



Debates

WEEKLY HANSARD

Legislative Assembly for the ACT

NINTH ASSEMBLY

11 FEBRUARY 2020

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Tuesday, 11 February 2020

Standing orders—suspension.....	1
Bushfire and storm season (Motion of thanks).....	1
Visitors.....	17
Bushfire and storm season	17
Questions without notice:	
Transport Canberra—network 19	35
Crime—sexual assault	36
Transport Canberra—network 19	36
Transport Canberra—network 19	37
Bushfires—economic impact	39
Transport Canberra—network 19	41
Transport Canberra—network 19	43
Transport Canberra—network 19	44
Bushfires—preparedness	45
Transport Canberra—network 19	47
Transport—driver education.....	48
Transport—driver education.....	49
Transport—driver education.....	50
Transport Canberra—network 19	50
Bushfires—government support.....	51
Bushfire and storm season	53
Government priorities 2020 (Ministerial statement).....	63
Petitions:	
Newborn screening—petition 21-19	68
Newborn screening—petition 1-20	68
Wanniassa bus routes—petition 27-19 (Ministerial response).....	69
Planning—Coombs peninsula—petition 31-19 (Ministerial response).....	70
Motion to take note of petitions	72
Newborn screening—petitions 21-19 and 1-20	72
Papers.....	74
Inquest into the death of Lauren Maree Johnstone—coroner’s report and government response.....	79
Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee.....	80
Planning and Development Act 2007—variation No 367 to the Territory Plan.....	81
Planning and Development Act 2007—variation No 360 to the Territory Plan.....	83
Planning and Development Act 2007—variation No 355 to the Territory Plan.....	86
Education, Employment and Youth Affairs—Standing Committee.....	88
Peaceful protest (Matter of public importance)	88
Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee.....	97
Education, Employment and Youth Affairs—Standing Committee.....	98
Education, Employment and Youth Affairs—Standing Committee.....	98
Environment and Transport and City Services—Standing Committee	99
Environment and Transport and City Services—Standing Committee	99
Environment and Transport and City Services—Standing Committee	100
Environment and Transport and City Services—Standing Committee	101
Planning and Urban Renewal—Standing Committee.....	102

Adjournment:

Canberra— <i>Our Bush Capital</i>	103
Gungahlin sports and recreation fair	105
Work safety—fatal accidents.....	107
Transport—Liberal Party policy.....	107
Sophia Hamblin Wang—tribute	108
Health—nurse graduates.....	109
World Cancer Day	109

Tuesday, 11 February 2020

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.

Standing orders—suspension

Motion (by **Mr Gentleman**) agreed to, with the concurrence of an absolute majority:

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Chief Minister moving a motion relating to the bushfire and storm season forthwith and to set the order of business for today, Tuesday, 11 February 2020, as:

Executive business motion relating to the bushfire and storm season

Ministerial statements

Presentation of petitions

Questions without notice

Ministerial statements

Presentation of papers

Matter of public importance

Notices and orders of the day;

provided that, at 2 pm, the Speaker shall interrupt the business before the Assembly in order that questions without notice shall be called on; and

- (a) if a vote is in progress at the time fixed for interruption, that vote, and any vote consequent upon that vote, shall be completed and the result announced; and
- (b) the Speaker shall fix a later hour for the resumption of the debate on any business under discussion and not disposed of at the time of interruption.

Bushfire and storm season

Motion of thanks

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) (10.02): I move:

That this Assembly:

- (1) notes the current unprecedented bushfire season across the Australian Capital Territory and the rest of Australia;
- (2) thanks the Emergency Services Agency (comprising ACT Fire & Rescue, ACT Rural Fire Service, ACT State Emergency Service, ACT Ambulance Service and Support Staff), Parks and Conservation Service, volunteers,

community groups who assisted at evacuation centres, ACT Policing and public servants across the ACT Government who have responded to storms and bushfires, working tirelessly to keep the Territory safe;

- (3) recognises the significant efforts of the ACT Rural Fire Service and the ACT Fire & Rescue in supporting their interstate colleagues in fighting bushfires since September 2019;
- (4) acknowledges the support provided by the Australian Defence Force and the New Zealand Defence Force to the Territory and thanks their personnel for helping protect the ACT and surrounding region;
- (5) thanks the other States and Territories and international partners for their support in helping respond to bushfires and storms that have occurred so far;
- (6) recognises the significant social and economic impact to both Canberra and the surrounding region, and encourages Canberrans to continue to support local communities, businesses and tourism operators;
- (7) acknowledges that the bushfire and storm season is ongoing and expresses its gratitude to all those that are continuing to keep our Territory safe; and
- (8) further notes that the ACT Government will appropriately recognise, at the conclusion of this year's bushfire and storm season, the service of all those that have helped protect the ACT.

We are only six weeks into 2020, but already it has been an extraordinary and incredibly difficult year for Canberra and our region. 2020 began with our city shrouded in a thick haze of smoke. We shared the pain with our South Coast friends and family as they lost properties, treasured possessions, livelihoods and, worst of all, loved ones. I am sure many Canberrans would have lived through the terror of the New Year's Eve fires on the South Coast, hunkered down on beaches, watching the flames as they rolled through their beloved coastal towns.

In the aftermath our city became a safe haven for people escaping these fires and the fires burning to our west. The relief centre at Dickson College supported hundreds of people over a two-week period. Volunteers from organisations such as the Red Cross, Anglicare and the Salvation Army were there providing comfort, a cup of tea and accommodation options for those who needed it, and we thank them for all of that work.

A few weeks later, our city faced a devastating hailstorm that damaged homes and property and tens of thousands of vehicles. There are still many families who will be impacted by this storm for months to come.

We then experienced bushfires within our borders. Both the Beard fire and the Orroral Valley fire threatened properties and lives, and have left a trail of destruction behind them. The weekend of 1 and 2 February presented the biggest bushfire risk to the territory since the 2003 fires. The combination of extreme heat, strong winds and a large fire burning in the Namadgi National Park led to the declaration of a state of emergency for the territory. It was a declaration that was not taken lightly, but it was a powerful message to the community about the threat that we faced.

Through a combination of good fortune and the tireless work of our emergency service agencies responding to the bushfire risk, Canberra suburbs were spared evacuation. Just over two days ago, the state of alert was lifted in the territory for the first time since 2 January, but we do remind everyone that the bushfire season is not over yet.

The Beard fire, which threatened residents in Oaks Estate, burnt through hundreds of hectares. The Orroral Valley fire has now burnt through over 86,000 hectares of the territory, and over 80 per cent of Namadgi National Park. It is one of the biggest ecological disasters in our territory's history.

As a community, we have had a disrupted and difficult time over this summer, having to keep children inside and away from playgrounds and parks, with thousands and thousands of families having to cancel much-anticipated holidays, and facing the trauma every night on our televisions. Residents in Oaks Estate, Tharwa and the Lanyon Valley in particular, but in all of Canberra's southern suburbs, have seen the light of the fires burning, often only hundreds of metres from their homes. They have experienced sleepless nights and feared for their homes.

But from this difficult time there are many stories of Canberrans who stood up when our city and our surrounding region needed them most. We are very fortunate to have an outstanding team of teams at the Emergency Services Agency. This includes the ACT Rural Fire Service, ACT Fire & Rescue, ACT State Emergency Services, ACT Ambulance Service, and the ESA and ACT Policing teams supporting their work.

They worked 24 hours a day, seven days a week, monitoring and responding to the fires, and responding to a record number of calls from Canberra households damaged by the hailstorm. They also continued their daily duties, responding to incidents across the territory. We cannot thank them enough for this effort to keep our city and our territory safe. These men and women, both paid and volunteers, make daily sacrifices as part of their work; they do it with good grace, and, I can attest, with good humour.

Commissioner Whelan and her leadership team deserve all of the praise that they have been getting. The commissioner, chief officers Joe Murphy and Mark Brown, Jeffrey Butler at the SES, and dozens of other hardworking staff out at Fairbairn provided fantastic leadership through this period and through the year. On a personal level, I appreciated the commissioner's frank advice and her commitment to keeping our community well informed on the risks we faced from a number of challenging weather conditions.

I want to also acknowledge the vital work that ACT police performed in supporting our firefighters to do their job, as did the Australian Defence Force personnel that were sent to support the territory. From managing road closures to doorknocking at-risk suburbs and building containment lines, their work was critical in our response to the two bushfires, the two significant fires, that burnt in the territory.

We have also been very fortunate to have had the support of many interstate and international firefighters and SES volunteers to lend a hand over the past few weeks. Again, we cannot thank them enough for their selfless decision to respond to our call for assistance.

More broadly across the ACT public service, people have played their role to help the community during this extreme summer. I want to acknowledge our city services teams, who put in a lot of extra hours to clean up after the hailstorm and to prepare areas ahead of those peak fire events. The doctors and nurses in our hospitals and walk-in centres supported Canberrans impacted by smoke and heat. There were also staff that worked tirelessly to keep our city informed of what was happening, and where people could get help if they needed it. On behalf of the ACT government, I want to thank each of you for giving up time with your families throughout the summer to support our city and our community.

As difficult as it is to contemplate, what we have faced this summer will inevitably become more frequent over coming years and decades, significantly shaping our lives and this city. We must each do what we can, as a government, as a Legislative Assembly and as a community, to mitigate the risks of these extreme events happening again.

Our climate is changing, the science is clear, and we accept that there is a link between climate change and the severity and longevity of our bushfire season. But I can promise Canberrans that this year we will continue to lead the nation in taking positive action to reduce our impact on the climate. We will do this because it is the right thing to do.

We will also work hard to support our city as we move into the recovery phase. At this point we still do not know the full extent of the damage to Namadgi National Park, but it is likely that the ecological recovery will take years, if not decades. This is a precious part of the territory, and it will be given the appropriate action and support that it needs to support the regeneration of both fauna and flora—the wonderful qualities of this national park that Canberrans cherish.

There is also a need to reflect on what future bushfire seasons might hold for our emergency service agencies into the future. It is clear from this summer that we can no longer take a business as usual response to commonwealth and state and territory government relations when it comes to disaster management and fighting these sorts of huge, destructive bushfires.

The Council of Australian Governments is meeting next month. I will be taking the ACT's experiences to this meeting and seeking to better coordinate between levels of government as we face these ongoing threats. Now is the time to fully explore what bushfire seasons that last for two-thirds or three-quarters of the year mean for our national and global coordination and resourcing arrangements.

What has been very clear in the feedback from the Canberra community is that Canberrans are very keen to show their gratitude to the men and women who risked

their lives to respond to the bushfire crisis both here inside the ACT and just across the border in New South Wales. We are planning a number of opportunities, particularly in Tuggeranong, for the community to thank the ESA staff and volunteers for their efforts over this summer.

From the members here in this Assembly to the thousands of people praising the ESA on social media and the tens of thousands who have donated what they could to help our neighbours, our city has displayed tremendous solidarity and compassion during this most difficult time in our region's history.

I thank the community for their support of our emergency services agencies. The messages and warnings that were so regularly provided were often difficult to hear and difficult to comprehend, but they were delivered in a clear, decisive and effective manner—one of the most important lessons learnt from the 2003 Canberra bushfires. I can say that what we heard from those who were knocking on doors in Canberra's south—our ACT police officers, SES volunteers and defence force personnel—was that our community was aware of the bushfire risk. Nearly all of them completed the bushfire survival plan, and they were thankful for the effort put in across so many areas of government to protect lives and property.

It has been a long summer; unbelievably, it is still only mid-February and this bushfire season continues. But in this period of relative calm, it is important for us to acknowledge the work of our emergency responders and those that came to their aid, and appreciate the challenging circumstances that our city has faced in the past few weeks.

I commend the motion to the Assembly. This is an opportunity for those in this place to place on the public record our thanks to the emergency service agencies. I know many members will want to speak in this debate, as is appropriate. This is an important opportunity not only to reflect upon the summer but also to focus our minds on what we need to do for summers ahead.

MR COE (Yerrabi—Leader of the Opposition) (10.15): I rise today to express the Canberra Liberals' sincere condolences to the individuals, families and communities who have been affected by the bushfires and storms right across Australia. And we offer our thanks to all those who put their lives at risk in the service of our nation.

This bushfire season has been particularly tumultuous. So much of Australia has been burnt, countless communities are left to rebuild and, most tragically, many lives have been lost. It has been a black summer and one that will be hard to forget.

To the families going through hardship as a result of fires, smoke and storms, we are with you. To the families of the 33 individuals who lost their lives during the fires, our hearts are heavy for you. Every person who died had a life that meant so much to the people around them. They were, and continue to be, loved by their communities and honoured by this nation.

In late January, a third of the ACT and huge portions of our region were devastated by the fires. Some estimate that a billion animals have been lost in fires across Australia this summer. The enormity of this is very hard to comprehend.

The Canberra Liberals extend our thanks for the services of Australian firefighters who lost their lives during the fires. To David Moresi, Geoffrey Keaton, Andrew O'Dwyer, Samuel McPaul, Bill Slade and Matt Kavanagh, thank you. We extend our deepest condolences to the families of these firefighters whose bravery and courage should be commended and remembered.

Our deepest sympathies are also with the families of Ian McBeth, Paul Hudson and Rick DeMorgan Jr, the three American firefighters who died in an airtanker crash just south of Canberra. These men, who shared decades of service to the US Marine Corps, the US Air Force and their respective state and national guards, had come to Australia to serve and protect our region. We honour them for their service and thank them and their families for their sacrifice.

Our thanks also go to the American firefighters and those from Canada, New Zealand and elsewhere who volunteered to serve this summer. During our time of need Australia received offers of assistance from 70 nations. Military assistance has been received from New Zealand, the United States, Indonesia, Malaysia, Korea, Singapore, Japan, Papua New Guinea and Fiji.

Donations have poured in from across the world, including from many countries who are less affluent than our own. Our thanks to our international friends for their support and generosity in this time of tragedy.

While the bushfires have gripped the world, it is the individuals and communities at a local level who have made such an extraordinary impact. I extend our deep gratitude to members of the ACT Emergency Services Agency, including Commissioner Georgeina Wheelan. I also thank ACT Fire & Rescue, ACT Policing, the Australian Defence Force and of course the Rural Fire Service and State Emergency Service. These agencies have been working tirelessly to ensure that the ACT is protected and prepared for future threats.

I acknowledge and thank members of the media, particularly the ABC, 2CC, FM106.3, FM104.7, the *Canberra Times*, the RiotAct and other outlets for their professional and compassionate communication in this time.

As devastating as the bushfires have been, they have also brought out the best of Canberra and the best of Canberrans. We now have a striking mural in Garema Place, painted by Geoff Filmer, to recognise and serve as a reminder of all the great work done by our firefighters involved here and of the wildlife which died as a result of these fires. The donations have been extraordinarily generous and I thank everyone who has contributed. There have been many businesses and individuals who have contributed greatly disproportionate amounts to make sure that our community is rebuilt.

On the occasions when I visited the Dickson recovery centre I was inspired by the dedication of the staff and volunteers who had been working around the clock to ensure that people received the support that they needed. I was pleased to lend a hand to the volunteers from St Mark Coptic Orthodox Church in Kaleen, which was just

one of many organisations that volunteered to serve meals to those who were escaping the South Coast fires. I pay particular tribute to the Red Cross, St Vincent de Paul, Anglicare, St John Ambulance, the Salvation Army, the Disaster Recovery Chaplaincy Network, Domestic Animal Services, Communities@Work, the Community Services Directorate and other organisations who supported the people who needed support as a result of the fires.

During the high levels of smoke that we had there were many unsung heroes on social media and elsewhere who provided support and advice. To the teams at the hospitals, local chemists and pharmacists, the Chief Health Officer and the directorate and so many others, thank you. Across Canberra in the extremely difficult times where we saw the worst of nature we also saw the best of humanity.

We saw so many people from all walks of life stand up to do what they could. At a time when so many people were feeling helpless, others created opportunities and inspired others to help. To people like Andrew Dale from the “G” Spot, Mohammed Ali from HelpingACT and so many others, thank you. To Jonathan Bolkenhagen, who was one of many who selflessly posted on Facebook that he and his ute were on standby, to the Canberra Sikh community, who were so generous in taking a convoy to the South Coast, to the Federation of Chinese Associations of the ACT who gave \$22,000—thank you. To the Mercy Association for the Underprivileged, who quietly gave \$10,000 to the Red Cross before Christmas, thank you. Of course, to the owners of the Bungendore fridge and all who stocked it, thank you. This is just a snapshot of the many who contributed to our community.

The reality is that there never will be an exhaustive list of everyone whose generosity and compassion came through this summer. The Canberra community rallied to support our city and the region, and I am proud of this city. There will be a time to reflect on policies and preparedness. We need to make sure that we are doing what we can regarding climate change, to make sure that the ESA and the RFS have the resources that they need and to make sure that we are managing the bush properly. We also need to engage with the Aboriginal custodians of this land to learn from them about traditional land management practices.

To the rural landowners of Canberra, I thank you for playing a very important role in defending the ACT. For establishing and maintaining fire breaks and trails, for keeping weeds and pests at bay and for all the other things you do to manage this important land, we thank you.

On top of all this great work in support of the bushfire effort, Canberra had to contend with the storm season as well. Thanks to the SES and other volunteers who worked so hard to assist those who were affected by the hailstorm. Thank you to the public servants who have been putting in overtime to handle the influx of work that has been generated as a result of these storms. The recovery effort is only just beginning, and for some areas it will be some time before it can even begin. The communities that have been devastated by bushfires need us now more than ever before.

Much of the coast is still pristine and we are lucky to have such a beautiful place to visit so close to Canberra. I urge Canberrans to visit these communities and to support

the local businesses there and here in the ACT to make sure that they can all get back on their feet and stay on their feet. Canberra has a big heart and it is time for us to show it.

The Canberra Liberals agree that there needs to be special recognition of the courage, fortitude, resilience and generosity shown by so many people this fire season. We believe there should be permanent recognition of the wonderful contribution that these people have made to our city and the region. We honour them, and I thank the Canberra community for all that they have done in this very tough summer. I am proud to be a Canberran.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong) (10.25): Thank you, Madam Speaker, and all the other members. On behalf of the ACT Greens, I would like to give my sincere and heartfelt thanks to all the emergency responders who have worked so hard to keep our city safe over this difficult summer.

It has also been an incredible coordinated effort by our entire public service, and I would like to acknowledge the role that everyone has played. From the education and community services directorates' proactive coordination of evacuation respite centres, to the long hours that media advisers and communications officials have put in to ensure a consistent stream of quality advice and information to our community, and the efforts of our parks and conservation rangers and ACT Policing, everyone has contributed and should be proud of their efforts.

A standout, of course, is our incredible emergency services personnel. They have the thanks and admiration of us all, and their level of dedication and sacrifice has been incredible. Commissioner Georgeina Whelan deserves a special thanks and credit. As the head of the ACT Emergency Services Agency, she has been so hardworking, calm and communicative. It has been great leadership, and I know the Canberra community have been highly appreciative.

We need to thank all the people who have gone beyond their usual roles to assist during these difficult times—people from other agencies like the Australian Defence Force who have given up their family time to assist and people who have travelled from overseas to offer assistance. You usually hear of people making sacrifices to help their fellow countrymen. Here we have people helping their fellow humans regardless of borders. It is just people helping people, with a true global spirit.

It has, of course, not just been the officials and volunteers but regular members of the community who have banded together to help. They have given donations, provided shelter, or even just lent care and support to people in need of it and to fellow community members in a difficult time. We have seen tremendous efforts from our non-government organisations. Red Cross and WIRES, in their different roles, are perhaps two of the higher profile organisations, but there are many other organisations which are more localised or which play very specialised roles. They have contributed to the immediate response needs and will continue to contribute to the longer term efforts. We have heard the media stories of individuals who just decided that something needed to be done and created a Facebook group and put together friends and supporters from the community to get in and give a hand.

While the events have been a tragedy for Australia, they have also shown communities at their best—at their most generous, courageous and caring. A broad range of senior ACT government officials have worked very hard over the summer, many interrupting their breaks. In particular, I note the role of the Chief Minister and Minister Gentleman, who, it seems, virtually lived at the ESA headquarters over this period and showed great dedication to the Canberra community.

I also want to solemnly acknowledge that the events of this summer have taken people's lives—the lives of everyday people whose homes were struck by fires, as well as volunteers and officials who lost their lives fighting the fires. This is a terrible tragedy, and we offer our condolences and sympathies to all the families and friends of the people we lost. There has also been widespread destruction of property and of our precious environment, and this simply amplifies the scale of the tragedy.

While the fires within the ACT were relatively recent, the impacts of this horrific summer of tragedy and loss have been felt for months by way of the smoke haze, dust storms and regional fires right through New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia. It has felt at times as though no part of the country has been untouched.

In the context the smoke haze, I would particularly like to acknowledge the hard work of the Chief Health Officer and her team, who have sought to provide the best possible advice to an anxious community in what has been described as an unprecedented poor, and in fact potentially hazardous, period of air quality, with Canberra at times officially having the worst air quality in the world. It is hard to draw an evidence-based response to a unique and novel issue, and I thank those who have worked so hard to provide advice to members of our community, who were uncertain about what this meant for us, as it is something we have never really experienced before.

