nation that those actions would be criminal today.

The decision we make on this bill will have consequences in both direct and indirect ways. For government and the Assembly, it means that future scrutiny committee reports will include specific consideration of workers rights in our consideration of laws. Further, it will provide guidance to government in all aspects as to how we will respect workers rights. Of course, we cannot override commonwealth laws, but we can make clear where the ACT stands on protecting workers rights and we can do our part in the legal framework that exists.

Symbolically this amendment will send a signal to both public and private sectors setting a standard. Nationally, it will again reinforce the ACT's place at the forefront of human rights law. Finally, it will engage our Human Rights Commission and parts of our justice system in advancing workers rights.

I would like to thank all the great advocates for workers and human rights who have contributed to this bill. The advice of the Human Rights Commission was invaluable, as was the advocacy of many union and labour activists over many years. Some advocates have been working towards this moment for a very long time. Simon Rice also deserves credit. This is a great example of how a good idea can sometimes take decades to deliver but it is always worth hanging on and keeping up the good fight.

Let us put workers rights in the Human Rights Act. Canberrans deserve just and favourable conditions of work. They already have the right to just and favourable conditions of work; our laws just do not recognise them, and they should. They are a fundamental human right and they should be part of our fundamental law.

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

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee Proposed reference

MS CODY (Murrumbidgee) (10.36): I move:

That the Human Rights (Workers Rights) Amendment Bill 2019 be referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety for report by the first sitting day of 2020.

I believe the Human Rights (Workers Rights) Amendment Bill 2019 is a wonderful piece of work; however, there can never be too much scrutiny of any bill that is brought into this Assembly. Therefore, I am referring the Human Rights (Workers Rights) Amendment Bill 2019 to the justice and community safety committee, with a reporting date of the first sitting day in 2020.

MRS JONES (Murrumbidgee) (10.37): In relation to the reporting date, I ask that some flexibility be applied, given that the JACS committee has an ongoing inquiry. I understand that there will be a desire to get this legislation through the chamber, and I do not have any problem with that, but as the chair of the JACS committee, I ask that there be some flexibility on the date, for example, by the end of February or something like that.

MADAM SPEAKER: That would need an amendment to the motion.

MRS JONES: Could we come back to this at the end of the next item of business?

MADAM SPEAKER: If someone moves to adjourn this question, we can possibly come back to it.

Debate (on motion by **Mr Coe**) adjourned to a later hour.

Territory rights

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra) (10.38): I move:

That the Assembly:

(1) recognises that:

- (a) the Commonwealth Government conferred self-government on the Australian Capital Territory in 1988; and
- (b) after more than 30 years of self-government, the ACT has a:
 - (i) robust and established parliament;
 - (ii) strong jurisdictional identity; and
 - (iii) community which has an expectation that elected, local representatives should and will be able to decide on issues that matter to it;

(2) notes that while section 122 of the Constitution empowers the Commonwealth to make laws for the ACT and Northern Territory on any subject:

- (a) it rarely exercises this power; but
- (b) where it has exercised this power it has been on social issues relating to human rights where the Federal Parliament's view has been out of step with ACT citizens' views;

(3) notes with disappointment the continued existence of subsections 23(1A) and (1B) in the *Australian Capital Territory (Self-Government) Act 1988* (Cwlth)

which exclude the ACT from the power to make laws with respect to voluntary assisted dying;

- (4) determines that the Commonwealth denying the ACT the freedom to debate and pass legislation that reflects the democratic will of the people it represents fundamentally undermines democratic principles; and
- (5) calls on:
 - (a) the Federal Parliament to:
 - (i) resolve that no Australian citizen should be disadvantaged with respect to their democratic rights on the basis of where they live; and
 - (ii) remove subsections 23(1A) and (1B) from the *Australian Capital Territory (Self-Government) Act 1988* (Cwlth); and
 - (b) all ACT Legislative Assembly party leaders to write to their federal counterparts before the end of 2019 requesting their commitment to remove subsections 23(1A) and (1B) from the *Australian Capital Territory (Self-Government) Act 1988* (Cwlth) in 2020.

I rise today to formally reignite the efforts of this government to have subsections 23(1A) and (1B) removed from the Australian Capital Territory Self-Government Act 1988. These subsections in federal legislation exclude the ACT—our jurisdiction and our home—from the power to make laws with respect to voluntary assisted dying. These subsections deny our community and our parliament—this place—the freedom to debate and pass legislation that reflects the democratic will of the people. These subsections persist unfairly, unreasonably and untenably.

Madam Speaker, you will keenly remember the last time we discussed this issue in this place. The Senate had voted on whether to restore our rights and the rights of the Northern Territory. They voted on giving us, the territories, the same rights as every Australian citizen who happens to live in a state. That vote was lost, 34 to 32, just a couple of votes in it.

When we last discussed this issue in this place we were hurting. We were hurting as a government but also as a parliament with our rights being ignored. We were also making history. At a time when all our chips were down, we stood up and we fought back remonstrating with the Senate, the first remonstrance to ever occur in the history of this Assembly, and to date the only one.

At that time, I concluded my speech on the subject with, “We will not give up. This does not end here.” I made that promise to the people of the ACT, to this parliament, and to myself, and we did not drop the issue. We have moved motions at conferences, tabled a committee report into end of life choices and continued the discussions in our communities.

I acknowledge in the gallery the presence of members of our community. I see a number of people who submitted to and appeared before the end of life choices committee inquiry. But, importantly, I see people for whom this matters. That is what it is about. Since the Senate disappointed us last year we have not shrunk away. In fact, numbers have grown. The numbers of people who want this issue resolved have

grown and the urgency has grown. This motion marks the reignition of our campaign and the rousing of our determination.

In 1988 self-government was conferred on us, and our parliament was established in 1989. This year our parliament celebrated, modestly, our 30th anniversary. We might still be a comparatively young parliament, but that does not make us any less mature. On almost every issue we are given the responsibility for making laws, for debating and passing legislation. Despite constitutionally being able to make laws for us, the commonwealth rarely interferes, except, of course, when it comes down to social issues; human rights issues; basic decency, respect and fairness issues; equal treatment issues; issues where the commonwealth parliament's view has been out of step with those of ACT citizens. That is where it has interfered.

The reasons for the insertions of these subsections relating to voluntary assisted dying are historical. To quote my federal colleague Andrew Leigh, the member for Fenner in his speech introducing a bill to restore territory rights last year—slightly paraphrased: back then, they said that the ACT and Northern Territory parliaments were too immature to be given the power of voluntary assisted dying. They said that no state had done it and a territory should not be the first. Today, those arguments are gone.

Through their continued operation those legislative provisions continue to mark an era of geographical discrimination where what we can determine for ourselves as Australians is decided based on our postcode. Doing so fundamentally undermines democratic principles, particularly in this representative democracy. It means we as parliamentarians cannot do our jobs and cannot genuinely act in the interests and desires of our constituents.

As much as I hate it, I reluctantly accept the rationale at the time for the insertion of the provisions. But I do not accept any argument put forward for these provisions to continue to exist, to persist, especially now. It makes no sense for a parliament that is now 30 years old. It makes no sense for a territory with a strong jurisdictional identity. It makes no sense to our community, which has a reasonable expectation that their elected, local representatives—all of us in this place who take our jobs and our roles very seriously—should and will be able to decide on issues that matter to the community. And it makes absolutely no sense when states are now exercising their democratic rights and legislating in this area.

Victoria was first in 2017 and now, despite their opposition's pathetic attempts at filibustering, Western Australia looks to be just days away. The federal parliament—it is incumbent on all of those parliamentarians—should not allow to persist this democratic discrimination simply based on our geography and our status as citizens of a territory rather than a state.

In an ideal world what is happening in the states—like Victoria, like Western Australia and even Queensland—would make the federal parliament realise how ridiculous they are being and take the responsibility themselves to identify and make this change for our territories without a concerted campaign from us. But we know we cannot rely on that, and that is exactly why we are redoubling our efforts.

Our first appeal to the federal parliament today is to ask its members and senators, particularly members representing state electorates, to put themselves in our shoes. If their own state was less privileged democratically compared to another state, the situation simply would not be allowed to persist. On that basis you cannot tell me that if they actually lived here—instead of the FIFO nature of their work—they would not want to have the same rights afforded to them as every other Australian. If they woke up tomorrow and happened to be territory citizens, you cannot tell me that they would not want the same rights they currently enjoy by being citizens of states.

For the philosophers and ethicists among us, it is a Rawlsian concept. If you could not be certain of where your residence would be tomorrow in Australia, would you not want all states and territories to effectively have the same democratic rights? That is what the first part of this motion is calling on: for federal parliament to recognise and to resolve that no Australian citizen should be disadvantaged with respect to their democratic rights on the basis of where they live.

If they agree with that notion—and they should—it naturally follows that they should be working to remove the democratically discriminatory provisions from the legislation which established our self-government, that they should be prioritising it, that they should collectively be working to put it on the agenda. It would be a simple bill. It is not difficult to prepare. We know this because of the efforts of senators and members already who have done it before, including our own Katy Gallagher and Andrew Leigh. A template is available. A bill of this nature costs literally nothing; there is no hit to the budget bottom line.

But we know our federal parliamentarians may need a nudge in the right direction, and that is why I am calling on all party leaders in this place to write this year to their federal counterparts requesting their commitment in 2020 to remove these discriminatory provisions. And by “all party leaders” I do mean all. This is not an issue to be political about. It is about standing up, united, as a parliament. The rights of our citizens depend on it.

Mark my words: there is new energy and new determination behind this. There will be more to come. This is just the beginning. I commend the motion to the Assembly.

MR COE (Yerrabi—Leader of the Opposition) (10.49): I thank Ms Cheyne for bringing this motion to the Assembly. I recognise and appreciate her commitment to and sincerity on this issue. Of course, there are different schools of thought in the community on this matter. While some people can separate the issue of self-determination or Assembly autonomy and the issue of euthanasia, for others they are inextricably linked. For some people it is very clear that the removal of 23(1A) and 23(1B) will lead to euthanasia being legalised in the territory. To that end, I respect Canberrans who have that view. I do not think it is wrong that they have that view and I do not think they should be disrespected for having that view.

Obviously, some people are passionate about the issue of self-determination for this Assembly and others are passionate about the need to legalise euthanasia in the territory. But there is no doubt that for some people this is a proxy debate for

euthanasia. Ms Cheyne may shake her head, but it is the truth. For some people it is a proxy issue. Ms Cheyne cannot possibly deny that many people in the community have that view. I accept she does not have that view and I accept that many people in the community do not have that view, but others do.

We have to approach this issue with the same respect and reverence that we would approach the issue of euthanasia in this Assembly and recognise that for some people their conscience is very much engaged. Whilst some people may try to portray this as a black and white issue it is not, necessarily, for everyone. We have to respect those who are passionate about self-government, autonomy and the linked issue of euthanasia. For many life is paramount and will trump any philosophical view about self-determination for the ACT.

I am open to considering such a letter as proposed in paragraph (5)(b). It will, of course, very much depend on what is included in that letter and whether it will be a political statement or whether it will be something far more meaningful. But I hope that everybody who engages in this debate both in this place and elsewhere is given the respect they deserve.

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Social Inclusion and Equality, Minister for Tertiary Education, Minister for Tourism and Special Events and Minister for Trade, Industry and Investment) (10.53): I thank Ms Cheyne for bringing this important motion before the Assembly. As we have heard, and as we all know, for too long Australians living in our nation's territories have been unable to enjoy the same rights as those who live in the six states. This is unfair and it is unreasonable. Australians should not be treated differently because they do not live in a state; they should not be treated differently because of their postcode.

Ostensibly, we have a representative democracy at the territory government level. But, of course, territory independence comes with a constant threat that the commonwealth may overrule and intervene in a decision of territory parliaments. History has certainly shown that they will do that. In 1995 the Northern Territory passed the Rights of the Terminally Ill Act 1995, which established a framework for a person with a life-limiting illness to request assistance from a medically qualified person to voluntarily and humanely end his or her life.

The Rights of the Terminally Ill Act was at that time a historic reform, reflecting the views and convictions of the majority of elected representatives of the people of the Northern Territory. It was an expression of their views through their legislature. In response, the commonwealth parliament passed the Euthanasia Laws Act 1997, which effectively nullified the Northern Territory's legislation and overruled the territory's democratic processes.

As Victoria's recent experience with the successful passage of the Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2017 demonstrates, if Australia's territories had the same rights as Australia's states, the commonwealth would not have been able to overturn the Northern Territory law.

As we all know, one state has already passed legislation regarding voluntary assisted dying, and the other five states are free to do the same. In particular, we note that Western Australia is currently debating the introduction of euthanasia laws. The issue is on the agenda, or has been, in Queensland and New South Wales, and, indeed, will be in the other states. Meanwhile the ACT and the Northern Territory are still prevented from having this debate. In 2019, after 30 years of ACT self-government, it is obviously a ridiculous situation and becomes increasingly absurd as each of the Australian states moves forward on this issue.

It is worth noting that the issue of territory rights is not just confined to the rights of territories to pass legislation relating to voluntary assisted dying. We have our own experiences here in the ACT. I take members back to 2006 when the ACT Legislative Assembly passed what was not a particularly contentious piece of legislation: the Civil Unions Bill 2006. It allowed two people, including same-sex couples, to enter into a civil union with the same legal rights and obligations under ACT law as marriage.

As an aside, that was the very first piece of legislation that I voted on as a member in this place. It is heartening to see how far that debate has come in a decade: from a pioneering law being overturned by the commonwealth in 2006, to the legislation being enacted nationally a little more than a decade later.

The intent of that bill was to deliver functional equality for couples who either preferred not to marry or who, at that time, did not have access to marriage under the commonwealth Marriage Act. Four days after the ACT law came into effect, the then commonwealth Attorney-General, Philip Ruddock, disallowed the ACT Civil Unions Act. In doing so, as a minister, he intervened in and undermined self-government in the ACT.

There was significant opposition to this action. A motion was moved in the Australian Senate to overturn the Attorney-General's decision and reinstate the ACT legislation. It was narrowly defeated, 32 votes to 30. This example demonstrates territory citizens being denied their democratic rights and being disadvantaged based on where we live. It is a situation that should not be allowed to persist. Territory citizens deserve the same rights as any other Australian.

After three decades of self-government here in the ACT, we can all attest that we have a robust and established parliament, a strong jurisdictional identity and an expectation that elected local representatives will be able to debate and decide upon the issues that matter most to the ACT community.

The personal views of senators and members of parliament on specific issues, for example, marriage equality or civil partnerships in the past decade, and voluntary assisted dying, should not be conflated with the legitimate argument to restore territory rights. The ACT and Northern Territory legislative assemblies should have the freedom to debate and pass legislation that reflects the democratic will of the people they represent. Denying this right fundamentally undermines democratic principles and prevents territory citizens from deciding on the issues that matter most

to their communities. The federal parliament should not be in the business of limiting the rights of some Australian citizens based simply on their postcodes.

In the lead-up to the Restoring Territory Rights (Assisted Suicide Legislation) Bill 2015 being considered by the Senate, the ACT and NT governments, and indeed parliaments, worked closely together to demand that federal politicians address the discrimination that exists between territories and states in relation to legislative rights. Sadly, again by the narrowest of margins, we were unsuccessful on that occasion.

It seems that some members of the Senate are unable to distinguish between their own personal views on social issues and the rights that nearly three-quarters of a million Australians who live in territories have to effective self-government. If the bill had passed the Senate and gone through to the house and been successful there, Canberrans would have had returned to them their right to determine their own legislation on a range of important issues.

As Ms Cheyne has indicated, this is a fight that we will continue. We would hope that every member of the Assembly, no matter what their personal views on a particular social issue may be, would support Canberrans' right to full determination, in exactly the same way as those rights are enjoyed by Victorians, Queenslanders, New South Welshmen, Tasmanians, South Australians and West Australians.

In response to the comments from the Leader of the Opposition: how many states have to pass voluntary assisted dying legislation before the absolute absurdity of the territories being prevented from considering such legislation becomes clear? How many states have to pass those laws before our situation becomes absolutely absurd, to the point where even those who are opposed to voluntary euthanasia would recognise that there cannot be only two parts of Australia whose democratically elected parliaments cannot even consider the issue?

There might have been an argument, when the Northern Territory moved on this question in the last century, that maybe the territories should not be the first to move on this question, but the way things stand at the moment, we will end up being the last, if we are allowed at all. If Western Australia, Queensland and Tasmania all pass laws that will allow voluntary assisted dying, and we have a majority of Australian states and a majority of the population who have access to such legal means, it does beg the question: why would the territories be barred from legislating? Undoubtedly, as each state progresses on this issue and more states legislate, we will see the momentum for change build. I thank Ms Cheyne for her motion today. (*Time expired.*)

MS LE COUTEUR (Murrumbidgee) (11.03): By now, everyone here will know what the response of the ACT Greens will be to a motion calling for recognition of territory rights. Clearly, we support territory rights; we always have and always will. It is a shame that there has been no resolution and that this is still an issue that we need to debate in the Assembly.

The matter has been debated previously in this Assembly and it is a real pity that it has had to be brought on again for debate. I would like to say somewhat cheekily that

if the Labor Party are short of ideas for private members' business, I am happy to take on a spot or two, if it would make life easier.

The only thing that is not a shame is that at least this time I have my voice. Last time this was debated, in August last year, I had a bad case of laryngitis and Mr Rattenbury delivered my speech.

After 30 years of self-government, there is no doubt that the Assembly has the trust of the people of the ACT to govern them effectively. It will always be the right time to lobby the commonwealth government to restore our territory rights and to allow us to have the freedom to debate and pass legislation that reflects the democratic will of the people in regard to voluntary assisted dying. It will always be the right time until it is done, and the Greens, for one, will not stop saying that.

The time is always right for the federal parliament to restore our rights in this space and to give the territory full voice and full opportunity to debate these matters, just as every other Australian parliament can, and just as other Australian citizens have the right to have their representatives discuss this issue on their behalf. These are totally discriminatory restrictions that place citizens of the ACT and the Northern Territory in a position that our fellow Australians are not in. On this specific issue, our parliaments are not allowed to determine the position of their constituents.

I appreciate that voluntary assisted dying, which is the issue that sits behind this, is a very difficult and personal topic. However, my views on this are also well known. I am a strong supporter of an appropriately legislated right to voluntary assisted dying. My views are formed by experience, stories that people have told me, opinions that have been expressed, and my own personal desire to have that opportunity, both for myself, if and when it becomes relevant, and for my family, when it was relevant in the past and if it becomes relevant in the future. But that is not the issue that we are debating today. The point is that we should have the right to have that debate, and that right has been denied to us.

If we were to have that debate, it would be a very complex one. I have also been clear in saying that publicly in the past. If the so-called Andrews bill was removed, I do not imagine that there would be a quick process in the ACT leading to passing any legislation that is relevant to this matter. We would have to think very carefully about how the public conversation was constructed and how it was held. That is an issue that has already been considered at length by the select committee, of which Ms Cheyne and I were members in the past.

In the future, if we were to go down the path of legislation, we would have to think even more carefully about how we constructed that legislation. Community views on this are diverse, and we have been talking about a very serious matter. But the bottom line is that we will not be having that discussion in any substantive way until such time as subsections 23(1A) and (1B) are removed from the Australian Capital Territory (Self-Government) Act 1988, which is a commonwealth act. I am deeply disappointed that this has not yet occurred.

As I have said before, I am disappointed with the position taken by Senator Seselja, a senator for the ACT. To have a situation where a senator for the ACT does not support our right to have these restrictions removed is particularly disappointing and is in stark contrast to work done by the senators for the Northern Territory. I have no doubt that there are differences of opinion in the Northern Territory, as there are everywhere else, but parliamentarians there have been united in their support for territory rights.

I heard Mr Coe's speech on this subject and I do acknowledge that some people are conflating the two issues, but we need to think about it sensibly. There is the right of the ACT and the Northern Territory assemblies to make legislation on this and represent the views of their constituents. There is also the appreciably diverse range of views on the substantive matter of voluntary assisted dying. I think we are old enough and mature enough to separate the two issues.

The views of Senator Seselja are in stark contrast to those of a former senator for the ACT, Gary Humphries, who has in the past, despite his personal views on the specific issue, voted for territory rights. Over the years Gary Humphries has been very strong in his views about the Greens—he is no friend of ours—but in the past he has demonstrated the ability to think about issues carefully and recognise the greater issue that is at stake here, despite his personal difference of opinion on specific issues.

I am also very grateful to our Senate colleagues. All nine Greens senators have previously indicated their support for territory rights. I know we are the only party that has a unanimous view on this matter, and I very much thank our senators from various jurisdictions around the country for supporting our right to self-govern on all matters, including voluntary assisted dying. I am grateful for the work of our parliamentary leader, Senator Richard Di Natale, and his office in liaising on and advocating for territory rights with his parliamentary colleagues, although, as we all know, without success to date.

I note that before Senator Leyonhjelm's unsuccessful attempt, there was an attempt jointly sponsored by a former Chief Minister, Senator Katy Gallagher, and Senator Richard Di Natale to remove the Andrews bill. That, I think, lapsed when Senator Gallagher had to resign from the Senate due to the unfortunate citizenship debacle.

The Greens remain undeterred. We will certainly support any attempts to remove this bill. I understand, from talking to our parliamentary colleagues, that if they think there is any practical chance of success, they would be the first to either sponsor, or probably preferably co-sponsor with another party, a bill to get rid of the Andrews bill.

As I said, the Greens are undeterred. The fight to restore territory rights will continue. We are disappointed that the debate continues without a positive resolution. There must come a time when the Australian parliament realises the error of its ways and restores the territories' rights to debate these issues. I look forward to that day for the people of the ACT, and for the people of the Northern Territory, who are in the same position as us, as far as this is concerned.

The Greens support this motion today. We will be happy to write again to our federal leader. I spoke to his office yesterday on this matter. I am sure he will do everything he can to restore our territory rights.

MR RAMSAY (Ginninderra—Attorney-General, Minister for the Arts and Cultural Events, Minister for Building Quality Improvement, Minister for Business and Regulatory Services, Minister for Government Services and Procurement and Minister for Seniors and Veterans) (11.12): I am very pleased to speak in support of this motion and to highlight again why Canberrans deserve the right to self-determination. This motion is about equality. This motion is about demonstrating and making very clear our view that it is unacceptable that Canberrans can still be stripped of the right to make their own laws.

This ACT government has consistently advocated and acted to give voice to Canberra's progressive values, and we are proud to represent Canberrans—all Canberrans. We believe in self-government. What we have at the moment with the provisions in the self-government act is not only undemocratic but it is also cowardly for conservative politicians to continue to deny this parliament the right to consider legislation simply because they do not like what the outcome might be.

I am reminded of the famous quote from Evelyn Beatrice Hall, who wrote in the *Friends of Voltaire*:

I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it.

This is the structural equivalent of that well-known democratic principle. Democracy relies on the representatives of people being empowered to consider matters for the peace, order and good government of the jurisdiction. The people of Canberra are currently denied their right because of the anomalous, unreasonable and undemocratic limitation contained in sections 23(1A) and 23(1B) of the self-government act.

Together in Canberra we have built the healthiest, best educated, longest-living community in Australia, and as members of government we as ministers have a responsibility to deliver policies and administer the territory in a way that honours the values of the people of Canberra. That is what we are doing; we are delivering. Our achievements in building the most progressive community in Canberra, a restorative city, honours our constituents' values.

Even when as elected representatives we differ on issues such as voluntary assisted dying or pill testing or marriage equality, each of us must stand up for Canberrans' rights to self-determination. This motion demands that we take renewed action to do so.

Despite Mr Coe's efforts to blur the boundaries between this motion and the substantive issue of voluntary assisted dying, this motion does not require the support of any member on the issue of voluntary assisted dying and any legislation that may follow. It simply calls on the leaders here to show leadership in their support for ACT democracy.

It is a perfectly reasonable position for someone to support this motion and also quite separately consider any legislation that may be introduced at a later time into this place. There is, indeed, an important and sensitive matter which is a matter of conscience. But that is a matter that will follow and is not a matter for today's debate. In fact, it is not accurate to say that a proxy debate is going on today. It is incumbent on those of us who fully understand what can happen in democratic institutions to distinguish between the substantive debate to follow and the one that occurs today. That is the responsibility we each have.

Our democracy will simply be strengthened when we take the time to work with people carefully and sensitively so that they can all fully appreciate how members in this place who may well find voluntary assisted dying untenable would simultaneously strongly advocate for this motion and for the rights embedded in it.

We will simply be a stronger community, a stronger parliament, when all 25 of us who are elected to this place accept the responsibility of working with our community so that they can appreciate and accept this difference. In fact, that is a responsibility that sits at least equally if not higher on those who are opposed to the concept of voluntary assisted dying so that they can demonstrate the important democratic values that lie behind an institution, a parliament, that is able to have self-determination on matters such as this.

This government recognises that the people of Canberra aspire to be a city that can fully consider matters that are relevant in a progressive, connected and egalitarian way. I say unequivocally yet again that I will keep on vocally supporting their right to self-determination. As Attorney-General I call upon each and every one of us here to take up the challenge raised in this motion and to request the repeal by the federal government of its powers that block our rights and responsibilities regarding Canberra's laws.

All members in this Assembly must recognise that as representatives of the people of Canberra we are required to protect the democratic rights of our people. I will continue to join with my colleagues on this side of the chamber and hopefully with all members of this chamber to vocally and actively support the rights of Canberrans to build a city that is inclusive, equal and fair, a restorative city with progressive values. I thank Ms Cheyne for bringing this important matter to the Assembly today and I commend the motion to the Assembly.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Children, Youth and Families, Minister for Disability, Minister for Employment and Workplace Safety, Minister for Health, Minister for Urban Renewal) (11.18): I thank Ms Cheyne for bringing this motion today. I am sure that many members have, like me, had conversations with some of their older constituents who still miss the days before self-government when the ACT was run and funded by the commonwealth. They miss the days when commonwealth funding fully supported the territory's infrastructure and our service needs. These days, however, we pay our own way. The ACT is only a self-governing jurisdiction because the commonwealth wanted us to take responsibility for our own administration. The

commonwealth wanted us to take responsibility for our own fiscal management and our lawmaking.

Canberrans may not have been big supporters of self-government when it was established but over the past 30 years we have learned to make the most of the opportunities made available to us by democracy. Even those who complain about self-government for the most part at least think that if we have it we should have the democratic rights it would be expected to confer.

As the Chief Minister so often mentions, we are a little city that punches well above its weight. Our economy is strong, our budget is well managed, and we lead the nation on so many policy fronts. On some, like our recently achieved 100 per cent renewable electricity goal, we come close to leading the world. As Ms Cheyne's motion notes and as the Chief Minister noted as well, we have developed a strong jurisdictional identity. Canberrans are proud to be a part of a forward-thinking, progressive city. Canberrans have shown they know what is best for Canberra. For the past 30 years we have been showing just how successful a little city we can be, that is, when we are not held back by the feds.

Despite washing its hands of full financial responsibility for the ACT the federal government has retained its ability to impart final moral judgement on our community's choices. Canberrans are well aware of the story of marriage equality in the ACT: we legislate to get it done, the commonwealth puts its foot down and says no. When our little city pushes ahead, the commonwealth pushes back, motivated by the wishes of some quiet Australians who apparently oppose progressive policies. But as the story of marriage equality shows us, the silent majority does not necessarily seem to think what the conservatives think they do when you put it to a vote.

Ultimately, this is about Canberrans having a choice to have their own conversation. We know that Canberrans are capable of having a mature, democratic debate about the difficult social issues of the day. All members would be aware that our city is very capable of engaging on these issues. I frequently receive well thought out correspondence on complex policy issues and have in-depth conversations with my constituents about a wide range of matters.

Contrary to Mr Coe's assertions, I believe all my colleagues on this side of the chamber engage in such conversations with respect for alternative views. It was hard for some of my colleagues when their very being was criticised and even condemned in the debate on marriage equality, but those conversations were had. So also should we be able to have the conversation about voluntary assisted dying and what it means to die with dignity.

Canberrans should be able to come to their local members with their ideas, solutions, and views without having to worry about what Kevin Andrews or the commonwealth might think. I fully support Ms Cheyne's motion and I encourage all members to do likewise. It is about our right as a democracy, as all other states in this country are able to have.

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra) (11.22), in reply: I thank my colleagues for their united show of support today. Before I get to the heart of what I want to say I place on the record my surprise and disappointment at Ms Le Couteur's remarks at the start of her speech. I appreciate it is not the substance of her speech but she and I have stood side by side on this so many times. Yes, it is absolutely a pity that we are discussing this today. I would prefer not to be; I think we all would prefer not to be no matter our stance on the issue, and I see Mrs Jones smiling. But we need to keep bringing back this issue for a reason.

We are not short of ideas for motions, and Ms Le Couteur knows this. That was a really cheap shot. If she is sick of talking about the issue, then fine—don't. But at a time when more and more states are legislating for assisted dying with Western Australia days away, maybe today—probably not, but maybe—it is right for us to draw attention to this and redouble our own efforts and to formally make that commitment here today.

I acknowledge the commitments of the Chief Minister and the Leader of the Opposition, who was very open today. So I ask Ms Le Couteur to reflect on her comments at the start of her speech—again, I appreciate it was not the substance of the speech—and the appropriateness of them, particularly in light of the community members in the gallery today and her own party members for whom this issue matters so much and who say to us that they want us to keep talking about it as parties and as a united government.

It is especially surprising when there was a genuine show of unity across the chamber today, and I thank Mr Coe in particular for his respectful remarks. I note his remarks and conflation that people may think this is a proxy debate for legalising voluntary assisted dying. I recognise that people may think this is a proxy issue, and I will respect that, but this is not a proxy debate today, and that is why I was shaking my head, for the record.

I remind members and the community that if our rights are restored, as they should be, there would be no ramming through of voluntary assisted dying legislation. I know some people are concerned about that and I recognise and respect that. But we have said repeatedly that it simply will not be the case. Our Attorney-General has repeatedly said that that will not be the case, and he did so again for the record today, and I underline that for anybody who has concerns.

For us working together as a parliament in considering legislation, if it ever came to pass, you would only have to look at the work of the committee on end of life choices, which had two opposition members, two government members and one crossbench member, Ms Le Couteur. All issues were carefully considered. The report was unanimous, which I do not think anyone reasonably expected, particularly when they knew who was on the committee and how diametrically opposed some of us are on almost everything. Yet Mrs Dunne and I worked together closely to draft the chapter on voluntary assisted dying, which I am sure continues to surprise everyone who knows us.

We can be a collaborative parliament, and we can have the respectful debate here. Mr Coe called for respect in any debate, and that is what we are asking for: to have that respectful debate, that conversation here in our parliament for our people, deciding and determining issues for ourselves like we do on everything else.

The first step is to write to our federal counterparts. I appreciate the Greens' commitment to doing that and genuinely note Mr Coe's openness to this. For the record, he is not here but I hope he is listening. If not, he can refer to *Hansard*. He can be assured that I will be following up with him, and I will work collaboratively with him to get this done. I can be annoying, so I might be spending quite a bit of time on the first floor waiting for that letter in my hand.

I note and respect Mr Coe's views on voluntary assisted dying and that of several of his party members. But as many of us have said today and as Mr Coe probably came as close as he ever will to acknowledging, this is fundamentally about equality. I genuinely appreciate that recognition right across the chamber today.

I said that this is just the beginning, and it is. Writing to federal leaders is just the first step. We will be mobilising our friends and family in the states whom we need to help us to get this done. I acknowledge all of those outside the territories who have rallied in their support of us over several years but particularly today. I will be relying on and nagging them to help us. I make no apologies for that and I make no apologies for this motion. This is a defining issue for us as a parliament. This is a defining issue for us as a community. We will not let it go.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Human Rights (Workers Rights) Amendment Bill 2019

Reference

Debate resumed.

MRS JONES (Murrumbidgee) (11.29): Members will see that I have circulated an amendment to Ms Cody's motion. It puts back the reporting date of the JACS committee on this reference to the Assembly, either in or out of session, to the end of February 2020. I move:

Omit "report by the first sitting day of 2020", substitute "report back to the Assembly by the end of February 2020".

Amendment agreed to.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

Crimes (Offences Against Frontline Community Service Providers) Amendment Bill 2019

Debate resumed from 23 October 2019, on motion by **Mrs Jones**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

MR RAMSAY (Ginninderra—Attorney-General, Minister for the Arts, Creative Industries and Cultural Events, Minister for Building Quality Improvement, Minister for Business and Regulatory Services and Minister for Seniors and Veterans) (11.30): This government is committed to protecting police and emergency service workers who provide such vital services to the ACT government and the ACT community. There is no excuse for violence against these brave people who work so hard in difficult conditions to keep our community safe. All of our ACT workers should be safe at work. That is why we introduced the Crimes (Protection of Police, Firefighters and Paramedics) Amendment Bill 2019 into this place, to recognise the vulnerability that police officers, firefighters and paramedics face while protecting the community.

The government bill sends a very strong and very clear message to everyone in the ACT that abuse and violence against these officers will not be tolerated. The government bill was carefully drafted to ensure that it achieves these important objectives and, at the same time, make sure that it does not unnecessarily and unreasonably limit human rights in our criminal process.

We as a government are not in a position to support the bill that is before us today, as presented by a member of the opposition, as we must ensure that it does strike this right balance. As the first law officer of the territory, I must ensure that all bills that are introduced in this chamber carefully consider the human rights issues and do not undermine fundamental principles of our criminal law.

I have key concerns about this bill, including its impact upon the presumption of innocence. This principle should be displaced only in rare and exceptional circumstances where a reverse burden can be very clearly justified. I am also concerned about the provisions in this bill which could make a range of crimes become aggravated offences with much higher penalties if the victim of an assault is classified as a frontline community worker under the bill.

The prosecution would not need to show that the defendant was aware, or should reasonably have been aware, that the person assaulted was a frontline community worker. Instead, the full legal burden is placed upon the defendant to prove that they were not aware of this fact. People in health care and other settings who may dress in plain clothes may well be indistinguishable from members of the public. To increase penalties in those particular circumstances, without the prosecution having to prove that the person in some way identified themselves as a frontline community worker, in my opinion goes too far and unreasonably limits human rights in criminal proceedings.

There is no doubt that all of our health workers provide a vital service to our community and should never face violence in the workplace. However, extending the scope of people protected to all healthcare workers in hospitals and imposing higher penalties may have a disproportionate impact on patients in mental health facilities, where persons are distressed and unwell, and may be more likely to get into confrontations with health staff. These groups are, therefore, likely to be disproportionately impacted by the aggravated offence and assault offence provisions in the bill. I do not believe that the bill, as it currently stands, contains adequate

safeguards to ensure that vulnerable groups will not be adversely impacted by aggravated offences in the bill.

In preparing and refining our government bill, it was very helpful to have the input of the ACT Human Rights Commission as well as my directorate on key human rights issues. It is open to any member of the Assembly to seek the independent advice of the Human Rights Commission on human rights issues. I know that Mr Hanson has drawn on this experience and this expertise in relation to private members' bills on previous occasions. I also know, Madam Assistant Speaker, that you have done so yourself in relation to a bill introduced today. That is an option that Mrs Jones might have availed herself of to ensure that the bill strikes the right balance in protecting our frontline workers in a way that does not unreasonably limit human rights. For these reasons, the government cannot support the bill as it stands.

Motion (by **Ms Berry**) moved:

That the debate be adjourned.

MRS JONES (Murrumbidgee) (11.35): Speaking to the adjournment motion, I am glad to raise this matter again today. We will support the adjournment motion, but I have a couple of things to say. First of all, the scrutiny committee report, which looked into the human rights elements of my proposed bill, has not brought this up as an issue. However, I accept that there are various opinions on the issue of the onus of proof and so on, and I am open to a discussion about it.

I would have liked to see this bill brought in before Christmas but I am also willing to work to amend the government's bill to get a better outcome, with the main objectives of both bills hopefully being achieved. I thank the minister for his openness to discussion. However, I think it is a shame that it will not be in place for the Christmas period when these workers obviously face a really tough time to be at work. While I would like to see their workplace, which is the public sphere, to be as safe as it possibly can be, I accept the adjournment and look forward to further debating the topic.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Planning—Coombs

MRS JONES (Murrumbidgee) (11.37): I move:

That this Assembly:

- (1) notes that, despite the importance of the Coombs Peninsula to the local community, the ACT Government plans to allow approximately 30 dwellings to be developed on the Coombs Peninsula via the land release program;
- (2) further notes the Coombs Peninsula is an important public asset and residents bought into the area understanding that it would not be developed; and
- (3) calls on the ACT Government to remove the Coombs Peninsula from the land release program and protect it from multi-dwelling development.

I rise today to help protect Coombs peninsula from additional multi-dwelling residential development. Coombs peninsula is one of the few open spaces left in the Molonglo Valley. It is still part a suburb that has been developed. It is a natural space. It is full of trees. On the balance of things, considering what the residents of Coombs have had to deal with lately, I think they should be able to continue to enjoy that space. It is an important public asset shared by all Coombs residents and the wider community.

The land in question is about seven to eight hectares of former farming land and pine plantation at the end of Fred Daly Avenue in Coombs, which forms part of Coombs peninsula. The strategic location of the land is important. The site is a small hill surrounded by a bend in the Molonglo River. It provides a great vantage point for views along the river valley. The hill is surrounded on three sides by Molonglo River reserve. The site is immediately adjacent to land that is already protected and set aside for the pink-tailed worm-lizard, which is a rare legless lizard. There is also a friendly platypus seen from time to time in that part of the river.

Opposite the Coombs peninsula is a section of land that will be developed. So even though at the moment the peninsula looks across to a natural space, that will not be the case in the long term. Coombs peninsula acts as a very important vantage point across the Molonglo River Reserve. It provides a buffer zone between the highly urban environment of Coombs and the protected environment of the reserve. The area is currently open space and available to all. The site is used by local residents to access the Molonglo River, to reach our nearby walking paths and to exercise dogs. Children fly kites, play in the bush and engage in general recreational enjoyment. Hot air balloons have used it as a landing site.

Despite the importance of this place to the community and despite the fact that many residents who bought into the area did so on the understanding that it would not be developed, the government plans to release the land for 30 dwellings. This would take away some of the last remaining natural space that the people of Coombs have to enjoy. As has been discussed at much length in this place, there are very few trees that have matured in the area and the few open green spaces are in a wind tunnel. We have, to this point, developed almost every inch of space in Coombs.

While people in some of the other suburbs that are backing on to bigger nature reserves have the capacity to walk up into the hills, the people of Coombs do not have that. They have to go across a big four-lane main road. It really is a big change from where you are, whereas the Coombs peninsula is a space within the Coombs suburb which people use to be able to unwind within their own suburb.

I am not saying that the Coombs peninsula can never be developed. We are actually in favour, on the whole, of development but it would have to be done right. I think there are environmental or recreational assets that could be developed there. But I believe that for the sake of that suburb and how it has developed to this point, it would not be right. Further work needs to be done on how best to keep the site as urban open space for all residents of the Molonglo Valley to enjoy while protecting nearby wildlife in the Molonglo River Reserve.

I note that the government yesterday tabled its response to the planning and urban renewal committee's recommendations that the peninsula be removed from the land release program and considered for environmental and recreational purposes. It is not just the planning committee that is calling for the peninsula to be protected. Earlier today I tabled two petitions, totalling over 550 signatures, to protect the peninsula. The Conservation Council has also called for the planning committee's recommendations to be accepted. But the government has arrogantly said no. They do not agree. They know best; too bad; everyone should just suck it up.

On behalf of the people of Murrumbidgee, my electorate, and the residents of Coombs, who do not want this area developed, who do not want to be told to just suck it up, I am calling on the government to protect Coombs peninsula and to remove it from the land release program. We have had many debates in this place about the situation for people who live in Coombs. They are suffering from high crime rates. They are suffering from the establishment of a new suburb, which takes time. It takes time for trees to grow; it takes time for gardens to grow. It is quite a heat sink at the moment. There is a lot of concrete; there is a lot of bitumen; there are a lot of rocks.

This small part of nature at the end of the peninsula is exactly the kind of thing that we need to promote to people to use for their mental health, for their wellbeing, for their ability to learn about the natural environment. I am very much in favour of new suburbs but I am also in favour of a balance where there is access to greenery, where we do not create a 100 per cent heat sink full of concrete and where we find a balance so that people's lives are able to be balanced.

I started out living in Canberra at Gungahlin. I have lived in Ngunnawal and Amaroo. Particularly when I was in Amaroo, it was a fairly new suburb. The trees were small. There was much concrete and many rocks. For the sake of a balanced life, it would be the right thing for the government to hold off and not make this an area for more housing, but to keep it as a nature park. I commend the motion to the Assembly.

MS LE COUTEUR (Murrumbidgee) (11.43): I move:

In paragraph (3), after "multi-dwelling development", add ", and rezone it for environment and recreation purposes by 30 June 2020".

The Greens are going to be supporting Mrs Jones's motion to protect the Coombs peninsula. The Greens believe that the bulk of the Coombs peninsula should not be developed. Instead, we believe that it should be rezoned and protected for environment and recreation purposes. I am going to find myself repeating some of what Mrs Jones said because we are talking about the same thing. Nonetheless, I will go through some of the reasons why we should be doing this.

First of all, it is a small site, surrounded by the Molonglo River reserve. What happens on that site will directly impact on the reserve. Sadly, many builders do not do the right thing with their construction waste. Anyone who visits a new suburb will see builders' rubbish blowing all over the place. For the Coombs peninsula, that rubbish will blow straight down the hill into the reserve and the river. I can see that there will be many hours wasted picking it up. This does not have to happen.

Secondly, the Coombs peninsula contains an area of pink-tailed worm-lizard habitat which should be protected. This lizard is listed as vulnerable, both nationally and in the ACT. Because of the environmental values of this area, the Conservation Council has been fighting since 2010 to protect it. In the Seventh Assembly, there were discussions about the estate development plan for Molonglo. It tended to be called the Coombs tip in those days, but the Coombs peninsula, a more appropriate name, was left out of the maps for development because it was recognised from the beginning that this is an area of considerable environmental sensitivity.

Thirdly, and one of the reasons for that, is that the peninsula is next to a really narrow part of the reserve. It is less than 200 metres wide at that point. Research has shown that very narrow reserves do not adequately protect biodiversity. This peninsula would be a great way to widen the reserve at the narrowest point.

Fourthly, the site has beautiful views along the river and would be ideal for recreation, as Mrs Jones has talked about. You could say, "Why on earth would you need more space for recreation when you have the Molonglo gorge just next to you?" I think that that probably is a valid question, but the answer is that the Molonglo gorge has an awful lot going for it but flattish space is not one of the attributes of being a gorge. It is a real asset for the people who live in Coombs, Wright and Denman Prospect to be next to the Molonglo gorge and the river reserve there. I recognise the recreational value of that 100 per cent, but there is also some positive to having reasonably flat space.

And there is another positive. I am aware that the Suburban Land Agency is in discussion with residents close to Holdens Creek about the possible location of a considerable amount of playground equipment there. There may be space on the peninsula to have some or all of that playground equipment without compromising environmental values. The area in Coombs around there is a high-density area; I know that the space is currently being used and I am sure that it would continue to be used. Finally, only 30 dwellings are planned. If we took this land off the land release program, it would make no material difference to the ACT's housing supply. Also, I do not think that there was any likelihood that it was going to be used for affordable housing. The Greens are concerned about having space for affordable housing, but I am not thinking that changing this will make any difference to land supply for affordable or social housing in the ACT.

These views, from me in particular and the Greens in general, should come as no surprise to anyone. They are 100 per cent in line with the recommendations of the planning and urban renewal standing committee on draft variation 360 Molonglo River reserve. I am the chair of that committee and fully supported the recommendations, which were unanimous. The recommendations were that the Coombs peninsula be (a) considered for environmental and recreational purposes; (b) withdrawn from the land release program while this consideration is completed; and (c) rezoned by draft variation 360 to the hills, ridges and buffer zone.

The last recommendation brings me to my amendment. Mrs Jones's motion is excellent, but I would like to add the one element that is not in it: rezoning the

peninsula. That was the last recommendation from the planning committee so it will come as no surprise that I have moved my amendment. The site is currently zoned RZ1 suburban residential. As long as it has that zoning, the government of the day can move quickly to an estate development process. If Coombs peninsula is to be protected permanently, it needs to be rezoned to an environment and recreation zone. That is what my amendment seeks to do.

My amendment also puts in a deadline, 30 June 2020. That would not normally have been an achievable time frame for a rezoning. However, in this case the government has available a quicker option that could be done by then. The obvious option is to follow the committee's suggestion of adding the change into draft variation 360. If that was done, it would be possible to have this rezoning in place by the end of February 2010.

In conclusion, the Greens will be supporting Mrs Jones's excellent motion. I hope that Mrs Jones and the Liberals will support my small amendment, which will strengthen the motion by addressing the zoning of the site.

I would like to acknowledge the hard work of the Conservation Council and its members, for about a decade, to protect the Coombs peninsula. I also acknowledge the efforts of the many local residents over the past couple of years. I hope that the Assembly will deliver for, I think, slightly over 500 people who signed the petition that Mrs Jones presented to the Assembly this morning. For those people, the pink-tailed worm-lizards—probably more than 500 of them, I assume—and all the people who want to protect our wonderful local environment, I hope that the Assembly will support my amendment and Mrs Jones's motion.

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (11.51): I think it is abundantly clear that everyone is on the same page here; everyone except the government. The community is on this page.

I fully support Mrs Jones's motion. We all had the ability to sit and listen to the evidence that was given to the inquiry here. Being on the committee, I had a better opportunity than most, but everyone had the opportunity to listen to the likes of John Hutchison, who is a private citizen who lives in Coombs. He said:

Once it is gone, it is lost forever, and in the long run we will look back and say, "Why wasn't this place protected? Who was so short-sighted as to develop this for a small number of residential blocks?"

Mr Hutchison also pointed out that the only bushland trees left in Coombs are on the Coombs peninsula. I remind the Assembly that only weeks ago we had a debate in this chamber about the planning mistakes that have been made in Molonglo, in particular how those planning mistakes have attacked the tree canopy in Molonglo, and that there is very little likelihood of that being corrected in the short term. It means that these bushland trees on the Coombs peninsula become even more important than they would have been.

We also heard from Professor Ian Falconer from the Conservation Council. My Greens colleague Ms Le Couteur pointed out that the Conservation Council have been fighting this fight regarding Coombs peninsula since at least 2012.

Madam Assistant Speaker, I would like to briefly draw your attention to some of the evidence given by the minister in the hearing. During the hearing, I asked Minister Gentleman, and I am referring to *Hansard*:

Just looking at this from an SLA bottom line perspective, this would be a wonderful place to live, wouldn't it? These would be prime blocks.

The minister agreed and said:

As Daniel was saying—

referring to Daniel Iglesias—

the views from there are quite incredible. The escarpment on the edge of the river is particularly spectacular ...

I went on to ask:

... if a decision were made to not proceed with any residential development ... It would impact the SLA bottom line at the end of that whole scenario, wouldn't it, and impact it quite severely?

This is the response I got from Mr Gentleman:

I will not speak for SLA, but I would say that if those blocks did not go ahead, they would look to find some other blocks. We are looking to ensure that we can supply enough land for the growing population, whether it is there or somewhere else.

I followed up. I said:

... in answer to my question, you suggested to me that if you did not build them there, you would build them somewhere else.

Minister Gentleman's response was:

Certainly, yes.

In this instance, where it is abundantly clear that everyone agrees except the government, I call upon the government to reconsider and to stop being so arrogantly pig-headed.

I would note that, as has been pointed out by Ms Le Couteur, the committee recommended that the Coombs peninsula be withdrawn from the land release program, and this was not agreed to by the government. I fully support Mrs Jones's motion.

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

Sitting suspended from 11.56 am to 2.00 pm.

Questions without notice

Crime—Irma Palasics

MR COE: My question is to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Minister, I refer to the case of Irma Palasics and her family, who continue to pursue justice for her unsolved violent murder 20 years ago. Minister, why hasn't anyone from ACT police or your office made contact with her family in light of the recent flurry of publicity on this terrible anniversary of her death?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Mr Coe for this question. I appreciate that this case continues to be distressing to Irma's family and friends. I extend my deepest sympathies to Irma's loved ones on the 20th anniversary of her death. I am seeking more information from ACT Policing about new technology that Irma's family have raised. The investigation remains open. Police have not lost hope of bringing the offenders before the court. ACT Policing will actively consider any new evidence brought forward.

MR COE: Minister, why have you refused to make contact with the family, despite numerous requests, both directly and through the media; and why hasn't DNA phenotyping been used, even when the family has offered to pay for it themselves?

MR GENTLEMAN: I have replied to Irma's family through social media channels, as they requested, and the consideration of the technology that I mentioned before is exactly what Mr Coe has raised.

MRS JONES: Minister, will you commit to meeting with Mrs Palasic's family before the end of this year?

MR GENTLEMAN: I will take advice from ACT Policing and the JACs experts on whether to meet with the family. It is of course an ongoing investigation, so it is important that we have all of the—

Opposition members interjecting—

MR GENTLEMAN: At the beginning I did advise of my compassion—

Mr Coe: You still have not responded to her email.

MR GENTLEMAN: We have responded, Mr Coe. I said that just now in the answer. I will take advice on whether to meet with the family. It is a distressing time for them, and I want to make sure that we approach this appropriately.

Homelessness—Christmas services

MS LE COUTEUR: My question is to the minister for housing. It relates to OneLink. Minister, I note that as of March this year, OneLink's funding agreement enables them to provide services on Saturdays and Sundays. However, this does not

apply to public holidays. Minister, what arrangements will be put in place to ensure that people can get access to homelessness accommodation and supports over the Christmas shutdown period, in particular at weekends and on public holidays?

MS BERRY: I thank Ms Le Couteur for the question. As Ms Le Couteur will know, over Christmas and holiday periods there are extended services available for OneLink. I do not have the details on me for the number of contacts for last year's services when OneLink was open during the public holidays over the Christmas period, but I can get them to inform the Assembly of the work that occurred over that period.

The government will consider the hours of engagement for the Christmas period this year to ensure that people who do need access to support services over that Christmas period can access them, whether that is through OneLink or through other services in the ACT.

MS LE COUTEUR: What services will be provided to those experiencing or at risk of homelessness over the Christmas shutdown period, and will this include access to brokerage funds during that time?

MS BERRY: A number of services are available over the Christmas period, as Ms Le Couteur will know from previous years when the ACT government has ensured that OneLink has been open over that period. Of course, UnitingCare, the Early Morning Centre, Red Cross and all the other services will be available as normal. Information on whether they will be available on the Christmas public holidays will be available soon but it has not been considered as part of the government's situation right now. We are looking at what services will be required, given what has happened over previous years, to make sure that people have those supports over that period.

MR PARTON: Minister, when will the OneLink Christmas operating hours be finalised, and how will that information be communicated to the wider public?

MS BERRY: I do not have an actual date for when that will be finalised. Certainly, the community will be made aware of that. It will be available on government websites as well as @OneLink and other services like the Blue Door, the Red Cross and the Early Morning Centre, to make sure that people are aware of when those services are available so that they can seek supports when they need them.

ACT Policing—staffing

MRS JONES: My question is to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services and goes back into history a little. Minister, what was the number of full-time equivalent frontline police in the ACT police force on 30 June 2011?

MR GENTLEMAN: I will take the question on notice; I do not have the detail of that in front of me just at the moment, from 2011.

I can say that this government is keen to invest in ACT Policing. In this budget we have invested \$34 million for new officers. It will bring 60 or more police to the front

line for the ACT. It is important to note that we have invested more in the past two budgets than previously. We have now a number of police acting for the safety of the whole ACT community. I continue to invest in that resource.

MRS JONES: I will let the minister know that it was 719. Minister, what was the number of full-time equivalent frontline police in ACT Policing on 31 June 2019?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank the member for the question. As I have mentioned, we have invested in more police over the past number of years. The FTE for 2019 was 977.94.

Ms Lee: Can you clarify that number again, Minister?

MR GENTLEMAN: The FTE headcount for 2018-19 was 977.94.

MS LEE: Minister, was the number of full-time equivalent frontline police in the ACT police force lower at the end of 2018-19 than at 30 June 2011, and, if so, why?

MR GENTLEMAN: I do not have the figures for 2011. However, I as mentioned earlier, I will take that on notice.

ACT Health—SPIRE project

MRS DUNNE: My question is to the Minister for Health, who was feeling left out yesterday. I refer to the Australasian College for Emergency Medicine emergency department guidelines, which state, “Security issues arise in all emergency departments, exacerbated by drugs, mental illness and anxiety amongst patients and those accompanying them.” Minister, what security risk assessment has been done related to the risks of having the proposed location for the SPIRE building so close to the junior playing area of Garran Primary School?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mrs Dunne for the question, but I am not really sure what point she is trying to make. As I have repeatedly said, the front entrance to the emergency department, as currently planned in the SPIRE development, is on Hospital Road, which is not on Gilmore Crescent; it is a long way from Gilmore Crescent. The front entrance of the emergency department, the emergency department itself and the current proposed footprint of SPIRE are not next-door to Garran Primary School or the junior playing area.

MRS DUNNE: To what extent will the proposed change in the location result in more risks to Garran residents and the students of Garran Primary School, and has the minister updated her knowledge of Garran geography in the last little while?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I have visited Canberra Hospital on a number of occasions, including during school drop-off time and pick-up time recently. I have seen the traffic on Gilmore Crescent. I made a commitment to Garran residents at the Woden Valley Community Council meeting, when Mrs Dunne was in attendance, that we will work with them to address the existing traffic issues, the existing safety issues, that they have identified, as we work through both the development of SPIRE and the

Canberra Hospital master plan. But those traffic issues are existing issues in the community.

I went for a walk around the area with Garran Primary School board members. Also, as you are probably aware, Madam Speaker, and as I said in question time yesterday, last week I opened an expression of interest for a local community reference group for the SPIRE project. I encourage Garran residents who are interested in being part of the detailed design of the SPIRE project to put forward an expression of interest to be part of that group, to be part of the conversation about how we build this new critical care, emergency and surgical facility, which is the biggest investment in health infrastructure since self-government. It is about how we get this right for clinicians, consumers and the local community, who we are already listening to in relation to their concerns. We are already working on some of the issues that have been identified. As I have said to them, and as I have said repeatedly in this place, I do not believe that this project will present any additional safety risk to the residents of Garran, and certainly not to the students of Garran Primary School.

MR WALL: Minister, how many major security incidents have there been at the Canberra Hospital emergency department over the past three years?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Wall for the supplementary question. I will take it on notice.

ACT Health—SPIRE project

MS LEE: My question is to the Minister for Health. What is the point in community consultation by the government on the location and operations of SPIRE after the government has already decided on SPIRE's location and operations?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Ms Lee for the question. It is becoming more and more obvious that those opposite are trying to find any way they can to delay the SPIRE project, the biggest investment in new health infrastructure since self-government and a critical expansion of capacity at Canberra Hospital that will deliver expanded surgical—

Mrs Jones: A point of order, Madam Speaker. The question was about consultation by the government happening after the decision on SPIRE's location had already been taken. The minister has not addressed that at all yet.

MADAM SPEAKER: Your point of order was raised 20 seconds in to the answer, so the minister has plenty of time left.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As I have said repeatedly in this place, we are at concept stage of the design of the SPIRE project at this time. Other parties in this place previously chose a location for a redevelopment of the Canberra Hospital in 2016. We are in the early stages of detailed design of this project and we will continue to consult with the community and continue to do that work in collaboration with the community while those opposite do everything they can to delay and to obfuscate.

It will be very interesting to hear what the Canberra Liberals have to say about their commitment to SPIRE at the 2020 election. Will they put the entire SPIRE project on hold at the 2020 election? That is going to be the question for the people of Canberra. We are talking about the biggest investment in health infrastructure since self-government: a new surgical, critical care and emergency department facility on which we are consulting with clinicians, the community and consumers to ensure that we deliver the best outcome for the people of Canberra and the local community.

MS LEE: Minister, what is the point in community consultation by the government on traffic flows to and from SPIRE after the government has already decided on its location?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: It is an interesting question, because there are in fact a number of options in relation to traffic flow to the SPIRE building, to the SPIRE project, in that current proposed location. That is something that we are working through.

Again, I emphasise that the traffic issues along Gilmore Crescent are existing issues. I have made an absolute commitment to work with Garran Primary School and with the local community to ensure that, as part of the development of the SPIRE project and as part of the Canberra Hospital master plan process, we address some of the existing traffic issues on Palmer Street and Gilmore Crescent, which I have visited with the Garran Primary School board. There are existing issues there. We recognise those. I have made an absolute commitment that we will work with the community to address some of those existing issues, which will not be made worse by the SPIRE project.

MRS JONES: Minister, what is the point in community consultation by the government on the safety and security of the 600 children who attend Garran Primary School after the government had already decided on SPIRE's location? Is there any possibility that you will move the entrance?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mrs Jones for the supplementary question. We will not be moving the location of SPIRE. This is the result of a lot of work in the Health Directorate. We will work closely with the community to look at traffic flow to the SPIRE emergency department. We have already made that commitment. But this is the point where we are engaging with the community, as I have repeatedly said, at the beginning of a detailed design process. We have just gone out for expressions of interest to be our construction partner or to be our early contractor involvement partner—

Mrs Jones: I raise a point of order, Madam Speaker. My question included the question: is there any chance that the entrance will be moved? The minister has answered that the building will not be moved, but that was not the question. Could you ask the minister to answer the question as to whether the entrance might be moved?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: Those opposite appear to believe that the entrance is opposite Garran Primary School. I can well and truly assure them that it is in fact not opposite Garran Primary School. We are considering detailed design for the SPIRE project. We will work through those issues with the local community.

Mrs Jones: I raise a point of order, Madam Speaker. Again, I ask the question and for the minister to be directly relevant to it: is there any possibility that the entrance will be moved?

MADAM SPEAKER: Mrs Jones, there is no point of order. The minister has been quite clear about the concept details around the entrance and the location.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: The current proposed entrance to the emergency department in the SPIRE project is as far away from Garran Primary School as it could be on the SPIRE location. So it is very unlikely that the entrance to the emergency department will be moved. But we are in the process of detailed design development, so I do not want to give any concrete yes or no answer, because that is what the detailed design development process will consider.