Across the nation, we have seen communities, rightly, praise the work of the predominantly volunteer fire services. I have been personally struck by the artistic expressions of this appreciation, from street art to media cartoons showing a weary firefighter being saluted by Batman and other comic book superheroes. I do not feel that it is hyperbole to say that they have earned such praise with feats of bravery and self-sacrifice which, unfortunately, I believe we will continue to see more of in the future.

As the Chief Minister has rightly acknowledged, however, this is not the end of the bushfire and storm season. The recent rain, welcome as it is, is creating its own issues, just as the recent hailstorm did, and we cannot ignore the fact that there may be still further fires or freak storm activities. But we are starting, collectively as a country and as a territory, to breathe a little easier, and to consider what possible lessons can be learned from this terrible summer. We are all aware of the national conversations regarding commissions of inquiry and the need to more closely examine the specific needs of small localities. We believe we need federal leadership and local solutions. It will be a partnership going forward, and in these conversations it will be very important to think carefully through these matters on the basis of the evidence.

We must also continue to work across borders and governments in the appraisal of the incredible ecological damage that has hit our national parks and reserves—the destruction of native habitat and alpine bushland in adjoining Kosciuszko National Park, the destruction of the woodlands and grasslands of the Monaro, the significant loss of our coastal forests and scrub, and, of course, the impact on our own Namadgi National Park and related areas. These will all have implications for our flora and fauna that are not yet fully understood.

I was encouraged to see the Minister for the Environment's recent reporting of the defence force's collaboration with ACT parks and conservation regarding the corroboree frog, and trust that over the coming months all levels of government will continue to work together on similar programs. I trust that all levels of government will also consult and work with our traditional custodians as we take the lessons in Indigenous land management, both in recovery but also in thinking ahead to further hazard reduction for the future.

Our community has been significantly impacted in multiple ways throughout this crisis. One unexpected but serious impact has been the smoke pall that has frequently settled on our city. As we started to experience poor air quality and high levels of smoke in early December, Canberrans were forced to start making changes to their daily lives they had not previously had to contemplate. As outdoor activities were curtailed, even our homes, office buildings, shopping centres and movie theatres were impacted due to the severity of smoke and compromised air quality.

This was extremely disruptive to people's lives. There are many issues that stem from this, and I will talk more about them in my motion on Thursday. For now, I want to acknowledge that the events of the summer have had impacts on people's mental health and wellbeing, with many feeling frustrated, upset and disheartened. These feelings were only heightened as the Christmas and new year period rolled in and the bushfires increased dramatically in neighbouring parts of New South Wales and around the country. It was an eerie and difficult time of seeking updates via television, radio and the various apps that we all now have on our phones.

Many of us acknowledge, understand and feel strongly that climate change has contributed to the early fire seasons and the length and severity of the fires. This growing concern about the changes in our environment due to climate change are manifested in a sense of climate change anxiety and grief, and this takes a toll on the mental health of some people. I think it would be accurate to say that across the nation there has been a shared sadness over this period. We tragically saw the loss of wildlife, ecosystems, homes and human life in what can only be described as a large-scale catastrophe. As we look for hope and positives in all of this, one can only be inspired by the resilience and determination demonstrated by so many in our community through these difficult times. We have come together through our shared grief and we have supported one another. These are the times where having a strong community and looking out for one another is so incredibly powerful and important.

As the minister with responsibility for both mental health and climate change, I realise that the confluence of these two issues and the inevitable impact it has on people's

lives underlines the need to equip members of our community to manage how they experience the devastating impacts of these sorts of circumstances. The response in the ACT, with input from ACT Health, Canberra Health Services, and the Office for Mental Health and Wellbeing, has been a good example of where to start. I know that through the ACT's evacuation and respite centres, particularly over the new year period, attendees wanted to talk to the mental health support staff about their mental health and seek advice on what they were feeling and how to approach or respond to those feelings.

In today's discussion, perhaps I can simply paraphrase the advice of the Chief Psychiatrist, Denise Riordan, who highlighted the importance of being kind to ourselves and one another, and the importance of taking the time to process the experience and what we are feeling. When we talk about the fires and smoke that have affected us so badly, it is also important that we are upfront about the causes of the tragedy. This is the only way we can ensure that we improve our response at a government level and take actions that protect us in the future. We cannot make sound decisions if we shy away from the reality.

Despite the efforts of some commentators and others to obfuscate on this issue, there is no doubt that climate change is a significant contributing factor to the terrible summer we have experienced. These are not debatable facts. The science is clear. We simply have to listen to the experts on this matter—the climate scientists, the firefighters and the bushfire experts. We need to listen to people like the group of 24 fire and emergency chiefs and ex-chiefs who have been calling for greater climate action and who have been trying desperately to make this point in all sorts of forums. These are people with decades of leadership experience in fire and emergency management—the types of people we have been thanking in our speeches today.

They say:

Climate change has supercharged the bushfire problem...

Just a 1C temperature rise has meant the extremes are far more extreme, and it is placing lives at risk, including firefighters.

They also emphasise the importance of talking about the course of the future. They say:

The Grenfell fire in London, people talked about the cause from day one. Train crashes they talk from day one. And it is OK to say it is an arsonist's fault, or pretend that the greenies are stopping hazard reduction burning, which is simply not true.

But you are not allowed to talk about climate change. Well, we are, because we know what is happening.

We can also listen to the climate scientists, like Dr Tom Beer, who wrote the world's first bushfire and climate change paper and worked at the CSIRO for 30 years; Professor David Bowman, Professor of Pyrogeography and Fire Science; and Professor Will Steffen, Emeritus Professor at the Australian National University and a

former member of our own Climate Change Council. They made a statement together saying that climate scientists have been warning Australian governments about the escalating threat of catastrophic bushfire conditions because of climate change for 30 years. They said:

Climate change is fuelling the national bushfire catastrophe, and it will get worse without radical action.

The fact is that climate change is leading to hotter temperatures, a drier environment, more frequent, longer and more intense heatwaves, shifting rain patterns and more severe bushfire conditions. The ACT is simply getting hotter and drier. Last year, 2019, was the hottest year on record, with the annual temperature 1.52 degrees Celsius above the long-term average. Nine of the ten hottest years have been recorded since 2005. The year 2019 also had the lowest rainfall since records began. This is the first time this has occurred in the same year as the high temperature record.

These discussions will continue. But in response to the Chief Minister's motion, I firstly thank him for bringing it forward and providing this Assembly with the opportunity to reflect on what has been an extremely difficult time. In conclusion, I simply again emphasise the heartfelt thanks and admiration we have for all the people who have worked so hard and sacrificed so much to keep our community safe, to help those who have found themselves deeply impacted and to begin the rebuilding process. It really shows humanity at its best. I hope that we can reflect on these moments, draw on the strengths that we have seen and go forward together to tackle the challenges that we face in the future.

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—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) (10.40): I want to start by commending the ACT Emergency Services Agency, ESA, for their efforts in preparing and protecting the ACT community so far this bushfire season. They have stood up and protected our community, along with communities in Queensland and New South Wales. The over 2,000 men and women who make up the ESA as paid and volunteer staff are Australia's best. They are leaders and proud Canberrans.

This fire season was always going to be difficult, as I reported to the Assembly in September last year. Changes in climate have contributed further to the threat of bushfire in the region and we cannot escape the realities of climate change and the consequential risk it brings. This season has shown the types of more frequent and severe consequences our city will face if we do not meet our obligations to limit global warming to two degrees or less. We cannot wait. We must act now, and I am very proud to serve in a government that is leading action on climate change while also preparing for the threats global warming will bring.

The 2019-20 bushfire and storm season has produced some of the most unprecedented weather conditions in Australia's history. Large parts of Australia have been impacted by significant fires, with unpredictable and dangerous fire behavior fuelled by hot, dry and windy conditions. These conditions mean fires have started easily and are hard to stop. Since August 2019, unprecedented fire activity has heavily impacted large areas

along the east coast of Australia. The ESA sent firefighters and specialist emergency management personnel to Queensland and northern New South Wales through September, October and November of 2019 to assist.

In December, fires burning in New South Wales closer to our borders brought smoke, the first impact of the bushfire season that our community would have to endure. As the fires intensified in our region and our community dealt with the unprecedented smoke, I declared a state of alert on 2 January 2020. This was based on expert advice in response to the conditions around us and those that were predicted to emerge. It was the first time we made such a declaration and, in doing so, it helped the ESA commissioner and her team improve our community's preparedness and awareness of the threats that the long, dry summer was bringing.

Our territory has already experienced record-breaking temperatures, with two records broken within a few weeks. The highest daytime temperature was recorded at 45 degrees and the highest night-time record was 26.7 degrees. Between 1 October 2019 and 4 February 2020, the ACT has declared a record of 24 total fire ban, or TOBAN, days. To put this into context, the ACT on average sees five or six TOBANs per bushfire season.

Following the hot and dry conditions, the ACT experienced severe thunderstorms, producing large hailstones, on 20 January this year. The ACT State Emergency Service, or ACTSES, received approximately 2,500 calls for assistance, another record number for ESA. Three days later, on 23 January, the ACT experienced its first significant bush and grassfire of the season. The fire started at the Pialligo redwood forest and quickly spread through to Beard, threatening Oaks Estate and Queanbeyan. An additional fire started in Pialligo the following day that joined with the first, eventually taking the fire to 424 hectares. Thankfully, this fire was declared as extinguished on 29 January.

On 27 January 2020, the Orroral fire commenced. This fire threatened the southern rural areas of the ACT, most notably Tharwa and the southern suburbs of Canberra, our beloved south of Canberra. The Orroral Valley fire remained out of control until 8 February this year, when, after receiving some much-needed rainfall, the status of the fire was downgraded to being controlled. The Orroral fire has burned 86,000 hectares and over 30 per cent of the ACT.

The response to the Orroral, Beard, and Pialligo fires has been significant. Much is owed to the expertise and professionalism of the ACT Rural Fire Service, ACT Fire & Rescue, ACTSES, the ACT Parks and Conservation Service, aviation rescue and firefighting services, the NSW Rural Fire Service and Fire and Rescue NSW, ACT Policing, and the Australian Defence Force.

Their collective efforts minimised the impact of these fires and ensured that there was no loss of life. The strategies and efforts in combatting the Orroral fire have protected Tharwa and the southern suburbs of Canberra. This is a credit to all, including those men and women who have worked in the background and those who have helped support frontline efforts, from our mechanics to our IT specialists and a range of public servants from across government. This work was assisted by the extensive

communication efforts of the Emergency Services Agency. This work was started before the bushfires arrived on Canberra's doorstep and accelerated as we declared a state of alert.

Our responses this season have shown that we have all learned from 2003. Since the 2003 fires, the ESA, supported by the ACT government, has ensured that it has improved its operations and capability to manage emergencies. This is an agency committed to continually improving services to the community, and we have seen this commitment in action this season. Lessons, of course, have been learned from the past and the agency has grown into a more cohesive and collaborative organisation. We heard loud and clear calls from the community for more timely and detailed information about bushfire threats following 2003.

The communication and insight provided by the ESA made it amongst the best in Australia. In addition to its social media outreach, it put boots on the ground, doorknocking houses in bushfire-prone areas and staffing booths at shopping centres across our city. The ESA responded to the community feedback over the summer and continued to enhance its communication. Once we are safely past this year's storm and bushfire season, we will review and look to make our engagement with the community even better.

We have made other changes. The government has strengthened the ACT's legislation and policy to improve the safety of this city and the surrounding region. The Emergencies Act 2004, under which we operate, is now reviewed as part of best practice in emergency management.

The development and implementation of the strategic bushfire management plan, or SBMP, has enabled the agency to identify and manage bushfire risk. The SBMP focuses our attention not only on our response to bushfires but also on preventing bushfires, mitigating their impact, coordinating across government during emergencies and focusing on recovery.

This planning has allowed us to bring the community together to combat the threat, manage the consequences of its impact, aid in emotional recovery and rebuild the things that are valued. The government has made a large investment to significantly upgrade our fire trails and this has allowed immediate access to bushfires not only for fire tankers but also for transporting heavy machinery, bulk water and people into remote areas quickly and effectively.

A range of resources that were not available in 2003 have been heavily utilised this season. These include massive aerial attack, in the form of large and very large air tankers, on remote bushfires, and the bulldozers to get to remote fire lines, providing for swift and secure containment of the fire edge in advance of forecast extreme fire weather conditions.

In 2013 we provided a new headquarters for the ESA and have continued to invest in new vehicles and equipment, new stations and station upgrades. There has also been an investment in communications technology and sciences to identify risk, including the special intelligence helicopter, or SIG. We have also made that investment in

aerial firefighting capability and implementing platforms to work with other Australian and international emergency services under reciprocal arrangements, which has benefited us all.

The ESA headquarters has been heavily utilised this season in response to the hazards faced in the ACT. Staff and volunteers from across ACT government have come together at ESA headquarters to manage the incidents, provide effective communications to the community and coordinate services to meet community needs and recovery.

Communities have seen and will continue to see social and economic impacts as a result of the bushfires or resulting smoke. Those communities along the South Coast of New South Wales, and those in the transitioning towns such as Bungendore and Braidwood, have had their normal holiday trade completely diminished as a result of the fires. Some traders in Braidwood have reported a 75 per cent decrease in profits compared to a normal summer holiday period. Despite this, in time, the process of rebuilding will bring work to the affected regions, boosting local economies and increasing tourism. *(Extension of time granted.)*

We cannot forget our local Canberra businesses, which have been impacted by the bushfire, hail, heat and smoke. Many Canberra businesses rely on the excellent weather conditions that we are accustomed to in our amazing city for their trade, and I encourage Canberrans to support those local businesses as the conditions continue to improve.

Our natural and cultural environment holds a special place in the hearts of many Canberrans. As fellow south-siders, we know that one of the best things about Tuggeranong is the views of the Brindabellas and having the bush on our doorstep. This closeness brings with it the challenges of bushfires, though, something our community has endured, seeing firsthand the impact on Namadgi National Park and Tidbinbilla nature reserve.

These special places conserve significant ecological and cultural values, including rock art sites at Yankee Hat and the former space tracking station at Honeysuckle Creek, as well as being important to the northern corroboree frog, the Macquarie perch and the spotted-tail quoll. They also include important habitats such as grasslands and bogs and fens. These areas are also critical for ensuring the quality of our drinking water. Staff across the environment division, including our parks and conservation service team, having been working together with the Emergency Services Agency to respond to the fires in the ACT and across the country.

Over 250 staff in the environment division, including the parks and conservation service, have been on the ground putting out the fires and, in critical roles in the incident management team, directing the fire response and providing technical advice on fire behaviour, fire weather, as well as developing strategies and identifying important values to protect. Behind the scenes, the team have also undertaken actions to conserve and protect a range of important values before the fire impacted them, including: establishing bare earth lines to protect heritage values from fire; installing and activating hoses and drip systems; removing wooden infrastructure; and

relocating threatened species such as bettongs, brush-tailed rock wallabies and northern corroboree frogs to secure locations away from the fire.

We have seen the installation of sediment traps to reduce nutrients entering our water catchments, and the retrieval of a significant Aboriginal artefact. Our vets responded to injured wildlife, following the hailstorm. Each of these has taken considerable planning, expertise and operational skills to implement quickly and successfully. This work would not have been possible without the support of our partners, including the Australian National University, the Australian Defence Force, Mount Rothwell, Zoos Victoria, Taronga Zoo, Icon Water, our catchment groups, of course, and ParkCare and Landcare.

We have further extended our relationship with the Ngunnawal community, engaging them in decision-making to conserve and protect country. It is testament to the professionalism and dedication of all the people in the environment division, including the parks and conservation service, that this work has been achieved under trying and draining conditions. I am advised that the division undertook significant work to prepare for the current fire season, including slashing of vegetation to reduce fuel loads, providing and maintaining fire access trails and ensuring that our people were trained and equipped to respond. This work has aided our response.

But let me be clear: the advice I have is that no amount of preparedness would have mitigated the fires, given the extreme dryness, high temperatures and low humidity. These conditions and the fire behaviour are unprecedented.

I would like to pass on my sincere thanks to all involved in assisting the community to remain safe. Volunteers and staff from the ACT Rural Fire Service, the ACT Emergency Services Agency, the Ambulance Service, ACT Fire & Rescue, mapping and planning support, ESA support services, the parks and conservation service, ACT Policing and the Australian Defence Force and public servants across the ACT government have worked tirelessly, on the ground and in the IMT, to keep the territory safe, so thank you to them.

I want to acknowledge the families, friends and employers of our ESA volunteers and the personnel who have assisted the ESA. Without your support, our volunteers across those services would not be able to provide services to keep the community safe. I want to acknowledge the Australian Defence Force and the New Zealand Defence Force for helping us out during this time as well.

In the chamber today are disaster specialist incident management personnel from the United Arab Emirates and the ambassador from the UAE as well. They have been working alongside our IMT team at ESA headquarters over the past week, so thank you for sharing your experience as well.

Thank you also to the crews from interstate, including New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria and Tasmania for their support in helping respond to the bushfires and storms that have occurred so far. Thank you to Kevin Jefferey and Steve Angus for their support and liaison with the community in Tharwa and the rural areas most impacted by the Orroral Valley fire. The response to the recent events that the ACT has faced

has shown that, in the face of diversity, we continue to be one of the safest cities in the world to live in.

Visitors

MADAM SPEAKER: On behalf of the Assembly, I would like to acknowledge and welcome the ambassador and delegates from the UAE and thank you for your help and assistance over our bushfire season. I am sure the entire city of Canberra thanks you with a very deep heart. Welcome to Canberra.

Bushfire and storm season

MRS JONES (Murrumbidgee) (10.56): In 1908 Dorothea Mackellar wrote her famous poem *My Country*, in which she describes Australia as a land of “droughts and flooding rains”. She referred to “her beauty and her terror, the wide brown land for me”. This summer, we have experienced the mighty force of nature, and the mighty force of our country’s terror when it comes. The season is not over, and it will not surprise me if the rain continues and we see more of the flooding rains before the season is done.

However it comes to pass, and however good we are at preparing for such events, there is one thing we can rely on in this country, and it is the brave and dedicated work of our frontline service personnel and the people of the ACT who put on a uniform and head towards danger, putting themselves forward to fight as the natural beasts of fire, flood and storms come to our homes and to our region. After the hailstorm just weeks ago, a friend of mine commented that we might be seeing locusts next, as the diverse difficulties seemed unending as January unfolded.

On a sombre note, a fantastic couple who I have bought meat from over the years lost their brother and nephew in the Cobargo blaze, and lost a great deal of their property and animals. They are fifth-generation farmers. Their property is west of Cobargo, in the beautiful Wandella Valley. They lost 150 head of cattle, 80 sheep, two houses, one shearers’ shed, one machinery shed, three hay sheds full of hay, two sets of stockyards and 25 kilometres of fencing.

Just yesterday they told me that the grass is green and they had had 150 millimetres of rain. They said that the place was looking much better, but still they have a great deal of work to do to put their lives back together. They are still in the process of clearing the burnt sites so that they can start the long and slow process to rebuild what has been their family’s life for generations.

The toughest part of all is that Warren’s brother Robert and his son Patrick died in the Cobargo fires. They were looking after their property. It helps us to remember how serious the decision is as to whether to stay or whether to go. It is something that Canberrans have grappled with a great deal over the last few weeks. I am sure they will support each other and make the sacrifice of so many worth the future that they will build. I am sure they will build that over the next few years.

Canberran firefighters earlier in the season put on their uniforms and, with full strength, crossed the border and went to help fight fires across our region. This is a whole community supported endeavour. The Rural Fire Service volunteers themselves make this possible by their commitment and dedication. Their families and employers generously share them with us when they head out the door into these tough situations. They do not want a pat on the back, but if my kids grow up to be as good citizens as they are, I will be a very proud mother.

New Year's Eve this year was the most sombre I have ever known in my lifetime, and I am almost 40, so I have seen a few. As Mr Hanson will tell us, Batemans Bay had it tough, as did so many around the nation as fires took off in so many places. In the days following, as the coast roads were opened, we saw lines of cars coming up through Canberra. I was really pleased to see Dickson College set up as a recovery centre to offer information and support, food, a place to rest and a place to chat for the stream of people heading home from the coast via the Bega and Cooma roads.

One highlight of this time was ACT Policing doing a fantastic job of traffic management on the Monaro Highway, as tired and stressed drivers came through from a very difficult drive up the mountain. I am told it was superb and that traffic flowed really well. That is a testament to the professionalism of our police.

During that time, I was up here in Canberra. The coast fires brought two things out in Canberrans. We endured days and weeks of smoke. As I looked out of my front windows in Duffy, out over Weston Creek and the Woden Valley, I realised how good we usually have it. I had probably never realised quite how good and clean our air is. I thought of places which deal with air pollution every day, and I was really grateful for what we have here in this great country.

I was grateful for the bushfire emergency accommodation Facebook page which spontaneously started under the leadership of Alison Elliot. Many Canberrans helped to house, make comfortable and give cups of tea and chats to people driving up from the coast who had been through a lot.

The smoke went on and on. The kids became more restless from being cooped up. I know many other families who were going through the same thing. Some days the smoke was really oppressive.