ACT Ambulance Service—SPIRE project

MR WALL: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, in a response to a recent FOI request sent to the ACT Ambulance Service, it was stated that they had no papers in relation to the SPIRE project. This indicates they have not been consulted about the SPIRE project. Minister, why wasn't the ACT Ambulance Service consulted about the SPIRE project?

MR GENTLEMAN: Madam Speaker, I am the minister with responsibility for the ACT Ambulance Service. I can advise that they have been in consultation with the major task force team on building SPIRE, indeed, right down to walking the actual plot, to ensure that they have the best access possible.

MR WALL: If the minister for emergency services wishes to take the question, I will direct the supplementary to him. How is it possible that the ACT Ambulance Service has been consulted if there is no documentary evidence of this?

MR GENTLEMAN: I am not sure that that is the case, Madam Speaker. Often in these matters, of course, Mr Wall will raise a point where he considers nothing has occurred where it actually has. I will take advice on this—

Mr Wall interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Wall, you have asked the question.

MR GENTLEMAN: and come back to the chamber with the documents.

MRS DUNNE: Will the minister ensure that the FOI request that I made, in relation to which I have been told that there are no documents, is reviewed thoroughly; and

will he ensure that if there are documents, they are treated in accordance with the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act.

MR GENTLEMAN: Madam Speaker, I do not have the power under the FOI Act to provide that certainty. It is a matter for independent processes.

Mrs Dunne: Point of order. The question was: would he ensure that the documents were reviewed and that they would be treated in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act. He is a decision-maker in relation to the Freedom of Information Act. The minister cannot avoid this issue.

MADAM SPEAKER: Minister, did you have anything to add?

MR GENTLEMAN: No.

MADAM SPEAKER: The minister has responded to me. I have taken it that he will take advice and deal with it.

Sport—swimming pools

MS CODY: My question is to the Minister for Sport and Recreation. Minister, what facilities are available for Canberrans wanting to swim this summer?

MS BERRY: As the weather is warming up, Canberrans are getting ready to enjoy the summer season in our public swimming pools. Having access to a great public pool is an important way for communities to enjoy a fun and active summer.

The ACT government is responsible for the management of six public pools in our region. Each of these facilities offers a wide range of indoor facilities, such as heated pools, gyms and cafes. There are also our much-loved outdoor facilities at the Dickson and Manuka pools.

In 2018-19 our six ACT government pools had a very successful swimming season, with over 1,050,000 visits to the centres. Canberra's residents clearly love going to a pool in summer, and especially our outdoor pools. Dickson pool had a 25 per cent increase and Manuka Pool had a 15 per cent increase in the number of visits.

The government is dedicated to investing in sport and recreation facilities, including at Manuka Pool and Mount Stromlo leisure centre on the south side. We have also completed a one-month trial of gender-specific swimming sessions at the Canberra Olympic Pool. The trial was in response to community feedback about supporting inclusion and providing a safe, sensitive environment for people who may not have previously had access to water-based activities. The trial had 274 women and 134 men participating in the men and women-only sessions on offer.

I am sure that our whole community is looking forward to another summer in Canberra where we can all enjoy swimming and outdoor activities at our public pools.

MS CODY: Minister, what upgrades is the ACT government delivering for pools on the south side?

MS BERRY: The ACT government is committed to building and renewing facilities and infrastructure on the south side of Canberra. Part of this commitment is upgrading local public pools so that everyone has a great place to swim, especially as the weather warms up. We have made a big investment into Manuka Pool as a special and unique place that the south side community has enjoyed since its opening on 26 January 1931. This pool combines beautiful art deco architecture with relaxing and enjoyable water activities.

The historic and iconic Manuka Pool has received extensive works on the filtration plant of the main pool to make sure that it meets modern health standards, maintains and protects its unique and original heritage design elements and provides a great place for the community to swim and enjoy the great outdoors. These works totalled \$2.42 million funded across the 2018 and 2019 budgets.

Re-tiling Manuka Pool has involved an extensive worldwide search to find tiles in keeping with the style of the facility while also meeting modern slip resistance standards. These tiles have been imported all the way from the Czech Republic.

The upgrades, which are now complete, were undertaken while the pool was closed after the summer swim season. I am happy to report that Manuka Pool will reopen on Saturday, 30 November with free entry as well as activities for the whole family.

MRS JONES: Minister, will the new swimming pool at Molonglo be open for this summer? Also, will it include female-only toilets and change rooms?

MS BERRY: No, the pool will not be ready for this summer. It is expected to open in the middle of next year. But as far as female friendly—what, so you want—

Mrs Jones: Female only.

MS BERRY: single sex?

Mrs Jones: Yes.

MS BERRY: Single sex; look, I will take some advice on that and just check whether they are gender neutral and accessible for everybody or whether they are single sex. Importantly, the Mount Stromlo leisure centre will be a really great local facility for the whole of the community to enjoy. As I said, it will be ready for use in the first half of 2020, which I know we are all excited about, particularly Ms Cody as it is in her electorate.

This was a \$39.49 million project to deliver a new facility. It includes a 50-metre pool, a warm water program, a learn to swim pool, a leisure pool, a toddlers pool, a splash park and a gym-health club, as well as seating capacity for up to 500 people.

Also on the south side, for Mrs Jones's interest, is the upcoming open day of the Active Leisure Centre at Erindale College, which is on 1 December. The facility offers a wide range of activities, including a cardio gym, a weights gym, squash courts and a sports hall, as well as a 25-metre swimming pool. The centre recently re-opened after \$1.4 million in repairs to the pool. As I said, the open day is on Sunday, 1 December, with free entry as well as a range of health and aquatic activities for all.

ACT Health—SPIRE project

MISS C BURCH: My question is to the Minister for Transport and Minister for City Services. Minister, what impact will the bottlenecks on Palmer Street and Gilmore Crescent have on travel to and from the Canberra Hospital after the SPIRE building becomes operational?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. I am happy to take on notice some of the detail, but we are, of course, in the early stages, as the Minister for Health has mentioned, of design of the SPIRE centre. As part of that work, we will be undertaking traffic modelling to assess the impacts. That will have to take into account the final design of the project, which is yet to be established. Of course, we will be looking at all the traffic impacts. That includes private passenger vehicles, but it also includes our public transport system. We have quite a few buses running past the hospital, including the rapid 6. We want the hospital to remain accessible for people using our public transport system.

MISS C BURCH: Minister, what measures will be put in place to ensure the safety of traffic and pedestrians travelling to and from the Canberra Hospital in the area around SPIRE?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question but, as I have just outlined—I am not sure whether she listened to the answer to the first question—we are still going through the work of doing the traffic modelling. Of course in the future we will look at what measures are necessary to make sure that traffic is flowing appropriately through this very tight precinct.

MR HANSON: Minister, what traffic studies have been done concerning school pick-up and drop-off times once SPIRE is fully operational?

MR STEEL: We are still working through those traffic studies at the moment as part of the early stages of the project. We will continue to assess the traffic as the early design continues. I am not sure that I can provide any more information than that today.

Hospitals—maternity services

MS LAWDER: My question is to the Minister for Health. I refer to a report in the media of 21 October regarding the experience of a woman who presented to the Canberra Hospital in May 2019 after her baby died in the womb. She was advised that the plan was to give her drugs and send her home to give birth to a stillborn baby. The

baby also had Trisomy 13, which results in deformities. This woman contacted her obstetrician, who suggested that she stay at the hospital and that a curette be performed. Minister, why is the Canberra Hospital sending women home with drugs to give birth to stillborn babies?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Ms Lawder for the question, which obviously goes to some very personal issues in relation to an individual person's experience with the health system. We are in the middle of an inquiry into maternity services that the Assembly is undertaking. We certainly welcome the fact that women and families have shared their experiences about ACT public maternity services with that inquiry, and we look forward to receiving the recommendations of that inquiry.

Ms Lawder will be aware that I am not able to provide any advice or information on any matters relating to individuals due to the provisions of the Health Records (Privacy and Access) Act.

MS LAWDER: Minister, what does a woman do with a stillborn child at home after the hospital has sent her home?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I will take Ms Lawder's question on notice, on the basis of wanting to get some further information in relation to this matter. Obviously, I was not minister at the time in May, and I have not been briefed on this individual matter. In fact, I would be unable to be briefed on this individual matter, due to the provisions of the Health Records (Privacy and Access) Act, unless the patient signed a release.

Mrs Dunne: That's not true.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: It is absolutely true, Mrs Dunne. It is certainly the advice that I have received.

Ms Lee: Point of order. The question, along with the first one, was specifically: why is the Canberra Hospital sending women home and what does a woman do with a stillborn child? It was not asking for the circumstances of this specific incident. It was the preamble. It was talking about the background. But the questions themselves are specifically talking about women and the Canberra Hospital.

MADAM SPEAKER: There is no point of order. The minister has been responding to the principles of the question that was asked.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I have already taken the question on notice. I am just trying to provide some further information to the chamber about the operation of the Health Records (Privacy and Access) Act, which does prevent me getting access to information on individual matters unless a release has been signed by those individual patients.

MS LEE: Minister, how many women in the past year have been sent home alone to deliver a stillborn baby?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Ms Lee for the supplementary, and I will take the detail of the question on notice. I am not convinced about the way the opposition is phrasing this matter. These are incredibly sensitive and personal issues, and we need to be very careful in the language we use in relation to them. I will take the detail of the question on notice in relation to how these sensitive matters of terminating pregnancies are managed by the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children.

ACT Health—workplace culture

MRS KIKKERT: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, in your ministerial statement on 26 September about the implementation of the recommendations of the culture review, you said that significant work was being done “in identifying where executive staff need further support and working with them to ensure they have the skills and capabilities to support their teams”. Minister, why are these skills and capabilities not core eligibility requirements and selection criteria for executive staff appointments?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mrs Kikkert for the question. Of course we are doing a lot of work to respond to the independent review of workplace culture within ACT public health services. We are constantly reviewing the capability of executive staff across the system. What we have seen in relation to health services is that often people are promoted, as they are in many technical areas, on the basis of their technical skill, on the basis of their clinical skill and on the basis of how they have done the job at the level that they have been at.

One of the things that have come out both from the culture review itself and from the work that we are doing collaboratively with the ANU school of management and the earlier conversations that they have had with people is that there has not been enough focus in the past within Canberra Health Services and the Health Directorate on ensuring that when people are promoted into those management positions they are actually provided with the professional development and support to be good managers. They may be technically excellent. They may be very good at providing the clinical services that they provide. In those kinds of areas we often see people promoted on the basis of those skills and not enough attention being paid to their capacity to be leaders and managers of staff. That is something that has been identified and it is something that we are addressing.

MRS KIKKERT: Minister, why was it necessary for an independent review to be conducted to remind the government, and you, that executives need to have skills and capabilities in team leadership?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mrs Kikkert for the supplementary. I find it interesting that the opposition is choosing to ask questions about leadership this week. But leaving that to one side, as I just said, we see these things across many technical areas and many areas where people provide clinical services or specialist services, where people are promoted on the basis of their clinical skills, their specialist skills or their technical skills. It is absolutely a core responsibility of organisations to ensure that people have those management and leadership skills. It is something that

sometimes does not happen in as timely a way as we would expect. That is something that has come through, as I said, from the work that ANU is doing, and we will continue to emphasise the importance of managerial and leadership skills for the executives.

I want to praise the executives across Canberra Health Services and the Health Directorate. We have in place now an extremely strong leadership and executive team that is doing excellent work in embedding the values of both organisations, making it clear that they live those values, and making it clear that culture and behaviour are a priority across both organisations.

MISS C BURCH: Minister, how many executives have so far been identified as needing support and mentoring to develop their leadership skills and capabilities?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Miss Burch for the supplementary question. I will take it on notice in relation to the specific statement that was made in my ministerial statement. But I would note that most managers and leaders actually engage in ongoing professional development to ensure that their leadership and their management skills are up to date. As Mrs Kikkert said, it is actually a core competency of managers and leaders in organisations but it is also something that can consistently be improved.

If Miss C Burch would like some advice on some courses on leadership for those opposite, I am sure that we would be happy to provide some advice on some excellent leadership courses for any member of the opposition who would be interested in that kind of professional development.

ACT Health—workplace culture

MR PARTON: My question is to the Minister for Health. How many public servants and health workers have had their employment terminated in ACT Health and Canberra Health Services this year because they have been found to be the perpetrators of bullying and harassment?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Parton for the question. I will take the detail of that on notice, but it is absolutely clear that we are taking these issues of bullying and harassment very seriously. The former Minister for Health and Wellbeing, Ms Fitzharris, called the independent review into workplace culture within ACT public health services. We established the culture review oversight group and since I have been minister I have met with that group on 4 September and more recently on 19 November. We get feedback in relation to the improvements that people are seeing across both the ACT Health Directorate and Canberra Health Services.

Both Canberra Health Services and the ACT Health Directorate have worked very hard on their new vision and value statements expressing the behaviours that they expect to see from staff and what the staff expect to see from one another, and creating a culture where people are empowered to speak out when they see the wrong thing happening and behaviours they believe should not be tolerated. That work is

ongoing but a lot of progress has been made. I am hearing cautious optimism from people around the table at the culture review oversight group as well as in meetings with professional colleges that we are heading in the right direction with this work.

These culture issues take a long time to get to a really positive place; it is much harder to rebuild a culture of trust than it is to damage it. That is the work we know will be ongoing over the next three years, but both Canberra Health Services and the Health Directorate have been working very hard across a range of areas, on which I updated the Assembly just yesterday.

MR PARTON: How many ACT Health and Canberra health staff have been given final warnings as a result of bullying and harassment this year?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I note that I did say I updated yesterday, and I am not quite sure if that was yesterday, because I have lost track of time. I will take Mr Parton's question on notice.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, how many workers have resigned from ACT Health and Canberra Health Services citing bullying and harassment as the primary cause of their resignation?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mrs Dunne for the supplementary question. I will take on notice whether we can get an answer on what was cited as the primary cause of anyone's resignation.

Tuggeranong—improved amenity

MS CHEYNE: My question is to the Minister for Transport. Minister, what steps is the government taking to improve amenity and access to the town centres of the south side?

MR STEEL: I thank Ms Cheyne for her question and for her interest in the south side, particularly improvements that we are making to improve the amenity of and access to town centres. As members will be aware, earlier this year the government completed upgrades on Anketell Street, Tuggeranong's main street. These works have made the area safer and more pedestrian friendly and provided local businesses with the opportunity to expand their outdoor dining facilities.

We have heard from the community that they would like us to take the next step of improving the area by taking buses off Anketell Street. We have listened to this feedback. Yesterday I was very pleased to announce that the ACT government will be re-routing buses away from Anketell Street. This will improve the look and feel of the precinct, making it cleaner, quieter and safer and inviting for diners. Following capital works, from next April—

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members, I am trying to listen to the answer.

Mrs Dunne interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mrs Dunne, that is enough, thank you.

MR STEEL: From next April, buses will take a different route. They will travel on Athllon Drive and Soward Drive, and we are taking the opportunity to install new—

Mr Coe: Why did it take that long?

MR STEEL: We have to take capital upgrades. We are installing new bus stops to make sure that we are providing access for—

Mr Coe interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Coe!

MR STEEL: people in the local public service departments and ensuring the safety of people wanting to catch public transport and other road users. Yesterday I also announced that we are bringing forward the government upgrades to the laneways between Anketell Street and the lake, an important precinct at the heart of Tuggeranong, with construction brought forward to as early as next January.

Final designs for the renewed space are based on community feedback that we have been undertaking with the community. Residents have told us that they want to see better views of the lake through from Anketell Street, level spaces and ensuring that it is more accessible. *(Time expired.)*

MS CHEYNE: Minister, with buses coming off Anketell Street, what other improvements are being made to public transport on the south side?

MR STEEL: I thank Ms Cheyne for her supplementary. Of course, our government has been outlining our positive plans for the future, particularly on the south side. Unlike those opposite, who are focused on themselves and their failed leadership team, we have been outlining our positive plans for the future.

Opposition members interjecting—

MR STEEL: You could learn something from that. In particular, we have seen the Wanniasa park and ride, a—

Mrs Dunne: A point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: Resume your seat. A point of order?

Mrs Dunne: The question was about Anketell Street, Madam Speaker. The standing orders require that the answer be directly relevant and not debate the issue. Just because this minister is a failed minister who, until a few months ago, told us that we could—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mrs Dunne, sit yourself down. Sit yourself down, Mrs Dunne.

Mrs Dunne: I beg your pardon?

MADAM SPEAKER: I asked you to sit yourself down. There is no point of order.

Mrs Dunne: My point of order is that the minister needs to be directly relevant and not debate the issue.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mrs Dunne, the standing orders also state that a minister will be heard in a level of silence. I have not got through many question times when that standing order has been listened to. Minister, you have the floor. There is no point of order.

MR STEEL: The question was not about Anketell Street. If the member had been listening, she would have heard that it was in fact about other improvements that we are making to public transport on the south side. In 2017 we built a new bus stop on Athllon Drive, a new park and ride.

Mr Coe interjecting—

MR STEEL: I am very pleased today that we are announcing that we are expanding that park and ride by 30 spots—

Mr Coe interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Coe, you are about to be warned.

MR STEEL: to provide better access to public transport.

MADAM SPEAKER: Please continue.

MR STEEL: Thank you, Madam Speaker. There will be 30 extra spots, in addition to the 58 we already have. We are providing those extra spots based on community feedback that we have received, because these park-and-ride facilities have been used so much.

Mr Coe interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Coe.

MR STEEL: I am very pleased to say that in addition to that the ACT government is continuing work on the planning for a brand-new bus interchange at Woden—something that is incredibly important—to upgrade the five-decade-old bus interchange—

Mr Coe interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: You are now warned, Mr Coe.

MR STEEL: to make sure that we are building for the future, to accommodate light rail and more buses. We are getting on with the work of bringing light rail stage 2 down to Woden, to provide better transport options for those on the south side, and stops for people who are living along Adelaide Avenue and Yarra Glen, who cannot currently catch a rapid bus. *(Time expired.)*

MS CODY: Minister, what steps is the government taking to keep Canberrans moving in Tuggeranong?

MR STEEL: I thank Ms Cody for her question and her interest in our investments and our plans for the south side.

The government is committed to making the Monaro Highway safer in particular, cutting travel times and improving capacity on this important freight corridor for our city and our region. The ACT government is bringing forward funding, with the commonwealth government, to start work earlier on the project—from as early as 2020-21—on the largest road project in the territory. The upgrades will keep Canberrans moving by removing at-grade intersections, particularly along the Monaro between Isabella Drive and Hindmarsh Drive. A focus will be on the Lanyon intersection and also the intersections around Hume to improve safety and cut travel time. Our government is committed to improving the Monaro Highway because we know from the recent AAMI report that it is one of the territory's most dangerous roads. These safety improvements will go a long way.

We are also committed to duplicating Athllon Drive, with design well underway to make commutes safer and faster for residents from Tuggeranong to Woden and through to the city. The project will see the duplication of a 2.4 kilometre stretch of road between Sulwood Drive and Drakeford Drive between Wanniasa and Kambah. We are also improving a stretch between Shea Street and Melrose Drive in Phillip.

As part of the works in Kambah and Wanniasa, I have asked the department to look, through the design process, at how we can add extra stops to provide better access to public transport for residents, particularly those living in the northern end of Wanniasa and Kambah. Our government is outlining our positive plans for the south side—

Opposition members interjecting—

MR STEEL: The lot over there are more focused on themselves than they are on anyone who lives in Tuggeranong, Woden, Weston Creek and Molonglo.

Mr Parton: Them's fightin' words!

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Parton, we do not need your sense of humour.

Members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Colleagues, Mr Milligan has the call.

Mental health—patient services

MR MILLIGAN: My question is to the Minister for Mental Health. I refer to your ministerial statement of 26 November related to mental health issues. Minister, in 2018-19, why did patients face an 11-hour wait for a bed in the mental health unit?

MR RATTENBURY: I thank Mr Milligan for an opportunity to focus on this matter again. As I outlined in my statement the other day, we have seen a significant increase in emergency presentations at the Canberra Hospital, a 137 per cent increase since 2014-15, which is an extraordinary rate of increase. This has certainly put some pressure on the system. But, as I outlined in my statement, despite those increases in presentations, we have, in recent times, been able to reduce the amount of waiting time that people are facing. Much of that time Mr Milligan refers to is actually what is known as bed block: people have arrived at emergency; they have been assessed; and they are simply waiting for an admission. I want to continue to bring those times down, but those times are coming down. I outlined in my statement some of the measures that have been put place to achieve that improvement. I thank the staff of Canberra Health Services for their diligent work in that space to bring those waiting times down.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, why has the government allowed the situation to develop where there is such a high level of bed block for patients with mental health issues?

MR RATTENBURY: As Mr Milligan has now heard twice, we have had a 137 per cent increase in presentations since 2014-15. This is an extraordinary increase that has been difficult to keep up with but strategies have been put in place to help bring those waiting times down.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, during 2018-19 what contribution did high levels of mental health bed block make to long wait times in the emergency department?

MR RATTENBURY: I will have to take the detail of that on notice.

Hospitals—emergency department data

MR HANSON: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, the quarterly performance report is due by Saturday. Have you received the latest data related to emergency department treatment and what proportion of people who presented to our emergency departments last quarter were seen on time?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Hanson for the question. I have to clarify one of my earlier answers but I will get to Mr Hanson's question.

I think I stated that I had made a statement yesterday; it was 26 September. I got confused by the fact that it was the 26th that had been referred to in an earlier question.

To answer Mr Hanson's question, I have not received the quarterly report for the last quarter at this point in time.

MR HANSON: What are the latest results for categories 1 through to 5, and are you aware of any improvements or deterioration in those results?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Hanson for the question. I will take that question on notice. I note that the quarterly performance report is a whole-of-ACT report and that I do not receive regular reporting on the emergency department performance at Calvary Public Hospital Bruce in the same way I do for Canberra Hospital. But my understanding is that performance has been roughly on par with the previous quarter. That is exactly what I said was expected when I tabled the last quarterly performance report, noting that the next quarterly performance report will also cover much of the winter season which, as we know, was a particularly busy season.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, what document did you just put down when you said to Mr Hanson that you had not received the report?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mrs Dunne for the question. This is the quarterly performance report, April to June 2019.

Government—assistance for veterans and seniors

MR GUPTA: My question is to the Minister for Seniors and Veterans. Can the minister update the Assembly on the results of the most recent seniors and veterans grants rounds?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Mr Gupta for his question. I am very pleased to report to the Assembly on the two grants rounds that have recently been held for seniors and for veterans. The seniors grants round has concluded and over \$68,000 worth of grants have been awarded to 12 organisations to help promote the social inclusion of seniors across the city. There are several initiatives designed to tackle elder abuse, programs to strengthen social inclusion, healthy eating workshops, upgrades and funding to men's sheds, and opportunities for seniors to engage with the arts.

In the veterans grants rounds, six organisations were awarded over \$42,000 in funding to help improve and support the lives of veterans in Canberra. Arts programs, nutrition programs, blacksmithing and social outings all attracted funding in these rounds.

There is a small amount of funding still available in the seniors grants pool, with opportunities for organisations to receive small grants of up to \$2,000 still available. A second round of veterans funding will open on 29 November—later this week—with the opportunity for small grants of up to \$2,000 also available.

I am pleased that we have the opportunity to fund organisations to provide targeted and meaningful programs to improve the lives of our seniors and our older Canberrans.

MR GUPTA: Can the minister outline some of the organisations that received funding in the seniors grants round?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Mr Gupta for the supplementary question. I am absolutely delighted to outline at least a few of the highlights funded through this grant round. Legal Aid has received \$10,000 for their legal topics for older people diary 2020. This will provide information, advice and referrals to older Canberrans for issues they specifically face and will be an important resource to help supplement the OPALS service. I look forward to launching this later this year.

COTA ACT based in Hughes has received \$10,000 for their seniors cafe hub. The program will enable Canberra seniors to access the services, information and social inclusion that COTA ACT has to offer regardless of their geographic location. There are two key components to the project: a seniors community hub located in Hughes at the new men's shed and there is also an outreach seniors community hub cafe model which will operate on a monthly basis from various sites across Canberra.

The Tuggeranong Arts Centre has been granted \$10,000 for their hot air choir. This participatory arts program will see local musicians working with senior Canberrans to form a community choir.

The Forrest Men's Shed received over \$1,600 to help refurbish their meeting room and kitchen to improve the facilities available to men attending the shed. The money will help with the installation of a vertical cabinet, a dual sink and cupboards to improve safety for members who attend the weekly meetings at that venue.

MS CODY: Minister, can you outline some of the organisations that received funding in the veterans grants round, particularly those on the south side of Canberra?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Ms Cody for her interest in veterans and for her strong support for the south side of Canberra. The Woden Valley sub-branch of the RSL has received over \$5,700 for their veterans social arts program. Art therapy and arts engagement are gaining prominence in the serving and veteran communities by addressing and supporting the mental, social and physical health and wellbeing of veterans and their families. This project will see the delivery of a social art program for veterans over a six-week period, with the courses teaching skills in colour mixing, brush and palette knife techniques and the development of individual styles.

The South Canberra Veterans Shed received \$9,000 to enhance the workshop equipment and purchase additional workshop safety equipment, which will increase the capacity and capability of the South Canberra Veterans Shed.

The Cuppacumbalong Foundation received almost \$10,000 for their forging families—garden sculpture for veterans with young families. This builds on their previous programs to facilitate a profound experience for veterans and their families that will increase the resilience of inter-family bonds through engagement with welding and cold-metalsmithing to create a large garden sculpture.

Nutrition Australia also received almost \$10,000 for Operation Dinnertime, which will empower veterans to prepare healthy, affordable meals while creating social support networks and building resilience through an innovative food skills program.

I am always impressed by the breadth of applications we receive in our seniors and veterans grants programs, and I am glad that the government is able to continue to support our older Canberrans and our veterans across Canberra.

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

Supplementary answers to questions without notice
ACT Ambulance Service—SPIRE project
ACT Policing—staffing

MR GENTLEMAN: I have some additional information I wish to provide to the answer I provided to Mr Wall's and Mrs Dunne's questions. I am advised that neither ESA nor ACTAS have been FOIed in the terms suggested during question time. I am informed by ACTAS that the project is in the early stages of consultation, including in relation to traffic flow for ambulances in and out of the proposed SPIRE centre. These and other matters will be considered as part of the design and planning stages. All aspects around response times and patient safety will feature prominently in any of these discussions.

ACTAS staff have participated in meetings regarding the SPIRE project. ESA and ACTAS will continue to work closely with agencies, including CHS and Major Projects, that are working to deliver SPIRE. ACTAS, along with Major Projects and the Minister for Health, also attended a recent public forum regarding the SPIRE project.

In relation to FOI, I draw to the attention of Mrs Dunne section 94 of the Freedom of Information Act 2016 regarding improper influence. As I said, FOIs are handled independently and are matters for the relevant decision-maker.

In relation to a question on police numbers earlier on, I wish to add to the answer I provided to Mrs Jones and Ms Lee as well as questions I took on notice in relation to the ACT Policing headcount. I thank chamber staff for helping me check the records, including a transcript from the annual reports hearings.

The 2018-19 financial year saw an increase in the total headcount, with 927 being the headcount number. I am advised that this is the highest staff employment number since 2010-11. It is fraught to make direct comparisons to the figures in annual reports from 2010-11, and those in more recent years, as the opposition continually seeks to do.

As successive Chief Police Officers have advised Mrs Jones and her colleagues at numerous annual reports hearings, prior to 2015-16 annual reports included enabling capabilities, such as the SRG, provided by the Australian Federal Police in the headcount figure. Since 2015-16 enabling capability has been excluded from the

headcount figure provided in annual reports. The opposition need to stop their scaremongering and accept the fact that they have voted against almost \$34 million of funding for an additional 69 FTEs for ACT Policing.

Hospitals—maternity services

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: Noting that I took some detailed questions on notice earlier in relation to the management of miscarriages, I have some further information for the Assembly, but I will need to come back with some specific figures. I can advise the Assembly that women with early miscarriage may be cared for in Canberra Hospital emergency department or the early pregnancy unit of the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children. Depending on their particular diagnosis, home and social circumstances, options for safe management are discussed and agreed. The options range from expectant management, medical management or surgical management. These options are discussed with the woman, taking into account her particular circumstances and wishes. If a non-surgical option is chosen, women are carefully advised what to expect and when to return to hospital if any complication arises.

Canberra Health Services strives to provide everyone with high quality and compassionate care. Every day our hospitals and clinical staff strive to provide the best possible birthing services and to do this in a compassionate and supportive way. Unfortunately, as we have acknowledged previously, we are hearing through the inquiry into maternity services that that is not always everyone's experience. We acknowledge that there is further work to do to ensure consistent access to care and support for women and families. Again, I welcome the inquiry that is underway and look forward to its ultimate findings and recommendations.

Personal explanation

MRS DUNNE (Ginninderra) (3.02): I raise a matter arising from question time today, under standing order 46, where I believe I have been misrepresented.

MADAM SPEAKER: You want to make a comment to that, Mrs Dunne?

MRS DUNNE: Yes.

MADAM SPEAKER: Please.

MRS DUNNE: In answer to a question today Ms Stephen-Smith said that I said that the front door of the hospital was near Gilmore Crescent. I did not mention the front door and the question was quite clear—it was about the location of SPIRE. Ms Stephen-Smith needs to be careful so as not to misrepresent what people say in this place.

ACT Health—SPIRE project Statement by member

MRS DUNNE (Ginninderra) (3.03), by leave: I would like to read and then table for the information of members the response to the freedom of information request made

that Mr Gentleman says I have not made. His staff need to check before they give him advice in this place. I sought documents dated from 1 November 2016 related to the change in the scope, location, timing and estimated cost of the SPIRE project, in particular, briefs for ministers relating to SPIRE, documents related to the transfer of responsibility for SPIRE; communications strategies; planning documents related to SPIRE, including traffic and other studies; correspondence with other directorates, unions, professional organisations; documents relating to meetings to discuss SPIRE, including agenda and minutes of meetings; costing of the SPIRE project; contracts related to the planning for SPIRE's main works and the SPIRE project enabling works; and any relevant documents associated with the SPIRE project.

In response I was told the ESA did not have any documents. My staff went back to the ESA to clarify this and the final response we received on 13 November was:

Thank you for your email checking JACS response to your FOI application for the SPIRE project.

To the best of my knowledge and the information received from ESA Ministerial Services, I confirm that the ACT Ambulance Service reported that it holds no records in relation to this FOI scope. Subsequent to your query, this information was re-confirmed as correct.

I seek leave to table those documents.

Leave granted.

MRS DUNNE: I table the following papers:

Freedom of information request—SPIRE Project—

Copy of email correspondence between Keith Old and Julia Bowden, Assistant Director, Freedom of Information Governance, Coordination and Reporting, Justice and Community Safety Directorate, dated 13 November 2019.

Copy of letter to Mrs Dunne from David Hart, Information Officer, Justice and Community Safety Directorate, dated 13 November 2019.

I now seek leave to move the motion circulated in my name.

Leave granted.

MRS DUNNE: I move:

That, in accordance with standing order 213A, the Minister for Police and Emergency Services table all documents held by the ACT Ambulance Service that relate to consultation on the SPIRE Project.

I move this motion because the information is unclear. As an experienced parliamentarian, as someone who worked in FOI before I was in this place and as someone who has made a large number of FOI requests it seems improbable to me

that an agency as important in this whole project as the ACT Ambulance Service holds no documents—not one piece of paper.

Mr Parton: A bit extraordinary.

MRS DUNNE: As Mr Parton said, it is extraordinary. I call upon the minister to ensure that the information I and my office received is correct. Mr Gentleman also needs to ensure that the information he gives in this place is correct. He just stood up and said that he had been advised that I had made no such freedom of information request.

Today I am calling on the minister to use the provisions of the standing orders that have been agreed in this place and used effectively on a number of occasions to put on the record the documents in the possession of the ACT Ambulance Service.

Ms Lawder: Which should have been given beforehand.

MRS DUNNE: I should have had access to them before. There is nothing in the scope of those documents that should exempt them. The handling of this freedom of information request does a disservice to this place. I commend the motion to the Assembly.

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Manager of Government Business, Minister for Advanced Technology and Space Industries, Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Minister for Planning and Land Management and Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (3.07): I thank Mrs Dunne for the motion. I reiterate that the advice to me is that neither ESA or ACTAS have been FOIed in the terms suggested during question time. If this motion goes forward I will look to any documents that have been provided by ACTAS or the ESA.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Planning—Coombs

Debate resumed.

MR HANSON (Murrumbidgee) (3.08): I would like to start by praising Mrs Jones for bringing this motion on, and commend her on her hard and continuous dedication to the work she has done not only on the Coombs peninsula issue but also more broadly across the suburb of Coombs, on many other issues. I will not repeat what Mrs Jones has said because I think she has laid out the case very well, with the support of Mr Parton and others in this place. What I would like to do is add the voice of a local resident, Mr Suhaan Bhagria, who is currently doing work experience in my office and who is a resident of Coombs. These are his thoughts:

The petition of the Coombs Peninsula communicates that it is a public asset, and the residents are not content and on board with development, as we have procured over 500 signatures.

We have established almost all of Coombs for housing purposes, and the preservation of the Peninsula is vital, as there is wildlife such as the pink-tailed worm-lizard and platypus.

The additional 30 dwellings that the government is trying to develop in Coombs is not taking into consideration the natural preservation and the satisfaction of the residents. People purchased properties specifically on the understanding that the green space would not be developed.

The lack of trees in Coombs is quite frightening and developing on the Peninsula is unnecessary and reduce the numbers even further. The government is sacrificing the last natural space that Coombs has. They are choosing development over natural green space.

Therefore, I call on the government to protect the Coombs Peninsula from a multi-dwelling development and I commend the motion to the Assembly.

I would like to recognise Suhaan in the gallery, as well as Verity Beman from his school, Canberra Grammar, who has come in to listen to the input that he has made to this speech. I reiterate and support the very important points that Mrs Jones and Mr Parton have made in this debate, as well as Ms Le Couteur.

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Manager of Government Business, Minister for Advanced Technology and Space Industries, Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Minister for Planning and Land Management and Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (3.11): I thank Mrs Jones for her motion on the Coombs peninsula. The government has, on many different occasions, spoken to its vision of Canberra as a sustainable, competitive and equitable city that is a great place to live not just today but for the community of tomorrow.

Only last year I approved the ACT planning strategy 2018 to provide a clear, robust and contemporary urban planning framework that will guide our growth and prosperity into the future. Relevant to the matters raised by Mrs Jones's motion, the strategy recognises the importance of protecting the many defining characteristics of our city that we value so much—our green space, diversity of lifestyle choices and bushland setting. It recognises the imperative to balance these while supporting infill to achieve a more sustainable and livable city.

These values inform the government's decision-making around the supply of land to meet the needs of our growing and changing city. The indicative land release program, the ILRP, aims to make sure enough land is released to the market every year to cater for Canberra's growth and change.

Canberra's growth is undeniable. By 2023 we expect that approximately 32,000 more people will call Canberra home. Mrs Jones quite rightly acknowledges that the ILRP signals the release of residential and multi-unit blocks in Molonglo Valley. A stable supply of new homes, available in a variety of locations and at different price points, contributes to Canberra being an attractive place in which to live and buy a home.

The development of the Molonglo Valley has been informed by numerous environmental and planning assessments over more than one decade under both ACT and commonwealth legislation. The Molonglo Valley, Coombs and the Coombs peninsula were originally zoned for urban residential development back in 2008 through amendments to the Territory Plan and the National Capital Plan. Variation 281 applied a Territory Plan residential RZ1 suburban zoning to the future Coombs peninsula urban area. The Legislative Assembly at the time approved this amendment. On a very practical level, this means that the Coombs peninsula has been identified for residential development, and particularly single dwelling development, since 2008.

Broadly speaking, the environmental assessments demonstrated that the Coombs peninsula had low environmental value; therefore it was not suitable for inclusion in the Molonglo River reserve. Its past status as a pine plantation had already degraded the environmental values of the land.

Commonwealth environmental approvals also recognised that a small portion of land within Coombs peninsula had low quality habitat potential for the pink-tailed worm-lizard and was unlikely to be recolonised through rehabilitation. Commonwealth environmental approval for development of the Coombs peninsula remains valid today, provided development occurs that is consistent with those approvals.

Plans for the Molonglo Valley include lots of open space for a diverse range of sport and recreation, including the opportunities within the Molonglo River reserve. Some of these parks and reserves have already been developed, while others will occur as development proceeds in the Molonglo Valley over the next 15 to 20 years.

The Territory Plan map and ACTmapi, which is the government's interactive mapping service, have both shown the future residential development intention of the Coombs peninsula since 2008. For the last two years there has been a sign on the site identifying it for future development. The government has openly and publicly communicated its intention to continue to develop Coombs, including the residential development on the Coombs peninsula.

Ongoing discussions about this intention have been well canvassed through the estate development plan subdivision development application and subsequent proceedings in the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal. Consent orders made by ACAT in 2012 required the government to remove the Coombs peninsula from development until a plan of management was released for the Molonglo River reserve. The plan of management is now the Molonglo River reserve management plan, which formally commenced in July this year. The plan protects 1,280 hectares of the river, heritage sites, native plants and animals, and recreation areas.

The development of the peninsula will require future statutory environmental and planning approvals under the provisions of the ACT Planning and Development Act 2007. These have not commenced.

The future subdivision development applications will confirm the area's zoning subdivision pattern and the number and type of residential dwellings. The planning for the development will take into consideration the requirements of the Territory Plan, including the outcomes of environmental and tree surveys, stormwater management to protect the Molonglo River and environmental values within the river reserve, and the recommendations of a bushfire risk assessment.

Given the findings of previous environmental studies, it is unlikely that the development application would seek this area to be rezoned for recreational purposes. As such, it is not considered necessary to withdraw the Coombs peninsula from the land release program.

I appreciate the concern that some residents of Coombs have raised regarding the future use of the remaining part of the peninsula. I can understand that, as this land is yet to be developed, there may be a perception that it should remain open space. Yet the planning for Coombs and the wider Molonglo Valley has always indicated that this area has been allocated and is proposed to be developed for residential purposes. This has been the case since variation 281 to the Territory Plan took effect in 2008.

As I have mentioned, the proposed land uses in this area have been determined through numerous planning and environmental assessments, with consideration to the various opportunities and constraints of the area, in addition to its desired future character. Land uses and development will be confirmed through the future development application process under the Planning and Development Act 2007 and the determination by the independent planning and land authority.

MS CODY (Murrumbidgee) (3.18): I must say that I am a bit baffled by this motion. I might just be a hairdresser from Kambah with a strong interest in the development of international human rights jurisprudence, but I cannot figure out how the Liberals got to where they are on this one. Mr Coe is well and truly on the record as saying he would like to bulldoze high-value nature conservation areas to build houses, yet they seem to want to preserve a bit of land that used to be a pine plantation and is of no particular value.

The Liberal Party are effectively saying that they will develop any green space land apart from this one parcel. Is this giving notice that the Liberal Party is repudiating Mr Coe's position on land development? It is normally polite to at least sack a leader before going around and backflipping on all of his positions. Is this the price of him staying, or is the plan to preserve this area and bulldoze high-value conservation areas for housing?

Maybe, after so long in opposition the Liberal Party has decided to try an innovative new policy approach: pave paradise to put up a parking lot, but preserve the scraggy bits of not very much, just to tease conservationists with. If this is the new approach of the Canberra Liberals, I look forward to coal juggling in the chamber. As an advocate for vocational education, I would like to note that all Canberrans are able to enrol in the excellent performing arts courses at the CIT, but I am not sure whether juggling or clowning are part of the course. I am sure the not-quite leaders of the opposition—all four of them—are investigating and will let us know.

Whilst I would like to continue making fun of the opposition, I will, for a moment, take this motion seriously—not because it deserves it but because it does not. Yes, there are some people who have houses over the road and who, despite the government’s published intention to build on the site, had a go at a bit of property speculation that it would end up being a park. Once the new houses on the end of the peninsula are built, I am sure they will get over it, because Coombs is a grouse suburb.

Other than them, this motion seems to represent the worst of Liberal policymaking—doing the opposite of what they say their principles are. It is probably why the people of Canberra have not let the Canberra Liberals anywhere near power in decades, because they will sell out their policies to the first lobby group that wanders past. I understand that they do not like us and are having a bit of a go at trying to make life inconvenient for the government. It is just a bit weird that they would sell out their own positions so hard in order to do so. But I am sure the government will respond by getting on with the job and ignoring the silliness.

MRS JONES (Murrumbidgee) (3.21): Speaking to the amendment and in closing, the Canberra Liberals will be supporting the Greens amendment today as it strengthens the statement that will be made by the Assembly about this matter.

I welcome Ms Cody coming out as being against Coombs peninsula, describing it as “scraggy bits of not very much”. I am sure the community will love to hear that. She might wonder, as the minister does, where this has come from. This has come from 550 residents in Coombs.

We on this side of the chamber are in fact open to and welcoming of conservation options which look after enough of the local environment to allow for native animals to flourish, and for people to enjoy the natural environment close to their homes. That is the way that the whole of the ACT has been developed—in particular, in older areas, where there has been the maintenance of tree growth in areas that families can enjoy, people with pets can enjoy and so that people can maintain a certain level of exercise and mental health respite.

Unfortunately, the Suburban Land Agency has already started tipping over trees in Coombs peninsula and digging holes. Ms Le Couteur informs me that the holes have been filled in again, but it was quite distressing for residents to see that. The assertion that it is only residents whose houses face onto the nature reserve who value this place is incorrect. That is wrong.

I look forward to continuing to keep an eye on this matter. Today the Assembly will speak on behalf of the current residents of Coombs, who have a right to have some say over their own area. This is a democracy, and that is the purpose of votes in this chamber. Today the preference of the residents of Coombs will be heard by this government.

Amendment agreed to.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

Water security

MR GUPTA (Yerrabi) (3.24): I move:

That this Assembly:

- (1) notes that:
 - (a) Australia is facing significant water constraints;
 - (b) from late 1996 to mid-2010, much of southern Australia experienced a prolonged period of severe dry conditions known as the Millennium Drought;
 - (c) in 2006, then Prime Minister John Howard described the drought as a “one in a thousand years” drought, yet we are seeing more droughts of that severity more often;
 - (d) conditions across the Murray Darling Basin are at their most severe in 120 years of records;
 - (e) Australia’s water security has already been significantly influenced by climate change, rainfall patterns are shifting, and the severity of droughts has increased; and
 - (f) these conditions have placed significant pressure on water availability in the ACT;
- (2) further notes the ACT Government’s achievements in ensuring the ACT’s long-term water security, in particular, the significant investment made by the ACT Government:
 - (a) to increase water storage, with capacity in the ACT growing around 35 percent from 205 gegalitres to 278 gegalitres since 2012;
 - (b) to add new water sources, including stormwater harvesting and reuse at the neighbourhood level in the inner north;
 - (c) to oversee major reductions in demand on water resources through increased efficiency as a result of water sensitive urban design and permanent water conservation measures; and
 - (d) in 2010, the ACT introduced a scheme of permanent water conservation measures, administered through Icon Water, which includes rules and guidance around matters such as garden and lawn watering, pool filling, and cleaning with potable water which are mandatory and enforceable; and
- (3) calls on the ACT Government and Icon Water to:
 - (a) continue to implement and promote the comprehensive ACT Water Strategy, *Striking the Balance 2014-2044*, which provides the basis for continuing to support current and future growth, achieve desired environmental outcomes and be responsive to climate change; and
 - (b) hold consultations with water stakeholders and relevant experts and report back to the Assembly on the Government’s findings from these consultations before 1 July 2020.

These days on Facebook you can update your status on how you are feeling. If I updated my status on Facebook, it would say “feeling stressed”. Why? It would be because we all need to be aware of the current and emerging water stress that we need to respond to. In 2016 the United Nations water agency said that in nine years two-thirds of the world’s population would be living in water stress conditions. Madam Speaker, if we take this chamber as the world, this part of the chamber will be living in water stress conditions and maybe the gallery part of the chamber will be okay for now.

What is apparent is that we need to start considering how we approach water and we need to get the message out about water conservation now, not just when it gets tough. I am pleased to bring this incredibly important topic to the Assembly today so that we can start a conversation on long-term water security and efficiency in the ACT.

Madam Speaker, Australia is facing significant water constraints. From late 1996 to mid-2010, much of southern Australia experienced a prolonged period of severe dry conditions known as the millennium drought. In 2006, then Prime Minister John Howard described the drought as a one in a thousand year drought. However, since then we have seen more droughts of that severity more often and, with the effects of climate change, our water security is challenged further.

In the ACT our water systems are secure at present due to the infrastructure investment into our water system. However, our jurisdiction has been always a forward-thinking one. I believe that it is our responsibility to act pre-emptively on future and current challenges so that we do not reach a point where it impacts our lifestyle and our environment is compromised.

It has been five years since the *ACT water strategy 2014–44: striking the balance* was released. I am pleased to be calling on the government to hold consultation with stakeholders and relevant experts to discuss how we are on track with our plan and report back to the Assembly on the government’s findings from these consultations before July 2020.

I would now like to draw attention to the daily water consumption we all engage in. For example, a one-minute shower uses up to 15 litres of water; washing your dishes by hand uses 18 litres of water; and a sprinkler going for an hour uses a whopping 1,000 litres of water. Water is a scarce resource in many parts of Australia and in the world. As we go into the future it is important that we treat it as such.

In recent years, low rainfall in many parts of Australia has led to low water storage levels, causing concern about the adequacy of water supplies. Population increase in Australia and Canberra is also putting more pressure on water supplies. As we face a changing climate and rising temperatures, we are seeing much higher rates of evaporation of water.

The combination of climate change and increasingly dry conditions we are seeing in Australia means that water is scarce and will become more scarce in the future. There is no doubt that water is absolutely essential. Wherever water flows on earth, you will

find life. Every single plant and animal relies on water in order to survive. We drink water and use it daily in the home and at work. We rely on water in our agriculture practices, as well as for the manufacturing of various products. We have a responsibility to ensure that we are using water in a sustainable way so that we can meet current and future challenges, be responsive to climate change and leave a positive environment for future generations.

The ACT government has been working to ensure Canberra's long-term water future. In response to prolonged periods of severe dry conditions and the 2003 bushfires, our government has embarked on a major strategy to bolster water security. The ACT government has made significant investments to increase water storage capacity in the ACT. It has increased our total water capacity from 205 gigalitres to 278 gigalitres, a 35 per cent increase compared to only seven years ago.

Water sensitive urban design and permanent water conservation measures have resulted in major reductions in demand for water resources. We have also added new water resources such as stormwater harvesting and re-use at the neighbourhood level across the inner north. The ACT government has put investment into water security and the results have been clear. Since water restrictions were lifted, Canberra's average per capita water consumption has consistently been 35 to 40 per cent lower than prior to when the water restrictions were first introduced. This is one of the largest sustained water use reductions per capita in Australia.

While we have been successful in ensuring water security for Canberrans, we must continue to look ahead. The ACT government has been working with Icon Water and the community to ensure that we have water to meet the present needs for security and safe drinking water without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

Since 2010 the ACT has had a scheme of permanent water conservation measures administered through Icon Water. These include rules and guidance around matters such as garden and lawn watering, pool filling and cleaning with potable water. These measures are mandatory and enforceable. Icon Water recognises that while our system is secure now, there is always the possibility of ongoing dry conditions that will require water restrictions to protect our water supplies.

Therefore, decisions regarding water restrictions and future security projections are based on a range of factors, including water storage levels, catchment conditions, predicted demand and climate outlook. Icon Water is constantly reviewing water storage levels and the climate outlook to inform the need for additional water restrictions.

In Icon Water's *Source water strategy 2018-2030* Icon Water states that if storage falls below 50 per cent the general manager of business services is responsible for initiating a complete review of planning variables and assumptions used to analyse water security, to ensure that they remain the most appropriate. We are not at 50 per cent yet. I understand that Icon Water has already begun the process to review its systems to ensure that we are in a good position now and into the future. Despite the

number of dry years we have had in a row, at this stage it is highly unlikely Icon Water will need to recommend water restrictions this summer.

Madam Speaker, a major factor in our current water security was the enlargement of the Cotter dam in 2013. This expansion increased the storage capacity of the Cotter dam almost 20 times. The investment in this major piece of infrastructure demonstrates this government's forward-looking focus. Projects such as the Cotter dam enlargement are not solutions that can be applied quickly during a drought. It requires decades of planning. By investing now, the ACT government is working to improve our overall water security.

I know that all of us in this chamber today have been watching with horror the current bushfires that have raged across Australia, devastating many parts of the country. Residents have been asked to brace for catastrophic and worsening conditions. As we speak, many homes and lives have been severely affected and the New South Wales fire chief has warned it could be months before the more than a million hectares of bushfires are under control.

Bushfires have an immediate effect on water scarcity in the affected areas and can often cause long-term damage. Change in land cover due to fire can adversely affect catchment water supplies. Bushfires have the potential to degrade water quality and alter the dynamics of the stream ecosystem in many complex ways. Amidst the fires and no signs of the drought crisis ending, the New South Wales government have recently announced that they are seriously considering level 2 restrictions on water if levels continue to lower. It is incredibly important to ensure that we can be reflexive to challenges such as bushfires, and water security is a big part of that.

Equally, as we look at the effect of these devastating natural disasters, we must also look what is causing this increased rate and severity—climate change. Since the early 20th century, Australia has been experiencing a long-term warming trend. This has not only brought an increase in the length of the fire season in Australia but also had a devastating impact on our water security.

Australia is getting hotter and drier, while rainfall has decreased. As a country we are currently facing our worst drought in living memory and climate change is exacerbating these conditions. It is paramount that our progressive government continues to address the issue of water security as the effects of climate change worsen.

The status of our current water security has been facilitated by the success of proactive ACT government policies such as those in the *ACT water strategy 2014–44: striking the balance*. That is why this motion calls on the ACT government to continue to implement and promote this comprehensive policy. However, to ensure that the ACT remains a leading jurisdiction on this issue, the motion also calls on the government to hold consultations with key water stakeholders and experts in the coming months.

As we are five years into the 30-year water strategy, these consultations will ensure that our progress on water security is on track. It will also facilitate a discussion

between the relevant experts and stakeholders and the ACT government to ensure that we are taking the most effective and efficient approach towards ACT's water security. This consultation is particularly important in light of Australia's current overall water problems and the worsening conditions of our climate. It will be beneficial for the government to consult with experts in this field.

Madam Speaker, one of the wonderful things about being in the ACT is that we have access to fantastic academics, particularly from the Australian National University and the University of Canberra. In preparing this motion, I wanted to do my research. I recently met with Professor Quentin Grafton. I am pleased to say that Professor Grafton is present in the chamber today. I thank him so much for his presence here. Professor Grafton is a professor of economics, ANU Public Policy Fellow, Fellow of the Asia and the Pacific Policy Society and Director of the Centre for Water Economics, Environment and Policy.

I also met with Ross Thompson, who is a professor of water science and the Director and Chair of Water Science in the Institute for Applied Ecology at the University of Canberra. In fact, it is wonderful to see him also here today. Professor Thompson and the University of Canberra are making fantastic strides in this field, with their own centre for applied water science to be opened in January next year. I am sure it will deliver excellent research and practical outcomes.

The theme from chatting with both professors is that in the ACT our population is growing and temperature increases around the world are impacting evaporation rates and the availability of water. The way that we plan our cities was also discussed. This included choosing water efficient trees and plantings around our city and the importance of green space, as well as significant capital works.

The street and home level side of things was also discussed, such as having water tanks in our suburbs. What was clear from these discussions is that the ACT is tracking well. However, it is sensible to be looking toward the future, as we cannot just hope for the best. It was wonderful to speak to these water experts who have excellent insights into our water systems and the *ACT water strategy 2014–44: striking the balance*. I would like to relay my appreciation to them for their advice.

Madam Speaker, earlier I outlined the water consumption we all use daily. Considering this, it is important not only to know that it is up to government to put in infrastructure to use water in a more efficient way but that our community is aware of the value of water from a young age and that we have a culture of sustainable water use. I grew up living with water restrictions my whole life in India. It taught me the value of water, but most importantly it showed me that small steps that we all take can significantly reduce water stress.

It is also important that we understand the value of water from a young age, from when children are in school. There should be an awareness campaign that many parts of the world will live in water stress conditions and that it is important to be cognisant of this. One of my favourite parts about being an MLA is visiting schools in my electorate. When I meet these incredibly bright students, I feel all the more empowered to leave a positive future for them. Something I hope to be doing in the

future is talking to children to start an awareness campaign on water conservation. This is incredibly important because what we do now will significantly impact the future of the next generation. It is our responsibility to ensure that we are leaving a positive future for the next generation. (*Extension of time granted.*)

In conclusion, Madam Speaker, I believe that it is our responsibility to act pre-emptively on current and future challenges so that we do not reach a point where our lifestyle and environment are compromised. Consultation with water stakeholders and experts will inform the future direction to ensure our water security. Consultation will also allow the ACT government to assess the progress we have made and to discuss ways to ensure that we are preserving our water for future generations. The results of this consultation should be reported back to the Assembly before 1 July 2020.

MRS DUNNE (Ginninderra) (3.40): I thank Mr Gupta for bringing forward his motion on this very important issue. The issue of water security has been an abiding interest of mine for some time. I do not particularly want to rain, so to speak, on Mr Gupta's parade—the motion that he has brought on is a very important one—but for a variety of reasons his understanding of the history of water security in the ACT is a little faulty, because it does not go back far enough.

In 2003 the Canberra Liberals advocated for water security. We advocated for the building of the Tennent dam. We advocated for the building of the Tennent dam over enlarging the Cotter dam because the Tennent dam is a gravity-fed dam; you do not have to expend power on pumping water if you need to extract water, as you do if you want to extract water from the enlarged Cotter dam.

It would be an understatement to say that at that time sections of the ACT community just about literally set their hair on fire. The Conservation Council, the Greens and the Labor government just about set their hair on fire at the prospect—the audacity to propose that in this town we build a new dam to compensate for the rising population and the fact that we were facing a drought at the time; we were in the beginning throes of what was called the millennium drought.

It was very entertaining. Many people on this side of the house like to quote Mr Stanhope these days. I will quote Mr Stanhope, but not to his benefit. At the time, and in this place, Mr Stanhope said that we would not need to build another dam. “Not for 20 years,” he said; “Perhaps not in my lifetime.” He went on to say that even if we built the dam it would probably never fill.

Somewhere along the line, Mr Stanhope had a Damascus-like conversion, about which I am very pleased. As is always the case with the Labor Party, if the Liberal Party suggests something, the Labor Party cannot come along and say, “Actually that is not a bad idea; perhaps we should do it.” Mr Stanhope was put in a position where he was eventually convinced that he had to build a dam, but he was blowed if he was going to build the dam suggested by the Canberra Liberals, so he came up with the proposal for the enlarged Cotter dam. As I said, Madam Speaker, the enlarged Cotter dam is better than no dam, but it is very expensive to run. That is why we do not

actually extract water from it, and we will not extract water from it unless it is absolutely necessary.

During the process of trying to put off the enlarged Cotter dam, Mr Stanhope went to great lengths to do just about anything. We have the Murrumbidgee to Googong water transfer, which cost in excess of \$80 million. My mind says \$88 million, and I think it was \$88 million, but I know that it was in excess of \$80 million. If ever there was a white elephant project, that was it. It has pumped two or three swimming pools full of water in its whole life. At the moment, it cannot pump water even if we want it to, because the flows in the Murrumbidgee are too low.

The Murrumbidgee to Googong pipeline was built dependent on the fact that we had water rights to the Tantangara dam. ACTEW, now Icon Water, has sold those water rights. To make the Murrumbidgee to Googong system work, what we need to do is this: if there is a shortage of water, you flush the water out of Tantangara dam and hope that by the time it gets to Angle Crossing there is still enough for you to pump over the hill to the Googong dam, at huge expense. It is really a third or fourth level security measure. But we have sold the rights. We cannot flood water down the Murrumbidgee to Angle Crossing anymore because we do not own the rights to the water. For a variety of reasons, it was considered that it was too expensive. I do not want to reflect too much on that, but it makes the Murrumbidgee to Googong \$80 million investment a very poor investment indeed. And when you consider that the turbines have hardly even been turned over since it was commissioned, I think that the ACT taxpayers need to question seriously the \$80 million plus investment.

It is important for us in this environment to look at our water security and be very active in our water security. I wish that there were other jurisdictions around the country who had acted in as judicious a way as the ACT eventually did in building a dam.

I look at the discussion about water security that is currently going on in New South Wales and people bemoaning the fact that the Warragamba dam is depleted. New South Wales has not built water storage for Sydney residents, who the Warragamba dam serves, since the mid-60s. The population of Sydney and the Sydney region has more than doubled in that period, but they have not taken this into account. It is negligent that successive New South Wales governments have not taken steps to augment the Sydney water supply or water supplies for cities and towns up and down New South Wales.

We are seeing this in other places as well. When you see places like Tamworth and Armidale with water supplies at 14 per cent, this is neglect. This is neglect from governments who have not had the moral fortitude to stand up to the naysayers and do something about water security in a forward-thinking way. It is neglect.

It was neglect on the part of this government that for the best part of 10 years they put off building a dam because the Liberals had the audacity to suggest it and it was not their idea. I am glad that the Labor Party came to the party, but it is neglect by successive governments across the country that we are in a situation where we are facing another drought and we are casting around to see what we might do. The

answer is that governments need a bit of courage to go about building some of the dams that were planned. Dams were planned up and down the coast which have not been built because of the failure of courage of successive governments.

The other thing we must do is not take off the agenda any possible dam. It has been said to me by a large number of water experts in the ACT that eventually we will have to build the Tennent dam and we must not take it off the agenda. At some stage, if our population is going to reach a million, and that seems to be everyone's expectation, we will need more water supply. Next time we have the discussion about whether to build a dam, I hope that the Labor Party comes early to that debate, not afraid of the consequences but able to clearly articulate how important it is that we look after our water security.

Water security is like hazard reduction burning and hazard reduction clearing generally. If we are facing a dry climate—and it is certainly the case that, despite snow showers and flurries, we in Australia are facing a dry climate—we have to be even more prepared than we were in the past. That means that we have to have better and more reliable water supplies, and larger and more reliable water supplies, to get us through the dry periods. If we are facing dry periods and the prospect of more forest fires, more bushfires and more houses being put at risk, it is incumbent upon us to do everything we can in relation to hazard reduction. Mrs Jones is right to call out this government on their failures in this regard. What we do not want to do is put our precious water resources onto fires that could have been avoided or ameliorated if we had done proper hazard reduction.