The Ginseng Chinese restaurant, in the middle of this, organised a fundraising dinner at a time when their restaurant is usually closed. It raised \$20,000 for the Red Cross. I was proud to be there. I was proud to see Sue Cheung, Rockie Cheung, and Tung Cheung and Roland Cheung, the parents, open their restaurant, with all their staff as volunteers, and the Red Cross volunteers. They helped us to both celebrate the generosity of Canberrans and put \$20,000 in the bank for the Red Cross to help those who had suffered in the fires. Their suppliers, Fyshwick Farm Fresh and others, donated the food for the meal. As I said, there were dozens of volunteers running the dinner on the night.

We have seen Canberra come out at its best. There was a spontaneous outpouring of support for people at the coast that was facilitated by Andrew Dale and his great team of vollies, volunteers, based around his food business, the “G” Spot in Gungahlin. These men and women, mostly from Gungahlin and the surrounding area, worked day and night to pack trucks full of slabs of water, non-perishable food and necessities. They called out to the community for help to get it down to the affected fire regions. People poured out their time, money and resources to help.

A special shout out to Paulie and Maria from Modern Concrete, who spent over \$7,000 on fuel, driving their trucks up and down the coast over a number of weeks. Paulie was maintaining his business at the same time, leaving in the dark of night to drive these goods down to people in need at the coast. This was before government and other services were really up and running, taking supplies to people who had really hit rock bottom. Paulie told me how at Cobargo they were out of water and food and were just so stressed. Some of them at that time had not even been back to their houses, afraid of what they would find. They were raw. These generous Canberra legends turned up, not seeking any attention but doing what they knew was right for people under a lot of pressure.

This is what makes Canberra a great place: people like Paulie, Andrew, Maria and all the really kind, big-hearted people around Andrew and the “G” Spot up there in Gungahlin. I felt as though what I do every day does not really measure up to them and the impact that they have had on people who needed it the most. Just this weekend, he and his team delivered 10 cars to families who had lost everything down the coast.

I would also like to acknowledge Kate Tonacia and Fenji Stradwick from Picking Up the Peaces, who are experts at PTSD and mental health, who have helped out in that group as well.

At the same time, the showground at Queanbeyan was filling up with people needing to be away from the coast for a few days or weeks. Within hours of their arriving, many generous people from Canberra and Queanbeyan were out there helping.

A special mention to the Canberra Sikh community, whose response was led by Amardeep Singh. We have seen the Sikh people show their very community service oriented nature during these fires. They are generous people, with a skill for bulk cooking, which is something they do every weekend at the temple in Weston. An amazing couple who emigrated from India, Jagjit and Kulwinder Singh, and their motel, Hamilton’s, at Queanbeyan put up those who needed a bed, sometimes at a discounted rate and with very generous support for those who really needed it. They hosted the New Zealand firefighters who came to help us and ran a thankyou barbecue for all they have done for us and our region. Throughout these troubling times, these are the people that you want to have in your community. (*Extension of time granted.*)

The Sikhs of Canberra are a group we are very blessed to have here. We already owe much to them as givers in Canberra. They put out a call to their own people and collected so much food and supplies within 24 hours that they had to work hard to give it all away. Well done; you make us proud.

The Alexander Maconochie Centre, our prison, prepared meals to be delivered to those working on the fires. This is a fantastic thing for our prisoners to be able to be engaged in. Despite the fact that they are incarcerated, they can be of benefit and do something good for the community. This was an excellent initiative and we should do more of it.

As January went on, the fires were close to home. We became more worried about our families and properties here. Thankfully, our dedicated firefighting personnel and some favourable wind conditions have meant that we have not seen the widespread devastation of homes that we did in 2003. It is not by accident that Tharwa is okay and that Canberra is okay; it is because of the hard work of so many.

I say thank you to the dedicated volunteer and career firefighters, all our emergency services workers. I acknowledge Joe Murphy, who is in the chamber, and Georgina Whelan and other members of the hierarchy at the ESA headquarters. I thank them for their service.

We also thank the more than 6,000 Australian Defence Force personnel who have given up so much of their precious time with their families this summer to help.

Thank you to the volunteers from all around the world who have come to fight our fires, shoulder to shoulder with us. Because of their skills, contributions and tireless dedication, Australians and Canberrans were safer.

Namadgi National Park will need time and care. I am pleased to hear the Chief Minister mention that this work will be done.

I express my deepest sympathies to the families who have lost loved ones, suffered injury or lost their properties. These fires have been truly devastating, and the toll that they have taken is high. The community will be forever grateful to those who have perished fighting fires. To lose your life while protecting others is a tragedy, but it is also a great honour and you do us proud. I cannot imagine how these families are feeling. My heart goes out to them. It is because of their efforts that so many more Australians were not injured or killed.

Perhaps we need to start our year again. I saw on Facebook the suggestion that maybe Canberra Day would be a good day to start again. We need to look forward in 2020 and think of all the great things that will happen, the great resilience that has been shown and the great generosity from Canberrans. I think we should call for a new start of the year on Canberra Day.

MS LE COUTEUR (Murrumbidgee) (11.09): Like all of us, I have been shocked by the fires. There were fires up north last year, where I used to live, and there were fires in the rainforest, which simply should not burn. I was shocked, just from living here and travelling a bit in the region. It is really great for Canberra to lead the world, but preferably not in air pollution.

People without houses or without adequate air conditioning, or with asthma or other medical conditions, must have had it even worse than us. It must have been particularly hard for parents with kids on holidays—not much of a holiday. I think that a lot of us were really pleased to go back to work in a nice air-conditioned office.

We must remember that at least 34 people in Australia have not gone back to work after the fires, wherever they worked. Some of them were firefighters; some were volunteers. Some were Australian and some were international. Some of them were people who just had the misfortune to be in the wrong place when it happened. Many more will die as an indirect result of the fires.

The fires this summer were unprecedented. Beekeepers smoking their bees early in the day to reduce any risk led to the fire by the airport. Lights from an army helicopter in Namadgi led to the fire in Namadgi. Neither of these things would have led to fire in normal conditions, but this is not normal. As Mr Gentleman said, the conditions were such that basically anything burnt.

Our response to the fires has also been unprecedented. I want to join with all the other speakers before me, and I am sure all the other speakers after me, in thanking the Emergency Services Agency—ACT Fire & Rescue, the ACT Rural Fire Service, the ACT State Emergency Service and the ACT Ambulance Service—plus parks and conservation, ACT Policing and lots of other public servants in the ACT government.

In the ACT we are very lucky to be part of Australia. We have had support from other states and territories; fortunately, we have been in the position to support them as well. Both our Defence Force and the New Zealand Defence Force have come to our aid. I have just realised that we also had support from the UAE; thank you. I thank the other states and territories.

I would also particularly like to thank volunteers. Mrs Jones in particular talked about a lot of informal volunteer efforts, and these have been absolutely wonderful. There have also been more formal efforts, particularly from wildlife carers, the RFS, the SES, the Red Cross, and hundreds and hundreds of local groups.

The fires are unprecedented but not unexpected. We have known about climate change for over a century, and for at least the last 30 years it has been part of public discourse. I went to my first climate change conference in Canberra in 1988. I will not bore you all with my views on why the world, and Australia in particular, has failed to take effective action on climate change. For this motion, we need to be aware that, while this fearsome summer was unprecedented, it was predicted and it was not unexpected.

Some people are calling this summer the new normal. But whatever this is, it is not the new normal. The world has warmed by a little more than one degree Celsius since 1880. Two-thirds of that warming has been since 1975, at a rate of about 0.15 to 0.20 degrees Celsius per decade. The Paris agreement, which the world, unfortunately, is not even on track to meet, talked about 1.5 degrees of warming, or another 0.5 of a degree. More realistically, we are on track for another three to four degrees of warming, and possibly more.

It may well be that we look back at this summer with nostalgia: how good was it? Most of the time the air quality was only poor, and we had hazardous air quality all day on only a few days. We desperately need to start adapting to the changed and changing climate. This time last year I moved a motion seeking action to make our buildings more suited to the new climate, but that was watered down to little action by the other parties. We need to start building for our future, not for our past.

We need also to look at where our food comes from. One of the local casualties of the fires has been the town of Batlow, where 10 per cent of Australia's apples come from. As we know, Batlow and the orchards around it have largely burnt. What I did not realise is that apparently it takes eight years for an apple tree to start producing. If I were a Batlow apple farmer, would I have enough faith in the future climate to plant again? And even if I did, I imagine very few would have the financial resources to take on this huge risk.

In the world in which we now live, we need to acknowledge how we feel. I very much thank the Chief Minister for moving this motion, to give us all the chance to acknowledge our feelings and the feelings of the community, both local and wider, that we live in. Coming back after the new year, everyone in Canberra seemed literally shocked and really despondent. Most of us have got back into the year, and the fires and smoke seem more normal—more like things we can live with. We are sort of happy with the air quality, or at least resigned to it being poor, because it is so much better than it was before.

We have to remember that it is important for our mental health to talk about what we feel, and not all of that talk has to be positive. It is very important for the health of the planet that those of us who have seen how our climate has changed tell the story of what has happened to our friends and family. These are the sorts of conversations that will change our society's actions. We need also to have conversations with the traditional custodians of this land, not just here but all over Australia. They have looked after our country, our shared country, for over 60,000 years, and they have done it in a vastly more sustainable way.

I would also like to acknowledge and speak about one of the ways that many of us are coping. Thousands of Canberrans and people all over the country have taken to the streets to show our concern about the bushfires and the climate emergency. These actions are really important and will be part of the way that we have effective action in the future.

There are scientific conversations that we need to have. The journal *Nature* quotes Professor Tim Lenton, who is the director of the Global Systems Institute at the University of Exeter, as saying:

A decade ago we identified a suite of potential tipping points in the Earth system, now we see evidence that over half of them have been activated.

These include the loss of the Amazon rainforest, and the great ice sheets of Antarctica and Greenland are melting much quicker than anticipated. The permafrost across the

Arctic is beginning to thaw on a large scale, and it is likely to release huge stores of carbon dioxide and, even more than that, methane—a greenhouse gas 30 times more potent than CO₂.

I could quote more scientists on this, but I do not think this will convince anyone who has not already been convinced by living in Canberra or on the South Coast over this summer that we have a life-threatening emergency. Over a billion animals have died. It is amazingly good, actually, that so few people have died. Thirty-four people is a lot of people, but it could have been worse.

I want to thank once more the amazing people who protected us. Of course, we are also finding out that protection is a limited resource. The ESA and other agencies, unfortunately, have had to make it clear to us that we cannot expect a fire truck on every street or even in every suburb.

I will conclude by saying that I really find it hard to know what to do now. Australia's greenhouse gas emissions have apparently more than doubled because of the fires. Have we reached a tipping point such that runaway climate change is inevitable, or can we change so that the world can have a habitable climate? What will it take to make this happen? Is there some way we can go back to summer being a carefree holiday instead of a time of tension, with either fire or flood?

MR PETTERSSON (Yerrabi) (11.19): The ACT and wider Australian community have faced an unprecedented bushfire season which had a profound impact on our way of life over summer. The Canberra that we all know and love has been anything but business as usual. We saw incessant smoke, fires and storms prevent Canberrans from going about their day-to-day lives.

The effects of our changing climate have wreaked havoc on our city. Our shops, restaurants and community centres were forced to close to ensure that Canberrans remained safe in the face of constant smoke, high temperatures and even hail. Dangerous hailstorms in the last month have damaged our cars and our homes, creating a lasting social and economic impact on our city. Despite the immeasurable effects of the bushfires on our everyday lives, we have seen the Canberra community respond to the country's bushfire crisis with support and compassion.

Since the beginning of the fire season many of my constituents have written to me expressing their deep concern about the state of our climate and unprecedented threats to our local environment that we have seen in this bushfire season.

Canberrans have opened their homes to those fleeing from the South Coast. Grassroots community groups such as Books for the Bush have ensured that families, some of whom have lost their homes and possessions, can experience an easier transition back to day-to-day life during this back-to-school period. The "empty esky" campaign is gathering momentum every day, as Canberrans are making a trip down to the South Coast to kickstart their local economies following this disastrous summer. I, for one, look forward to joining in sooner rather than later with a trip down to the coast.

I rise today to also thank the ACT Emergency Services Agency—in particular, the ACT Rural Fire Service and the State Emergency Service for their tireless efforts towards keeping the territory safe. Alongside our parks and conservation teams and the ACT Ambulance Service, they have minimised the potential damage to homes, wildlife and human life for the last three months.

I would also like to extend my thanks to the Australian and New Zealand defence forces and the emergency service units from other jurisdictions for their support in helping respond to the bushfires and storms. Despite a huge section of the territory being under threat of fire damage, there has been minimal damage to property, and we have our emergency services to thank for that.

I would like to acknowledge the integral role that the ABC and other local media have played in keeping our community safe over the last few months. This summer's dangerous conditions have reinforced the importance of properly funding our broadcasting services, particularly when these services are relied upon to maintain public safety.

However, this season of wild weather is not yet over. Our emergency services will have to work into the coming months to ensure that the territory remains safe. Let me be clear: the unprecedented bushfire threat across Australia this summer is a direct consequence of climate change. In the ACT this has meant that our summers are hotter than ever before, our water levels are diminishing rapidly and, coupled with more frequent lightning storms, the territory will face longer and more threatening fire seasons.

Australia has just experienced our warmest and driest year on record. Canberrans have experienced the highest annual mean temperature on record in the ACT. Just last month Canberra's air quality index ratings peaked at 7,700. All readings above 200 are considered hazardous.

This summer Canberrans have felt the effects of the inaction of others on climate change. Since our air quality first reached hazardous levels on 9 December, our local shops and restaurants were forced to close, our national institutions were made to shut their doors and our postal services even came to a halt. Most of us did not leave the house for days at a time. Those of us that did were met with scenes of empty roads and commuters wearing P2 masks, which have now become the norm. Conditions like these can only be described as apocalyptic.

However, it is those who are most vulnerable in our community who have had to deal with the worst of the weather this summer. Climate change is already disproportionately impacting those in our community who are doing it tough. Without access to air conditioning or air purifiers, pensioners, young children, those living in shelters and people sleeping rough have been more exposed to the negative effects of extreme temperatures and smoke.

It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge that these threats of extreme weather are not yet over. The fire to our south has so far burnt through around 80 per cent of

Namadgi National Park. However, I hope that the rain we are experiencing now is helping. The threatening storms that this summer has brought show little sign of slowing down. Even after the threat of fires and storms has subsided, a large clean-up effort will need to be undertaken by our ESA teams so that areas like Namadgi National Park are once again safe for us to visit.

The social and economic impacts of this summer's fires will be felt throughout the year, as many of our local businesses and outdoor attractions recover from smoke, fire damage and lost tourism revenue. There is also the human cost. The pressures felt by those on the front lines will be felt long after the fires are out.

The ACT must continue to take proactive steps to reduce our vulnerability and improve our resilience to extreme weather events. Our changing climate and the strain it has put on our electricity network, community and essential services are only going to happen more often. The way that we react to the effects of our changing climate and devastating bushfires is not about beliefs, politics or ideology. It is about ensuring that we are taking practical steps forward to ensure that the community is best protected from bushfires and climate change.

In closing, I want to once again thank all of the brave volunteers, the ESA and the RFS, for all of their work. Our city is in your debt.

MR HANSON (Murrumbidgee) (11.25): I thank the Chief Minister for bringing this motion forward today and everybody who has spoken for their insightful and compassionate words. I offer my thanks as well to all the ACT frontline emergency staff, including the police and the firies, the New South Wales frontline staff; the ADF and of course all the volunteers across New South Wales and the ACT who have been helping.

I share my family's experience in Batemans Bay on New Year's Eve, which was similar to that experienced by many hundreds and thousands, probably, of Canberrans who were down the coast. I have some people that I will acknowledge and thank, most notably the Batemans Bay and Canberra Greek communities, and that story will unfold as I explain what happened to us.

Like many Canberrans, we were down the coast. It is a place that we regularly visit. In fact, I go there every year. I do a house swap with my in-laws. We spend a week in their house; they spend a week in ours. This year we were down there with friends, as we always are. There were eight of us: me; my wife; our friend, Kate; her elderly mother, Robyn; and four kids, all 13 years old, Robbie, Kit, Zoe and Ella.

Batemans Bay was already doing it tough before the fires hit. We were going to businesses and they were saying they were 80 per cent down on their normal trading, which gave us an excuse, particularly my wife, to spend in the name of doing good. She got away with it.

There was already a risk of a fire on the mountain but I do not think any of us expected what then unfolded, including the RFS. But we were vigilant. We had taken notice. Certainly we were mindful that evacuation might occur. We knew what our

plan was. On New Year's Eve, at about six in the morning, I received a text on my mobile to be prepared to evacuate. We received a landline call with an emergency beacon-type sound and we got a further text about ember attack.

At about that stage we decided it would be prudent to leave and we decided to go to the evacuation centre at Hanging Rock in Batemans Bay. If you do not know where that is, if you drive through Batemans Bay to near where the fairground sets up every year, there is the footy club and there is an oval on either side—I think rugby league on one side, Aussie rules on the other.

There were several hundred people that went there. I do not know what the exact number was. It may be a couple of thousand. But it was a mix of tourists and locals, and people were spread out, sitting in their cars and at the library that is there. There are some basketball courts, and the footy club, which is a two-storey building.

Already in the morning it was like an oven. The wind was blowing hard. The temperature was in the early 40s. It was a hostile place to be. But it was wonderful to see people supporting each other. Some people had water. We did. We had a lot of water. We were giving it out. Other people had food. They were sharing it. People were particularly mindful of pets, sharing pet food and so on. It was great to see the Aussie spirit in action.

About 11.30 in the morning a fire flared up on the other side of the evacuation centre, and a ground crew went there. The chopper, Elvis, was busy fighting that fire. That was only about 300 metres from the evacuation centre. We had fires coming toward us from one side and fires on the other side of the evacuation centre. Overhead were choppers; there were fixed-wing aircraft. Up and down the road in front of the evacuation centre there were fire trucks, ambulances, police vehicles, all with their sirens going.

At about midday the fire rolled into that area of Batemans Bay, or close to it, and day turned into night. The whole place went black. It was almost impossible to breathe. I have spent some time on the front line in these sorts of environments. In 1997 in the fires west of Sydney I commanded a military contingent fighting the fires. I have spent time in conflict zones, including Iraq, and, can I say, this was not dissimilar. This sense of terror, dislocation you can get, was not dissimilar. For many people who had not been in that environment before, it was quite clearly terrifying. I think that people who had been in the 2003 bushfires in the ACT can recognise the feeling.

Fleur, her friend Kate, her mother and the girls were in the evacuation centre. It was very crowded. I decided that the boys and I would move to our car to make sure there was more room for elderly or sick people. It was very difficult to get to the car. Some of you may have seen the stuff I posted on social media, with the sirens and the fact that it went from day to night.

The power went out. Being in the evacuation centre was not then a fun place to be. Mobile phones stopped working and it was pretty terrifying. A lot of people were upset. There were a lot of elderly people, people with oxygen masks, people in

wheelchairs. It was not an easy place to be, as you can imagine. No-one was able to say what was happening.

An RFS volunteer turned up. He came to brief everybody and said basically, “I don’t know what’s going on.” One of the consequences of unfolding fires is that it is very difficult for information to be passed on and, quite understandably, the RFS and others were busy fighting the fires. Getting information through to people was difficult, but that added to the sense of fright, of distress, that many people were experiencing.

Amongst this scene were a bunch of volunteers—Anglicare and others—handing out water, helping people, comforting people and giving out bread, which was essentially the only food that we had. By now, approaching the evening, a lot of people were pretty hungry. People did not know what was going on. It was not a good place to be. Amongst that I saw a really great act of community spirit that I think has been reflected across Australia over this summer, and I will share that with you.

In Batemans Bay every year the local Greek community and people from Canberra, Melbourne and elsewhere go there and they have a dance. They decided, “Let’s get to the evacuation centre with all our food to feed the hungry masses.” They came from John the Baptist, I think it is, the Greek Orthodox church. They decided to get down there and they turned up. We went from water and bread shared amongst, as I said, many hundreds of people to these—

Mrs Jones: It was biblical.

MR HANSON: It was biblical. I am not a religious man, as some of you may know, but there they were, members of the Greek community, with their own barbecues going. These men were cooking the barbecue in extraordinary heat. There was souvlaki. I do not know how many they were planning for their dinner but there was a lot of souvlaki and Greek salad and we went from stale bread to delicious Greek salad and souvlaki. Let me say that it was not just the physical sustenance but the morale boost that that gave the whole room, and this sense of uplift in comradeship, community spirit—Aussies looking after their mates—was fantastic.

I thank the president of the Greek Community of Batemans Bay and Districts, Sid Paschalidis, and his community for donating the food to the evacuation centre. They also made a \$5,000 donation to the Eurobodalla Shire Council mayor’s bushfire appeal, as did the Hellenic Club, I note, and the Canberra Greek Orthodox Community donated \$2,500.