I commend Mr Gupta for bringing this motion here today, but when he writes motions like this, I think he needs to go back and get the real history.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong) (3.51): I welcome the opportunity to discuss water policy in the Assembly. I enjoyed Mrs Dunne's history lesson; it is always fun to look back with the benefit of hindsight and offer your judgement on it. It reminds me of the promise the ACT Greens took to the 2012 election where we identified \$88 million of commonwealth money available and we proposed that that be used to rebuild urban waterways in Canberra, build some of the wetlands we are now seeing across the city and do some projects to help protect our lake. I cannot remember the exact words, but suffice to say both Mrs Dunne and I think Mr Corbell for the Labor Party were highly uncharitable about that proposition and said it could not be done. We have now seen some years later Senator Seselja cutting the ribbon at these projects that have been funded out of that \$88 million of commonwealth money. History is always fun to reflect on.

Water is without doubt our most valuable resource and we have an obligation to use it wisely and ensure we take good care of our water catchments. Our water resources should be managed in a way that maintains and improves ecological health and provides for human health and wellbeing in the long term. The quality and availability of our water and how we choose to use it affects every aspect of our lives.

How we use our water will be increasingly important, and this has been touched on in the debate already, as our climate changes. We are fortunate to have a large water

storage capacity in the ACT and a healthy catchment that gives us high quality drinking water. As I am sure other members have, I have had the chance to be up in Namadgi National Park with some of the park rangers, particularly Brett McNamara. He has a great enthusiasm for telling the story of Canberra's water supply and how the catchment was designed to ensure that this city has a reliable and high quality water supply. He talks about how this side of the ranges really benefits from that.

It is also a reminder of the need to make sure we deal with feral species in our water supply. I have been up there with the National Parks Association discussing issues of feral horses in Namadgi National Park. They have real potential for detrimental impact on our water supply. The increasing arrival of deer into the territory is an emerging challenge when it comes to protecting that wonderful legacy we have of the way the ACT was designed to give us a secure, quality water supply.

We also have a dry climate with an average annual rainfall of around 600 millimetres. All the forecasts are that our region will become hotter and our rainfall more variable as a result of climate change. Generally it is predicted that our environment will become even drier than it currently is. Modelling has identified that our region will experience a more frequent and prolonged drought, longer and more frequent heatwaves with higher daytime and night-time maximum temperatures and more frequent and severe bushfires.

These impacts mean we will need to carefully consider how we use our water, particularly in the context of a hotter urban environment that will need cooling through irrigated green spaces, shade and water bodies and the impact the greater threat of bushfire will have on our catchment areas. Most members will recall the thought process that went into what happened after 2003 and the impact it had on our various water catchments both in terms of potential contamination of water supply as well as issues of inflow as the vegetation in those areas regrew and went through a phase of sucking up considerable amounts of water.

The motion acknowledges that climate change has already placed significant pressure on water availability in the ACT. Climate change impacts will continue to affect water security, and we need to ensure our long-term water planning and decisions about when to implement water restrictions reflect the climate of our future.

In addition to more variable rainfall, the higher summer temperatures will increase evaporation rates and result in higher water demand, exacerbating the impact on water security. As we face these challenges we will need to find innovative ways of using our water more effectively to create the best outcomes for our community. We can have the biggest dam in the world but it will not help us if it does not rain, and they are the scenarios we need to contemplate under future climate modelling. We need to be smart about how we use our water to avoid getting caught out as our climate changes.

Canberrans have shown they are willing to reduce their water use when it matters. During the millennium drought the community responded to the education campaign and the water restrictions that were in place. Canberra's per capita water used dipped and has actually remained relatively lower since. We are still at a level per capita

below the pre-millennium drought education period. People have shown they care, they understand it and are willing to act.

Over the last six months as we have gone through this particularly dry period a number of people have either spoken to me or contacted me to ask why the ACT is not bringing in stage 1 water restrictions. This shows the level of community concern and engagement on this issue. Of course, there are guidelines and those decisions are taken in a particular way, but the community understands the dryness going on and they are super conscious about making sure we use our water as judiciously as possible.

The ACT's permanent water conservation measures have played a valuable role in reducing water demand and educating the community on water conservation. The continuation of education programs will be crucial for changing behaviour to reduce water demand, particularly at times when water restrictions are in place. In addition to targeting households, education programs and other water conservation measures can also be targeted at business and commercial users.

Water sensitive urban design is about increasing permeable surfaces to encourage water to soak into the soil to support planted spaces instead of being lost in stormwater drains. Slowing stormwater runoff and filtering it through soil and plants collects nutrients and mitigates flash flooding. It has benefits for soil health, water quality, green space, visual amenity and city cooling.

We are in a process of embedding water sensitive urban design into the development of our city, and I look forward to continuing to improve how we do this. This is particularly relevant as we implement Canberra's living infrastructure plan to cool our city through increased tree canopy and green spaces. There are a number of other elements in that living infrastructure plan, but how we use our water and how we provide the permeable surfaces are an important part of that strategy. That living infrastructure will do a lot to help keep this city cool as we see average temperatures rise.

Under the parliamentary agreement we have been working to improve parks and increase urban green space in recognition of the many benefits it provides to our city, such as reducing the urban heat effect, providing cool places during heatwaves and providing habitat for wildlife. Making better use of recycled water and stormwater for irrigation will mean we can keep our city green and cool in a drier climate while also conserving our precious water supplies, particularly potable water supplies.

We are fortunate to have a system of healthy waterways throughout our city and a growing network of wetlands and stormwater retention ponds that treat our stormwater whilst also providing habitat and quality spaces for recreation. The wetlands I spoke about earlier under the funding package at Mitchell, Gungahlin, O'Connor, Dickson and Lyneham have helped to restore habitat, improve water quality, and make better use of our stormwater. They also provide cool areas for outdoor recreation and improve flood protection.

As I touched on, that work was included in the parliamentary agreements after we made our election commitments, and I am really pleased with the progress that has been made in this space. These facilities are incredibly popular amongst Canberrans not just because of their water system impact but also because of the amenity they bring to neighbourhoods.

There is still more to do in this space and we will continue to work on this area. It has an impact right through to the water quality in our lakes, which we know is a problematic area. The benefit of these urban wetlands multiplies out in a number of different ways.

Due to the significant implications of climate change for our future water security, I have circulated an amendment which goes to this point, I now move the amendment circulated in my name:

Add new paragraph (3)(c):

“(c) ensure climate projections are considered in long-term planning and decision-making regarding water use and water restrictions.”.

This brief amendment simply adds to Mr Gupta’s motion. It asks that we ensure climate protections are considered in long-term planning and decision-making regarding water use and water restrictions. I am very keen to understand how the climate scenarios are being built into water restriction guidelines and whether they are being taken account of.

There are other areas of policy where we still use models of what Canberra’s climate used to be. Ms Le Couteur has spoken about that in regard to issues around measuring the energy efficiency of buildings and some of the design features we put in buildings to ensure that they have a quality of life and a comfort about them. I am keen to dig out some more information on how water restrictions are designed and how much account they take of the scenarios like the CSIRO has put forward about what Canberra’s future rainfall patterns will look like.

I thank Mr Gupta for his motion. He has raised some important issues about water supply for Canberra. I commend my amendment to the Assembly as an addition to the important issues he has raised today.

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Manager of Government Business, Minister for Advanced Technology and Space Industries, Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Minister for Planning and Land Management and Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (4.01): I thank Mr Gupta for his thoughtful and considered motion today. As we face dry conditions throughout our region and across Australia, water is at the forefront of the minds of many Canberrans. We are fortunate in this city. Because we are guided by experts and scientists, and we accept the advice on climate change, we have been able to better prepare our city for its water needs as it grows.

Our territory remains one of the most water secure communities in Australia, with its combined water storage currently at 51.52 per cent capacity. Madam Deputy Speaker, this may sound worrying, but I can assure you and our community that our water supply is secure.

As Mr Gupta's motion acknowledges, because of this government Canberra has a greater volume of water storage now than it did during the millennium drought. This is because of the enlargement of the ACT's overall water storage capacity by 72 gigalitres, providing a total capacity of 277.8 gigalitres. This additional water storage and a water conscious community continue to contribute to a significant improvement in the ACT's water security position since the last decade.

Our water supply is also secure because of the lessons learnt from the previous millennium drought and the community's sustained, positive changes in water usage behaviour. I want to acknowledge and thank Canberrans for their sustainability and broader conservation efforts.

While we have learnt lessons and have good water security, it is important that we remain vigilant. Icon Water, as the ACT's supplier of water and sewerage services, constantly reviews the ACT's water storage levels, along with other factors, including predicted demand, climate outlook, regional water availability and catchment conditions. Although we do not know how long the current dry weather conditions will last, Icon Water has indicated that at this stage water restrictions are not considered necessary in 2019. If conditions remain dry, restrictions may be necessary in 2020 should water storage fall below 35 to 40 per cent capacity.

The government's strategy for managing Canberra's ongoing water security is the ACT water strategy 2014-44, titled *Striking the balance*. This strategy supports the current and future growth of the ACT, achieves desired environmental outcomes and is responsive to climate change implications. It has been designed to promote three primary outcomes: healthy catchments and water bodies; a sustainable water supply used efficiently; and a community that values and enjoys clean, healthy catchments.

The ACT has also implemented other policy measures to ensure that water savings are maintained on an ongoing basis. As a result of these measures, per capita water demand has reduced by about 40 per cent since 2003.

The ACT's water sensitive urban design code under the Territory Plan requires all new housing development to incorporate water saving measures, such as water efficient appliances, dual-flush toilets and rainwater tanks. Additionally, a scheme of permanent water conservation measures, administered by Icon Water, was introduced in 2010 and remains in place to encourage efficient water use. These are common-sense rules that provide flexibility to use water when we need to, while making sure that water wastage, like hosing down driveways, is not permitted. They provide guidance on how water should be used for garden and lawn watering, pool filling and cleaning.

This government has shown that you can have sensible water policy that delivers for the water needs of our community while also delivering for environmental needs. We have undertaken sensible conservation steps, changed community attitudes and increased capacity. These are elements that form the basis of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan. The plan is sound. As the largest urban area on the river, we have a direct interest in the health of the Murray-Darling river system. As a city that cares deeply about the environment, we have an important role in helping to ensure that the Murray-Darling Basin Plan is adhered to and delivered.

However, not all in this chamber share this view. The shadow minister for the environment is on the record as saying that the Murray-Darling is a matter for the commonwealth. She has come into this chamber to defend the rights of feral horses over protecting the territory's precious upper alpine ecosystem that provides Canberra with some of Australia's cleanest water supply.

Ms Lee's comments on these issues remind me of a prominent misguided figure in our broader region. Her comments and approach are more right wing than those of the current Leader of the Opposition—something I did not think was possible. She has aligned herself with the leader of the New South Wales Nationals. These are just some of the actions that show that the Canberra Liberals shadow ministry comprises a spokesperson against the environment. In contrast, this government is providing services—water being the subject of today's debate—while our city grows.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I was really interested in the history lesson that you provided a little earlier in regard to the choice as to where a dam should go in the ACT. I remember the furore from those living in the Naas and Gudgenby valleys regarding the idea that the Canberra Liberals would want to build a dam at Tennent, in a rain shadow. I will quote from an Icon Water study regarding the Tennent opportunity. Under "rural leasehold", they say:

The residents of the Naas and Gudgenby valleys will be seriously affected if a decision is made to proceed with a Tennent reservoir as residential and agricultural activity would be precluded from the catchment. Inclusion of the existing rural lessees in the planning and analysis process has been given a high priority in an endeavour to ensure that they are as fully informed as possible as work progresses.

A key issue for the Tennent reservoir proposal is the impact of the ongoing uncertainty and, if it is built, the reservoir itself, on the valley residents. The proposal affects 14 rural holdings.

Some of the leases that would be subject to acquisition are either short term or include clauses ("land withdrawal clauses") providing for the withdrawal of the lease should the land be required by the Government. Although the residents have therefore been aware of the possibility of a reservoir for a long time, they nevertheless have strong links with the land and in some cases occupation has been multi generational. Some of the leases are for longer terms and have renewal rights. These would be resumed under the Lands Acquisition Act.

Not so long ago it was a matter of sticking up for the rights of a number of people in the Coombs area, ensuring that we can provide them with a little bit of area on the

Coombs peninsula, but previously the Canberra Liberals were thinking of building a whole dam, dealing out the historic farmland of the Naas and Gudgenby area.

In closing, once again I thank Mr Gupta and acknowledge his constructive engagement. The government welcomes the suggestions brought forward today in his motion, and I look forward to reporting back to the Assembly.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (4.09): I thank Mr Gupta for bringing this motion to the Assembly today. The use of our water and how much water we have are very important issues for most Australians, and it is especially true here in the ACT. My colleague Mrs Dunne has addressed the significant issue as a reminder that it was the Canberra Liberals who made the big decision to build new water storage capacity for the ACT—one of the few new dams built in Australia by any administration in decades.

I have a few minor points—it depends who you ask as to whether they are minor points—or technical matters relating to Mr Gupta’s motion. Firstly, paragraph (1)(a) is technically incorrect. While it is abundantly clear that much of Australia is facing significant water constraints, there are also some wetter parts of Australia that are not facing the same issues. When we discuss these issues, it is important not to glibly gloss over the facts.

The second point is that the reference to how severe a drought is must take many factors into account. Expressions like a “120-year drought” or a “one in 1,000-year drought” are really only indicative estimates, because the severity and relative severity of droughts will vary significantly from place to place.

Paragraph (3)(b) contains the recommendation to “hold consultations with water stakeholders and relevant experts and report back to the Assembly on the government’s findings from these consultations before 1 July 2020”. I am concerned, and I think others are as well, that, given our storages are at 52 per cent and dropping rapidly, reporting back to the Assembly before 1 July 2020 does not actually leave much time to make any changes to try to avert us going into temporary water restrictions for the summer of 2020-21. Mr Gentleman referred to possible water restrictions.

This government has shown itself to be lacking in water policy, lacking in managing Icon Water, and lacking in providing an effective and efficient stormwater management system. To illustrate that, for example, I refer to the questionable issues of the Shared Services contract.

We would all be interested in knowing how the \$80-plus million Googong pipeline has worked. For example, how much water could potentially have been transferred from the Murrumbidgee to Googong dam through the Murrumbidgee to Googong transfer for the last five years? What is the maximum that could potentially have been transferred? Also, we would like to know how much was actually transferred over the last five years and why Icon Water left it too late to start pumping—that is, to save money—now that there is not enough water in the Murrumbidgee River to pump. Perhaps Mr Gupta would like to ask Icon Water about that.

While he is at it, he might like to ask Icon Water about selling 10 gigalitres of New South Wales water entitlements and terminating the Snowy Hydro agreement—that is, the Tantangara transfer option—with agreement by the ACT government, which has brought forward temporary water restrictions. Wasn't the Tantangara option the insurance policy for our water security? It has now gone, probably for a very long time. Has Mr Gupta seen the business case for that? I would certainly like to see it and understand why the ACT government agreed to sell 10 gigalitres of water entitlements.

Mr Gupta might also like to ask, given hindsight, which is a wonderful thing, whether the ACT government would still have supported Icon Water selling their New South Wales water entitlements and terminating the Tantangara transfer agreement with Snowy Hydro. Mr Gupta, is the ACT government requiring Icon Water to resurrect the Tantangara option? If so, how much will that cost?

There are many questions in relation to the management of water in the ACT which illustrate their poor management of water. Perhaps Mr Gupta would like to ask the water minister how much water was supplied to irrigators from the inner north reticulation network for the past three years. What is the government doing about increasing the supply from this system and creating other systems around Canberra? It could be that the water supply dropped off significantly in the inner north reticulation network due to operational issues and lack of resourcing. I am told it could readily be increased. The government just needs to provide a dedicated resource, which would be easily self-funding from increased water sales.

While Mr Gupta is rightly interested in water security for the ACT, it would have been helpful if he had made himself more familiar with the legacy that the Canberra Liberals have left in building new water storage, and the real problems that this government has brought on itself in being very poor in its water policy and in managing Icon Water, and in failing to provide an effective and efficient stormwater management system.

We can only hope that our water assets and water storage will soon be properly managed by the Canberra Liberals, before Canberrans face their next water crisis. I thank Mr Gupta for bringing this motion before the Assembly and urge him to continue to ask questions and better understand the history and the legacy of the water supply, water security and water management here in the ACT.

Amendment agreed to.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

(Quorum formed.)

Transport Canberra—network 19

MISS C BURCH (Kurrajong) (4.19): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) since the last motion debating Canberra’s bus network (dated 14 August 2019), with regard to weekend buses:
 - (i) the Minister for Transport agreed to a motion calling on the Government to produce a Weekend Bus Service Reliability Action Plan on 15 August 2019;
 - (ii) on 15 August 2019, the Minister for Transport claimed the priority of the ACT Government was on bus driver recruitment and volunteer uptake of weekend services, but has not done anything to incentivise an uptake in weekend shifts;
 - (iii) the Minister for Transport announced cuts to weekend bus service frequency to every two hours for suburban services on 16 August 2019;
 - (iv) the Minister for Transport released the details of the Weekend Bus Service Reliability Action Plan on 28 September 2019;
 - (v) the Minister for Transport released a substantively new weekend bus timetable on 28 September 2019;
 - (vi) the 2018-19 Transport Canberra and City Services Annual Report states that “service reliability on weekends has been well below the target”;
 - (vii) as per a Freedom of Information request provided on 8 November 2019, the Government did not know how many drivers it needed to recruit to be able to service the whole network as of July 2019;
 - (viii) the Minister for Transport provided a Quarterly Update on the Transport Action Plan in October 2019, which stated that “incrementally increasing weekend services to meet the Network19 plan” had “not yet commenced”; and
 - (ix) when providing the quarterly update on the Transport Action Plan to the Assembly on 24 October 2019, the Minister refused to provide a resolution date to the weekend network reliability issues;
- (b) since the last motion debating Canberra’s Bus Network (dated 14 August 2019), with regard to suburban bus services:
 - (i) fewer Canberrans in the suburbs of Belconnen, Woden and Tuggeranong are using the public bus network, as per patronage data released in late August 2019;
 - (ii) there has been a survey undertaken by the Women’s Centre for Health Matters in relation to women’s safety on public transport due to ongoing safety concerns with waiting at bus stops and long walking distances at night;
 - (iii) data from the 2018-19 Annual Reports showed that the bus network failed to achieve its 99.5 percent target for “Services Operated to Completion”;
 - (iv) data from the 2018-19 Annual Reports depicted a 21 percent decrease in overall network satisfaction from 83 percent in 2017-18 to 62 percent in 2018-19;

- (v) despite fewer Canberrans being serviced by Network19, bus network operating costs are well above their target of \$5.35 per network kilometre for 2018-19;
 - (vi) the Minister has refused to guarantee a date of resolution for issues plaguing Network19; and
 - (vii) despite over 130 adjustments being made to Network19, the ACT Government is yet to deliver the bus network promised to Canberrans;
- (c) since the last motion debating Canberra's Bus Network (dated 14 August 2019), with regard to dedicated school services:
- (i) the Minister tabled the ACT Government response to the impact of Network19 on school students on 24 September 2019;
 - (ii) data from the ACT Government response to the impact of Network19 on school students depicted student patronage remaining broadly level on the public bus network during weekdays;
 - (iii) data from an incoming ministerial brief provided to the Minister also supports this, stating that the patronage on school days by school students has been broadly level compared to 2018; and
 - (iv) despite the data showing patronage remaining broadly level, the Minister for Transport has continued to claim that student patronage has increased;
- (d) light rail services are operating at or above capacity during peak hours, resulting in delays and inconvenience for commuters using the service; and
- (e) the uncertainty regarding the procurement, design and delivery of a new integrated public transport ticketing system, promised in early 2018, and scheduled for implementation in 2019, and is yet to be delivered as of November 2019; and
- (2) calls on the Minister for Transport to:
- (a) fix the problems plaguing Network19 as a matter of priority, specifically:
 - (i) reinstate weekend suburban services to the frequency promised under Network19;
 - (ii) reinstate express commuter services for residents in Tuggeranong and Belconnen;
 - (iii) reverse the removal or closure of 752 bus stops across Canberra;
 - (iv) reinstate all dedicated school services that were lost under Network19; and
 - (v) reinstate commuter services during peak times down Northbourne Avenue to complement the at-capacity light rail services; and
 - (b) procure and deliver a new integrated ticketing system as a matter of priority.

I welcome the opportunity to speak, in this final sitting for 2019, on one of the government's biggest failures of this year, our public transport network. I am here today to present you with a recount of every failed accountability indicator, missed target, broken promise, cut service and utter incompetence demonstrated by both transport ministers this year.

It is well understood among transport planners that, with the current technology that is available, any network update should only ever improve, not worsen, the accessibility, reliability and connectivity of a network.

It is evident that our public transport network has not reaped the benefits that so often come with change. Network 19 was ill conceived, poorly planned and woefully implemented. As always, it is the Canberrans who rely on these services who continue to suffer the consequences. It is Canberrans who must now navigate a second-rate bus network. And it is Canberrans who are paying the price for the most complacent and out-of-touch government that this territory has ever seen.

2019 has been arduous for Canberrans trying to get around Canberra on public transport. 2019 has seen over 752 bus stops removed, weekend services drastically cut back, commuter services slashed and dedicated school bus services cancelled. In just under 12 months, we have had two transport ministers and two transport networks but zero real solutions to the issues plaguing network 19.

What we have witnessed over the past year can only be viewed as a series of failures. It is unfortunate that many thousands of Canberrans that rely on a frequent, reliable and efficient bus service have lost so many services and been left stranded by this government.

Let me highlight some of the government's so-called celebrated achievement over the last 18 months. In mid to late 2018, the former minister for transport unveiled her plans for network 19 and soon after engaged in a consultation process which many Canberrans will tell you was completely disingenuous.

The government released a report on the your say website to say that they were listening to the public's concerns. That report said that Canberrans wanted more frequent services and greater reliability. It said that soon Canberrans would have a shiny new bus network that incorporated these things. It soon became very clear that network 19, in all its proposed glory, was set in stone well before the consultation had ever begun. Over 13,000 submissions were made and none of them have been taken seriously.

In early 2019 parents, children and schools continued to raise their concerns about the impact of cancelling dedicated school bus services. We now know that if the government's intention was to drive parents and kids back to their cars to get to and from school, the cuts to dedicated school services have been a resounding success.

Around the same time, the Council on the Ageing and other seniors groups raised their own concerns about the inaccessibility of the new network, with many older Canberrans facing an extra 400-metre walk to their local bus stops. Unsurprisingly, little care was shown for how it would affect the quality of life or how isolated these people might become.

Next it was Canberrans in Tuggeranong and Belconnen who expressed their concerns about cuts to Xpresso services and suburban routes, routes that had previously served

them well, and the fact that many commuters were now facing an additional six or seven hours a week on the bus just to get to work. Once again, the government continued to ignore these concerns. As a result, many of these Canberrans have also returned to their vehicles.

Then rolled around D-day, 29 April. The new integrated transport network was unveiled with a \$400,000 launch party that ran well over budget. Patronage in the first month of travel was up, but it was not long until the chaos set in. News article after news article about the network was published, with each one shedding more and more light about the concerns of ordinary, hardworking Canberrans raised just months before.

The headlines really speak for themselves. On 1 May the *Canberra Times* headline read, “Bus changes leave students in the lurch”. The article stated that school students at St Vincent’s primary would lose the equivalent of nine days of school time because of increased journey times the new network brought. On 2 May the headline read, “Record numbers of ACT public transport students left behind”, and on 4 May the headline was, “Bus timetable leaves children in tears”. What was the reply of this government? The minister called the network a great success.

In July this year the network claimed its first casualty—thankfully not a patron of the network but the transport minister herself. With Minister Fitzharris gone, Chief Minister Barr passed the buck to Minister Steel. Promising the world, Minister Steel vowed he would turn things around, starting with reliability issues that plagued the weekend network.

That brings us to 15 August, when the new transport minister agreed to an action plan to resolve the huge number of weekend service cancellations. Very conveniently he failed to mention that he planned to drastically cut weekend suburban services with an announcement made the very next day.

In the September sitting Minister Steel detailed several key goals and milestones under his action plan and rolled out a brand new weekend bus timetable that left Canberrans stranded in the suburbs for up to two hours. What the minister did not detail was any concrete date for restoring these services or any real solution to long-term reliability.

Minister Steel also released the ACT government response to the impact of network 19 on school students and attempted to use dodgy statistics to gloss over the safety concerns of thousands of parents. His claims that more and more students were using the public network were skewed by weekend patronage data. These claims did nothing to ease the concerns of parents like Daniel from Gungahlin. In response to school service cuts, Daniel wrote:

This has forced our younger K-6 students onto public transport. My youngest daughter goes to Amaroo and is in year 6. Recently she and one of her friends have been having very uncomfortable experiences on the public bus where an older man has been getting on to the bus ... next to my daughter despite the fact there are plenty of free seats on the bus to choose ... gets off at the School stop and proceeds to walk with my daughter up to the school gates.

In the October sitting the minister provided us with an update against the weekend bus action plan. It was an exercise in artful deception. The minister announced that reliability was back on track and that his action plan against the weekend network issues was working. Yet he has still not outlined any plans to incentivise weekend bus drivers to pick up weekend shifts and we still do not know when these weekend services will be restored.

His defence of the indefensible is shocking. In response to questions regarding the resolution of the weekend service issues he stated that there has been no change to the frequency of rapid services, which account for around 70 per cent of all boardings on weekends. This is an insult to Canberrans who rely on the other 30 per cent of services. It is an insult to Canberrans who live in the suburbs of Belconnen and Tuggeranong to parrot higher reliability figures for a weekend network timetable that bears no resemblance to the one that was promised. It is insult to Canberrans, like Mary from Kambah, who had a horror story about the rapid 4 on a Saturday afternoon. She wrote:

I arrived in Woden, parked and walked to the bus platform at 7pm. The scheduled 7.09 pm bus did not arrive. I still had time to catch the next bus, however it did not arrive either. By this time a group of about 12 people were waiting for this service.

I rang Transport Canberra and when I asked what time the next R4 was leaving Woden, the operator replied that there would be no more R4 services from Woden that night because there was not enough drivers to drive the buses. I told the people at the platform and they all said that no announcement had been made about this cancelled service.

I had not heard one either ... I know some of the people waiting were travelling home after work to families, some had to catch the light rail and others had to get to Belconnen.

Instead of being transparent with Canberrans, this minister has given us six months of political spin, empty statistics, hollow progress updates and broken promises. The minister conveniently left out of the action plan update speech any guarantee of a firm resolution date to the restoration of weekend service frequency that had been promised under network 19. It was only information contained within a freedom of information request that showed February 2020 as the next review date for service restoration. That is still three months away and Minister Steel has no intention of telling Canberrans this.

Just as disappointing is that the government promised that a new integrated ticketing system would be rolled out shortly after the commencement of light rail but they have since extended the MyWay ticketing contract to 2022. What are we to believe? The government has claimed that the procurement process has been underway for several years now. Is this another broken promise or will we suddenly see it appear as an ALP election commitment next year?

Appallingly, members opposite have remained complicit in their minister's incompetence, negligence and neglect of the Canberrans they claim to represent. For example, in Ms Cheyne's electorate of Ginninderra we heard from a constituent named Maria. Maria's eight-year-old son has been forced to wait around Belconnen interchange unsupervised just to get to and from his school in Florey. He was just as worried and anxious about the changes to his schedule as his mum. The added stop means an extra hour on his journey time every day. Does Ms Cheyne really think this is acceptable?

In Mr Gentleman's electorate we heard from a concerned constituent named Shannon whose children have been forced to choose between walking 30 minutes with heavy backpacks to Erindale to catch a direct service or take two different buses from their local stop near Gowrie to get to school in the morning. To get home Shannon's children now have to catch three buses between Isabella Plains and Fadden and then walk.

It is not just schoolkids living with the consequences of this government's biggest failure; it is our daily commuters too. Anthony from Dunlop wrote to us saying:

I live in Dunlop and, prior to the introduction of the new bus timetables, was happily commuting daily to work.

The new timetable has doubled my trip. Previously it took 45 minutes door to door (ending at Woden). It now takes 1.5 hours.

That is right: it takes Anthony from Dunlop twice as long to get to work in the mornings and twice as long to get home at night.

Ironically, earlier today Minister Steel made a rather pathetic announcement of a few additional car spaces at the Wanniasa park and ride and a few additional bus stops for the south. In the media release announcing these plans Minister Steel said:

We have listened to the Tuggeranong community.

If it was not for the hundreds of bus stops that this government has cut in the south they would not need to be announcing new bus stops now. Dare I suggest that the ALP's polling shows they have a problem with south side Canberrans. For the voters of Brindabella this response from the government is too little, too late. Why wasn't the minister listening to the Tuggeranong community three months ago, six months ago or nine months ago when these issues were raised? It is baffling how tone deaf this government continues to be. If the government had truly listened to south side Canberrans this announcement would have been about restoring Xpresso routes and weekend services and reinstating school buses.

Let me be clear here: I take no pleasure in recounting this government's failures. What matters most to me is that when the government makes a promise to its people that promise is kept and the government is held to account. I call on the minister and this government to finally recognise the huge impact its failed bus network has had on Canberrans; truly listen to the people most affected; fix these issues as a matter of

priority; restore dedicated school services to ease the concerns of parents like Daniel, Shannon and Maria; bring back the 752 stops, the Xpresso routes, the suburban services in Tuggeranong that Canberrans used to rely on to get home from work in a reasonable hour; deliver the weekend timetable you promised Canberrans; and assure patrons like Mary that when a bus is scheduled to come on a weekend it will show up.

Do your job. Listen to Canberrans. Admit that you have made a mistake. Fix the mess you have created and restore some credibility to our transport system. I commend this motion to the Assembly.

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee—Minister for City Services, Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Minister for Recycling and Waste Reduction, Minister for Roads and Active Travel and Minister for Transport) (4.33): I start by welcoming Candice Burch into the chamber. For the second time in two days the opposition has been so completely distracted that government ministers have had to call for a quorum.

Mrs Jones: Point of order.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: A point of order.

MR STEEL: What a joke.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Sit down. Mr Steel, when a point of order is called you are required to sit down. On the point of order, Mrs Jones.

Mrs Jones: I believe the minister referred to the member by her first name, and I believe the protocol in the Assembly is that we are referred to by our titles.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: There was some discussion about this in the changes to the standing orders, but Miss Burch prefers to be known as Miss Burch. I remind Mr Steel of that and ask him to address her accordingly.

MR STEEL: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. This distraction from Assembly business is unprecedented. It is unprecedented in this chamber. I am glad to have the belated opportunity today to discuss the important matter of transport. It once again provides me with the opportunity to comment on Canberra's bus network and the government's work to ensure that Canberrans have a reliable, safe and connected public transport system.

On 17 September 2019 I tabled the weekend bus reliability action plan, which outlined 10 concrete actions to be delivered. The action plan outlined how services would be increased when their reliability can be ensured. The government recognised that weekend service reliability was lower than target performance and committed to a comprehensive 10-point plan to address and resolve these issues.

Members would be aware that on 28 September 2019 Transport Canberra introduced the interim updated weekend timetable that sought to address the unacceptable levels of reliability for weekend bus services. In the 28 September timetable change, the service frequency of local bus routes was changed to every two hours for weekend

services on an interim basis. However, there has been no change to the frequency of rapid services, which account for 70 per cent of boardings on the network.

I am very pleased that weekend reliability has dramatically increased as a result of the timetable change, with Transport Canberra recording an average reliability rate of 99.91 per cent for weekend bus services so far in November 2019, which equates to just nine bus services not delivered out of more than 10,200 timetable services.

In October I tabled the first quarterly update on the action plan, noting that work has commenced on nine of the 10 actions, with two actions already complete. These are to implement an interim weekend timetable to improve reliability, which has been achieved, and increase the use of standby drivers. The government recognises that an interim weekend timetable is not a long-term solution. Our goal is to deliver not just reliable weekend services but also more frequent services right across our city. No single action alone is likely to deliver frequent and reliable bus services for Canberrans, and this is why we have identified a whole range of actions that we are taking.

I note that the motion moved by Miss C Burch in relation to weekend buses points out that the priority of the ACT government was on bus driver recruitment and drivers opting to work weekends. However, once again we see Miss C Burch making incorrect claims that the ACT government has not done anything to incentivise an uptake in weekend shifts. I will again set the record straight for the opposition.

Transport Canberra has made real progress in ensuring continuous recruitment of drivers and we will incrementally increase weekend services once enough drivers have been recruited. During a recent recruitment round, from 11 July to 27 September, Transport Canberra received 458 applications, with assessments taking place twice a month and up to 45 interviews being held each week with potential drivers.

I am advised that a further recruitment round commenced on 28 October. Transport Canberra is prioritising applicants interested in weekend work, fast-tracking candidates who meet several eligibility requirements, and has partnered with the Australian government's veterans employment program to attract candidates with suitable experience and qualifications, such as heavy vehicle licences.

While our preference is to have services enabled as soon as possible, we must also follow appropriate recruitment processes to enable staff selection processes and training so that the services that we do provide are sustainable, safe and efficient. The ACT government will continue to focus on taking targeted and immediate action towards driver recruitment and increasing weekend bus services, which I will continue to report to this Assembly on quarterly as we progress the work under the action plan.

The Canberra Liberals have no plans for our public transport network. While our government has delivered a bus network that provides more services and more public transport options for Canberrans, they have no plan. More Canberrans are using the public transport network compared to the old network. There are 5.28 per cent more

weekday journeys being taken and 20.7 per cent more weekend and public holiday journeys being taken.

Ms Lawder: Journeys?

MR STEEL: Yes, journeys, not boardings. There may be multiple boardings in the journey. Those are figures from October 2019, compared with October 2018. Network 19 has also delivered an additional 3,556 bus and light rail services on weekdays during school terms. We are not cutting services. We have put thousands more services on. This includes 2,350 more bus services on weekdays and 1,206 light rail services on weekdays each week. There are currently 501 more timetabled Transport Canberra bus and light rail services each weekend under the interim updated weekend timetable than there were under the old network that operated prior to 29 April.

This includes 214 more bus services each weekend, as well as 287 more light rail services. In addition to that, our public transport operating hours have been extended. The span of services has been extended, with more services in the evenings in particular, to deliver more services every day of the week. As part of our introduction of network 19, Transport Canberra undertook a review of the location and use of bus stops across the city. Of course, there were changes that were made to the bus stops. We had a changed network. The objective of the review was to ensure that the new network struck the right balance between having faster bus services, which was the feedback we received through the consultation that was undertaken in the lead-up to the introduction of the new network, and having bus stops close to where people live.

The review resulted in 59 new bus stops being opened, bus stops being moved, and 11 former bus stops being reinstated. There were also a number of bus stops closed. Overall, there are now 2,434 bus stops in use in Canberra, which is 606 fewer bus stops than there were under the previous network. But we made that change to improve the frequency of service because we know that that is important to building a public transport system that works for more Canberrans.

However, this number included 202 school services only bus stops, which in many cases caused a situation where, if a student missed their bus under the previous network, there was no other bus to catch. Almost all students catching public transport to school now use the same bus stop and light rail stop as other customers on Transport Canberra, meaning that, again, if they miss their bus, they can catch the following bus to school and actually get there.

Only our government is committed to ensuring that we help young Canberrans become lifelong users of public transport. We have seen that with students adapting to the new network and actually using it on the weekend, because they understand how the new system operates. It is a seven-day-a-week network, not a five-day-a-week network with a separate weekend network in operation like there used to be.

The ACT government are working hard to ensure that we can continue to increase the number of public transport passengers. We have been listening to what Canberrans have had to say after six months of operation of the network. Based on feedback from

the community, we have already made 136 tweaks to the network. We have done that in consultation with schools. We have done it in consultation with communities. At the six-month mark, we are listening to Canberrans and we are engaging with key community groups such as community councils. We are going out through Transport Canberra to community councils. We are listening to what people have to say after six months of operation and we are engaging with key community organisations like the Women's Centre for Health Matters to hear their feedback.

Miss C Burch raised the issue of safety on our public transport network. I want to make it very clear that safety is our utmost priority for all Canberrans when it comes to all government services. All our buses and major interchanges are fitted with closed circuit TV and, as we expand our network with real-time technology, we will be able to better monitor these facilities. I have announced today that as part of the upgrades to public transport infrastructure we will be looking at improved lighting as well to improve passenger safety at certain bus stops. We will continue to make changes to our public transport infrastructure. That is important and we will do it in consultation with organisations like, for example, the Women's Centre for Health Matters.

As a result of the success of light rail stage 1, the ACT government is also exploring options to increase light rail frequencies in peak periods. It is important to consider the technical feasibility of increasing frequency at different times, to identify any additional drivers or vehicles that might be required to deliver more frequent services, to do the modelling to understand the increased impacts of conflicting traffic movements between cars, light rail and passengers to ensure safety and traffic flow and forecasting passenger demand over the coming years.

We are doing that work. We are considering that work. We have undertaken to do that work in the Assembly. The Canberra Liberals have clearly demonstrated that they do not understand that adding buses to Northbourne Avenue to supplement light rail capacity, as they have proposed, will only create traffic congestion. The whole idea of light rail was to take off all of those buses that were stopping in the left-hand lane of Northbourne Avenue, causing traffic congestion, among other problems.

The ACT government recently went out to market for a new ticketing system through an expression of interest process and is currently evaluating a preferred solution for the replacement of the existing system. So we are getting on with the work of looking at what the options are to improve our ticketing system into the future. But we also know that we need to keep MyWay up for some time yet in order to ensure a smooth transition to a new ticketing system. This is going to take some time, but we are going through the proper processes to consider what solutions are available for the territory and to get the best outcome for the territory as well. We want a future ticketing system that will provide a modern solution that will provide for multi-modal travel and assist users to take control of their own journeys.

Our government will continue to listen and to deliver public transport options for Canberrans by continuing to recruit more bus drivers and increasing weekend bus services once there are sufficient bus drivers to ensure continued reliability. We will respond to feedback received from community members to make improvements where possible. We will continue to assess the viability of increasing frequency of light rail services during peak periods. We will continue to provide quarterly updates

to the Legislative Assembly on the transport weekend reliability action plan. We will continue to consider options for a new ticketing system for Canberra's public transport system and provide a further update to the Legislative Assembly and the community in 2020. Madam Deputy Speaker, I move the amendment to this effect circulated in my name:

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

"(1) notes that:

- (a) on 17 September 2019, the Minister for Transport tabled a Weekend Bus Service Reliability Action Plan that outlined several actions that enabled services to be increased when reliability could be ensured;
- (b) on 28 September 2019, Transport Canberra introduced an Updated Interim Weekend Timetable that sought to address the unacceptable levels of reliability for weekend bus services;
- (c) on 24 October 2019, the Transport Action Plan Quarterly Update was tabled. One of the key actions of the Plan, to continually recruit bus drivers, was noted as underway;
- (d) Network19 has delivered six additional rapid routes compared to the old network;
- (e) the services frequency of local bus routes was changed to two hourly in the interim updated timetable for weekends. There has been no change to the frequency of Rapid services, which account for more than 70 percent of all boardings on weekends;
- (f) public transport operating hours have been extended under the new network, with more buses in the morning and evenings, delivering services every day of the week;
- (g) weekend reliability has increased as a result of the reduction to two hourly weekend local services, with Transport Canberra recording an average reliability of 99.91 percent for weekend bus services so far in November 2019, which equates to just nine bus services not delivered out of more than 10 200 timetabled services; and
- (h) the ACT Government is recruiting new bus drivers and will incrementally increase weekend services once enough drivers have been recruited;

(2) further notes:

- (a) Canberrans continue to use the public transport network in increased numbers compared to the old network, with 5.28 percent more weekday journeys and 20.7 percent more weekend and public holiday journeys made in October 2019, compared with October 2018;
- (b) based on feedback from the community, Transport Canberra has responded to issues raised, with 136 adjustments to Network19 since 28 April;
- (c) the ACT Government is continuing to listen to Canberrans about Network19, with Transport Canberra speaking with key community groups, such as community councils and the Women's Centre for Health Matters, to hear their feedback on six months of network operations;

- (d) the ACT Government is investigating increasing the frequency of light rail services. The Minister for Transport tabled a response to a previous resolution on this matter on 26 November 2019;
 - (e) Network19 has delivered an additional 3556 bus and light rail services on weekdays each week during school terms. This includes 2350 more bus services on weekdays each week and 1206 light rail services on weekdays each week;
 - (f) under the interim updated timetable, there are currently 501 more timetabled Transport Canberra bus and light rail services each weekend than there were under the old network that operated prior to 29 April. This includes 214 more bus services each weekend, as well as 287 light rail services;
 - (g) Transport Canberra opened 59 bus stops in new locations and reinstated 11 former bus stops, in a bus stop review as part of the new network which also saw some stops being moved or removed, to ensure that Canberrans had access to more services, more often, that are available more frequently. Overall, there are now 2434 bus stops in use in Canberra, which is a net reduction of 606 bus stops. This includes 202 'school services only' stops which were closed and provided limited access to bus services both for the community and for students; and
 - (h) the ACT Government is investigating options for a new ticketing system, which will also provide a replacement of the current NXTBUS system with a new, modern real time passenger information system; and
- (3) calls on the Minister for Transport to:
- (a) continue to recruit more bus drivers;
 - (b) restore weekend bus services once there are sufficient bus drivers to ensure continued reliability;
 - (c) continue to assess the viability of increasing frequency of light rail services during peak periods;
 - (d) continue to provide quarterly updates on the Transport Action Plan; and
 - (e) continue to consider options for a new integrated public transport ticketing system, reporting back to the Assembly quarterly.”.

MS LE COUTEUR (Murrumbidgee) (4.46): To make life even worse, I move an amendment to Mr Steel’s amendment:

Add new paragraphs (3)(f) and (g):

- “(f) report to the Assembly by the last sitting day in March 2020 with data and analysis on weekday patronage from Woden Valley, Tuggeranong and Belconnen, as well as ways to improve weekday patronage from these districts; and
- (g) implement the Climate Change Strategy’s actions around improving public transport services.”.

Network 19 has been a case of people who win out, people who miss out and a botched rollout of some of it. Parts of my electorate are benefiting from network 19, particularly the residents of Weston Creek and Molonglo Valley. Miss Burch’s

motion would mean a wholesale throwing out of network 19, and I am not in support of that at the cost of my constituents in these areas. The Greens will instead be voting to keep the good and popular parts of network 19 but try to fix the parts that are not working so well. That is the sensible, logical thing to do. We will vote for the ALP amendment but hope to make it much stronger with my amendment, which also covers the weekday bus services for Woden Valley, Belconnen and Tuggeranong.

As I said, network 19 has been a case of people who win out, people who miss out and a botched rollout. This is clear in the patronage stats for the past three months, from July to September 2019, compared to the same period in 2018. Over that time, overall patronage was six per cent more. Tick. Full fare patronage was 16 per cent higher. Even more of a tick. School student patronage was two per cent higher. That is probably just population growth. Concession patronage was two per cent higher. Again, that is probably just population growth. But the more surprising thing was that tertiary student patronage was two per cent lower.

This is mostly good news, but when you look at it by district, the pattern of winners and losers becomes clear. As Miss C Burch's motion says, in some districts starts measured by MyWay cards are down for the three months from July to September 2019 when compared to 2018. Woden Valley journey starts are down five per cent; Belconnen is down four per cent; Tuggeranong is down two per cent. But in my electorate, Weston Creek is up 12 per cent and Molonglo Valley is up 25 per cent.

Then we come to the botched rollout at the weekends. Weekend MyWay patronage, comparing June 2019 to June 2018, was up by 36 per cent, which is brilliant. Weekend patronage growth was still an excellent 27 per cent during the July to September quarter, but clearly faded compared to July as service cancellations of over 10 per cent of services took their toll on public confidence. The story that Miss Burch told of someone waiting at Woden for the R4 is very regrettable, but not, unfortunately, surprising.

Mr Steel's amendment shows that by October, after weekend services on local routes were reduced to two-hourly, the year-on-year increase was down to 20.7 per cent. This is not surprising. It could have been worse. Two-hourly services do not work for weekend commuters. They do not work for people going to an appointment. They are a complete disaster for anyone connecting from one local service to another. They are just too inflexible for anyone who wants to go out over the weekend. The problem is getting enough weekend drivers. The best part of network 19, the part that Canberrans were really keen on, was the part that did not work because of not enough drivers.

I hope the weekend patronage growth now stabilises at at least 20 per cent higher, to remind everyone in the Assembly and the directorate of what can be achieved when a truly better service is provided and to provide encouragement to get weekend local services back to one-hourly, preferably even better than that, as soon as possible.

Miss Burch's motion has a number of sensible notes and sensible calls, but critically the only way to deliver the other calls would be to completely throw out network 19, which we are not going to do because it substantially benefits a large number of people, including many of those in my electorate.

Miss Burch calls for reopening 752 bus stops that have closed. You cannot do that without a wholesale return to the previous network. It is the same thing with the restoration of the dedicated school services that we moved from network 19. Where are these buses going to come from? We do not have a separate school bus service in the ACT. A bus might do an R7 down to Weston Creek, then a school run to Weston Creek and then a local service in another part of Canberra. If we put back under-utilised school services, that would mean fewer buses available for busier school routes and commuters, especially in what is the crunch time morning peak.

Clearly part of the solution to this problem—which the Greens and I have been advocating forever—is more resources for our public transport system. That would obviously alleviate some problems, though I note that it is not one of Miss Burch's calls. In the short run, looking at what we have, the patronage data does not make the case for reversing the changes to school services, because school use has not gone down.

Network 19 is a major shift in bus route design towards a hub-and-spoke approach. This, hopefully, is the correct move in terms of Canberra getting bigger. In the previous design, each route had been looked at for years and optimised. Hopefully, the local routes will get better on this one, it will be more optimal, and that hub-and-spoke will work. We have to give it longer. It can work.

One of the reasons that Weston Creek has much better patronage under network 19 is that Weston has become a significant hub. A quick local trip to the hub connects you to frequent and quick services to the city and Woden town centre, and also the services going to Tuggeranong via Kambah. This is much better than what was available before.

The ALP amendment is much better than the motion, but it is still not enough. On the positive side, it acknowledges that driver shortages for weekend services need to be fixed, and critically. It also commits to restoring the weekend bus services. This is very important in getting the Greens to vote for this amendment. We—and, I am sure, all the travelling public—want to get back to the full weekend services promised by network 19 as quickly as possible.

What the ALP amendment lacks is anything to address the fall in weekday journey starts in Woden, Belconnen and Tuggeranong. This is a real concern. Where are the approximately five per cent of people in each of these areas who used to catch the bus and are not anymore? What happened? We need to find out what happened, and to find out with enough detail to make changes so that they have similar gains in patronage to Weston Creek and Molonglo Valley. That would be ideal. The first step is to recognise that there is a problem during the week. My amendment recognises that.

The second step is to investigate why, and my amendment adds to this. In my previous lifetime I was an IT manager. I have spent hours and hours doing SQL queries of all sorts of data. The ACT government has a wealth of MyWay card data. Drilling into that data should be able to show us a lot more about what people did

under the previous network that they are not doing now. Where is this missing five per cent? What did they do before? What has happened in the new system that does not work for them now?

The ACT government has an open data portal, but it has very limited information based on the MyWay data. That is why, unfortunately, the patronage figures by district that I and others have quoted have come from questions on notice that I have asked. This is not the way to run a bus system.

We need information. As I said, the MyWay data gives Transport Canberra a wealth of information. MyWay data can tell the time that the day trips are taken. If the data shows, for instance, that the Woden Valley journey stats are down in the morning peak, it probably means that the commuters who live in Woden Valley need service improvement. If the lower patronage is more in the afternoon peak, it means that service improvements are needed for commuters who work in Woden Valley but may well live elsewhere.

MyWay data can also reveal if there are problems for certain types of passengers. It could, for instance, show that there are fewer concession journeys starting around Canberra Hospital during the day. If so, it would suggest that there are problems for older people who are trying to visit the hospital. Then you could look at the options to improve that.

I hope—indeed, I assume—that Transport Canberra is already making use of MyWay data to work out what we want and how we can work our bus network better. If not, or even if they are, I have a few suggestions as to how they might get it done. We could provide this data with appropriate privacy condition protections if necessary. If they take out the MyWay card data, if there was no MyWay card identifier, there would be no private data. I am not even sure whether the MyWay card identifier would qualify as private data; I have not looked into that enough. With appropriate privacy protections if necessary, we could give the data to ANU and UC students who are studying IT and offer a cash reward for the person who makes the best use of the data to suggest improvements in the system.

The ACT government still participates in GovHack every year. There could be an ACT one. This could be a major part of next year's ACT-based GovHack. GovHack, for those of you who are not into it, is a couple of days where people spend their time looking at government-provided data and hacking it to find new, useful and interesting things. I am sure a lot could be found in the MyWay data. This could be really useful. You can also pay people to do this. I would assume that the ACT government already pays a number of people throughout the ACT government to look at big data. If not, we have problems bigger than the bus network. My amendment will, hopefully, see this happening.

The third step is implementing the findings, whatever they are, to improve network 19 for Woden Valley, Tuggeranong and Belconnen. My amendment also covers this. My amendment also touches on the Greens' long-term commitment to public transport by referencing the climate change strategy. As I said in my end-of-year speech last night,

this strategy is a real highlight of the year, from my perspective. Importantly, in the context of this debate, it includes several actions around improving public transport.

In conclusion, as I said last night, one of the positive things about network 19 has been that all three parties in the Assembly have been united in calling for a better bus system. That is positive compared to some of the previous words that have been said on this subject. I will not go any further than that.

As I have said, network 19 is a mixed bag, with winners and losers. Miss Burch's motion, though, would effectively scrap network 19. That would really be bad for people who have had better services. That includes some people in my electorate, but it also includes a lot of people in Miss Burch's electorate. The overall patronage has actually gone up. We should remember that. Overall patronage has not gone down, although it has gone down in some places. We need to keep the good and not throw out the baby with the bathwater. The way forward is to fix the problems while keeping the gains.

Mr Steel's amendment is better than the motion on this, but it does miss a key point, which is to fix network 19 weekday patronage from Woden Valley, Belconnen and Tuggeranong. My amendment looks at that. My amendment will see the government looking at that and doing it. I urge all members to vote for my amendment so that residents in these areas can have a better bus service, just like the ones for people in areas like Weston Creek and just like the improved service that is happening for people who are fortunate enough to live close to the light rail.

MRS KIKKERT (Ginninderra) (5.01): I thank Miss C Burch for bringing this motion before the Assembly today. Many Belconnen residents have shared with me the very same points that this motion raises. In fact, frustration with the chaos and dysfunction that this government has needlessly introduced into the territory's bus network is something that I hear about regularly in my electorate of Ginninderra.

I strongly suspect that Minister Steel and those opposite, clueless about how to fix these issues, are holding out for people to just get accustomed to a severely diminished public transport system. This is not going to happen, however. Canberrans know what their commutes looked like before Labor and the Greens closed 752 bus stops, cancelled express commuter services for residents in Tuggeranong and Belconnen, and axed buses for schoolchildren. They remember how long it took to get to work, to school or to a doctor's appointment one year ago and they know how long it takes now.

Earlier this month I spent a morning meeting with Canberrans who live in one west Belconnen neighbourhood. One of the main concerns raised that morning was frustration with changes to the public transport system. These residents know personally that these changes have not been improvements, and any attempt to label them as such comes across as Orwellian doublespeak.

One resident, who works in Belconnen, explained that it now takes her 45 minutes to get there from her home. She would prefer to use public transport, she said—and in fact she used to—but now she drives her private car since she can do so in one-third

of the time. Residents also raised concerns about the unpredictability that plagues the network. Buses now frequently come early or late, they said, and often they are completely full and do not stop at all.

One resident, who recently separated from her husband, spoke about how she no longer feels safe catching a bus after having been left stranded by overfull buses both on her way to work in the morning and at the bus interchange in the evening. She also expressed concern that a one-kilometre walk to and from the nearest bus stop in the dark of winter is simply not safe.

As a result, residents of Belconnen are turning away from the public bus network, as the latest patronage data clearly show. The Barr government's stubborn determination to make the public transport system less convenient, less efficient and less safe has had a significant impact on many families in my electorate and many other parts of our territory.

I join Miss Burch in calling on the Minister for Transport to fix these problems as a matter of priority.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (5.04): I would like to thank my colleague Miss Burch for bringing this motion to the Assembly today. Whilst this topic of the new bus network has been discussed for some time now, it continues to be a very hot topic. I know I continue to receive a lot of correspondence and contact from constituents about this. Miss Burch's motion highlights the failings of the Canberra bus services at the moment. She highlighted that they can be infrequent, with few services running, that they can be unreliable, that they can come early, or leave or arrive late, and that there can be long waiting times. She also talked about the closure of bus stops.

There are a few aspects of Miss Burch's motion that I will address today. She has already discussed them in a well-rounded way and has explained her position on all of them, so I will just pick a few. The first is that the failure of the new bus network is making women feel unsafe when using public transport, especially at night. We have heard about the closure of 750 bus stops. This means users of the bus network, including women, will have to walk further to reach a functioning bus stop. This is especially an issue at night for women, who feel unsafe. The perception of being unsafe is enough of a deterrent for them. They have to wait longer for their buses, and they can feel uncomfortable and unsafe while waiting longer for their bus to arrive.

A survey by the Women's Centre for Health Matters has highlighted that this fear is very real and tangible for women in Canberra. The minister said that they are working with the Women's Centre for Health Matters, but my question is: why wasn't this done before the new network began? Why wasn't this considered before these bus stops were closed? Why wait until we have these issues raised by the Women's Centre for Health Matters, then say, "We're going to consult on them"? It should have been considered through the lens of women's safety before these changes were introduced.

Whilst I am focusing right now on women's safety, this can apply to many other demographic groups in our community. Miss Burch highlighted schoolchildren and

the cancellation of school buses. The fact is that children and their parents are very uncomfortable about those changes.

Poor access to public transport is isolating for women. It can prevent or limit their social and economic participation in their community. This is reflected in the data in my electorate of Brindabella, for example, which shows that fewer people are using the public bus network in Tuggeranong. This represents an overwhelming disregard for the safety of women.

I would also like to touch on older Canberrans and seniors, to whom exactly the same concerns can apply. They may already feel more isolated. They may already feel that they are more vulnerable because they may be starting to have some physical infirmities or are becoming slightly more frail, but they certainly have a perception that they are more at risk—their personal safety is more at risk. We are not just talking about women; we are also talking about older Canberrans generally, of whom there are quite a large number. We are talking about schoolchildren, their parents and families. It could apply to some culturally and linguistically diverse groups, who may feel at risk if they are walking further to bus stops in the dark and waiting longer for bus services. We have seen some terrible racially motivated attacks, and we do not want to be putting anyone in this position, no matter which demographic they come from, in our city of Canberra.

I repeat my point: why weren't these basic safety needs considered before the new bus network was rolled out? How will the ACT government achieve their target of making women feel safer when they are taking away some of the very public services that helped women to feel safe? Helping women to feel safe in public places, especially at night, and when using public transport, is an important part of what we should be doing to help women, older people and any other group that feels unsafe. We should be working to make them feel safer.

Apart from the physical safety concerns for older Canberrans, for example, there is the very real concern for many older Canberrans that they simply cannot walk further to another bus stop. Now that their nearest bus stop has been closed—750 of them closed—they simply cannot walk further, even if it is not a lot further. I have heard, for example, from residents of Wanniasa who are very upset because Wanniasa—there are many examples but this is one example—has quite a number of hills. For some residents the bus stop may be almost the same distance away but it means they have to walk up the hill either on their way there or on their way home, and physically they do not feel able to do that.

We have heard from so many residents in Tuggeranong about how upset, how isolated and how disadvantaged they feel, yet the government remains unmoved. I genuinely thought that when the new Minister for Transport came in he might make some changes. It is a good time to put your stamp on a portfolio, and the bus network came out under the previous Minister for Transport. I genuinely believed that the minister might take all of that feedback from Tuggeranong residents to heart—that feedback from Tuggeranong residents that is evidenced and backed up by having fewer users of public transport, according to the government's own data, in Tuggeranong. They have remained unmoved. They have not made the changes that residents of Tuggeranong

need. Despite the fact that they have had over 130 so-called tweaks, they still have not addressed the needs of Tuggeranong residents.

There were some announcements today about public transport in Tuggeranong. It was about some more parking. On the face of it, that is a great thing; but why do we need more parking? It is because they have taken away all of the bus stops and bus services in other areas of Wanniasa, so residents have no choice now but to drive to the Wanniasa park and ride, as there is no bus stop near them. It is too little, too late.

When you take away a big chunk of people's services, give them a little bit back and expect them to be grateful for it, it is no wonder Tuggeranong residents feel that they are disadvantaged. Despite these shows of support for people on the south side and for people in Tuggeranong, the perception of being neglected, abandoned and the poor cousin remains in Tuggeranong, and it is such a shame.

We have also heard some talk about light rail, but I can assure you, despite not being averse to active travel in any way, that it is a very long way from Tuggeranong to the nearest light rail stop. Why have we taken away Tuggeranong bus services and not replaced them with anything else? Residents of Tuggeranong deserve better. Thanks, Miss Burch, for your motion, and shame on the government for neglecting the residents of Tuggeranong.

MISS C BURCH (Kurrajong) (5.14): Of course, I am in no way surprised by Ms Le Couteur's comments today. Ms Le Couteur has a track record of pretending to care about bus users across Canberra in public and in the media, even going so far as to claim credit for a motion earlier in the year that was not hers. However, Ms Le Couteur continues to vote down or amend my motions which call for tangible, real action on the bus chaos. At best she has shown herself to be a hypocrite, and at worst it is borderline deceitful to the people she claims to represent.

Her amendment today is yet another example of this. She has chosen to support Minister Steel's watered down amendment which does nothing but pat the government on the back for a job poorly done. In contrast to Ms Le Couteur's claims, I am calling not for the positive aspects of network 19 to be reversed just for these serious shortcomings to finally be addressed. What is worse is that Ms Le Couteur's amendment endorses the government's policy on territory-wide car-free days and car-free areas. If Ms Le Couteur is genuine in her desire to have fewer Canberrans relying on their cars, she would be supporting my motion and demanding some real solutions from this minister.