I got these names from Eleni Harradimos, who is a friend of mine. Apparently the decision to do this was made around her kitchen table in Batemans Bay: Lisa Andonaros; Paul, Jaymima, Georgia and Demi Andonaros; George, Maria, Johnny, James and Karissa Frilingos; John, Chrisoula, Sofia, Eliana and Nikolas Mamatas; Penny and Irene Michalis; Cathy Peppas; Mary, Marissa, Panayioti and Yianni Stefanopoulos; and Tario, Effy, Felicity and Parris Triantafillopoulos. There may have been many more as well. If I have missed them, I apologise.

There were a lot of kids hanging around there as well and they were handing out water and platters of food, particularly helping the older people, and older kids were helping prepare and serve the food. I know there are many stories like that across Australia, but I particularly thank all those who came and fed us and boosted our morale at a point when it really needed it.

We were advised later in the evening that it would be safe to return to our homes. We went back, but we then spent two days without power, without electricity, without any communication. If it were not for ABC local radio we would not really have known what was going on. We waited to try to find out when the roads would open. (*Extension of time granted.*) As you could imagine, with an elderly woman and four children, I did not want to be stuck on the side of the road. It would not have been safe to do so.

We waited a few days. By this stage we were low on fuel. Sitting in the car, which was the safest place to be, although we had filled up the night before all this happened, we were low on fuel and we queued for about 2½ hours for fuel. We then got in the car and we went south. We debated, “Go north, go south, go north, go south.” It was a very difficult decision to make. If we had gone north we would have been stuck on the side of the road, as it happened, because it was closed again. We went south and it took 10 hours. We went through Surf Beach, all down that coast and through Cobargo. The devastation was horrific—animals dead and burning on the side of the road, houses burnt out, communities devastated. It was just horrific. It was very confronting.

We spent 10 hours in the queue of thousands of other vehicles heading back to Canberra. I certainly echo the point that Mr Gentleman made about the work done by the police. On the way home we got through a roundabout quickly. That saved us probably a couple of hours. Thanks to the police for doing that. It was tough. It was a difficult time and it would have been equally difficult for many thousands of Canberrans and others in New South Wales—far more difficult, of course, for those who had lost their homes, lost their stock and in some cases lost a loved one.

I say thank you to everybody that contributed and will contribute over the coming weeks as well: the fireies, the police, the volunteers and just the ordinary community members, like the Greek community that went out there and helped their fellow Australians to get through what has been a very difficult summer. Thank you very much.

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) (11.37): I rise to speak on this motion today with a mixture of sadness at what has been lost and experienced this summer and pride in our incredible emergency services and our broader community.

I want to start by acknowledging the traditional owners of this region, who have cared for their country for tens of thousands of years, for whom country is not just sacred but also identity, heart and soul. To the Ngunnawal, Yuin, Ngarigo and Gundungurra people in particular, I recognise the deep sorrow of the devastation that has been

wrought on country. I also join with colleagues in this place in expressing my heartfelt sympathy for those who have lost loved ones in these terrible fires, as well as to those who have lost their homes and livelihoods. We have seen brave Australians pay the ultimate price for their service to their communities or for seeking to protect their homes and families, and we have seen three Americans, who came halfway round the world to help us, perish in dreadful circumstances.

As bushfires seasons lengthen, both here and in the Northern Hemisphere, there will be a need for even more collaboration to understand the challenges we face, to share resources where we can and to recognise where that will become more difficult as our fire seasons overlap. It is easy to forget in our fast-paced world, but it was only last July that we were seeing shocking pictures of fires in the Arctic Circle. What scientists tell us is not that the Arctic does not usually burn. Fires are a regular occurrence. But they are becoming more frequent, bigger and hotter and this is changing whole ecosystems. Australia's natural environment also relies on fire to regenerate, but patterns are changing here too. As climate change drives more frequent extreme weather it is not good enough to say, "We'll talk about that later," or to pretend it is not a factor.

The physical devastation caused by this summer's bushfires is enormous. Despite the very welcome rain over the last few days, which has brought its own challenges, the Orroral Valley fire in the Namadgi National Park is not yet declared extinguished. We have seen 80 per cent of the park affected by fire this season. That is huge. Thank you to the parks and conservation team that has worked with the support of the Emergency Services Agency, the Australian Defence Force and traditional custodians to defend and protect the natural, cultural and economic assets in our national park, nature reserves and rural areas. It has been an amazing effort. But in many ways we know your work has just begun.

Also huge for Canberrans have been the impacts on the places we go year in, year out to swim, ski and simply relax with family and friends. The South Coast is Canberra by the sea. I acknowledge Mr Hanson's experience down there. The Snowy Mountains are our winter playground. So the psychological impact of these fires for our community has been and will continue to be huge as well. Like tens of thousands of Canberrans, I have memories of 18 January 2003 seared into my mind. They are frequently recalled when I see images of other communities devastated by fire or hear the stories of terrifying ordeals and close calls—the sound of the fire approaching like a freight train, the wind roaring, lying on the floor, hoping the building I was in would protect me, stables burning, not knowing whether friends had reached safety before it hit. And then there were the spot fires, the cars and sheds destroyed, the horses dead and injured, the grief. But also there was the community: the way people worked together and came together afterwards to support one another, to share and console and just to talk—and talk and talk—for months. We know that will be the case this time too.

The anxiety Canberrans have experienced as a result of fire and smoke was for many exacerbated by the memories of 2003. This was certainly the case for many in the local equestrian community. People have been on high alert for weeks. But they have

also been prepared. I would particularly like to acknowledge the work of Christine Lawrence, the president of the ACT Equestrian Association, in ensuring that community members were getting accurate information about issues such as horse evacuation and relocation points, road closures and the operation of the alert system. We also saw the community pull together, with people offering one another transport and accommodation for their horses as the fire threat shifted around the city from the western fringe to Pialligo and Oaks Estate and back again to the south-west. Awareness of and communication with the equestrian community is just one example of the lessons learned from 2003 and since then.

The commissioner, Georgeina Whelan, and her team, have been laser focused not only on fighting the fires but also on communicating with the community about what they are doing and how ACT residents could help and prepare themselves. Technology has helped. Many people have followed the ESA on social media and the New South Wales RFS Fires Near Me app, which clearly was not an option in 2003. As others have, I also want to give a shout-out to the radio stations, and particularly our emergency broadcast partner, the ABC. I know more than a couple of people who came back from new year on the South Coast vowing to buy a battery-powered radio.

I want to acknowledge how quick the commonwealth government was in understanding the mental health impact of the fires. The funding they have put in place so far is welcome. I have no doubt that Minister Rattenbury and the ACT government as a whole will continue to monitor its effectiveness.

Many members of the first nations community in the surrounding region, particularly the Yuin people on the South Coast, have relocated to the ACT either temporarily or to stay. In the first instance they were supported by community services across Canberra, including through the Dickson relief centre. This support included immediate temporary accommodation and financial assistance. Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health and Community Services and Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation opened their doors to provide extra support to Aboriginal people from the region impacted by fires. I met with Julie Tongs in mid-January to discuss this response. As a result of this meeting, I have written to the commonwealth health minister, the Hon Greg Hunt MP, asking that he expand the mental health package to include culturally appropriate and community-controlled supports for community members for whom the impact of the fires may be exacerbated by the intergenerational trauma and cultural load that comes with being an Aboriginal person in this country.

Our anxiety as a city has also been heightened by the waves of dense smoke that have engulfed our city for days at a time since November. Canberrans have become aware of air quality in a way most of us never expected. We will be talking about this more on Thursday, so I will not go into detail on everything the Chief Health Officer and health protection service did to respond to this challenge. It was an enormous amount of work, including developing a new website to provide hourly average air quality data in response to feedback from the community and providing up-to-date evidence-based advice on how best to cope.

The commonwealth government provided 400,000 P2/N95 masks to the ACT from the national medical stockpile in early January. Officials from across the ACT government worked hard to distribute these masks to pharmacies and to vulnerable Canberrans. I would like to acknowledge the support of the Pharmacy Guild and the Australian Pharmaceutical Society in this effort, and the support of community pharmacies across the city who provided important advice and support to Canberrans.

As our city has faced air quality issues, bushfires in our own backyard and then of course the global challenge of the novel coronavirus, Dr Kerry Coleman has taken on all these challenges, as the territory's Chief Health Officer, ably supported by her staff at the health protection service. It was a pleasure to visit HPS in January to thank staff for this work and the work they do every day of the year to protect and support Canberrans.

The community also stepped up, seeking to support one another share information. To the many health professionals and academics called on to explain the impact of smoke and what we should do about it, thank you. In early January, the Deputy Chief Minister and I met with a group of students and staff from the ANU who had stepped up to disseminate information and resources to their community and were keen to be part of the solution. Their grassroots work provided valuable insights and made a real difference.

Thank you to the staff at Canberra Health Services, Calvary Public Hospital and our local general practitioners and other health professionals who provided support to Canberrans and our neighbours during these difficult times. Staff in the children, youth and families division and across the Community Services Directorate have assisted at the Dickson relief centre and at the Erindale and Hedley Beare evacuation centres. During this hard time, ACT government staff and our community partners have also been keeping in touch with vulnerable families in our community to ensure they have relevant information, know what is happening and have been supported to develop their bushfire plans.

There has been no greater privilege in this job than seeing firsthand the work our emergency services team of teams has been doing from their base at Fairbairn. The planning has been extraordinary. The teamwork has been exemplary. The commitment to the wellbeing of our community and to the ESA and other agency staff has been nothing short of inspiring. I thank them and I commend the motion.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (11.46): We are all too aware of the issues we have faced in the ACT over the past few months. It started with smoke, mainly from coastal and other region fires, and then moved to be a threat to ACT residents from the more recent bushfire events. Many have suffered significant losses in our region. Lives, homes, farms, stock, businesses and wildlife have been lost. A large part of our beautiful Namadgi National Park has been burnt, 86,000 hectares, or 80 per cent of Namadgi. Of course, the impact on our wildlife has been devastating.

Each loss is a personal tragedy. Each property saved, each animal rescued is a celebration. In some parts of Australia, we have seen whole communities razed by

fires, so some ways we, as a community in the ACT, have been fortunate. The worst predictions of fire in the ACT were not realised.

As a member of my local community fire unit, we were on high alert during these times. Our unit, like all the other CFUs, was established after the 2003 bushfires. Where we are, we have a reserve on one side of the road and, as well as the immediate danger, we can see the Bullen Range and the Brindabellas from our house. We could see the fires and see them approaching, just as we could in 2003. Unlike 2003, we felt we were trained and prepared to face a fire if it came closer, like other CFUs across the ACT. Fortunately, at this time we were not stood up. We were not required to fight fire, but we did engage in other community activities: outreach activities at shopping centres, encouraging people to complete their bushfire survival plan, and I went to the Erindale evacuation centre.

There are so many people that we need to thank for their work over the past weeks: a range of government agencies, the directorates and officials, paid and volunteer staff, our fireies, RFS, SES and community fire unit members, volunteers in the evacuation and relief centres, those who helped people move from threatened homes, those who made meals, those who donated supplies and money, interstate and overseas firefighters and other personnel, the police, the Defence Force, Vinnies, Red Cross, the Salvos, St John's Ambulance, Communities@Work, Anglicare, the Community Services Directorate, ACT Health and Domestic Animal Services. These and other agencies and organisations played a crucial part.

I would also like to pass on my thanks to the media, including the ABC, WIN, Channel 9, the *Canberra Times*, the RiotACT, 2CC, and the FMs. I also thank the wildlife carers and those who assisted in many, many ways, not just caring for wildlife. For example, the ACT Woodcraft Guild and some men's sheds, who are making possum boxes and nesting boxes for wildlife that were displaced by the fires. These are all important parts of our recovery activities and they are all important parts of helping people to know that they are helping.

We owe our thanks to all the people of Canberra, and particularly Tuggeranong, I believe, who faced the wrath of this summer's fires. The humanity and the hope and the positivity displayed by so many in our community are heartwarming. One group that popped up in Tuggeranong is called Community Connections Inc. This group was not seeking any recognition or coverage. It is a group of Tuggeranong residents who got together to provide practical support for people in our region who had, in some other ways, fallen through the cracks. These residents were there to help people after the bushfires or the drought.

It was our community members helping other communities that needed help, including tailored care packs of food, toiletries, clothes, shoes, bedding, as well as thoughts and wishes bags, bags that were lovingly packed with both practical and nice luxury items for people aged from zero to 100, along with a handwritten message of support. They packed trucks and drove down the coast and other areas and delivered these packages. Thank you to those people. They do not want to be recognised publicly, but I say to you that they represent the very best of all of us. This and other

responses make me proud to be a Canberran and proud to be a “Tuggeranongite”, if that is actually a word.

Thanks absolutely to those who bore the brunt of fighting the fires. Some who came to help to serve and protect did not return home and we, as Australians, will be forever grateful for their sacrifice. As someone with a family member in our emergency services, this is a real fear for our loved ones.

To the residents of Tuggeranong, thank you for your humour and stoicism and grace under pressure and thanks also to the residents of Tharwa. To the residents of Tuggeranong, thank you for perhaps finally completing your bushfire survival plan. It took a bit of encouragement, but I think we got there.

We need to acknowledge the losses faced by some of our community, including one of my family members who drove down to their farm a week and a half ago to be confronted with the smouldering ruins of their house and land and fences. We need to applaud and continue to encourage the preparedness of our whole community and we need to absolutely appreciate and applaud the willingness of so many to help in a myriad of ways to support fellow Australians. And our hearts go out to those Australians who are still facing a summer of potentially threatening fires, floods and other natural disasters. I applaud the motion before the Assembly.

MS ORR (Yerrabi—Minister for Community Services and Facilities, Minister for Disability, Minister for Employment and Workplace Safety and Minister for Government Services and Procurement) (11.54): This summer has been an extremely stressful and devastating time for many Australians, and I would like to express my deepest condolences to the families of those who have lost their lives in recent bushfires across the country. While bushfires are often a common reality of an Australian summer, it is safe to say that we have never experienced anything like this bushfire season.

As Canberrans, many of us have been or know someone who has been impacted by fires in the recent months, whether it be friends and family members who have had their local communities devastated, volunteer firefighters who have given up their time and, in some cases, sacrificed their income to contribute to the firefighting effort, or the impact of the smoke haze and poor air quality that has challenged us this summer.

Our South Coast neighbours have particularly felt the severity of fire, smoke and heat this summer. We are all aware of the devastation caused by the Currowan fire, which burned close to 500,000 hectares of land over 74 days. The announcement by the NSW Rural Fire Service over the weekend of the Currowan fire officially being out came as a huge relief. The fire left a path of destruction across the entire South Coast, and we know it will take a very long time for communities and ecological systems to recover.

Here in the ACT, we have of course been faced with the danger of the Orroral Valley fire. We have tragically lost 80 per cent of the beautiful Namadgi National Park,

although fortunately no lives or homes have been lost. The cooler weather and rain over recent days have thankfully contributed to the fire being brought under control.

Although the fire is still burning, it is important for us to take the opportunity today to recognise the incredible work of the emergency services personnel, the police, public servants, community service partners and volunteers who have assisted in the enormous effort of protecting our city. I would like to thank Commissioner Whelan for her leadership and outstanding efforts to keep the people of Canberra safe this summer. The commissioner and the entire Emergency Services Agency have worked tirelessly to fight fires within the ACT and surrounding regions, while at the same time providing all of us with the information we need to be bushfire prepared.

The Community Services Directorate has also played a vital role in supporting Canberrans and people from other fire-affected areas in Australia. Under the ACT emergency arrangements, the Community Services Directorate is responsible for establishing evacuation relief and recovery centres. These centres provide a safe place for people to shelter and access support, including financial assistance and temporary accommodation when they are required to evacuate their home or business. In response to the bushfires within our region, evacuation centres were stood up across the ACT.

On 2 January the Dickson relief centre was established at Dickson College to provide respite and support to people affected by the bushfires in New South Wales and Victoria. The centre was open for two weeks and helped more than 380 people, providing more than \$30,000 worth of financial assistance as well as meals, goods and clothing and much-needed accommodation.

People accessing the centre were either transiting through the ACT on their way home from the fire-affected region, due to the many road closures, or were impacted by the fire and had temporarily moved to Canberra. A lot of these people were understandably anxious and upset and many families were split, with one parent staying near their home to manage insurance and other arrangements and the other parent and the children trying to establish a sense of temporary security in Canberra with family or friends or on their own.

On 28 January the Erindale evacuation centre was activated to provide a place of safety and support to people in Canberra's southern suburbs threatened by the Orroral Valley fire. The evacuation centre was open for 10 days and provided assistance and reassurance to over 175 people. These evacuation centres are a vital part of the response to any natural disasters, such as a bushfire or flood, and it is thanks to the staff of the Community Services Directorate, volunteers and our community service partners that we can provide these much-needed places of respite. I would like to thank everyone involved in the operation of these centres for their time, effort and compassion over the past month.

I have no doubt that this bushfire season will be remembered by all of us as the most destructive and unprecedented season to date. As a government, we are committed to supporting Canberrans and our interstate neighbours who need assistance to recover.

From what I have seen so far, I am confident that all Canberrans will be ready to come together and support those who need a helping hand.

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 11.59 am to 2.00 pm.

Questions without notice

Transport Canberra—network 19

MR COE: My question is to the Minister for Transport. I refer to a petition tabled on 4 June 2019 advocating the return of the previous bus network. Over 7,000 people signed the petition, the largest number in this Assembly's history. Minister, if you respect Canberrans why do you choose to deliberately ignore their wishes?

MR STEEL: I do not.

MR COE: Minister, why was the government too arrogant and too proud to admit that you made a mistake and will you reverse the changes?

MR STEEL: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. Since the introduction of network 19, we have seen 7.1 per cent more journeys taken on public transport. That has been a result of putting on 21 per cent more public transport services throughout the city through the implementation of 10 rapid routes. Something that we have heard from the community is that it is important to be able to provide frequency and encourage more people to use public transport.

We have seen that result, but we have also, from the very beginning, said that we would look at the operation of the new network, we would listen to the community and make changes where necessary. We made 136 tweaks last year, and now we have announced further changes to the public transport network, which will come into effect in term 2. That responds to many of the issues that were raised about network 19, and we hope that, as a result of these changes, even more people will use public transport.

MISS C BURCH: Minister, now that you have conceded to the many failings of the network, will you apologise to the over 7,000 people who signed the petition for creating such a huge inconvenience to their everyday lives and for only choosing to act when an election is on the horizon?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her supplementary question. We make changes every year with the public transport network, responding to the needs of the community. With the largest change to the public transport network for well over a decade or two, this was always going to need to be improved over time. We have looked at the six months of operation of the network. We have looked at the data that has come through the MyWay system. We have heard feedback from the community.

We have checked in with community councils about how the network was operating. We have listened and we are making changes to the network, which will commence in term 2.

I will be announcing further changes and improvements to timings when we release the timetable in mid-March, which will provide further information for the community.

Crime—sexual assault

MS LE COUTEUR: My question is to the minister for policing, and it relates to an ABC investigative report that the number of reports of sexual assault classified as rejected or unfounded in the ACT has soared from three per cent to 21 per cent between 2007 and 2017. Minister, can you explain why there has been such a huge increase in the number of reports that have been deemed to be unfounded?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Ms Le Couteur for the question. It is an important question. I do not have the details for those reports with me, but I will take that on notice and come back to the chamber.

MS LE COUTEUR: Minister, does the ACT PROMIS policing data system allow for the recording of why a report has been deemed unfounded, including if the complainant withdraws the complaint? And does the ACT government explain to the complainant why their report is deemed unfounded, if it is deemed unfounded?

MR GENTLEMAN: There is a great deal of information provided on PROMIS, and jobs are allocated from a CAD from that system. That does include, of course, these sorts of complaints, and jobs are dealt with and stored on the system. In relation to reporting back, I will ask ACT Policing to give me more detail on that and come back to Ms Le Couteur.

Transport Canberra—network 19

MS LAWDER: My question is to the Minister for Transport. I refer to an article from the *Canberra Times* titled “We’re the forgotten people of the south: bus changes opposition heats up”. Minister, why did your recently announced changes to network 19 not include any routes for Wanniasa?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. We have listened to the community and we are making changes to respond to some of the community feedback. We have, through network 19, implemented a new rapid 5 service which provides frequent rapid transport through Wanniasa to Woden and the city. We are looking at improving that service further, with changes in term 2 to reduce travel time by up to 15 minutes.

We will also be introducing changes to route 73 to provide local services to Wanniasa taking in Erindale, Wheeler Crescent, Kirkton Street, Gaunson Crescent, Sainsbury Crescent and Longmore Crescent. This service will directly connect with Woden and Tuggeranong. Route 73 will connect with the existing rapid 5 service as

well, for people who want a faster trip into the city without needing to change at Woden. Three local route services will also be going through Wanniasa to Woden. Those are the 72, 76 and 77 route services, which will also connect with the hospital and provide people from Wanniasa and other parts of Tuggeranong, particularly in eastern Tuggeranong, with more options to get to Woden.

I will be releasing a timetable, as I mentioned earlier, around mid-March, which will provide further information and timings for people in Tuggeranong in relation to the new network. The government has been listening to feedback on the network and we are making changes. Just as we did last year, we are making changes this year.

MS LAWDER: Minister, could you please explain how you expect elderly and disabled people who have been left disadvantaged by network 19 to travel?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. They will be able to travel on services that I have outlined in my previous answer.