While the minister may continue to stick his head in the sand and deny that there is a problem, I think the headlines very simply speak for themselves—the headlines from the *Canberra Times* this year alone, in reference to Canberra's bus network. On 18 March the headline read "New bus network raises concerns". Again on 18 March, the headline was "School bus changes to see students cross busy roundabout in peak hour".

On 24 April we saw "A lesson in double-speak, courtesy of your non-existent school bus". On 28 April we saw "School buses a class war battleground". On 29 April the

headline was “Commuters confused but officials happy with new bus network”. Again on 29 April we saw “Bedding down issues blamed for bus timetable blowouts”. On 1 May we saw “Pressure mounts on ACT government over bus network”. On 2 May it was “Record numbers on ACT public transport but students left behind”.

On 3 May we saw “Transport minister under fire over passenger data”. On 4 May we saw “Bus timetable changes leave children in tears”. On 8 May the headline was “Weekend buses cancelled after volunteer shortages”. On 9 May we saw “Hopes problems plaguing new weekend bus routes can be fixed”. On 13 June the headline was “Canberra bus passenger numbers plummet after end of trial period”. On 22 June we saw “Canberra bus network sparks thousands of complaints”.

On 17 July we saw “We’re the forgotten people of the south: bus changes opposition heats up”. On 1 August the headline was “Calls for free transport as bus cancellations soar”. On 2 August we saw “Bus network turmoil could continue for a year”. On 26 August the headline read “Saving Canberra’s bus network means confronting some hard truths”. On 5 September the headline read “Canberra bus network changes leave elderly housebound”. On 25 September we saw “Most Canberrans live too far from tram or rapid bus stops”.

On 4 October the headline read “Students least likely to be jumping on the new transport network”. On 11 October it was “Canberra transport network satisfaction falls”. On 22 October it was “Unjust: Principals say schools still left behind under revised bus network”. On 30 November the heading was “Canberra’s bus network pushed back after light rail delays”.

Those are, of course, only the *Canberra Times* headlines. I do not have the RiotACT and ABC headlines here, but there are many more on top of that.

The minister continues to ignore the fact that patronage in both Woden and Tuggeranong is down by five per cent. In Belconnen it is down by two per cent, and patronage for schoolchildren taking public transport has not improved. Customer satisfaction has dropped 21 per cent to its lowest in years, to 62 per cent. Reliability remains well below target, despite the minister attempting to pass off dodgy data trying to show otherwise.

The promises of a new ticketing system remain a distant dream, as commitments to a 2019-20 rollout of the system have blown out to 2022 or longer. Child safety on the public network is still a massive concern for parents across Canberra. This is the transport network that Minister Gentleman has labelled as world class. It seems that Mr Gentleman and I have very different ideas of what “world class” actually means.

I cannot overstate how much the government’s actions in the past 18 months have decimated confidence in our public transport network. Canberrans have come to realise that they cannot rely on our bus network to get their kids to and from school, get into the city from the suburbs on weekdays, or get around our city at all on weekends. Parents have returned to their cars, older people are stuck in their homes and people are stranded in suburbs on weekends.

The minister has claimed that his priority has been to deliver a reliable and accessible bus network. We can see that under his leadership Canberrans have anything but this. Unlike those opposite, the Canberra Liberals know how much Canberrans around the territory are hurting from these changes. Canberrans deserve a government that they can rely on, that listens to them regardless of internal political polling and that treats them with some respect outside an election campaign.

I would like to thank my colleagues Ms Lawder and Mrs Kikkert for their contributions today. Ms Lawder has tirelessly fought for residents on the south side to be given the same treatment as the rest of Canberra by this government. Mrs Kikkert, who, unlike Ms Cheyne, does seek to represent the people who elected her, had a petition lodged with over 590 signatures for the restoration of peak Xpresso services, school services and suburban routes around Belconnen. That petition was instrumental in having some tweaks made to the routes in her electorate.

I was proud earlier this year to table a petition totalling over 7,000 signatures calling on the government to review the impact of the network on students, the elderly and hardworking Canberrans. Of course, again, they are refusing to listen. Unlike the ALP and the Greens, the Canberra Liberals are listening, and we will continue to advocate for these changes that Canberrans actually want. That is why the Canberra Liberals made the promise earlier this year to restore dedicated school services, because Canberrans across the territory deserve a government that listens to them, respects them and delivers for them.

Question put:

That **Ms Le Couteur's** amendment to **Mr Steel's** proposed amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 11

Noes 8

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

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Mr Steel's amendment, as amended, agreed to.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

Alexander Maconochie Centre—management

MRS JONES (Murrumbidgee) (5.26): I move:

That this Assembly:

- (1) notes:
 - (a) the current mismanagement of the Alexander Maconochie Centre (AMC) by the Minister for Corrections and Justice Health; and
 - (b) this mismanagement is causing great distress to staff, inmates and families of both, undermining the mandate of the facility, which was supposed to make rehabilitation of inmates better because they were closer to family;
- (2) further notes that, under the minister's watch, the AMC has been plagued with:
 - (a) deaths in custody;
 - (b) multiple escapes from custody;
- (c) record rates of assaults against inmates and guards;
 - (d) a state of emergency declaration after a hole in the perimeter fence was found;
 - (e) the accidental release of a prisoner;
 - (f) high rates of illicit drug use;
 - (g) high methadone use without a methadone exit program;
 - (h) low staff morale, with 93 resignations in three years; and
 - (i) that these failures undermine the mandate of the AMC and are causing great distress to prison staff, inmates and their families;
- (3) calls on the Minister for Corrections and Justice Health to resign; and
- (4) calls on the Chief Minister to appoint a new Minister for Corrections and Justice Health to return the morale of staff, the morale of inmates and a restoration of some level of confidence to families that their loved ones are being supported in their rehabilitation.

Since becoming the corrections minister in 2012 Minister Rattenbury has failed to manage and secure the Alexander Maconochie Centre to a satisfactory level. His lack of appropriate leadership and interest in running the facility properly has led to mistake after mistake and a prison system that lurches from crisis to crisis. Let's take a look at the record.

Tragically, there have been two deaths in custody. In May 2016 Mr Steven Freeman died two days after going onto the methadone program. He did not need methadone; he needed to see a dentist and was in pain. Another tragic event was the death of Mr Mark O'Connor, whose toxicology report revealed a mixture of methamphetamine and buprenorphine as the likely cause of death.

There have been multiple escapes. In April 2016 a prisoner escaped from the Canberra Hospital's mental health unit. Just five months later, in September, two prisoners escaped from the AMC grounds using construction materials to scale three fences. I have spoken with many corrections officers who are concerned about how easy it is to scale the fences at the AMC, the internal fences between compounds in particular. Two more inmates escaped from custody from the Canberra Hospital, one

found three days later in regional New South Wales and the other found almost two weeks later, allegedly having managed to get his girlfriend pregnant during that time.

As well as escapes from custody, earlier this year three women escaped their compound to meet up with a male detainee, one of whom was out of sight of CCTV for 14 minutes, possibly engaging in sexual activity with the male detainee.

The AMC has one of the highest rates of inmate-on-inmate and inmate-on-officer assault rates. The AMC is one of the more dangerous places to be locked up and one of the most dangerous places to work. Inaction on occupational violence is not good enough, which is why I brought forward my bill to the Assembly to protect corrections officers and justice health staff.

Earlier this month, on Wednesday, 6 November, a state of emergency was declared at the AMC. It followed the discovery of a hole in the fence—not discovered until the day after it had occurred—and fears that contraband including firearms and tasers had been smuggled into the facility. The state of emergency was extended once and lasted just a day less than a week. Staff, detainees and their families held grave concerns for the safety of those inside the facility.

From what I hear on the ground it was a chaotic experience with little or no policies and procedures in place. Management and staff were fearful that a firearm may have been smuggled into the facility, so staff were directed to search every inch of the prison. The trouble is that staff had not been previously trained in how to search for, manage and confiscate firearms, so they felt completely helpless. They were also not being given adequate protection, so if there was a firearm they were left vulnerable.

There was an accidental release of an inmate. On 16 December 2017 a detainee who was supposed to have remained in prison on a further remand warrant was mistakenly released. The released inmate remained on the streets of Canberra for approximately three days before prison staff realised their mistake and issued a notice to the police for his re-arrest. Two years later and absolutely nothing has improved. The Chief Minister continues to tolerate this minister's dismal performance. The minister seems completely unwilling to fix or incapable of fixing the mess that is the Alexander Maconochie Centre.

Drug use and abuse is rampant inside the AMC. Take this headline from the *Canberra Times* of 9 March 2019: "Almost 30 per cent of AMC inmates report heroin use while in Canberra's adult jail". In July this year we heard of yet another overdose inside the prison, this time a woman inmate. I understand it was so serious that she was rushed to hospital. How is illicit drug abuse so rampant? How is it that day after day and year after year in the job the minister continues to tolerate it, shrugs his shoulders and say it is a war we cannot win?

Methadone use in the facility varies between 20 and 40 per cent of inmates, much higher than many other jurisdictions, with Victoria varying between 10 and 15 per cent. Many prisoners may take methadone as something to do in an otherwise unstructured day. Others have reported that they were encouraged to increase their

methadone doses, presumably to be more sedated and compliant. This is appalling and a form of chemical sedation.

In his first four years as corrections minister Mr Rattenbury focused on implementing a needle and syringe program in the prison. This would have armed prisoners with further weapons and put staff in unsafe positions. His priorities were all wrong. Meanwhile, there is not a formal program to help inmates get off methadone if they so choose and no real action has been taken to help end their addictions. Too many people go into the facility clean and come out addicted to drugs.

Years of mismanagement and low staff morale at the AMC have left us with a staff shortage crisis. The government now relies on thousands of hours of overtime and rolling lock-ins simply to keep the prison running. The AMC is suffering from a toxic workplace culture, with 93 resignations in the past three years and multiple job vacancies in need of filling.

Due to understaffing, one of the AMC's main cell blocks, the AU building, had up to 111 rolling lock-ins over 92 days. That is a quarter of the year. Having to conduct rolling lock-ins for a quarter of the year because of chronic understaffing is a failure of government. The minister is now relying on his prison guards working an extra 26,000 hours of overtime simply to keep the lights on and the doors locked.

Even with overtime almost tripling in 12 months, the government cannot keep up. This reliance on overtime and rolling lock-ins has much wider implications for both staff and detainees and it greatly inhibits any rehabilitative process. This was demonstrated in the healthy prison review released yesterday by the Inspector of Correctional Services, which I will speak to in more detail later. It is no wonder corrections staff are resigning at record rates. This is just another example of this government's and this minister's inability to properly regard our men and women in service and frontline roles.

I turn to the healthy prisons review—this scathing review points to over 100 serious and systemic failings in the facility. The review highlights that the four pillars of a healthy prison—safety, respect, purposeful activity, and rehabilitation and preparation for release—are not performing satisfactorily and in some instances require urgent remedial action.

What is performing satisfactorily in this facility? Not a great deal. Further areas of concern identified by the review include insufficient staff to assist prisoner activities, overcrowding in the facility and a severe lack of policies, procedures and staff training in a variety of areas across the facility. That was seen when the section 26 lockdown was called earlier this month and there were no policies for how to manage medical needs and the decisions were being made on the go. Staff had not been drilled and procedures had not been practised. It was the first time and there was no plan.

Court transport unit staff are concerned about the transport and detention of children and young people for which they are not adequately trained and for which their facilities are not adequately set up. There is a lack of policies and instructions relating to the handling and disposal of contraband. What is happening to the contraband once

it is seized? There are various opinions that it ends up back in the prison. Drug detection capability is not up to the standard it should be and a significant problem exists with the detainee disciplinary process, including arbitrary and inconsistent application.

There is a lack of proper incentives and earned privileges, and informants are not properly protected. Women inmates are not properly inducted or given appropriate information about their rights and obligations and there are not enough suitable recreation facilities or activities for them. The armoury does not have a proper inventory. We do not even know what is meant to be being kept in the armoury of the prison.

Minister Rattenbury has been the minister responsible for corrections for seven years, the majority of this facility's existence. The minister is either disinterested or incapable of running a properly functioning prison.

The very mandate of the AMC—to be a rehabilitative and healthy prison—is being undermined on a daily basis. Jon Stanhope and Katy Gallagher lauded the value of having prisoners closer to their families and that it would be better for their rehabilitation. They would be pretty unhappy with the state of play at the moment.

To recap, we have had deaths in custody, escapes, record rates of assault, emergency declarations, accidental release of prisoners, illicit drug abuse, high methadone use without an exit program, low staff morale and understaffing, overcrowding of the prisoner population, and now more than 100 systemic failings compromising prison safety and rehabilitation, as identified by the Inspector of Correctional Services in the *Healthy Prison Review of the Alexander Maconochie Centre 2019*.

Every one of these failures undermines the human rights and rehabilitative mandates of the Alexander Maconochie Centre. Alexander Maconochie himself, the man this facility was named for, had a great regard for incentives for prisoners to work hard. He believed it would improve them and that they should be able to obtain release earlier. That was his radical idea at the time—that if a prisoner did the work assigned to them and got through it faster than expected, they had had the opportunity to improve themselves as a person.

This facility would make Alexander Maconochie cry because people are just being locked in their cells all day with nothing to do. The education numbers are not real because people are enrolling in courses and dropping out of them and not finishing them. As one of the female detainees who is quoted in the report asks: what is the point of enrolling in education if it is held once a week or once a fortnight? People are not obtaining certificate-level training. What they are doing in there is not useful to them on the outside. People who have requested degree-level training are being told they cannot access it, and the list goes on.

Minister Rattenbury has had seven years to secure the prison. Instead, the prison has become more dangerous. Mr Rattenbury needs to be replaced with a more capable and interested minister. Therefore, I am asking for the minister to resign and take a break

and for the Chief Minister to find a corrections minister capable and willing and interested enough to do the job well.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong—Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability, Minister for Corrections and Justice Health, Minister for Justice, Consumer Affairs and Road Safety and Minister for Mental Health) (5.40): I am happy to inform the house that I will not be resigning from my role as minister for corrections, nor will I be supporting Mrs Jones's motion today. Firstly, Mrs Jones motion makes a series of dramatic statements in an attempt to bolster her argument. But they really exaggerate the situation or simply get it wrong. Let me give a couple of examples taken directly from her motion.

The motion suggests that the AMC has been plagued by escapes. Escapes from custody in the ACT are lower than those in most states. Since the jail opened in 2009, there have been four escapes from custody as per the definition in the *Report on government services*. In that same period, the Northern Territory has had 105 escapes and New South Wales has had 119. The other jurisdictions have figures lower than that. The ACT has had four in that period. I think we need to put some of these things into perspective to see the reality of what is actually happening at the AMC. Of course, we seek to prevent all escapes. Certainly, those four that have taken place have been regrettable. But the claim of a plague of them really is an exaggeration.

Another example is where Mrs Jones seeks to note in the motion that there is no methadone exit program. I can inform the Assembly that Canberra Health Services are clear in advising me that all detainees released from the AMC who are on the opioid maintenance therapy program are referred to a community provider, which may include Canberra Health Services alcohol and drug services at the Canberra Hospital or a range of other community prescribers.

Newly released detainees have priority access to opioid maintenance therapy at the alcohol and drug service public clinic. This includes access to counsellors, nurses and medical staff. They are then dosed at the AMC prescription level until they attend a medical review with an alcohol and drug service addiction medicine specialist. The script is valid for one month. I do not know where the assertion comes from that there is no exit program, because there is a clear pathway. If someone leaves custody, they remain engaged by the services.

Mrs Jones has also commented that there is a high rate of methadone use in the AMC. She suggested some sort of chemical handcuffs. All I can inform the Assembly is that it is a medical decision, made by a medical professional, as to whether somebody enters that program. If Mrs Jones wants to suggest that those medical staff are making inappropriate decisions, she should say that rather than make the sort of allusions she is making that suggest that some other strategy is in place.

Let me turn to the issue of low staff morale, because Mrs Jones has cited 93 resignations. I need to take this opportunity to correct the record. In the response provided to the Select Committee on Estimates 2019-20, it was stated there were 93 resignations in total over the three-year period. However, there were in fact 94 in the period. The difference is due to a resignation that occurred in 2018-19 year being

entered into the HR information system after the answer to the question on notice was prepared.

I think it is important to note that ACT corrective services does not support the argument that these resignations relate directly to poor morale. Resignations can be for various reasons, which include, but not are limited to, other opportunities arising, people moving interstate, health reasons and personal reasons, just to name a few. It is also worth noting that 24 of the 94 resignations are of non-custodial ACT corrective services staff. It includes people who work at 2 Constitution Avenue and who perform other functions for ACT corrective services.

These examples underline the fact that in seeking to make the political point she wishes to make, Mrs Jones has misconstrued, misrepresented or at best misinterpreted a range of the facts relating to the business of ACT corrective services. That said, there is much more to the story of the AMC and corrective services more broadly. As members would be aware, I have been quite open in this place and in other public domains in saying that there are challenges in running the AMC and that not everything works as we would wish it to. Things do go wrong on occasion. I think the important part is how one responds to that. Our response is always to take these matters seriously and to seek to improve from the lessons that have been learnt.

The history of the AMC is that it was built too small. It was built with no industries. We have been playing catch-up ever since in trying to overcome some of those issues that relate to the original design and the intentions of the facility. I think the decision not to build industries is an interesting one. I think it was taken for the right reasons. I was not there. But the emphasis was to be on education programs. I think that that is a laudable goal and I think the decisions were taken with the best of intentions.

Mrs Jones made the case—I think this was one of the correct parts of her arguments—that having industries in jail is a really important thing to do. The cohort of people that we are supporting in the corrections environment are not necessarily the ones keenest to sit down with the books and learn new things. But often they do like using their hands and they can often pick up great skills while they are inside. That is why I have during my time as corrections minister sought to build the range of industries available at the AMC.

It is a slow but steady process. We have brought online the bakery. We have brought online the recycling work. We have recently opened a metal shop at the AMC. This is a more recent innovation. It has not had a lot of publicity but that is because we are just quietly getting on with our jobs. We have now got people who are actually on a maintenance team in the AMC undertaking a range of maintenance projects across the facility, which is great for their skill building, for finding meaningful work for them to do and also maintaining the quality of the facilities.

The Inspector of Correctional Services released the first healthy prison review yesterday. It has found that overall the Alexander Maconochie Centre has the ingredients to be a healthy prison. But, as I expected, the report clearly identified that more needs to be done to address key issues across all four pillars of the healthy

prison framework. I am encouraged by the finding that the foundations are strong but I am also focused on the work that still needs to be done.

The Office of the Inspector of Correctional Services was set up and funded exactly for this purpose. This was a deliberate decision, led by me. I have brought the legislation to this place to create a proactive, independent oversight mechanism to drive continuous improvement in our corrective services system, including through the proactive healthy prison review, every two years. I am a minister who expects continuous improvement. The inspector's independent report highlights the number of areas where real improvement has been made but also identifies the areas that need further work.

This is the first report of its kind in the ACT. Therefore, I think it provides us with benchmarks for the future. It enables us actually to measure in a benchmarked way how we are going into the future. The report is a snapshot in time. I think this is an important perspective to keep in mind. It is very clear that it does not seek to highlight all the improvements that have been made in recent years or the progress that has been made in the relatively short history of this facility.

It is now a jail that is just 10 years old. Compare that to other systems that have literally been operating for 100 years. It does not take account of the industry developments that I have talked about. They are not part of the story because that is not the job of the review. The fieldwork was undertaken in July and I am pleased to be able to flag to the Assembly that some of the issues identified in that report have been worked on appreciably since the fieldwork was undertaken in July, because necessarily the inspector could only take a snapshot in time.

In areas such as policy work, there has been a concerted project going on for a period of time now to update and amend the policies to make sure that the gaps are filled in where they need to be. The report presents a system that is challenged but rising to those challenges. I think that that is a worthy description of the ongoing efforts of ACT corrective services. The deep and broad maturation and modernisation of the jail and its operations are progressing.

This is a work in progress. It is work where we are not standing still. I and the leadership of ACT corrective services at our weekly meetings discuss almost every single week, "What are we doing this week to improve the operations of the AMC?" As the inspector notes, ACT corrective services does have work ahead of it, but I am confident that the executive team will continue to progress this work and methodically and systematically improve on a range of fronts in the short, medium and longer term in response to some of these recommendations.

There is a wealth of examples of promising practice and enhanced services for detainees if you take the time to look for them. That, of course, does not suit the purposes of this motion today but that does not mean that they are not happening. There is also a range of benefits that flow to, or are directly relevant to, staff such as the funding of a dedicated intelligence and security unit and year-on-year staffing profile increases.

Some of the other positive areas of improvement include the expansion of the Hume Health Centre, which is currently underway, and the inclusion of Winnunga Nimmityjah community health services as part of the delivery of health services at the AMC, the first time that has been done in Australia. I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that it has been challenging to put in place something like that when it has never been done before. But through the persistence of, frankly, everyone involved we have worked our way through that and delivered something that most people considered would be very difficult to achieve.

We have a new admissions process highlighted in the inspector's report. This is a sensitive time for new detainees and staff alike and it is positive to see the ongoing work to respond to both some of the issues raised in the Moss review and new best practice methods being implemented in more recent times. The new induction policy, similar to the admissions process, is vital to the wellbeing and safety of detainees, and the inspector makes comment on that.

In respect of the management unit, there were periods in the AMC's history when, due to population pressure and highly complex separation and segregation regimes, the management unit has been over-utilised. Through a combination of revisiting some of these issues, it is positive to see that it is now being far better utilised. In fact, generally there are very low numbers of people in it.

The inspector made some interesting observations around the dynamics of our jail. The report notes that more than 25 per cent of our detainees spend less than one year in prison. They note that in July 2019, 40 per cent of the total jail population was on remand. The report notes the incredible pressure that this churn places on the AMC. We need to deal with that. That is part of the job. But it is difficult in that sort of environment to create the right rehabilitative frameworks when you have people there for such a short periods of time, because it limits the ability to intervene. We need to find effective ways to intervene and to help people reset their life trajectories.

Let us be real about the situation that is in front of us. I particularly want to comment on the issue of women because this is an area that has been a real challenge for us. There has been a lot of commentary, including in this report and in other places. I have had significant discussions with members of the community—representative groups—about the decision to move the women from the cottages to the special care centre.

The move was based on a rapid increase in numbers that meant that there were more women than beds in the female part of the prison. We had women living in the management centre in temporary cells as well as in the women's accommodation. That was incredibly unsatisfactory and unacceptable, so it was an improvement to move them into the special care centre.

It is not an ideal outcome and I can let members know that I have been meeting with community organisations, former detainees, current detainees, as well as oversight bodies to discuss these issues because I take this matter very seriously. We are very focused on improving that. I have been to the jail myself to inspect some of the issues

that were raised with me and I have personally directed that a range of changes be made.

I will be returning to the jail shortly to follow up on whether those changes have been made. I will look at what we need to do next, as well as continuing to work closely with our oversight agencies and the coalface service providers who regularly are there and who are able to keep me updated, as well as the views I get from corrective services.

Let me conclude by simply saying this: there is a range of short-term projects that we need to keep working on but I also am not losing sight of the bigger picture goal of our building communities, not prisons agenda, because the best thing I can do for people touching the justice system is to make sure that we have the right supports in place that mean they actually do not end up in jail.

We have two prongs of our work here: one is to make the jail the best we can. The second is to minimise the number of people who have to go into custody, because that is better for them; it is better for the bottom line of this territory; and it makes our community safer, because if we break that cycle of offending we make our whole community safer. I will not lose sight of that big picture goal whilst working on that day-to-day job of improving the AMC.

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Social Inclusion and Equality, Minister for Tertiary Education, Minister for Tourism and Special Events and Minister for Trade, Industry and Investment) (5.55): I will speak very briefly to indicate my full support, and that of the government, for the Minister for Corrections and Justice Health. He enjoys the full support of his colleagues. Perhaps the same cannot be said of the Leader of the Opposition at the moment. We will not be supporting the motion.

MRS JONES (Murrumbidgee) (5.56), in reply: That was possibly the least enthusiastic defence of a minister that this place has ever seen. I have never seen such a weak defence of a minister. I suppose the Chief Minister feels that he has little choice but to go on with this minister in place. It does not surprise me that the government would back a useless minister in a job that he is not achieving in.

The minister admits here today that this facility has very significant problems. He says the problem is that we are not talking about the good news stories. Actually, we have talked about the good news stories; I have made a point of that ever since coming here. But the level of bad news stories that are coming to this place, that are coming into the public domain and that are coming to me privately leaves me gravely concerned about this facility and gravely concerned about what might happen even over the next 12 months.

People come to me and I say to them, “I am not the minister. I cannot fix this problem until the people of the ACT decide that the Liberals should be in government.” They say to me, “But to wait until October next year could be too long.” It is a tinderbox and there will be greater and worse things occurring.

That is why I brought this motion today, long before I had seen the report of the Inspector of Correctional Services. It is the view of others—not me; others—that the situation is so dire inside this prison that much worse things will occur. Let us all hope that is not the case. The constant mantra of this minister is “There are problems. We take them seriously. We are working on them.” No evidence has been produced that there is any intention to move the women out of the men’s side of the prison.

I described to a local Aboriginal elder the fact that our women are housed in a section of the men’s prison where they can hear them; where they walk past them with line of sight to them when they leave their unit; and where they get wolf-whistled. And, as has been reported to me, at least one woman has walked past her own rapist. He said to me, “That is shameful.”

That is shameful. The minister has no plan to fix that fundamental problem. Yet he comes in here and says that he thinks we can have fewer people offending. There is no plan to have fewer people offending. There is no action taken by the minister that would change the mental state of someone inside that facility to improve it or to change the health situation of someone inside that facility to improve it. If the minister wants to know why there are more people on methadone in this prison than elsewhere, it is his job to find that out, not mine. But the results speak for themselves. There are clearly problems with too many people being on the methadone program. The Canberra population is not so special that double the people entering the prison have an addiction to something that requires methadone.

The minister said in his speech that this facility needs modernising. It is 10 years old. This is not Her Majesty’s prison from some central Sydney location. This has been open for only 10 years. For the vast majority of the time it has been open, this minister has been in charge of it. It is a failed facility, and it needs a great deal of help.

I cannot say often enough how disgraceful it is that the women are now permanently housed on the men’s side of the prison.

In the minister’s response to my motion, he tried to say that the things I have stated in my motion are incorrect, but he totally failed to do so. When he discussed escapes from custody, he compared the numbers in the ACT to the numbers in New South Wales. On face value, everybody knows that there are many more prisoners in New South Wales than there are in the ACT. On top of that, he conveniently likes to leave out escapes from the hospital, because they do not fit someone’s definition of escapes. They fit the community’s definition of escapes, minister.

The minister has also shown his lack of understanding of this area because he does not actually know what a methadone exit program is. He has no idea what a drug exit program is. He is claiming that a methadone exit program is something you put people on after they leave the facility. A methadone exit program, a drug exit program, is something you do inside the facility to work with people one on one to achieve their aspirations for dependence on drugs or not. It is a slow medical process to let people deal with the underlying reasons why they are incarcerated and why they have drug dependency.

The Greens' response to drug dependency is always the same: "Why don't we free up access to it? That is going to solve the problem." When someone has an underlying anxiety condition and the response is to try to drown out their pain with drugs, this minister says, "The problem is not enough access to drugs." That is rubbish. That is wrong. I find that totally embarrassing. The minister for the prison does not know what a drug exit program is. That is the whole story in one.

I commend my motion to the chamber. I say again that I am disappointed that the government will not take proper responsibility for this failing facility.

Question put:

That the motion be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 8

Noes 11

Miss C Burch	Mr Milligan	Mr Barr	Ms Le Couteur
Mr Coe	Mr Parton	Ms Berry	Mr Ramsay
Mr Hanson		Ms J Burch	Mr Rattenbury
Mrs Jones		Ms Cheyne	Mr Steel
Mrs Kikkert		Mr Gentleman	Ms Stephen-Smith
Ms Lee		Mr Gupta	

Question resolved in the negative.

Adjournment

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

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Valedictory

MS LEE (Kurrajong) (6.06): Reflecting back on the year that was 2019, no-one would be in any doubt that the greatest event that happened to me personally was the birth of my first child. Mia unexpectedly arrived four weeks early, but we are very fortunate that, despite surprising us preterm, Mia was and is healthy, happy and thriving. A big shout-out to my amazing team of healthcare professionals. I faced a number of medical issues and risks before and throughout my pregnancy, and I thank them for their tremendous care and support.

Madam Speaker, I acknowledge my hardworking team—Sue, Josh and Anton—because without them there is no Team Elizabeth Lee. The hours they clock up, the effort they put in and the heart they give to everything we do is a great credit to their work ethic, their dedication, and their belief that what we are doing is making a difference to the people of the ACT.

I acknowledge my party room colleagues and their staff. We are all focused on bringing about a Canberra Liberals government next year, and we have the best team to make that happen.

Joining that team is an amazing group of new candidates who are being preselected this week. I cannot wait to have them join us on the campaign trail. It is this team that will be pounding the pavement next year, spreading the message about so much that the Canberra Liberals will deliver for Canberra, so much more we will be announcing next year.

We are already delivering from opposition. I was proud to announce our commitment to installing flashing lights and crossing supervisors at every school that needed them. I was proud to announce our world-class language education plan. I was proud to shine a light on the government's failings in looking after our CALD community in accessing disability services. I was proud to announce a funding commitment for the catchment groups for Landcare ACT. I was proud to confirm the Canberra Liberals' ongoing commitment to 100 per cent renewable electricity into the future, and securing this by cementing into legislation the capacity to deliver on this promise for at least the next 10 years. I was proud to take on the job of chair of the integrity commission committee and see it go from an election promise to opening its doors this weekend. I was also proud to take it to the government in terms of the bullying and violence that we have seen in our schools. And of course, I was proud to be the local member that the people of Kurrajong go to with their local issues: everything from maintenance to our local shops and poor planning decisions in my electorate.

Madam Speaker, I acknowledge all members in this place and their staff. As much as we trade barbs across the table, we are all here to serve the people of the Australian Capital Territory. The privileged role that we have is one that is shared across political parties. To the entire OLA staff, thank you for your support, advice and guidance.

Last year I finished my valedictory by thanking the people of Kurrajong; it was, it is and it will always be about them. This year is no exception; it is them that I serve. But today I finish with two final messages.

Anyone who has had any dealings with my office will be aware that Josh has been my rock. He is always by my side, and goes above and beyond the call of duty. Josh will finish working full-time in my office next month. I know that it will not be just me who will miss his bow ties and three-piece suits; seemingly never-ending knowledge of all things parliamentary procedure and High Court judges; show tune singing, quoting *Keating!*, the musical; lunchtime trivia; and, of course, cupcakes. Josh, you have grown in so many ways during the past three years. I know that you will continue to spread your professional wings. Even though you are not going to be gracing these corridors every day, you will always be a part of Team Elizabeth Lee.

Finally, Madam Speaker, I go to my family: my parents, who have now become the most doting grandparents in the world; my sisters, who have, without fail, been my greatest supporters; and my partner, Nathan, who puts up with my crazy life. To my daughter, Mia, you have brought a joy to our lives that we never thought possible.

Juggling my duty to serve the people of the ACT and my duty as a mum is a challenge. I know that it has not been easy being dragged along to all corners of Kurrajong as I have tried to discharge both duties. My hope for you is that you will not resent this start to your life but grow to learn that each and every one of us will contribute to our community in our own way: mine is to serve the people of Kurrajong, and one day you will find yours.

Veterans Advisory Council Valedictory

MR RAMSAY (Ginninderra—Attorney-General, Minister for the Arts, Creative Industries and Cultural Events, Minister for Building Quality Improvement, Minister for Business and Regulatory Services and Minister for Seniors and Veterans) (6.11): I am honoured to rise today to reflect on the achievements of the ACT Veterans Advisory Council as the current term of the council has come to an end and we welcome the new ministerial advisory council for veterans and their families.

I have been greatly privileged to work with and to seek the advice of such highly professional, engaged and committed individuals. Throughout their term over the past two years they have been a highly active advisory body. They have advocated on a wide range of issues affecting the lives of veterans and provided advice on issues to improve life outcomes for veterans. Their service and their advice to me as Minister for Seniors and Veterans has been invaluable, tailoring their advice to ensure that we consider not only the issues affecting veterans of all ages, but how those issues affect their families.

They have engaged personally with members of veterans organisations and the community across the ACT, as well interstate, to ensure that what they have provided me with is reflective of the needs of the community, is grounded in a high level of understanding of issues and would make a real impact on the lives of veterans here in the ACT.

They have been instrumental in the creation of the ACT Remembrance Day ceremony at the Arboretum. That day acknowledged and celebrated local veterans while solemnly remembering those who had given their life in service for our country.

Their consultation and advice have formed the basis of a large part of the ACT government's submission to the Senate inquiry into defence transition. Their experience and their connections across the veterans community and the ACT have allowed the government to provide an extensive submission with a large number of tangible recommendations for that committee to consider.

The council also provided advice that led to the creation of Veterans Day at Floriade, a growing event which saw its second year this year. These are just a few examples of the many achievements of this council. They have been one of the most energised and connected councils that I have had the pleasure of working with in my role across a number of portfolios. They have been in regular communication with the directorate and my office. They have provided tangible and actionable outcomes.

I would like to formally acknowledge the members of the council in the Assembly: Brigadier Alison Creagh CFC, who is the chair; Mr Gerard Pratt, the deputy chair; Major General Dave Chalmers AO CSC; Mr Chad Hodgins; Ms Pat McCabe OAM; Flying Officer Shaun McGill; Ms Suzanne McGuinness-Butler; Mr Rob Marshall; Mr David Munro; Squadron Leader Gary Oakley OAM; Dr Kathryn Spurling; and Ms Virginia Hayward.

I want to provide heartfelt thanks from myself, my office and the ACT government to each member. Our community is grateful for their devoted and selfless service to our country and to other veterans and their families. They have made a measurable impact on the lives of many veterans in Canberra.

I want to place on record my anticipatory thanks to the incoming members of the new-look advisory council, and veterans and their families, for the work that they will be continuing to do over the coming years. They are picking up the baton after a very strong piece of work from the previous council, but I have no doubt that they will continue that work.

Finally, I wish to place on record my thanks to the many people who have supported the work of me and this government over the past 12 months: my staff; the wonderful DLOs across the various directorates, whose work is often unsung and underpraised, but who often do the work to keep this government going in many ways; and the officials across the range of directorates that I have the privilege of working with. I thank them for their strong work and their dedication to the people of Canberra and making Canberra the great place that it is and can continue to be. I wish them and all the people of Canberra a very good Christmas.

Alexander Maconochie Centre—federal detainee

MRS JONES (Murrumbidgee) (6.15): I rise today to speak about Robert Macklin's *City News* article, "Who is Canberra's mysterious secret prisoner?" Having read this concerning article I wrote immediately to the minister for corrections seeking a briefing. It is an interesting new understanding that we have federally convicted inmates here as we do not have any federal prisons. But it has also become clear that the minister is not regularly briefed on how many federal inmates we have and under what conditions and circumstances those inmates are held. This should change.

For some reason the inmate was denied a visit from a journalist, Mr Macklin, when he asked for one. I have been informed that that is due to conditions that were put on the time he was to serve in the facility. As a result of the request to meet with Mr Macklin, his brother's house and his cell were both raided in, it is my understanding, the search for the manuscript of a book he was writing.

This matter concerns me much more than him being denied a meeting with a journalist; the matter I am exercised about is that the inmate wrote a manuscript and, according to him, after requesting to have this meeting he was discouraged in some way from continuing to write his manuscript. It is my understanding that the manuscript had nothing to do with his offending and that it was a work of fiction.

I sought and was given a briefing on Monday about the matter and I have asked the department some questions to come back to me on regarding the treatment of this person with regard to his freedom to pursue the writing of what I have been assured is a work of fiction and whether he was discouraged from this undertaking.

That people convicted under federal law are in our prison is normal because we do not have federally run prisons in Australia. But that the minister did not know and was not briefed on his existence is not good enough. Following my briefing I am waiting on further information on precisely what advice was given to this inmate by the general manager of the AMC about his pursuing this hobby, this pastime or academic pursuit in writing a book.

Given the many issues in the AMC—the dangerous levels of boredom, the complete lack of routine and a proper rewards and incentive program, and the existence of regular lock-ins—I hope he was not discouraged from pursuing something to do while stuck in his cell for hours every day. I will update the chamber when I find out more.

Hong Kong district council elections

MRS DUNNE (Ginninderra) (6.19): Very late the Sunday before last I received the following message from a prominent human rights advocate in London:

Is there any chance that you might be willing to join a delegation of Parliamentarians and other dignitaries to go to Hong Kong to monitor the district council elections ...

As a self-confessed electoral nerd, the veteran of six personal election campaigns and two electoral reform campaigns, and trusting completely my inviter, it took less than five minutes' discussion with my husband before I said yes. Fast forward six days and I joined 18 others from Canada, the UK, Malaysia, the US, Slovakia, Lithuania, Japan, Sweden and Denmark at the beginning of the independent electoral observation mission organised by Fight for Freedom—Stand with Hong Kong and Hong Kong Story.

Before we set out for the polling places there was a whirlwind of information-gathering from academics, doctors, journalists, businessmen and students; Hongkongers who are passionate about their city and their democratic future.

At previous district council elections—elections for purely advisory bodies at a municipal level—not all seats were contested and the turnout was around 40 per cent. On Sunday every electorate was contested and the turnout was nearly three million people, or 71 per cent. The polls opened at 7 am and the day was marked by huge queues everywhere. After the polls closed at 10.30, people turned out in their thousands to observe the counting from public galleries in polling places across the city. There was a high police presence, but no clashes between police and citizens. As the *South China Morning Post* put it, the protesters took the day off to cast their votes.

The mission visited polling places, spoke to electoral officials, candidates and average Hongkongers and observed the counting. In transit we were able to see the devastation caused to parts of Hong Kong city by months of protest and escalating violence: the broken infrastructure, the deserted campus of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, the litter, the piles of bricks, the makeshift barriers of cafeteria chairs, the graffiti, the damage caused by protesters' Molotov cocktails, and the more than 10,000 tear gas canisters launched by the police.

The mission's overall assessment was:

The election was smooth-running, peaceful and orderly, notwithstanding the current socio-political climate.

The mission made specific recommendations to uphold the freedom of speech, assess the feasibility for an independent electoral body, protect candidates, review and clarify the role of observers, regulate the discretionary powers of officers presiding over polling stations, minimise the waiting and queuing time by increasing the number of polling stations, and excluding police from involvement in the mechanics of electoral processes.

The mission noted the disqualification of Mr Joshua Wong, which appeared to be an act of political censorship. It also noted that candidates from both sides were assaulted. We witnessed that uniformed and highly armed police were present inside some polling booths. Some of us witnessed intimidatory practices, like people using GoPros to monitor people's activities, and the passing out of gifts to voters. We received many reports of such activity and evidence of roll-tampering.

The result of the election was the routing of the pro-Beijing establishment candidates such as Junius Ho, who had called protesters cockroaches and called on police to crush them. It was a landslide victory to the pro-democracy candidates, including people like Jimmy Sham, who organised the million-strong peaceful march in June; Lucifer Siu, who capitalised on his reputation as a protester; and Cathy Yau, who quit the Hong Kong police force to stand with Hongkongers.

The election for not very powerful positions has been a powerful statement by Hongkongers that they want democracy. Despite the rhetoric of the PRC and PRC-supported government, they strongly supported the protest. Jimmy Sham, who was recently beaten up—and I saw his scars on Sunday—told the media on Monday morning that the election was a de facto referendum. It leaves Hong Kong at a crossroads.

Will Hongkongers and the protest movement take the opportunity to negotiate the delivery of their five demands? Will the Chief Executive, Carrie Lam, hear the strong voice of Hongkongers, or will this victory be squandered? I believe Hong Kong and the world cannot afford for this to happen.

International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women

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) (6.24): Monday was the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, marking the commencement of 16 days of activism to end gender-based violence.

Violence against women is at epidemic levels. On average, one woman a week is killed in Australia by an intimate partner. Two in five assaults recorded by the ACT police relate to domestic and family violence. Women are dying, and if there is one thing that feminism has taught us, it is that the personal is the political. The experiences of women in their homes is a political issue. The personal stories of struggle that women have to tell us need to be recognised as political stories. Ending violence against women requires partnerships across government sectors and organisations, both nationally and locally. Some men are scared that women will laugh at them. Women are scared that violent men will kill them.

Before I hear the question, “What about the men?”, let us be clear. I am talking about men who use violence, not all men. Any violence is bad. It is as simple as that. But the facts are that 95 per cent of violence in Australia, including that against other men, is perpetrated by men.

Gender-based violence is a term that recognises how women are disproportionately affected by violence in ways fuelled by sexist attitudes. These attitudes begin at a cultural level. An example of this culture is the acceptance of sexist jokes and sexist advertising. To address gender-based violence, we need to change this culture because it is this culture of sexism that makes some men think it is okay to disrespect women.

Domestic and family violence disrupts a woman’s ability to stay employed. Domestic and family violence is a workplace issue. Women have the right to be safe at work. The newly adopted International Labour Organisation convention calls on governments, organisations and employers to address the gendered nature of violence and harassment at work. There need to be measures in place to address this, including family and domestic violence leave, flexible work arrangements and the inclusion of domestic violence in workplace risk assessment.

The ACT has shown great leadership as the first state or territory to provide 20 days of paid domestic and family violence leave, in addition to personal leave, for ACT public servants. This leave should be granted for all women workers across the country.

As part of our COAG commitment to the fourth action plan under the national plan to reduce violence against women and their children, the ACT government is releasing its local implementation plan. I would like to highlight the ACT government’s domestic and family violence training strategy, which began this year with delivery across the ACT public service. This strategy recognises that the workplace is an important setting for preventing and responding to domestic and family violence. This training will be offered to all MLAs in this place and their staff.

The ACT government has made it clear that addressing domestic and family violence needs to be a whole-of-community response. There is so much work to do to prevent

the deaths of women in our community. I am committed to creating a community that will not be silent about gender-based violence and that will not ever think that it is okay to disrespect women.

Valedictory

MRS KIKKERT (Ginninderra) (6.27): I could go back and reminisce about this year. Instead I think it is more important to focus first on where we will be in the next year. Whether it will be cooking up a new policy, detailed evaluation of a bill or a motion, creating new music, a meal or excelling in sport, all of us must make sure the words “passion”, “service” and “success” are associated with what we do.

We must concentrate on enhancing our work in 2020 and setting great examples for those around us, in our family, our communities, our colleagues and our friends. We must be willing to work diligently and have a keen understanding of the world we live in, whether that means you are a mother and your world is your baby, or whether your world consists of your work, studies and hobbies. Whatever it is, make 2020 your best year yet. Ralph Waldo Emerson once said, “Do not go where the path may lead; go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.” Let us leave a trail others will be proud to follow.

It is no surprise that my trail will be with the Liberals winning the 2020 ACT election. We will be the new government of 2020, with new policies, new faces and a new Chief Minister. We will make impressions that demonstrate we never gave up on the Liberals winning in 2020, after being in opposition for years. Excellence is never an accident; it is the result of hard work. It may have taken us years of growing and learning; now we are maturing into leading Canberra and securing a Liberal win in 2020.

My trail going forward cannot be complete without the trail I have been walking on in the past year with my amazing, supportive family, and my incredible, talented staff: Brett, Sylvia and Joseph. Each, in their own wisdom and skill, have provided wonderful work and support, and I extend my heartfelt gratitude to them.

This year has also been fantastic because of the amazing people I have met in my electorate. I have learnt a lot from working with them and they have been a highlight of my year here in the Assembly. They have also reminded me on a daily basis of why I am in this role as their representative. Another thing I have learnt is that I have spent more and more time on social media than I ever have in my life, but it is a wonderful tool to connect with our constituents.

As the Christmas season is around the corner, may we always remember the true spirit of Christmas and give when we can, serve where we are able to serve and continue to uplift and strengthen others. As the new year, 2020, rolls in, may we continue to lead such a life of making other people’s lives better and happy.

Valedictory

Ms Bid Williams—tribute

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Children, Youth and Families, Minister for Health and

Minister for Urban Renewal) (6.30): At this time of year we take the time to reflect on the year and thank those who have supported us in our roles in this place. I want to start by acknowledging Josh, from Ms Lee's office. Josh has accompanied and represented Ms Lee at so many Kurrajong events. Unfailingly polite, helpful and genuinely interested in the wellbeing of the Kurrajong community, Josh will indeed be missed by me and by many Kurrajong residents.

I thank my own staff and the officials who have supported me in my ministerial roles. With respect to those in my former portfolios of disability, employment and workplace safety and procurement and government services, I learned so much in these portfolios, and I thank the officials and stakeholders who continue to contribute so much to our community, particularly those who work behind the scenes in areas like government services. They do not get a lot of publicity but their work is absolutely critical to the ongoing work of the ACT government.

With respect to the office for disability, I particularly want to thank the officials who helped to deliver the disability justice strategy, which I consider to be one of my biggest achievements as a minister, and certainly the biggest achievement of this year for me.

To the Health officials who have helped me to get my head around this large and complex portfolio, I say thank you, and I look forward to continuing our work together, as I do with the officials and stakeholders in the portfolios of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs, children, youth and families, and urban renewal. I thank you all.

To the frontline staff in Health and children, youth and families who serve our community 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year, I say thank you, particularly for the work you will do over the Christmas-New Year period, when so many of us are taking the opportunity to enjoy time with family and friends. To all the frontline workers across the ACT public sector, I say thank you for the work that you do every day.

In my office I want to thank the department liaison officers—currently, Ella, Alex and Chadia—all the acting DLOs who have provided assistance during periods of change, the former DLOs, and particularly Rowena, who provided a lot of support and put up with a lot of missed deadlines in her support of me in the employment and workplace safety and government services and procurement portfolios.

In my office I want to thank Jonny Goodwin, my office manager, who is the glue who keeps our office together. I have had compliments from other offices on Jonny's fantastic work. I thank my advisers—Tim, Ash and Ben—and my media adviser, Caitlin.

I want to thank my chief of staff, Mel James, who will finish up in my office at the end of this week. I have been incredibly fortunate to have Mel work for me for the past two years. She has been a strength, both professionally and personally, in my office. We worked together during some difficult times and some challenging spaces from both a policy point of view and in this place and when we faced personal

challenges, Mel has been an absolute rock in my office: her sense of humour, her capacity to both be organised and also to be so flexible, and to get things done with incredible good humour and an incredible understanding of how to work with other people. I cannot thank Mel enough for the contribution that she has made in my office, and I look forward to working with her in her new role in the future.

Tonight I also want to spend some time reflecting on the contribution made by someone whose contribution across many years supported many other people than me, but who also impacted on my life. Bid Williams died peacefully at her farm, surrounded by family, on Friday, 15 October, aged 93 years. Bid was a remarkable woman who gave so much to change the lives of so many and did it with humility, kindness, determination and a quiet sense of humour.

In the 1970s Bid discovered a profound joy in helping others share her love of horses, after being approached by a therapist at the Canberra Hospital to see if a few children with disabilities would be able to go out to Bid's farm to have some pony rides. And Pegasus was born.

Pegasus has remembered Bid as a genuinely kind and caring person, who will be forever remembered and admired for her compassionate efforts, pioneering spirit and remarkable contribution to the Pegasus family for the local community and those living with disabilities. Bid will be deeply missed, but her legacy will live on through the continued work of Pegasus and the many people whose lives she touched. Vale Bid.

Valedictory

MR MILLIGAN (Yerrabi) (6.36): It does seem to be a little bit odd to be saying goodbye at this time of the year; nonetheless it is a good time to reflect on the 12 months that have passed, as a local member for Yerrabi, as the shadow minister for Indigenous affairs and sport and recreation, and as part of the Canberra Liberals team.

As a local member for Yerrabi, I feel proud of the advocacy and the work I have done to stand up for small businesses and to shine a light on the disruption and chaos that the light rail caused them. This journey is not over, and I will be keeping a close eye on the 12-month report to ensure that local businesses are given the opportunity to provide their feedback into this review.

I am also happy that after many campaigns, petitions and letters, parking will be provided at Palmerston shops. This will be of real benefit to local businesses, parents and residents in the nearby area. I am also grateful for the patience and hard work of the Hall community in pushing forward with their plans to build their bike track.

In terms of my two shadow portfolios, it certainly has been a big year, a year of consolidation in some ways. Having spent my initial time in the Assembly listening and learning, this year was about policymaking.

In March the Canberra Liberals launched our Indigenous affairs policy. This booklet was, and still is, revolutionary in terms of presenting a vision and outlining

18 different policy initiatives across a range of areas. It was really pleasing to receive such positive feedback from the media, community leaders and the community, not to mention former Chief Minister Jon Stanhope, who, as we all know, has a particular passion for Indigenous affairs.

This positivity has continued with the recent release of our sport and recreation policy booklet, “Find your game”. “Find your game” is a coordinated approach to provide more opportunities to increase grassroots participation and grow sport and recreation in the ACT. It outlines a strategic framework and direction to prioritise investment over the next 10 years. This document also contains over 30 initiatives across areas, including innovation, community facilities, the great outdoors, young people, a helping hand, women and diversity.

The strategic framework provides certainty and clear priorities to grow participation, increase sports tourism, make the most of our natural environment and turn Canberra into the amateur sporting capital of Australia. Growing home-grown talent to feed into elite teams and competitions is something that I am particularly passionate about.

It has been a big year, an exciting year and a very positive year for the Canberra Liberals. Our leader, Alistair Coe, has committed to the ACT that we will freeze residential rates. We know that this will make a huge difference to households that are struggling with cost-of-living pressures.

Before I conclude I would like also to offer my thanks to everyone in this building who works so hard to support the operation of the Assembly—the attendants, the committee team, the library, the OLA, HR and finance crew. Your work and commitment are very much appreciated.

My office staff have been superb, guiding me through all of my Assembly, shadow portfolios and electorate duties. My senior adviser, Cath Woodward, has been a real tiger in assisting me with my Assembly duties, with great research and analytical skills in policy development and all-round team building. Ewan Brown has provided wise counsel and valuable policy input, and has helped to address the age balance in our office. Bella Gilhooly has brought added expertise to our communications and has been a dedicated performer on all electorate-related matters within the electorate and the Assembly.

I also want to thank my family, my wife, Katrina, and my son, for their support. I thank my team of volunteers and the broader Canberra Liberals family. None of us would be in this place without their efforts.

In conclusion, I would like to wish everyone in this place a merry Christmas and a safe new year. I certainly look forward to what 2020 will bring for all of us next year.

Valedictory

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra) (6.40): It is a privilege to serve another year as a member for Ginninderra; it has been a huge year where every day is full and varied. I am so lucky to meet so many people and to be trusted with their stories, people like

Julie-Ann Finney, who is calling for a royal commission into veteran suicide and not letting her son's story be forgotten; those seeking fertility preservation; those who simply wish to enhance and improve their communities, like my friends in Scullin and Florey; and so many in between. To all, it is a privilege to work with you, support you, advocate for you, and get answers and resolutions for you.

Late this year I was honoured to be asked by the Chief Minister to serve as his special secretary with a focus on championing the issues for Canberrans where they are not getting a fair go. I am proud of the work we have done so far with lemon laws and restarting our campaign on territory rights. Trust me, there is more to come in all of these spaces.

It is important for me to note that this time last year I was remarking on grieving families as we tried to uncover just what had gone wrong at Norwood crematorium for them to have lost children's ashes. What we learned this year is that Norwood's processes and procedures were not good enough. While our efforts resulted in two of the children's ashes being found, it remains my biggest personal regret this year that Timothy Mol's ashes remains missing.

I am proud of the work that we have done in this place across committees, especially the select committees on end of life choices and fuel prices, where we worked together collegiately across party lines, exemplifying the very best of what a parliament can be. Of course one of my personal highlights is getting Mr Parton to stop clicking his pen incessantly.

As politicians, a lot of attention is placed on who we are and what we do. But as is well known among us, who we are and what we do is enabled by a huge number of people who support and drive us and believe in us.

To my staff, I cannot thank you enough. This year we farewelled Minuri Dharmasena and Annika Rees, and we wish them very well in their future endeavours. I have been very pleased to continue to be supported by dynamos Emma Kelly, Nicholas Argy and Jemma Cavanagh. This team does an extraordinary amount of work just with our day to day correspondence let alone the number of issues we have championed. I thank them for their responsiveness—or at least appeasement—when I walk into the door and say, “Hey, guys, I have an idea.”

I am so lucky to have a team who are altogether thoughtful, patient, considerate, kind, diligent and determined. The amount of work we produce and the number of people we help each day continues to astound me, and these three are the humble stars of the show.

I thank my Labor colleagues for their ongoing support, guidance and friendship. There is no better team as we march into 2020. I am proud to be by your side as we put our case forward in the election.

I continue to think that everyone in this place is, surprisingly, pretty sufferable. As I touched on before, we are at our best when we are collegiate. I think of some—not all—of those across the chamber somewhat fondly, and this year I will single out

Mrs Dunne, whom I have had to work with very closely. For the most part it has genuinely been a pleasure.

My sincere thanks go to all the OLA staff, who I am sure I must exasperate on an almost daily basis but they never let on. My particular thanks go to the secretaries of all the committees I am on and have been on. I also want to thank all the public servants, from the rangers to the directors-general and ministers' office staff and DLOs. They work so incredibly hard, they care, and they make this territory the extraordinary place it is.

Finally, thank you to my volunteers, friends and my family who continue to believe in me but also keep me pretty grounded. I cannot do this without you, and every day I am reminded how lucky I am to have such a team of supporters around me.

Most of all, thank you to my Ginninderra constituents who continue to put their faith in me. It is their heart that creates our beautiful Belconnen community and it is their heart that fuels my drive. I promise to continue to giving my all in serving them. Merry Christmas.

Valedictory

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (6.45): I rise to officially close the parliamentary year for the Parton office for 2019, notwithstanding the fact that we still have a sitting day to go and we are really only halfway through November, but whatever. I promise I will be short.

I want to say thanks to my three staff for this year: the amazing Mr Lovett who is off traipsing around the country with his beast of a ute and his gorgeous other half, Gail. I know I am an old man, but I know Mr Gentleman will be familiar with Lucky Starr's hit song from the late 60s *I've Been Everywhere*, and it could well have been written about Mr Lovett. During his trip he managed to have coffee with my mother in York in Western Australia. The last I heard of him he had been kicked out of a pub somewhere on the Great Ocean Road in Victoria. He has been the backbone of my office since I was elected. We have missed him dearly and he is joining us again mid-December.

Thanks to Brad Clarke, who has taken up most of the load and who continues to provide outstanding advice and expertise on many matters, including fundraising. The Johnny-come-lately of our office, Patrick Pentony, is course hoping to be preselected by the party to run in Kurrajong tomorrow night. It has been a joy to have Paddy around for a short stint.

I have to say that I really enjoyed working in radio, but I am here to tell you, Madam Speaker, that this is the best job I have ever had. It may seem odd for me to reflect on this in this particular week, but one of the reasons it is the best job I have ever had is the closeness of the Liberal team. Sure, as has been evidenced very recently, we do not always agree on everything absolutely, but I can very easily describe members of the parliamentary team as among my closest friends. We get along really well. Even

in the context of this week we have been able to thrash things out with robust honesty and to come to agreement and move on.

I was a little surprised that the government did not drop some more leadership gags during question time. But I can guarantee that whichever jokes they dropped, we had probably already dropped them on ourselves. That is just how we roll; we just do not take ourselves all that seriously. We take very seriously the job in front of us in regards to winning the election in 2020, and thanks to all of my Liberal colleagues for being mates of mine; I really appreciate it.

Big thanks to all the staffers on the Liberal floor and the Assembly staff of all levels and all sections for all your assistance. As we get closer to Christmas it is also timely for me to thank my genuine friends on the other side. Your ability to put ideological and policy differences at arms-length and to engage with me simply as a colleague is one of the things that keeps me sane.

I am hesitant to thank all of the journalists because then everyone will think I am the leak! But well done for your work. Thanks to my wife, Luisa, and all of our teenagers and just out of teens for putting up with my somewhat unstructured schedules.

Most importantly, thanks to every single Tuggeranong resident who voted for me in 2016. I will keep on fighting for you in this next 11 months, and hopefully we will find ourselves in a position to deliver much more for you in the spring of 2020. So see you next year.

Valedictory

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Manager of Government Business, Minister for Advanced Technology and Space Industries, Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Minister for Planning and Land Management and Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (6.49): I thank everybody for their good wishes tonight. Madam Speaker, it is that time of year when we head into the holiday festive season and have many celebrations across our diverse and multicultural society. It is a time to simply relax for some people.

To our hardworking, smart and committed public service, thank you. We have the best public servants in the country. They have helped shape a vibrant and inclusive Canberra while delivering the services we need.

To those Canberrans who work for the conservative federal government that often belittles your work, my wish this festive season is for you to change, for you to have a government much more like ours.

Madam Speaker, I want to especially thank our frontline public servants who work so hard, particularly across this period. To everyone within the directorates and agencies that so ably help me—CMTEDD, EPSDD, JACS, ESA, EPA, the Parliamentary Counsel's Office and ACT Policing—thank you, and I wish you and your families a safe, enjoyable and fun-filled holiday period.

I also want to thank everyone who works in this building. We would not be able to make our city the wonderful place it is without you. To the chamber staff, the Clerk, our attendants, committee staff and everybody else, thank you, and I hope you have a well-deserved break.

To my hardworking staff, the stars of the show—Baz, Louise, Alicia, James, Tash, Saff, Ellen, who has just zipped off on a four-week holiday, and Harley; and the DLOs, Tracey, Erica, Kelly, Kim and Victor—thank you for all of the effort that you have put in for us over these past couple of years.

And thank you to our wonderful south siders, particularly our fellow Tuggers residents. Happy festive season. I look forward to seeing you around many celebrations that will happen around our suburbs. Like fellow south siders, I love the open spaces and our views of the Brindabellas. Madam Speaker, we live in a wonderful part of Canberra and I look forward to working closely with you over the next year to make Tuggeranong an even better place to be.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 6.51 pm.