MR WALL: Minister, will you apologise to the elderly and disabled residents, particularly in suburbs such as Wanniasa, who have been forced back into cars because of the shambles that network 19 was?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question. Many people travel in different ways to get where they need to go. We are expanding Wanniasa park and ride for those who want to connect with public transport from a vehicle. We have the R5 service running through Wanniasa. What we heard from some members of the community was that this was the first time that Wanniasa has had a frequent bus service. But we are making improvements to that, based on feedback that we have heard from various groups in the community, including from Wanniasa, by adding new route bus services like the 73, which will connect more parts of Wanniasa through to places like Woden and Erindale, which is a major hub for public transport now, as a result of the changes that we have made as part of network 19.

Transport Canberra—network 19

MR PARTON: My question is to the Minister for Transport. Minister, I refer to an article published on RiotACT titled “Woden and Tuggeranong not getting on board new transport, data reveals”. Data indicated as early as August that people living on the south side were disadvantaged and disenfranchised by network 19. Minister, do you regret waiting so long to take action on this?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question. When the network started in April last year we said from the very beginning that we would monitor the operation of the network and we would look at the data. With six months of data—and we have been looking at that every week; I get briefed every week on the data—we have been looking at how the network has been operating and we are making changes as a result of some of the feedback and data that we are receiving.

One of the changes will be to add extra capacity on the Athllon Drive corridor to the city, not only with the existing R4 service but also providing, through a more direct

R5 service, extra capacity for people from the Woden Valley who want to take the bus directly into the city rather than having to go through Barton, over Kings Avenue Bridge and along Constitution Avenue. There will be a new bus service, the 59 route, which can take people into Barton from Woden.

The changes that we will be making from term 2 respond directly to some of the feedback that we have been receiving and the data on the network. That is the benefit of having that MyWay data and we will continue to use it to make improvements to the network going forward.

MR PARTON: Minister, is the upcoming election the reason that you have remembered the south side exists?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question. He may not realise that I live on the south side, in Kambah. I realise that I live there every day when I wake up and go to work.

The answer is no. We have been making improvements in Tuggeranong, whether it is public realm improvements at Kambah village that have been welcomed by the community or whether it is the construction that will very soon begin on the laneways project in Tuggeranong town centre, but also in relation to the changes that we are making to the bus network. We put on new rapids when we made changes to the network last year to improve public transport patronage, and we are looking at making further improvements based on feedback that we have had from the Tuggeranong community.

We will continue to make changes to improve public transport patronage, because, unlike those opposite, we want to invest in public transport. We know that the Liberals' only plan for public transport is to privatise the bus system and to cut 22 bus services at peak hours of the day.

Mrs Dunne: Point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: Minister, resume your seat, please.

Mrs Dunne: Point of order, Madam Speaker. When answering a question, the minister is supposed to be directly relevant to the question. A riff on other people's policy is not directly relevant, and when it is untrue it is even less directly relevant. I ask you to ensure that the minister is directly relevant to the question.

MADAM SPEAKER: I think he was relevant to the point of the question. Also, on points of order, I know it is the first question time and everyone could be quite excited to be back, but normally when a minister is on their feet they are to be heard in silence.

MS LE COUTEUR: Minister, there are buses going around saying "new one of 40 buses". What is the net increase in the number of buses? We have 40 new ones, but how many old ones did you get rid of?

MR STEEL: I thank Ms Le Couteur for her question. Members will be seeing brand-new Scania buses that are made with bus check that have been coming off the production line in Adelaide and will be seen on our public transport network. These buses are replacing some of the old Renault PR2 and PR3 buses that have been around, some of which are up to 28 years old. Those 40 new buses are replacing existing old buses. Over time we will need to continue to replace the rest of the Renault fleet as well as the LNG buses that are in our fleet.

We have funding to purchase an additional 84 buses and we are hoping that, through that program, we will not only be able to replace the old buses that we have but also grow the number of buses in the network. That is very important.

Mrs Jones: Point of order, Madam Speaker. The question asked was: how many is the net increase. I do not believe that we have been told yet the net increase. I note that the minister is headed towards his very important concluding remarks.

MADAM SPEAKER: Maybe he would have got there before you stood, Mrs Jones. Mr Steel.

MR STEEL: I said that they were replacing the existing buses, so they are not designed to grow the number, but over time we will be able to grow as a result of the further 84 that we will be purchasing over the next few years. That is very important, because in order to grow the network to new suburbs and to add more frequency we need more buses and we need more bus drivers. We are in recruitment for more bus drivers at the moment and we will need more buses as well to couple with them. We want to put those on the routes to make sure that there is more frequency.

The opposition wants to cut 22 services in peak times. That is their policy; they have announced and reiterated that policy this week. They will cut 22 buses.

Bushfires—economic impact

MR PETTERSSON: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, can you please update the Assembly on the impact on the ACT economy of the bushfires and smoke?

MR BARR: There is no doubt that the smoke that blanketed our city and gave us some of the worst air quality in the world severely disrupted our everyday lives and livelihoods. It is going to take some time to calculate the full financial and economic impacts of our summer of disasters but there is no doubt that our economy, particularly the hospitality and tourism sectors, has had a very difficult time over the past two months. Visitor numbers have declined and some businesses, large and small, had to temporarily shut their doors to keep out the smoke.

With the worst of the smoke behind us, we have certainly seen the best of Canberrans though. Our resilience has been on display. Locals have come out in support of both local and regional businesses in the immediate aftermath of this summer period. We have been actively working with our business community for some weeks now, first

to measure the impacts and then to respond with a range of practical assistance measures. This work has included an initial round table with tourism and hospitality businesses in the middle of January and has continued with active, individual case management for a number of bushfire and smoke impacted businesses that have been directly affected by events over the summer. A further industry forum will be held later this week to update on progress and further inform the next phase of the ACT government's response.

MR PETTERSSON: Chief Minister, how is the ACT government supporting small to medium businesses impacted by bushfires and smoke this summer?

MR BARR: We are taking steps to assist the most immediately impacted and to effectively help those sectors of the economy. A practical example of this was the assistance I announced to the hospitality sector through free outdoor dining permits for 12 months or a 50 per cent reduction in fees for those with existing permits. We have joined with Tourism Australia in their "holiday here" campaign to encourage domestic travellers to enjoy everything that Canberra and the region have to offer. I will have further announcements on support for the tourism sector this week.

Those in the community, including businesses, with hail-damaged vehicles will also benefit from the assistance package announced this week. It is worth noting at this time, when people are looking at their insurance policies, that Canberra businesses with business or motor vehicle insurance, for example, pay no duty on their insurance policies in the ACT, unlike those across the border in New South Wales, saving them hundreds and thousands of dollars—

Mr Coe: Hundreds of thousands?

MR BARR: Hundreds and thousands of dollars in tax over the past three years. I have written twice to the Prime Minister to seek federal government approval to activate the disaster recovery funding arrangements for the ACT. The first instance of this was for the bushfire smoke and hailstorm impacts and more recently also for the Orroral Valley fire. ACT officials have lodged DRFA claim notifications with the Australian government for approval that covers the fires in New South Wales as well as the hailstorm impacts on the ACT. A further claim notification for the Orroral Valley fire within the ACT is being finalised for lodgement with the commonwealth.

MR GUPTA: Chief Minister, how is the government supporting the local communities affected by the bushfires and smoke?

MR BARR: Thank you. Our focus continues to be on keeping the local communities safe and informed while acting on their wish to contribute to lower emissions and to reduce the risks of climate change. We moved as quickly as possible to locate and distribute suitable P2 air masks for vulnerable Canberrans. I acknowledge the support of the federal government in supplying an additional 400,000 masks from the national stockpile for this purpose.

We provided the Canberra community with full and timely information about the risks we faced, the reasons for going into states of alert and a state of emergency. We set up

respite and evacuation centres to give Canberrans and interstate travellers a safe and welcoming place to rest. At the end of this fire season we will review what has worked and what we can do better, make any necessary changes, and prepare for the future. We are in a strong position but we can, of course, never be complacent.

Canberrans have also very clearly indicated to me that they appreciate that the ACT government is not in the business of disputing the science of manmade climate change. The effect is real, and we are beginning to see the consequences through longer droughts and greater extreme weather events. These affect every Canberran.

It is worth noting that through this period the ACT is now the first major city outside Europe to transition to 100 per cent renewable electricity. The impact of these disasters will be felt for a long time to come, but it is important that we reassure Canberrans that the ACT government will be there every step of the way, supporting Canberra and the region in our recovery.

Transport Canberra—network 19

MS LEE: My question is to the Minister for Transport. I refer to an article in the *Canberra Times* titled “Safety concern: School buses cut in transport overhaul”. Minister, why did you ignore the concerns of the territory’s peak parent body, the ACT Council of Parents and Citizens Associations, when you decided to cut over 50 dedicated school bus services?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. We continue to work closely, both Transport Canberra and I, with school communities. Around mid-March, at the time that I release the timetable for the whole network, I will be announcing some changes to the school bus services being delivered. We deliberately did not want to start changes to the bus network on day 1 of term 1. We want to provide information later in the term, at a point where students have gone to school and their families are settled. We will be clearly communicating with families and students as well as schools and their communities about what those changes are. Many of them relate to timing and capacity issues and also connections. I will have further to say about that.

We continue to work very closely with school communities. We have seen students adapt quite well to the new network, and we have not seen a dramatic decrease in the number of school students using public transport. In fact, we have seen quite the opposite, and that is a very good thing. We are seeing students become lifelong public transport users, taking more bus services on the weekend in particular, because they know how to use the regular route bus system. There are, of course, 220 school bus services remaining.

But I will reiterate this: the plan from those opposite is to cut buses on the regular network. That is their policy. Over 20 buses would be cut from the regular network because of their plans.

Mrs Dunne: On a point of order, the standing orders clearly state that the minister has to be directly relevant. The standing orders go on to say that the minister cannot

debate the issue, and the standing orders actually allow that, if the minister attempts to make a ministerial-type statement, a member of the opposition can—

Members interjecting—

Mrs Dunne: You took it out? Anyhow, my point stands: the minister is not being directly relevant to the question and you, Madam Speaker, need to bring him to order.

MADAM SPEAKER: I believe he is being directly relevant to the question and that ability was removed from the standing orders. You can take your colleague outside if you like and have that discussion.

Ms Berry: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, the behaviour and the name calling from those opposite about Mr Steel are unparliamentary and they should withdraw their comments.

Mrs Jones: On the point of order, there was no name calling. The opposition, including me, said, “Lies, lies, lies,” which is exactly what has been told in this chamber. That is not name calling. That is discussing the behaviour, not the person.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mrs Jones, please resume your seat. I have ruled that the response to the question was in order and the minister’s time has expired.

MS LEE: Minister, will you bring back the dedicated school bus services that you cut?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. As I said, we are seeing students adapt to using the regular route bus system as well as school services, the over 220 that we are providing. School students were using regular route buses before network 19 came in, and we are seeing them continue to use regular route bus services to get around. Because we have made them more frequent across the city, with the implementation of 10 rapid routes connecting the city, with light rail included, it has made it convenient for many school students to catch the regular route bus system rather than needing to rely on a school bus service that may have shown up only once or twice rather than having a regular, frequent route bus service.

MISS C BURCH: Minister, will you apologise to parents for cutting dedicated school bus services, forcing them and their children back into their cars to get to and from school or to find alternative routes to get their children to school?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. I do not accept the premise of the question. We are seeing students using our public transport system. That is a very good thing, because we want to encourage young people in particular to be using public transport. We have been seeing that through the implementation of 21 per cent more services on our regular route bus services that are available to the whole community, including students. They have been using them, which is fantastic to see. We will continue to grow our public transport network. We will make investments in new buses. We will continue to expand light rail to other parts of our city, which will benefit the whole community, including students.

Transport Canberra—network 19

MR MILLIGAN: My question is to the Minister for Transport. I refer to a petition tabled on 14 August 2018 calling for the return of bus route 54 from Crace to Belconnen. Why have you waited so long to reinstate bus route 54?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question. Of course, there is a rapid service that currently exists between Gungahlin and Belconnen, but we did listen to the community, including retirement villages in the Crace area, that wanted to be able to access the Belconnen town centre until Gungahlin town centre expands to provide extra services in the future to the community. We know that Belconnen mall is an important destination, and we have listened to that feedback.

We will be making changes to the bus network that will start in term 2. As I explained in answer to an earlier question, we were very deliberate about that. We wanted to make sure that we started it in term 2 rather than in term 1, because of the issues that that would cause, particularly for school communities. Those changes will be made.

We touched base with Gungahlin Community Council after the operation of the network last year. We will be going out there to meet them through Transport Canberra very soon, to talk through the changes that have been made in responding to some of the issues that they have raised with the introduction of the network. The government has been listening, and we will be making those changes.

We are making further extensions, not only through Crace but through other suburbs in Gungahlin, through to Belconnen, which will provide better connections for suburbs in Belconnen as well.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, will you admit that taking away bus route 54 was wrong in the first instance?

MR STEEL: We undertook to implement 10 rapid services through network 19. We thought that the rapid service that existed—the black rapid, as it is known—has been successful and will continue to remain an important service. We have heard from the community that they want to see those local route bus services connected through, and we will be making those changes in term 2, responding to that community feedback.

MR COE: Minister, will you apologise to the 529 residents who signed the petition and whom you seriously disadvantaged for more than a year before reinstating route 54?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question. We will continue to make changes to the public transport network based on feedback that we receive from the community, but also looking at the data on how the public transport network was being used. When you make changes to a public transport network as substantial as those that were made as part of network 19 in April 2019, you do have to look at the data to see how the network is being used. We certainly acknowledge that we need to make changes. We have listened to community feedback in that regard. The

alternative is the opposition's plan to cut 20 bus services and to privatise the public transport network. Which would you prefer?

Opposition members interjecting—

Mrs Dunne: Point of order, Madam Speaker; standing order 118A—

MADAM SPEAKER: There are two things I am going to do. I think the question is relevant but I also caution ministers on referencing opposition policies. The question was about your policies, not opposition policies. Also I will be asking Mrs Jones to withdraw her interjections. You called across the chamber, "Lies, lies and lies," which implies that the minister is lying. I ask you to withdraw.

Mrs Jones: I withdraw.

Transport Canberra—network 19

MRS JONES: My question is to the Minister for Transport. I refer to an article from the *Canberra Times* titled "Bus changes leave students in the lurch". Minister, why did it take 10 months of children being left stranded at interchanges or having to be driven to school because public buses were at capacity for you to introduce changes to the school buses under network 19?

MR STEEL: I wish the opposition would stop dog whistling on student safety. What we have seen with the new network is that students have adapted very well. They have done so with the support of customer service officers who have been available at the interchanges, supporting them to get them and other public transport customers to where they need to go.

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members! Can you resume your seat, please.

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members on my left, I have asked you to be quiet. The minister may still want to conclude his answer, should he wish.

MR STEEL: We have seen students adapt very well to the public transport network. We will continue to work with school communities. We have a school liaison committee—

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, I have called members to silence.

MR STEEL: that Transport Canberra convenes, where we work with schools, school communities and their representatives to work through any issues. The public transport network is changing all the time. That is as a result of the city growing. It is

as a result of us wanting to put on more bus services, which we did in the network 19 changes. We will continue to make improvements, working with those school communities, to make sure that students can get around quickly and efficiently.

MRS JONES: Minister, will you continue to deny the concerns parents like me have about children like mine who have special needs spending time in bus interchanges?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. We will continue to work with school students, their parents and representatives on improvements. The customer service officers, who have been welcomed by the community, are available at our interchanges, and can be used by everyone, including those who need extra support for where they need to go. Of course, we have special needs transport, which is currently being run by Qcity through this year, through a new change in contract.

Mr Coe: It has been privatised. It has been outsourced.

MR STEEL: It has been for a very long time. We know what your plan is. That is not our plan.

MISS C BURCH: Minister, when will you apologise to parents for ignoring their concerns about their children's safety, and to the school children themselves for making their safety an election issue?

MR STEEL: Again we see dog-whistling from the Canberra Liberals on student safety. We see students using public transport and being supported in their use of public transport.

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members! The member will resume his seat. Mr Coe and Mrs Dunne, I know it is a bit exciting to have our first day back in 2020, but please! Minister Steel, I see that you have concluded.

Bushfires—preparedness

MR GUPTA: My question is to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Minister, how has the ACT government prepared for the threat of bushfires since 2003?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Mr Gupta for this very important question. The ACT government has taken significant steps over the past 17 years to ensure that the lessons learned from the 2003 Canberra bushfires have been applied across our emergency services. These lessons continue to shape how we prepare for and respond to bushfires in the ACT. The ACT government, the ESA and the community have been proactive in implementing plans and increased protection measures against bushfires and we are more prepared than ever in 2020.

Under the Emergencies Act 2004, the ESA has successfully delivered four strategic bushfire management plans, reflecting significant improvements in bushfire

prevention, bushfire fighting capacity and capability, and increased community engagement and education. ESA has utilised new technology including the specialist intelligence gathering capability, satellite imagery, aerial firefighting capability and improved communications technology.

Together with parks and conservation, ESA has significantly upgraded our fire trails and taken a proactive approach to protecting important environmental and heritage sites. To achieve these outcomes, the ACT government has ensured that the ESA and partner directorates are well funded and resourced including with appropriate equipment, well-trained and qualified firefighters, collaborative intergovernmental arrangements and strong cross-border relationships and arrangements.

While we have learned the lessons of 2003, preparing for bushfire is a shared responsibility. We need ACT residents to be prepared by having a bushfire survival plan, and I encourage all members of the ACT community to download and complete a bushfire survival plan today.

MR GUPTA: Minister, how can the ACT Government build on its current investment in the Emergency Services Agency?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Mr Gupta for his interest in investing in these agencies. The independent Bushfire Council has acknowledged that the ACT is well resourced and well prepared for bushfires. To ensure that this remains the case, the ACT government is committed to building on its current investment in and support for the ESA. That is why the ACT government is investing \$976,000 in the 2019-20 budget review, which adds to our \$2.65 million for strengthening bushfire preparedness and ACT Rural Fire Service partnerships which was provided in the 2019-20 budget.

At the request of the ESA, the ACT government is funding a six-month trial of fire and smoke detection cameras in key elevated locations across Canberra to establish how they could assist with early fire detection. An extra investment will also enable the installation of seven new electronic fire danger rating signs, completing our replacement of the manual signs. This includes continuing the ACT's contribution to the national emergency alert system.

Our ongoing investments in the ESA have enabled their outstanding efforts so far this bushfire season in protecting Canberra. We will continue to ensure that this remains the case.

MS CHEYNE: Minister, what improvements have been made to emergency communications since 2003?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Ms Cheyne for her question. We heard loud and clear calls from the community for more timely and detailed information about bushfire threats following 2003. As demonstrated by the actions of the government and the ESA during the current bushfire season, the ACT is as prepared as it has ever been in keeping our community safe and informed. I take this opportunity to thank

Commissioner Whelan and the ESA who have been doing a remarkable job keeping the community up to date with the latest information.

The Emergency Services Agency has several public information strategies that provide advice to the community on any actions they should be taking during an emergency. They include but are not limited to posts to social media, including ESA's Twitter and Facebook pages; publication of messages on the ESA website; and a memorandum of understanding with media outlets for transmission of public information on radio and TV. The ESA also maintains an emergency alert capability which can be used to broadcast warning messages directly to mobile telephones and landlines in any area in the ACT and has been working closely with New South Wales to ensure that the Fires Near Me app provides up-to-date information regarding fire activity in and around the ACT.

Volunteers from the ACT Rural Fire Service and the ACT State Emergency Service have also been out in the community, at shopping centres and in town centres keeping the community updated and helping residents complete their bushfire survival plans. These measures, in addition to the doorknocking efforts of ACT Policing, SES and the ADF in our bushfire-prone areas, have ensured that our community has remained well informed and well prepared during this bushfire season.

Transport Canberra—network 19

MR WALL: To continue on a theme, my question is to the Minister for Transport. Minister, I refer to an article published in *CityNews* titled "ACT Labor cuts weekend bus services". Minister, why didn't you admit that network 19 was a failure when you were forced to cut weekend bus services following its initial implementation?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question. This issue was canvassed significantly in the Assembly last year, and this week I will be tabling the quarterly update on our weekend bus action plan. I have made announcements that we will increase the frequency of weekend bus services during the day on Saturdays from term 2. This is the result of work that we have been doing under the 10 actions under the action plan to recruit more drivers, to have standby drivers available on weekends.

As a result of the changes last year that the member refers to, bus reliability has been hovering at around 99.8 per cent every week. It was an important change to make until we recruited more bus drivers, and we will continue that recruitment on an ongoing basis to make sure that we have more bus drivers available to work on the weekends. Then we will be looking at other actions under the action plan heading into the next enterprise agreement, talking with transport workers and their representatives about the enterprise agreement, and taking further actions to provide better information to customers about weekend services and network changes.

MR WALL: Minister, will you guarantee commuters that the subsequent changes you have made to network 19 will not subsequently be cut, just like the weekend services previously were, when the new network comes into effect?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his supplementary. We are very confident now that we have recruited an additional 87 bus drivers. We have had some leave through attrition during that period as well. I have also announced funding of \$1.4 million which will go towards recruiting a further 43 drivers. With those additional drivers and the actions that we are taking, we are confident that we can step up the frequency of services on Saturdays from term 2.

We will continue to work towards further improvements to weekend bus services going forward. The big change that was made under network 19 was to increase the span of services, particularly later at night. The Canberra community has really responded to that. That has been one of the reasons why we have seen a massive increase in the number of journeys taken on public transport under network 19.

MISS C BURCH: Minister, will you apologise to the Canberrans who have been left stranded as a result of your huge, drastic cuts to weekend services?

MR STEEL: Certainly we are looking at improving weekend services. We have been communicating with Transport Canberra customers about changes that were made last year to the bus network. We will continue to communicate with them and provide better systems for communication, as well as stepping up the frequency of services delivered on the weekend.

Frequent rapid bus services have remained unchanged since the start of network 19, and they have been a major element because we were delivering a seven-day network for the first time. People may remember that there was no seven-day network prior to that, with the same services on the week days operating on the weekends. The community has responded very well to that, and those services have been reliably delivered.

Mr Hanson: Madam Speaker, my point of order relates to direct relevance. The question to the minister was whether he would apologise or not. I ask him to answer that question directly.

MADAM SPEAKER: The question was concerning weekend bus services and I believe he has been relevant to the question. The minister has concluded.

Transport—driver education

MR HANSON: My question is to the minister for road safety. Minister, I refer to the recent changes to the learner permit logbooks. Minister, in the new logbook, under the driver competencies section, the list goes from competency 5 to competency 7. Can you please advise what is competency 6?

MR RATTENBURY: As Mr Hanson has identified, we are transitioning to a new graduated licensing scheme. This is designed to improve the capability of young drivers so that, when they find themselves driving alone, they have better skills in that early stage of their licence, when they are most vulnerable. In terms of his specific question, I am aware that there was misprint in the first batch of books that went out.

My directorate is working to ensure that that is corrected. They are having discussions with some of the driving instructors around town who have provided some of the feedback that Mr Hanson is referring to.

MR HANSON: Minister, why was competency 6, which is steering, for your information, forgotten about?

MR RATTENBURY: Clearly, there was an error.

MR PARTON: Minister, how can such a basic but crucial mistake have been made in the logbook changes process?

MR RATTENBURY: I know that the officials who have been working on this have been very diligent in the efforts that they have put in to bring in this significant reform. It is unfortunate that there was an administrative error there, but it is being worked on to fix it as quickly as possible.

Transport—driver education

MRS KIKKERT: My question is to the Minister for Transport. I refer to the recent changes to the learner permit logbooks. Minister, how did you inform current L and P-platers about the recent changes to the law?

MR RATTENBURY: Madam Speaker, I will take that question, as that lies within my portfolio responsibilities. There has been a range of communications with people coming into this category. As members will recall, there was an extensive discussion about this reform in this Assembly over the past 18 months. There was extensive consultation. We received many thousands of submissions on this. Many students will come to this process through their in-school curriculum and the programs they do at school. When somebody turns up to apply for a licence, there is online information prior to them attending. If they just front up to Access Canberra, they will be given the information upon arrival.

MRS KIKKERT: Minister, how do you expect young people to follow the law if you have not bothered to inform them that it has been changed?

MR RATTENBURY: I do not accept the premise of the question. The rules for getting an L or a P plate in the ACT are very clear. There has been a change, and I am sure, as when there are most changes, some people may not have caught up with that yet. But when they seek to apply, the information is absolutely readily available to them.

MISS C BURCH: Minister, given that current P-platers now have to change over to green plates, why haven't you informed them of these changes, and is it appropriate that they are first notified of this by police officers when on the roads?

MR RATTENBURY: That is not my understanding of the circumstances, but given the clear issue that Miss Burch has raised, I will take some advice on that and come back to the Assembly.

Transport—driver education

MRS DUNNE: My question is to the minister for road safety. I refer to the recent changes in the learner permit logbooks. Minister, can you please advise why, in the driver competencies section of the new logbook, there is no place to mark if the competency was achieved in a manual or in an automatic vehicle?

MR RATTENBURY: I will seek some advice on that and provide Mrs Dunne with a detailed answer.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, while you are doing that, can you please advise how the driving instructor will be able to record whether or not the competencies are undertaken in a manual or an automatic vehicle and what impact that will have on the licence obtained?

MR RATTENBURY: I am very happy to do that. I can inform the chamber that driving instructors were involved in a range of discussions prior to the implementation of this new system. I think that there are diverse views, and we have certainly seen some of the concerns publicly expressed by some of the instructors. Those discussions are continuing. I know that my directorate is having a meeting this month with a number of driving instructors to have further conversations about the implementation of the system.

MISS C BURCH: Minister, did you read over the final copy of the logbook before it was printed and how many of these incorrect logbooks are already in circulation?

MR RATTENBURY: No, I did not read over the logbook. I do not think that that is necessarily a ministerial responsibility. I am happy to take the second part of the question on notice.

Transport Canberra—network 19

MISS C BURCH: My question is for the Minister for Transport. I refer to a *Canberra Times* article dated 1 May 2019 titled “Pressure mounts on ACT government over bus network”. Minister, why did you knowingly overpromise and underdeliver on the original network 19, only to reinstate services that Canberrans have needed since April last year now that it is an election year?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. The key elements of network 19 remain: light rail, 10 rapid bus services, a seven-day-a-week network, and an expanded span of services on the weekend for Canberrans to use. Those elements still remain, but we always said, from the very beginning, that we would monitor how the new network was operating. We have been doing that on a consistent basis. After six months, we decided that we would make changes to the network, which we will be implementing in term 2, responding to community feedback and the rich set of data that we now have showing what improvements could be made to the network. Next year, I have no doubt that we will continue to look at further changes in addition to that. Then, with the expansion of light rail throughout the city, I am sure that we will

continue to build a better public transport system. That is what our government is doing. That is what we will continue to do.

MISS C BURCH: Minister, given that there were almost 18 months of consultation prior to the rollout of the network, why did you not listen to Canberrans at the time instead of needing to rely on recent data?

MR STEEL: At the time we were relying on the data that we had on the operation of network 19. We consulted with the community and they told us that they wanted to see more frequent services. That translated into more frequent bus rapid routes being added to the network. Also we had light rail stage 1, commencing with network 19 at the end of April last year. So, there were major changes to the network.

Of course, we did not know exactly what that was going to result in, in terms of public transport patronage. In fact, it has seen an increase—7.1 per cent more journeys since the new network started—but we want more people to be able to catch public transport and so we are making further changes, which we hope will further increase patronage.

MS CHEYNE: Minister, where has patronage increased under the new network?

MR STEEL: We have seen an increase on weekends under the new network. There has been a significant increase in the number of people using bus services across the weekend because we have improved the span of service. Frequent bus services are now available on weekends. We have seen huge numbers of people using light rail, which is absolutely fantastic. Three and a half million people have now boarded light rail. We have seen, as a result, that in areas of the inner north and Gungahlin more people are choosing public transport. We want to extend the benefits of light rail to other parts of the city in future stages as well. They are some of the key benefits.

Of course, the rapid routes are some of the most popular routes on the network throughout weekdays as well. In places like Tuggeranong, people have really embraced the R5 service that now runs through Erindale to places like Calwell: a 25 per cent increase in patronage in Calwell alone, which is fantastic. We want to make sure that all suburbs see an increase in patronage over time. That is why we will continue to make improvements in term 2 and beyond.

Bushfires—government support

MS CHEYNE: My question is to the Minister for Community Services and Facilities. Minister, how has the ACT government supported Canberrans and our interstate neighbours who have needed safety and respite from the bushfires?

MS ORR: I thank Ms Cheyne for her question. The Community Services Directorate is responsible for establishing evacuation, relief and recovery centres as part of its emergency and recovery roles under the ACT emergency arrangements.

Prior to the state of emergency being declared in the ACT, this government had pre-identified five evacuation locations across the city. The evacuation centres are

designed to provide a safe place for people to seek shelter and have their immediate needs met, including financial assistance and temporary accommodation, when they are required to evacuate their home or business. The relief centres are designed to provide a community-friendly location for reassurance and support, along with referral to other services as required, including financial assistance and temporary accommodation. Recovery centres, when needed, are essentially one-stop centres where people can access information on recovery assistance over a longer term period.

On 2 January 2020 a relief centre was established at Dickson College to provide respite and support to people impacted by the bushfires in New South Wales and Victoria. The centre was open for 14 days and provided much-needed assistance for more than 380 people. Over \$30,000 worth of financial assistance was provided, along with meals, goods and clothing and 86 nights of accommodation.

The Orroral Valley fire began on 27 January and quickly escalated to an emergency-level bushfire. The Community Services Directorate took swift action, and on 28 January the Erindale evacuation centre was activated to provide a place of safety and support to Canberra's southern suburbs threatened by this fire. The evacuation centre was open for 10 days and provided reassurance to 175 people.

MS CHEYNE: Minister, how has the government worked with local volunteers and community organisations to deliver support to people who have used our evacuation and respite centres?

MS ORR: I thank Ms Cheyne for her supplementary question. We know that Canberrans are strong and resilient, despite the constant impact of smoke and poor air quality that Canberrans have endured over the past month. We have continued to offer assistance to those who need it most. Coordinated teams of volunteers, local organisations and large businesses have all taken the time to deliver support to members of the local community and our interstate neighbours.

I would like to take the opportunity to express my gratitude and appreciation to all the volunteers who gave up their time to assist in the running of the evacuation, relief and recovery centres. Without their support we would not have been able to provide the much needed support to the individuals and families seeking security during such a devastating period. I would also like to thank our community partners including GIVIT, the Salvation Army, St Vincent de Paul, St John's Ambulance, the Red Cross, Anglicare, Communities@Work, ACTCOSS and Volunteering and Contact ACT.

The impact caused by these bushfires has been felt across the country. However, it has been humbling to see the level of grassroots support from the Canberra community.

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, in what ways will the ACT government continue to work with the Canberra community to promote social recovery efforts post the bushfire season?

MS ORR: Thank you, Mr Pettersson, for the question. Throughout January the ACT experienced extreme weather conditions: a series of heatwaves and

record-breaking temperatures reaching 44 degrees in some areas, followed by a destructive hailstorm. The impacts of climate change are undeniable, and we know that the devastation of fires ranges from the natural environment, to small businesses, to people and their livelihoods. The impacts are widespread and the aftershocks are still being felt.

I am proud to serve in a government that is working hard to mitigate the clearly disastrous impacts of climate change, as we take tangible action in the face of a very real climate emergency. We are beginning to see the light at the end of the tunnel as major fires are officially extinguished. However, this government understands that there is still work to be done.

In true Canberra spirit, the ACT government will continue to work to ensure that the safety and social recovery of our community and interstate neighbours remain a priority.

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

Bushfire and storm season

Debate resumed.

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) (2.56): Last November I had the privilege of conducting a wedding ceremony for two friends of mine. The ceremony was in Bungendore, and as we prepared for the outdoor ceremony and the smoke surrounded us, we were aware that, because of the impact of the smoke and the impact of the Tallaganda fire some miles east of the town, some of the guests were unable to attend the wedding. The interruption and the disruption of a celebration of life by that growing natural disaster was, in some ways, a portent, even if just a very a minor one at the time, of the events that would unfold in a summer without precedent.

That particular event was on the land of the Ngarigo people. More recent experiences have impacted the land of the Darug, the Gundungurra, the Tharawal, the Wiradjuri and, of course, the land of the Ngunnawal, along with many lands of many nations. I acknowledge the devastation and the deep pain that has been caused to people who have cared for this land for many thousands of years.

The impact of this summer has been profound. It is clear that the warnings of the impact of climate change that we have heard for decades are being realised and that our country is being changed. Over the past three months we have all been affected. The closeness—the physical, economic and relational closeness—between Canberra and the surrounding region has meant that we are affected in broader ways than may be immediately apparent.

Friends of mine have had a fire within 150 metres of their property. Another friend of mine was evacuated from his house, only to return to offer chaplaincy support to an

evacuation centre. Personally, I had some nervous hours communicating with my son who, on advice, remained in his workplace without power as the Beard fire burned very nearby for several hours. People in my neighbourhood, my street, have all had substantial damage and disruption caused by the hailstorm.

Obviously, the impact of this year's summer has not stayed at a distance. We have experienced smoke, fire, storm and hail over recent weeks. Canberra has at times been isolated by road, by air and by rail. But the reality is that, of course, we have not been alone. Under the inspiring leadership of Commissioner Georgeina Whelan, who, I note, contributes her time as one of our veterans executive champions in her spare time, our team of teams has prepared, has combatted and has communicated.

For those of us who were in Canberra in 2003, and for the many Canberrans who have lived through the experiences of fires in other places, as my family did in Sydney in 1994, this leadership and this action have brought a sense of reassurance in the midst of understandable anxiety. Today I would also like to acknowledge the great work of Access Canberra in supporting the Canberra community during the recent bushfire events. Over the period of heightened activity, the Access Canberra contact centre provided information to over 600 callers specifically relating to matters such as bushfire preparedness, air quality and P2/N95 masks.

The Access Canberra contact centre also worked through the night and handled over 2,700 calls, in support of the ACT State Emergency Service, in response to the 20 January hailstorm. This is the highest number of calls ever handled for a single event by the contact centre team. Throughout this period, Access Canberra's website has been continually updated to provide timely information to the community, in support of the Emergency Services Agency and the emergency controller, during the state of alert and state of emergency, as well as during the days of the total fire ban.

During the state of emergency, the Access Canberra contact centre operated continuously for 61 hours, from 7 am on Friday, 31 January, until 8 pm on Sunday, 2 February, providing immediate support to both our community and to the work of our emergency services. Many staff from across Access Canberra volunteered to cover additional contact centre shifts outside normal business hours, willingly giving their time to support the Canberra community at this critical time. This meant that calls could be quickly answered and responded to, and that they could provide a strong level of reassurance to the community at an anxious time.

Access Canberra staff have also supported ACT Health and Canberra Health Services, through the provision of information to the community, to reduce the influx of bushfire and smoke-related calls to the hospital switchboard and to support more recent information about novel coronavirus. I am particularly proud of the efforts of Access Canberra for these efforts and I am pleased to take this opportunity to say thank you to them, on behalf of the ACT community, for their outstanding work over what indeed has been a challenging start to 2020.

I also want to place on the record, as Minister for Seniors and Veterans, my deep appreciation for the strong cooperative work by members of the Australian Defence Force, who have worked as part of the team of teams this summer.

Throughout it all, the Canberra community have gathered and supported each other. When the hailstorm blew through west Belconnen, leaving a stunning path of destruction, neighbours moved from house to house, supporting each other in the minutes and hours afterwards, helping remove broken skylights and broken glass from where they had fallen inside people's homes.

When people were caught outside in the hailstorm, strangers put themselves at risk of injury to help protect others. When the relief centre was opened for people threatened or impacted by fires, Canberrans dropped in to help. When our ESA leadership team worked enormous hours at Fairbairn, there were flowers, there were cards, and I understand there were even donuts that were dropped off in thanks.

We are a strong, resilient community. We gather and we support each other with a generosity of compassion and a generosity of concern. I am very proud of and very thankful for how Canberra has responded and how Canberrans continue to respond. I commend the motion.

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) (3.03): I would like to join my colleagues in extending my gratitude to the volunteers and staff of the Emergency Services Agency, the RFS, the SES, fire and rescue services, ambulance services, ACT parks and the ADF, as well as many other agencies that have been involved—as well as community sector partners—in supporting the response to and recovery process around the bushfire crisis and other issues that have come up, including the recent hailstorm event.

We are indebted to all of those who have volunteered their time to keep our community safe and to help our community recover. Minister Gentleman and the Chief Minister have already outlined the exemplary work of our emergency services agencies extensively. I would like to take the time to acknowledge the work of the Community Services Directorate staff in particular, and Transport Canberra and City Services, in response to fires, the devastating hailstorm and the current rain event over eastern Australia.

The Community Services Directorate were prepared, coming into the bushfire season. They had been through extensive preparation in a trial run of setting up a recovery centre, which I had attended to have a look at. That proved very useful when the Orroral Valley fire started, and the Beard fire, and before that the recovery centre that was set up to support those fleeing from southern New South Wales.

Many Community Services Directorate staff volunteered their time, often very late in the evening, if not overnight, to support those in our community to recover, to get respite, to have a cup of tea and a bikkie, to get information that they needed and to connect with our community services organisations that worked with them at the centres.

I heard very positive feedback from our community not only in person but also through the ABC, through their broadcasts in conjunction with the ESA to provide information to the community. They really valued the work that was going on in those centres. I would like to extend my thanks to all of the staff that were involved there and all of the volunteers and community services organisations that worked in them.

There is a lot of work that happens that does not get coverage, for good reason during a time of crisis, but nonetheless needs to be acknowledged. That includes the work of Transport Canberra and City Services during this crisis. In support of the ESA and ACT Policing, Roads ACT implemented and maintained road closures to ensure public safety. Many of these road closures were staffed on a 24-hour basis, often in difficult weather conditions and in remote locations where there was no phone signal.

Unfortunately, some members of the public abused some of these staff for not being able to move around as they wished to do and wanted to have a go at someone playing their part in protecting the community. I want to thank those staff for the work that they did in making sure that our community was safe and also the work that they were doing with message boards, communicating with people on roadways about the traffic conditions and providing guidance at evacuation centres, as well as assisting in relation to temporary changes to road conditions. The quiet work of this team throughout the year in maintaining and upgrading our stormwater system has been critical right at this time in keeping Canberra's homes and streets from being inundated through the wettest February day on record.

Our domestic animal services have been a critical part of the respite centres, supporting families with pets and providing services to them during the time of the bushfire. Their staff were present at evacuation and relief centres in Erindale, Stirling and Dickson, rotating on 24-hour shifts to provide secure animal housing, bedding and food for pets.

Transport Canberra bus drivers transported key personnel from the ESA and Australian Defence Force as needed during the fires, often at short notice and at all hours of the day. Mechanical staff were on hand to assist the ESA. Bus drivers were available to provide additional services as needed during the Beard and Orroral Valley fires, ready to be stood up to support evacuations, which thankfully did not occur in the southern suburbs of the ACT, with the exception of Tharwa.

During periods of extreme heat, Libraries ACT in Dickson, Woden, and Erindale opened for extended hours. As the ACT entered a state of emergency, additional services were provided by a Libraries ACT team: impromptu story times, colouring sheets and other activities for families spending time in evacuation centres. Library staff further assisted in providing documentation to evacuees, such as financial assistance forms and printing documents.

Our city services staff worked hard to ensure that access to our urban spaces was unimpeded and quick access was available to firefighting crews, and that sports grounds were made available for emergency services command posts. Essential maintenance work to reduce risk was also undertaken, including mowing activities concentrated in key risk areas.

In response to the hailstorm, 692 kilometres of road have been swept, with many streets having to be swept multiple times to clear them, and crews undertaking additional shifts. Even today, our street sweepers are still responding to the leaf litter created by that storm. Our tree team has also been very busy working to support the ESA to address hazardous trees across the city. Our city presentation team continues to work to remove the large amount of leaves and branches in parks and along paths in areas impacted by the storm.

I call on our community to continue to bear with us while we continue to work through the backlog of tree maintenance that has been required because of the diversion of resources to address the key fire risks and also in relation to the extensive work that is ongoing in the clean-up of leaf litter and branch litter throughout the city.

Apart from their day-to-day jobs, many TCCS staff and other staff from right across the ACT government, and even in my office, are volunteer firefighters who would have otherwise volunteered their time to assist during these extreme weather events, such as through the SES. I want to thank every person who contributed their time to help those in need. They are worthy of our heartfelt recognition and thanks.

We must be mindful of the impacts in this extreme year, and the more extreme years to come, of weather events that are not over. We continue to see our city's trees severely impacted by the drought. We have seen the impact on our recycling system as well, having to store baled mixed paper recycling because of the severe fire impact on plantations around Eden, which means that the Tumut paper mill is unable to process the same amount of recycled paper from our Hume MRF. Our city's infrastructure will continue to be tested going forward, with climate change contributing to a longer fire season and hotter and drier weather going forward.

Beyond the countless hours diverted away from business as usual to support our city in response to this trying summer, our staff across government have endured smoke-clogged streets, the anxiety of living in suburbs under threat of fire, and losing their summer holiday at the coast as well—which is important for them to recuperate for the year ahead. Only in the months ahead will we know what the total toll of the fire really is. I again pass on my thanks to the many staff of the emergency services agencies and across the ACT government and community service organisations and the broader community for their work during this challenging time.

MR GUPTA (Yerrabi) (3.12): I rise to support the motion moved by the Chief Minister noting the unprecedented nature of our current fire season and offering our thanks and support to the many people and organisations who are working to ensure the safety of ACT residents during this time.

I am sure we can all agree that the bushfires that have been burning across the country since September are not only of a severity that we have never seen before but also undoubtedly a result of our changing climate. Our summers are growing longer and hotter and we are struggling to keep up. This fire season is the worst Australia has ever experienced, but this may become our normal. The ACT must continue to lead policy to combat climate change and to restore habitat, particularly in the wake of such extensive damage to Namadgi National Park.

I would like to thank all of the organisations that are continuing to work tirelessly to ensure the safety both of ACT residents and of all Australians affected by these fires: the emergency services agencies, including ACT Fire & Rescue, the ACT Rural Fire Service, the ACT State Emergency Service and the ACT Ambulance Service. I would also like to thank the parks and conservation service, as well as those who have volunteered with one of these organisations, who have demonstrated incredible courage and selflessness. Thank you also to the ACT police and ACT public servants, many of whom have cut short holidays or otherwise gone above and beyond all expectations in working to keep the territory and its residents safe.

I would also like to acknowledge the support provided by both the Australian and New Zealand defence forces to the territory and give my thanks to their personnel for their work in helping to protect the ACT and surrounding areas. New Zealand has shown great friendship to us in this difficult time. I thank them for their continuing support to the Australian people. I want to thank the other state and territory governments for their work in helping us to respond to the bushfires and storms that have occurred so far. They are facing severe fires of their own, and I am glad we have been able to provide them with support, as they provide it to us in turn. I hope that we can continue to work together effectively to combat this ongoing threat.

Between fires and smoke haze, the ACT and surrounding regions have suffered greatly on the social and economic front. Many small towns in our region have been hit hard by the significant drop in tourism. I urge Canberrans to continue to support local communities, both within Canberra and in its surrounds, and to give your money to local businesses, particularly those that are suffering as a result of reduced tourism.

The crisis is ongoing and shows no sign of being over soon. So many Australians have lost their homes and businesses that the damage is impossible to measure and will take months or years to repair. These fires are still burning, with our southern suburbs still under threat from the Orroral fire and tens of thousands of hectares of Namadgi National Park already lost. Thank you to all the workers and volunteers who are out fighting this fire as we speak and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future.

As well as these fires, Australia has another challenge on the way. Cyclone Uesi is currently approaching from New Caledonia and is expected to hit the coast of southern Queensland and northern New South Wales on Friday, bringing more heavy rains to already flooded areas, as well as dangerous sea conditions. We may also see a second cyclone form in its wake, likely to be more severe than Uesi. I thank the emergency services workers and others currently dealing with the flooding in New South Wales and wish them luck in dealing with more rain in coming weeks.

When this fire season does finally end, and I note that that may not be for four months, the ACT government will ensure that all those who have worked to combat this ongoing threat to the ACT and its surrounds will be appropriately recognised.

I would also like to extend my thanks to the local Sikh community, who have been conducting ongoing fundraising efforts to support the New South Wales fire services

and other organisations. These efforts have been very successful. They estimate that they have raised around \$10,000 for bushfire relief efforts. Similarly, I thank several organisations within the Indian community in Canberra, including the Australian Business Council, the Canberra India Council and the Telugu organisation, which organised a vegetarian food festival with the goal of raising funds for bushfire relief. I attended this fundraiser myself. It was an absolute success, with a further \$10,000 raised to support emergency services in Canberra.

While this has been a difficult time, we have seen the beautiful humanity and coming together of our nation to face this challenge. I commend Mr Gentleman, the Chief Minister and our emergency services team for all their hard work. I commend this motion to the Assembly.

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra) (3.17): Flames towering above treetops. Skies turning from grey to orange, to red and then black. People fleeing to beaches as flames engulf trees and properties behind them. Animals running for their lives. Eye-watering, throat-burning smoke. So much smoke. These are just some of the images that have come to define what has been an unprecedented bushfire season in Australia, a bushfire season that began in this country in August with unprecedented fire activity, a stark manifestation of what we knew was coming: longer and more extreme seasons. It was a bushfire season intensified by climate change, a bushfire season that has burnt millions of hectares of land, killed an estimated more than one billion animals and tragically claimed the lives of more than 30 people, all of whom were defending lives and property. We will never forget them, and we offer our deepest condolences to their colleagues, families and friends.

As we are recognising today, the ACT and the surrounding capital region have not been immune to the threat of fire or the unrelenting smoke that has wafted in and out of our city, forcing people inside their homes and the temporary closure of many government offices, childcare centres, national institutions and businesses.

We are incredibly lucky and fortunate to have been supported by professional leadership in agencies and volunteer and community groups as our city combated such an unprecedented summer, with their actions and their communications assuring us that we have never been better prepared.

It is only right that we appropriately recognise the service of all those who have come to our community's aid, at the conclusion of the bushfire season, with some formal opportunities which have been mentioned today, but at this moment we thank them all, so much. And I want to thank the wider Canberra community for stepping up in such difficult times: for heeding the advice of the ESA and taking the necessary precautions when asked, and for rallying together to help each other and to help our pets and wildlife across our city and our region.

Many individuals and organisations have already been highlighted today. I want to make special mention of Water for Wildlife, an incredible grassroots movement to ensure that wildlife searching for water in a parched land had access to it; and Canberra Pet Rescue, which has raised over \$50,000 in its bushfire appeal for pets in need across the region, with every \$5,000 providing over seven tonnes of food.

Canberra Pet Rescue even had to evacuate their warehouse, and then their headquarters, on two separate occasions due to the threat of fires, but their enthusiasm has not been impeded.

Madam Assistant Speaker, if bushfires and hazardous smoke were not enough, Canberra has also been battered by a severe hailstorm that has damaged homes and buildings, written off cars, destroyed years of scientific research, killed wildlife and covered the streets in a foliage-like carpet. Many suburbs in my electorate of Ginninderra were among the worst hit. The repercussions of the January hailstorm, and now the eventual much-needed rain, will continue over many months.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the individuals and agencies that have worked hard to both protect and clean up our city and help those affected, more recently by the storm and rain. Many of those people were also on hand during the fires and smoke. All of this work has been relentless, and we are full of admiration for their dedication, for turning up time and time again.

To the Canberra community, we acknowledge that this was the lost summer. Instead of the usual rest and contemplation, it was filled with frustration, anxiety and reliving painful memories. It was okay to not feel okay, and it still is. Nothing will ease the experience and memories of the past few months, but we are in control of our future and how we respond. In the months to come, we can be kinder and more patient. We can support the businesses and the activities around us. We can reflect and prepare some more. And we can remind ourselves how special this city is to us and find new ways to celebrate it and our incredible community.

From drought to fire, dust, hail and, finally, rain, it truly has been an unprecedented summer. What is not unprecedented is how hard our community is prepared to work to protect what and who we love. We are all indebted for that service. We celebrate it, and we will not forget it.

MS BERRY (Ginninderra—Deputy Chief Minister, Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development, Minister for Housing and Suburban Development, Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, Minister for Sport and Recreation and Minister for Women) (3.23): I realise that this has not been the year that we had been hoping for in Canberra, but all of us can be proud of the work that has been done within our community, with people stepping up and giving a hand to people who have needed it most.

I particularly want to acknowledge the work of our school communities and the Education Directorate in responding to the events of this summer in making sure that our schools were ready to accept new and returning students and teaching staff. Schools were ready well before the challenges of term 1 started, and have been prepared to support student and family wellbeing needs. The Education Directorate is continuing to work closely with the ACT Emergency Services Agency as well as the ACT Rural Fire Service to make sure that we keep an eye on conditions and respond where appropriate. We know that this summer and these weather events are not over yet, and they are something that we will have to continue to monitor and manage well into the future as we deal with the effects of climate change in our community.

I want to specifically thank Erindale College and Dickson College for providing the evacuation and relief centres and for the work that they did in supporting our community, overlapping the period when students were returning, particularly with regard to Erindale College, and how welcoming that school community was to people who were needing to evacuate or get some support or respite at those centres.

Our schools are places for children to learn, and this means that they need to be comfortable places for both students and staff. The ACT government has invested more than \$5.3 million since 2016 to keep public schools cooler during summer and has a plan to make sure that students can keep learning during days of extreme heat and poor air quality.

Our new schools, Margaret Hendry and a new school in Denman Prospect, will be completely draught proof. The upgrades that we are making to our older schools and retrofitting will mean that these will be more able to deal with smoke and heat exposure and air conditions as we make sure that these schools are more appropriate and can be adapted to meet the conditions that we are all now starting to face. It has been described as unprecedented, but we expect to see more of these weather conditions in the future.

We have had very good support from Asthma Australia on the government's approach to managing air quality in schools. The CEO, Michele Goldman, said that the resources were timely, comprehensive and reassuring. As a parent of a child who has asthma, I know that it is important that our schools are doing the right thing by our children who have sensitivities, particularly sensitivities to smoke and dust, making the right decisions to ensure that our children and our staff are kept safe in our school environments.

Mitigations that can occur during mild conditions can include ensuring that younger children remain indoors and limiting physical activity. In poorer conditions, schools can implement measures for the general population, such as cancelling outdoor activities and excursions. All this information has been made available and will continue to be made available for parents, through schools and throughout the school year on the education website. The government has not proposed closing schools during these smoky day events but instead will consider carefully the advice of experts and make adjustments as required.

We all recognise that this has been a difficult start to the year for everyone in the ACT, particularly those who were directly impacted and evacuated to beaches or evacuation centres. If we were not impacted directly, we were reminded every day by the smoke and dust and the fire on our doorstep.

That is why the government has been ready to ensure that we meet the mental health and wellbeing needs of students, families and staff in our school communities. Since 2016 the government has funded 20 additional school psychologists, with 81 now working across our schools. All our school psychologists received additional training in trauma and disaster responses before the start of the school year. Teachers have received additional professional learning so that they can support students and each other through what is a very difficult time.

The Education Directorate is also providing schools with evidence-based resources to share with families to ensure that they can support each other and their children. In our schools we have health professionals, including the psychologists, available to support both students and teachers, providing a targeted approach to address wellbeing issues. A range of resources is available to assist parents and carers. Factsheets and other resources are available for parents and carers to provide information on how they can help children cope with the media coverage of traumatic events and steps that parents and carers can take to help create a sense of safety for their children.

Madam Assistant Speaker, the Canberra community really did step up during this crisis, providing support for pretty much anything. Mr Coe gave a not exhaustive list—because so many people were volunteering and stepping up—that gave a good insight into the numbers of people in our community that work so hard, including the “G” Spot, through the slabs for heroes work, and Norths, in collecting all those important items to support pretty much everyone with pretty much anything that they needed for as long as they needed.

There is also Water for Wildlife. There are now many more watering stations across the ACT in people’s backyards, more than ever. They are particularly looking after the bees. I have personally noted that there are a very small number of bees this season; they are obviously directly impacted by the weather and the dusty conditions and lack of water.

To the family and friends of the people who lost their lives during this fire—people not known to me personally but some known to many in the ACT and to members of my own family—I give my deepest sympathy and heartfelt condolences to everybody who was connected with the individuals who passed away.

Many of us have been deeply saddened by these events, particularly through the loss of lives—and houses of course—and the loss of animals and the ecology. I will have seared into my memory forever the image of the koala screaming in pain being rescued—sadly, he lost his life—but we know that there were many millions of others that we did not see who were also killed during this incredibly tragic event.

As we hit the recovery stage of this event, it is the time where we take care of each other. We know that we are all tired; not many of us got a break during the summer, and if we did get a break, it was not the kind of summer that we had expected. Now is the time to really step up and help each other out. As Ms Cheyne said, it is the time to be a bit kinder and a bit more patient with each other as we move through this stage of the event.

I know that the Emergency Services Agency, as well as the SES, have this at front of mind through the leadership of Georgeina Whelan. Her work has earned the respect of our community, through her leadership through this crisis. She has had at front of mind the kind of work that will need to continue through the recovery stage so that people are kept informed about where they can get support if they need it and where they can support each other.

I thank Mr Barr for bringing this motion to the Assembly today. I acknowledge all the comments that have been made, in what has been a difficult time for us all, and the contributions of everybody in this place who I have seen out in the community through this time.

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) (3.31), in reply: I thank all members for their contributions. They highlight the significant role that we all play in this place as elected representatives of this community. We heard the personal and heartfelt stories of individuals in this place who were impacted, and the support that they have provided to broader communities, not just here in Canberra but in the greater region, reflects very well on the Legislative Assembly.

I thank members for their contribution to this debate. I hope it sets the tone for how this year will be conducted. Time will tell in relation to that, Madam Assistant Speaker, but it shows the best of this place and is something we can all be proud of, though we know, as we move into the weeks and months ahead, that the recovery phase can be just as challenging as dealing with the immediate crisis. I again thank the ESA for their leadership and support of our community. I acknowledge that this is a summer that we will never forget. I commend the motion to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Government priorities 2020

Ministerial statement

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) (3.33): Through this 2020 year, the ACT government will continue to deliver on our plan for a better Canberra. This includes a stronger health system, delivering care where people need it; an education system that helps all children to reach their potential; building the infrastructure and creating good new jobs that our growing city needs; and taking real effective action to protect our environment, to reduce emissions and to combat climate change. It is what Canberrans want and deserve from their government.

Smoke and fires have affected Canberrans' lives but also produced significant economic shocks. As I have already indicated, the long-term impacts to our economy and local businesses will not be apparent for some time. Despite this, though, there is cause for optimism. Canberra continues to be a growing city. Our population is growing, our economy is growing, employment is growing, long-term tourism is growing and investment in our city is growing.

Today we can say that we now account for the largest share of the national economy in our history. The ACT economy now contributes almost \$42 billion annually to Australia's economic effort. That makes the ACT economy larger than the Tasmanian economy and larger than the Northern Territory economy, and it is one of the fastest

growing economies in the nation. Over the past four years, 3,200 new businesses have established in the territory and 19,600 new jobs have been created.

But whilst this is very strong economic data, our city is much more than just that. We live in a city that is environmentally sustainable, lively, progressive and inclusive. Data clearly supports the fact that we are a welcoming place that people want to come to live in, to work in and to raise a family in. We believe that the ultimate goal of our economic, social and environmental policies should always be to enhance the collective wellbeing of our community.

That is why last year I announced the development a set of wellbeing indicators to help guide future government decision-making and priorities for the future. These indicators will help us measure how Canberra is performing, based on what Canberrans believe is necessary to live a quality life. Next month, I will announce the full detail of our new wellbeing framework, which, from this year on, will be reported against as part of the territory's annual budget process.

In the Health portfolio, Minister Stephen-Smith will continue the important work already underway to deliver our greater than \$500 million critical care and emergency facility, known as the SPIRE project, at the Canberra Hospital. The facility will deliver more beds and operating theatres, a new and expanded intensive care unit, a new and expanded emergency department, a new mental health short stay unit and more. The minister will also be focusing on hiring more nurses, doctors and staff to deliver these services.

We are also expanding the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children to deliver more specialist facilities for new mothers and their babies. The new expansion will also include an adolescent mental health unit. The SPIRE project and the upgrades to the Centenary Hospital will be the largest expansion of the Canberra Hospital since it opened, ensuring that public health care expands as our city's population expands, and as our community's needs expand.

Later this year we will also open our newest walk-in centre in Dickson, creating a network of five walk-in centres. In addition to the Tuggeranong, Belconnen, Gungahlin and Weston Creek facilities that are already open, we add the inner north to this network. These investments will futureproof our healthcare system and ensure that we are able to deliver the healthcare services that Canberrans need, when and where they need them.

The Southside Community Step Up Step Down centre is expected to be operational by July this year. This will be the fourth facility of its kind in the ACT, demonstrating our commitment to building our community-based mental health support capacity to prevent relapse and to assist recovery from an acute episode of mental illness. The Office for Mental Health and Wellbeing has conducted a review to understand why mental health conditions remain a high concern for young people in the ACT, with findings due for release in March of this year. The office will use these findings to support children and young people to enhance their mental health and wellbeing, and also to prevent more severe illness.

In education, later this year the Deputy Chief Minister will release our early childhood strategy, which outlines our plan to ensure that every child in the ACT has the best start in life through equitable access to high-quality early childhood education and care. This important document will also outline the first targeted phase of our commitment to provide free preschool to three-year-olds in the ACT. We will also continue our significant investment in public education infrastructure. This will include commencing construction on the new \$47 million primary school at Denman Prospect, the commencement of planning works for a new high school in east Gungahlin and an expansion of the Franklin Early Childhood School.

Continuing in Minister Berry's portfolio, 2020 will mark the second year of our \$100 million public housing growth and renewal program, which will grow our public housing stock by 200 dwellings and renew a further 1,000 existing properties. We will also be pleased to open the Stromlo leisure centre in the sport and recreation portfolio, and Molonglo, and indeed all Canberra residents, will be able begin using this centre later this year.

In the transport portfolio, we will take the next step in delivering on our vision for a well-connected Canberra when we sign the contract and begin preparatory work on light rail stage 2A from the city to Commonwealth Park. Since it commenced in April last year, light rail has been a huge success with Canberrans, smashing the previously predicted passenger numbers, and to date we have had 3.5 million boardings. There is no doubt that this was the right investment, at the right time, for Canberra. This year we look forward to the process commencing on stage 2A, which will expand our light rail network from the city and ultimately over the lake, through the parliamentary triangle and on to Woden town centre.

In city services, Minister Steel will also lead the rollout of the territory-wide bulky waste collection service in the ACT. This comes off the back of the government successfully completing a territory-wide green bin rollout ahead of schedule and the delivery of a container deposit scheme in the ACT.

In emergency services, as our city grows, we will continue to invest in the emergency services that Canberrans need. I do not think it hurts to repeat that this summer has shown the capability of our already well-resourced Emergency Services Agency. In the coming months, Minister Gentleman will unveil the ACT's two newest firefighting vehicles, and we will provide more funding to our bushfire fighting capabilities.

We are also providing our Rural Fire Service and the SES with the additional resources that they need to keep us safe. There is no doubt that every Canberran rests easier at night knowing that we are being looked after by our amazing and hardworking emergency services personnel, led by Commissioner Georgeina Whelan. They again deserve our deepest thanks and appreciation.

With the Orroral Valley fire continuing to burn in Namadgi National Park, dampened by the significant rain we have received in recent times, we are now moving into a significant effort to repair the devastating ecological damage done in the park.

Minister Gentleman directed the evacuation of endangered wildlife in Tidbinbilla in advance of the fire, to save local populations from complete destruction. I am pleased that the minister will now be coordinating government efforts to support the regeneration of the landscape in Namadgi National Park and the ultimate return of our wildlife, as well as any repair work required to government infrastructure and assets.

This work has already begun. Minister Gentleman announced the establishment of a rapid risk assessment team that comprises specialists in how fire impacts may be addressed for threatened species, habitat, water quality and threats from debris flowing into our dams as a result of the recent rain. Given Minister Gentleman's responsibilities for emergency services, planning and the environment, I have asked him to oversee the government's recovery and resilience efforts and will be amending the administrative arrangements to specifically reference this important role over coming months.

Turning now to the Attorney-General's portfolio, Minister Ramsay will take an important step towards making Canberra a more inclusive and age-friendly city by providing more protections for vulnerable members of our community. I think we have all heard and been deeply disturbed by the stories from the aged-care royal commission. Older Australians have been exposed to unthinkable abuse and neglect. Our move to introduce an offence for elder abuse will be an Australian first and will be an important step in our plan to make Canberra a leading restorative city.

Minister Ramsay will also continue to implement our goal of ensuring that into the future Canberra has the highest quality buildings and the highest confidence in building quality. There is no place in the territory for builders who cut corners, who deliver poor quality or non-compliant work, who flout approvals or who fail to rectify issues in a timely manner. The government will not let dodgy builders avoid their obligations.

On a more positive note about construction, I am pleased to say that the business case for the new Canberra Theatre Centre precinct will be delivered this year. This important document represents the next step in delivering a major cornerstone of our plan to make Canberra a national hub of creativity and innovation in the arts, a place where creative people can pursue their passions and make a contribution to the rich fabric of our society.

In the area of WorkSafe, the newest member of our cabinet, Minister Orr, has a busy year ahead establishing WorkSafe ACT as an independent agency and ensuring it works effectively to keep Canberrans safe in their workplaces. Minister Orr will also continue working on the introduction of a labour hire licensing scheme to foster and promote responsible practices in the ACT, and on an important body of work to make Canberra a more disability inclusive city.

Turning now to climate change, having released two nation-leading strategies on climate change and living infrastructure, Minister Rattenbury is now getting on with the job of implementation. The city of Canberra is now sourcing our electricity by 100 per cent renewable energy. Every electric appliance plugged into a household socket in the ACT is running on clean energy. This, however, is just the start of the

ACT's efforts to reduce the territory's impact on our climate. We will also continue to work towards our target of zero net emissions by 2045, which is, I note, a significant and nation-leading target amongst Australian states and territories.

Minister Rattenbury will also continue to implement our ACT zero emissions vehicles action plan, which will see our passenger vehicle fleet transition to zero emissions. We already have 51 such vehicles in the ACT government fleet and this year we will add a further 29, bringing the total fleet to 80 and meeting our target of 50 per cent newly leased passenger vehicles for the ACT government being zero emissions.

The work I have outlined today is, of course, only a small part of the work underway across all areas of government to fulfil our commitment to Canberrans. As we know, 2020 is a year in which Canberrans will be asked to make a choice about our city's direction for the first half of this coming decade. Canberra's success will be determined by the decisions and actions we take this year.

For our part, we are committed to investing in and growing our services and infrastructure to ensure that they continue to meet the community's expectations and needs. This means access to health care when and where you need it, access to a great local school close to where you live and access to a fast and efficient public transport network. By making these investments today, we will ensure that our hospitals, healthcare centres and schools, our city's social infrastructure and our city's transport network are ready for the decade ahead—a decade where Canberra's population will reach over half a million people.

In conclusion, now is not the time to send our city backwards. Our growing city needs new and better public infrastructure. Our community expects world-class public services and we need good, secure jobs in the future. The government is committed to delivering just that. I present a copy of the statement:

Government priorities—Ministerial statement, 11 February 2020.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

MR COE (Yerrabi—Leader of the Opposition) (3.48): After 19 years of Labor, what more can we expect from this government? I firmly believe that Canberra is the best place in Australia—indeed, it is the best place in the world—and Canberra is too good for a bad government. In this election year, Canberrans can expect more undelivered Labor promises; more taxes, rates, fees and charges; taxpayers paying for government political advertising, and of course record spin and dirty tricks.

Labor has the wrong priorities for the ACT. Canberra is too good for a bad government. At the moment, so many people are struggling with the cost of living in this city and it is because of their taxes, their rates, their fees and their charges. Labor has had every single opportunity to make Canberra an affordable place and it has failed at every single moment. We have the worst hospital waiting times in the

country, our kids are going backwards with regard to reading and maths, and 750 bus stops have been closed by this heartless Labor government.

There is a better way, and the Canberra Liberals are proud of our commitment to this city. We are proud of our positive plan to make Canberra the best place to live, to work and to raise a family. We want to futureproof this city and we want to have practical solutions that improve the lives of all our residents. In the wake of this devastating bushfire season we need to do everything we can to rehabilitate our environment and our wildlife. We need Canberra once again to be the bush capital that we can all enjoy.

The Canberra Liberals unashamedly will focus on frontline services: the nurses, doctors, police, teachers, firefighters and so many others who do so much for our city, which we are grateful for. We want to empower them to do what they do best. After almost two decades of Labor it is time for a change, and there is a better way.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Petitions

The following petitions were lodged for presentation:

Newborn screening—petition 21-19

By Ms Le Couteur, from 146 residents:

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

The following residents of the ACT draw to the attention of the Assembly: the infant mortality of Severe Combined Immune Deficiency (SCID). SCID is a life-threatening condition that without early diagnosis and treatment results in death within the first few months of life.

Your petitioners, therefore, request the Assembly to call on the Government to: introduce the inclusion of screening for Severe Combined Immune Deficiency (SCID) into the existing Newborn Screening (Guthrie test) to reduce preventable infant mortality. Inclusion in the Newborn Screening test would enable early detection, diagnosis and lifesaving treatment for these babies. This is already standard practice in New Zealand, most US states and other OECD countries.

Newborn screening—petition 1-20

By Ms Le Couteur, from 564 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: the infant mortality of Severe Combined Immune Deficiency (SCID). SCID is a life-threatening condition that without early diagnosis and treatment results in death within the first few months of life.

Your petitioners therefore request that the Assembly calls on the Government to: introduce the inclusion of screening for Severe Combined Immune Deficiency (SCID) into the existing Newborn Screening (Guthrie test) to reduce preventable infant mortality. Inclusion in the Newborn Screening test would enable early detection, diagnosis and lifesaving treatment for these babies. This is already standard practice in New Zealand, most US states and other OECD countries.

Pursuant to standing order 99A, the petitions, having more than 500 signatories, were referred to the Standing Committee on Health, Ageing and Community Services.

The Clerk having announced that the terms of the petitions would be recorded in Hansard and referred to the appropriate ministers for response pursuant to standing order 100, the petitions were received.

Ministerial responses

The following responses to petitions have been lodged:

Wanniassa bus routes—petition 27-19

By **Mr Steel**, Minister for Transport, dated 10 December 2019, in response to a petition lodged by Ms Lawder on 19 September 2019 concerning Wanniassa bus route changes.

The response read as follows:

Dear Mr Duncan

Thank you for your letter of 19 September 2019 regarding petition No 27-19 lodged by Ms Nicole Lawder MLA regarding Wanniassa bus route changes.

To provide more frequent and reliable services for our growing city, it was necessary to make changes across the city. As a result, more Canberrans are using public transport. During the first quarter of 2019-20 (1 July to 30 September 2019), Transport Canberra recorded 6.4% more journeys on bus and light rail services than were recorded during the same period in 2018.

Wanniassa is served by several different bus routes, including:

- Rapid 5, which provides frequent services, seven days a week to destinations including the City, Woden and Lanyon along Langdon Avenue and from the Erindale Interchange;
- Routes 72 and 73 provide services to local destinations and the town centre along Wheeler Crescent; and
- Route 74 and 75 provide services to local destinations and the town centre along Sternberg Crescent.

Additionally, many residents of the area use the Wanniassa Park and Ride to access fast, frequent and direct buses to the City, Woden, Belconnen and Tuggeranong on Rapid 4 and Rapid 5. I recently announced that due to the popularity of this Park and Ride, the Government will provide additional parking spaces to make it easier for residents to access these rapid services.

Wanniassa residents will also benefit from other investments to public transport infrastructure in Tuggeranong, particularly upgrades to wayfinding and signage at both the Erindale Interchange and Tuggeranong Interchange. These upgrades and improvements will make it easier for people to access public transport and to find their bus easily, matching the signage recently rolled out in the City and Woden to ensure consistency across the Territory.

I am committed to continuing to invest in our public transport network and working with Canberrans to make practical improvements to the public transport services they rely on every day.

I have asked Transport Canberra to consider opportunities to improve services for residents of Wanniassa as part of future changes to the public transport network.

Thank you for raising this matter. I trust this information is of assistance.

Planning—Coombs peninsula—petition 31-19

By **Mr Gentleman**, Minister for Planning and Land Management, dated 3 February 2020, in response to a petition lodged by Mrs Jones on 27 November 2019 concerning future development in Coombs.

The response read as follows:

Dear Mr Duncan

Thank you for your letter of 26 November 2019 providing petition No 31-19 lodged by Mrs Giulia Jones MLA, about future development in Coombs.

I thank Mrs Jones for lodging this petition with the Assembly. The matters raised in the petition have also been raised directly with me, with other members of the Government, with the Assembly's Standing Committee on Planning and Urban Renewal, and was documented in their Report No 9 on Draft Variation to the Territory Plan No 360 (Molonglo River Reserve).

I appreciate the concerns that have been raised through the petition about the use of the remaining part of the peninsula. The planning for Coombs and the wider Molonglo Valley has always indicated this area is proposed to be developed for residential purposes. This has been the case since Variation to the Territory Plan No 281 took effect in 2008.

The Government released the *ACT Planning Strategy 2018* (the Strategy) in 2018, which framed how local, regional and global changes and trends affecting the Territory can be best managed for our city. The Strategy provides a clear, robust and contemporary urban planning framework to guide our growth as a sustainable, competitive and equitable Canberra.

Relevant to the matters raised by the petition, the Strategy recognises the importance of carefully weighing up decisions about greenfield planning and development against protecting our natural environment, our green spaces and bushland setting. The Government is committed to supporting future growth in a

manner that is sustainable, with appropriate oversight to protect and build upon the qualities that we value about Canberra.

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 (ILRP) aims to release enough land every year to cater for Canberra's growth and change.

Canberra's population continues to grow, and over the next 20 years the population is expected to increase by over 40%. A stable supply of new homes, available in a variety of locations and at different price points contributes to the ACT being an attractive place to live and buy a home. The ACT Government has always been clear on the intention for development to occur in the Coombs peninsula. The Molonglo Valley, Coombs and the Coombs peninsula were identified for urban residential development in 2008 through Variation to the Territory Plan No 281 (Molonglo and North Weston) and Amendment to the National Capital Plan No 63 (Molonglo). The Variation applied a future urban area (FUA) overlay over the area and an indicative Residential RZ1 Suburban zoning to the Coombs peninsula, both of which were documented on the Territory Plan map. The Variation was approved by the then Legislative Assembly as part of standard statutory practices.

Before any decision is made to identify an area as future urban area, extensive environmental studies are undertaken to determine the ecological value of the land. The environmental values of these areas were explicitly tested and assessed to support robust and informed decision making occurred about land use within these areas. Broadly speaking, the environmental assessments that were undertaken to support this zoning demonstrated that, due to the past use of the area as a commercial pine plantation, the Coombs peninsula had low environmental value and was therefore not suitable for inclusion into the adjacent Molonglo River corridor reserve.

This conclusion was supported by the decision of the Australian Government to approve development of the peninsula under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act), which occurred in 2010. In doing so, the Australian Government found that a small portion of land within the Coombs peninsula had habitat potential for the pink-tailed worm-lizard, but as it was of low quality it was unlikely to be re-colonised through rehabilitation. The EPBC Act approval for development of the Coombs peninsula remains valid, providing development occurs consistent with the Australian Government approval.

In relation to concerns about the platypus, it is not an endangered species, however it is an important species in determining the health of our waterways. Waterwatch is currently finalising a report on the most recent platypus survey work, with the closest monitoring sites below Coppins Crossing bridge. The report will be available in early 2020. Generally, the main concerns that have been raised by the Waterwatch team for the platypus are disturbance from dogs, retaining habitat structure (snags etc) and artificial lighting.

It is within this broad context, that the future delivery of residential development in the Coombs peninsula has been openly and publicly communicated by the ACT Government since 2008.

The development of the Coombs peninsula was originally approved in 2011 through an estate development plan development application for the suburb of Coombs. The approval was appealed to the Australian Capital Territory Civil and Administrative Tribunal (ACAT).

ACAT made a consent order in 2012, whereby the Coombs peninsula would be removed from development and that a future development application for the peninsula would not be lodged until such time as a Plan of Management that included the river corridor adjacent to the suburb of Coombs was in place. This was not an agreement that the peninsula would not be developed.

The Plan of Management is now the Molonglo River Reserve Management Plan which formally commenced in July 2019. The Management Plan sets out how the reserve will be managed and restored over time to protect flora and fauna including the pink-tail worm-lizard, provide recreational opportunities and minimise the risk of bushfire.

Now that the Molonglo River Reserve Management Plan is in place, a development application for an estate development plan can be lodged with the independent planning and land authority. It is at this stage of the process that the final zoning of land is determined (and therefore no longer indicative) in accordance with the *Planning and Development Act 2007*.

When a development application is lodged, the application will be determined taking into consideration the requirements of the Territory Plan, the outcomes of environmental and tree surveys, stormwater management measures to protect the Molonglo River and environmental values within the river reserve, the requirements under the EPBC Act, and recommendations of a bushfire risk assessment. The authority will also take into consideration submissions received during the development application's public notification. The public notification process will provide the community with a further opportunity to comment on the proposal.

Thank you for referring the petition to me. I trust this information is of assistance.

Motion to take note of petitions

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Ms Lee): Pursuant to standing order 98A, I propose:

That the petitions and responses so lodged be noted.

Newborn screening—petitions 21-19 and 1-20

MS LE COUTEUR (Murrumbidgee) (3.53): This is an important petition. It was signed in both the electronic and physical form by over 600 Canberrans. It calls on the government to introduce screening for severe combined immune deficiency—SCID, as it is known—into the existing newborn screening test, which is known as the Guthrie test.

At the moment New South Wales is undertaking a pilot program of newborn screening for SCID. Because all of the ACT's newborn screening is processed in New South Wales, for the period of this pilot our newborns are being screened for this condition. The petition draws our attention to the importance of this testing and the need for this to occur on an ongoing basis. I am pleased to be able to support these Canberrans in bringing this issue to our attention.

I would like to share some of the expertise and experiences behind this petition. I will seek leave at the end of my statement to table some documents that I am quoting from. This is a serious health problem with a simple and achievable solution. SCID disease, which is popularly known as "bubble boy" disease, is a catastrophic inherited problem with a person's immune system in which the body is unable to fight infections. Without detection and treatment, babies will continually get sick, and without treatment most babies die by the age of two years. It is one type of primary immunodeficiency disease, and one that can be treated if it is detected early enough.

The Immune Deficiencies Foundation Australia says that newborn screening for SCID should be mandatory in Australia. They have provided this information. They say that babies born with SCID:

... initially look perfectly healthy until they suddenly become sick, often around the age of two to three months. As SCID is a rare condition (one in about 50,000), the diagnosis may not be considered, and the required tests not undertaken before it is too late. Completing these tests before the baby becomes sick, preferably soon after birth, enables early diagnosis and commencement of early treatment.

SCID can be managed to some extent with immunoglobulin infusions to boost immune defence. But the really great thing is that it can, in most cases, all going well, be cured by replacing the faulty immune system with a healthy, normal one by bone marrow transplantation. If the transplant is performed before the baby gets sick, especially before the age of 3½ months, there is a greater than 90 per cent chance of survival. Transplantation performed later, especially after an infection, reduces the chance of survival to about 70 per cent.

I would like to read a quote from one mother, Javeria, who lost one child to this disease and had to take quite extraordinary measures to keep a second child alive while seeking treatment:

It took the life of our first son, Zakariya, at 15 months of age in 2014. He went undiagnosed for 13 months and by then he had received his 1 year vaccinations; they were essentially fatal in his condition ... It isolated our second son, Ismaeel, from birth until he was 2 years old. We converted our home into a bubble, kept him cooped up inside and away from other people to protect him from the risk of virus or illness. We washed hands and sanitised and sterilised everything. All. Day. Long. We isolated ourselves so we wouldn't bring any germs home. Our daughter didn't go to school or see other kids for a year, and I didn't leave the house except for hospital visits.

It is also useful to know about the finances. I am advised by Dr Wong of the Westmead Children's Hospital that international cost-effectiveness studies have shown that the cost of treating children once they have symptoms far outweighs the cost of giving the transplant to babies before they have symptoms. Testing would cost around \$10 per child. Newborn screening would be the perfect solution to the problem.

I thank all of the community members, and in particular Jenny Tyrell, who is here today in the gallery, for their ongoing work over many years to bring attention to this disease, support work for a cure, and for raising this issue through a petition as one way to potentially bring the screening and the cure to the babies and families who need it to survive. The doctors, including Dr Wong, have worked so hard on this. I seek leave to table the documents from which I have quoted.

Leave granted.

MS LE COUTEUR: I present the following papers:

Newborn Screening for Severe Combined Immune Deficiency Australia—
Position Statement, prepared by the Immune Deficiencies Foundation.
Javeria—Impact of disease.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Papers

The Clerk presented the following papers:

ACT Ambulance Service—SPIRE Project consultation documents—
Letter to the Clerk from the Head of Service, ACT Government, dated
11 December 2019.
Schedule of returned documents.
Copy of—
Email correspondence regarding planning for the SPIRE centre and
ambulance movements, dated 5 and 7 March 2019.
Meeting invite regarding SPIRE planning and ACTAS movements.
Email regarding NSW ambulance contacts, dated 21 November 2019.
Email correspondence regarding ACTAS presence at Woden Valley Council,
dated 5 November 2019.

Madam Speaker presented the following papers:

Auditor-General Act, pursuant to subsection 17(5)—Auditor-General's Reports
Nos—
9/2019—2018-19 Financial Audits—Overview, dated 29 November 2019.

10/2019—2018-19 Financial Audits—Financial Results and Audit Findings, dated 13 December 2019.

11/2019—Maintenance of ACT Government School Infrastructure, dated 19 December 2019.

Standing order 191—Amendments to the:

Crimes (Disrupting Criminal Gangs) Amendment Bill 2019, dated 4 December 2019.

Education Amendment Bill 2017, dated 5 and 6 December 2019.

Mr Gentleman presented the following papers:

ACT Ombudsman quarterly updates—Copy of letter to the ACT Ombudsman from the Chief Minister, dated 13 January 2020.

Coroners Act, pursuant to subsection 57(4)—Report of Coroner—Inquest into the death of Lauren Maree Johnstone—

Report, dated 4 June 2019.

Government response to Coronial recommendations, dated February 2020.

Environment and Transport and City Services—Standing Committee—Report 9—*Inquiry into a Territory Coat of Arms*—Government response.

Fuel Pricing—Select Committee—Report—*Report on Inquiry into ACT Fuel Pricing*—Government response, dated December 2019.

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee—Report 6—*Report on inquiry into domestic and family violence—policy approaches and responses*—Government response.

Loose Fill Asbestos Insulation Eradication Scheme—Implementation—Report—1 July to 31 December 2019.

Planning and Development Act, pursuant to subsection 79(1)—Approvals of Variations to the Territory Plan, including associated documents—

No 355—Calwell Group Centre—Zone changes and amendments to the Calwell Precinct Map and Code, dated 3 February 2020.

No 360—Molonglo River Reserve: changes to public land reserve overlay boundaries and minor zone adjustment, dated 4 February 2020.

No 367—Common Ground—Dickson section 72 block 25—Zone change and amendments to the Dickson precinct map and code, dated 3 February 2020.

Subordinate legislation (including explanatory statements unless otherwise stated)

Legislation Act, pursuant to section 64—

Animal Welfare Act—Animal Welfare (Advisory Committee Member) Appointment 2019 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2019-286 (LR, 23 December 2019).

Building and Construction Industry Training Levy Act and Financial Management Act—Building and Construction Industry Training Levy

(Governing Board) Appointment 2019 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2019-285 (LR, 23 December 2019).

Civil Law (Wrongs) Act—Civil Law (Wrongs) CPA Australia Ltd Professional Standards (Accountants) Scheme 2019 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2019 284 (LR, 20 December 2019).

Court Procedures Act—Court Procedures Amendment Rules 2019 (No 3)—Subordinate Law SL2019-30 (LR, 19 December 2019).

Cultural Facilities Corporation Act and Financial Management Act—

Cultural Facilities Corporation (Governing Board) Appointment 2020 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2020-7 (LR, 23 January 2020).

Cultural Facilities Corporation (Governing Board) Appointment 2020 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2020-8 (LR, 23 January 2020).

Cultural Facilities Corporation (Governing Board) Appointment 2020 (No 3)—Disallowable Instrument DI2020-9 (LR, 23 January 2020).

Cultural Facilities Corporation (Governing Board) Appointment 2020 (No 4)—Disallowable Instrument DI2020-10 (LR, 23 January 2020).

Duties Act—Duties (Pensioner Concession Duty Deferral Scheme) Determination 2019—Disallowable Instrument DI2019-270 (LR, 12 December 2019).

Environment Protection Act—

Environment Protection (Automotive Trades) Code of Practice 2019—Disallowable Instrument DI2019-267 (LR, 16 December 2019).

Environment Protection Amendment Regulation 2019 (No 1), including a regulatory impact statement—Subordinate Law SL2019-32 (LR, 23 December 2019).

Firearms Act—Firearms Amendment Regulation 2020 (No 1)—Subordinate Law SL2020-1 (LR, 9 January 2020).

Government Procurement Act—Government Procurement (Non-Public Employee Member) Appointment 2019 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2019-256 (LR, 21 November 2019).

Health Act—Health (Fees) Determination 2019 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2019-261 (LR, 5 December 2019).

Health Records (Privacy and Access) Act—Health Records (Privacy and Access) (Fees) Determination 2019 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2019-260 (LR, 5 December 2019).

Legislative Assembly Precincts Act—Legislative Assembly Precincts (Fees) Determination 2019—Disallowable Instrument DI2019-280 (LR, 23 December 2019).

Magistrates Court Act—Magistrates Court (Long Service Leave Infringement Notices) Regulation 2020—Subordinate Law SL2020-2 (LR, 20 January 2020).

Major Events Act—Major Events (ICC T20 Women's World Cup 2020) Declaration 2019 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2019-283 (LR, 18 December 2019).

Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act—Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods (Continued Dispensing) Amendment Regulation 2020 (No 1)—Subordinate Law SL2020-3 (LR, 20 January 2020).

Motor Accident Injuries (Premiums and Administration) Regulation—Motor Accident Injuries (Industry Deed) Approval 2020—Disallowable Instrument DI2020 4 (LR, 13 January 2020).

Motor Accident Injuries Act—

Motor Accident Injuries (Persons Living Outside of Australia) Guidelines 2019—Disallowable Instrument DI2019-276 (LR, 19 December 2019).

Motor Accident Injuries (UVP Liability Contribution) Guideline 2019—Disallowable Instrument DI2019-277 (LR, 19 December 2019).

Motor Accident Injuries (WPI Assessment) Guidelines 2019—Disallowable Instrument DI2019-278 (LR, 19 December 2019).

Nature Conservation Act—

Nature Conservation (Native Woodland) Action Plans 2019—Disallowable Instrument DI2019-255 (LR, 14 November 2019).

Nature Conservation (Spotted-tailed Quoll) Action Plan 2019—Disallowable Instrument DI2019-266 (LR, 18 December 2019).

Official Visitor Act—Official Visitor (Corrections Management) Appointment 2020 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2020-3 (LR, 10 January 2020).

Public Health Act—Public Health (Chief Health Officer) Appointment 2019—Disallowable Instrument DI2019-259 (LR, 3 December 2019).

Public Place Names Act—

Public Place Names (Strathnairn) Determination 2019—Disallowable Instrument DI2019-263 (LR, 9 December 2019).

Public Place Names (Taylor) Determination 2020—Disallowable Instrument DI2020 2 (LR, 6 January 2020).

Public Place Names (Whitlam) Determination 2019 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2019-253 (LR, 12 November 2019).

Public Place Names (Whitlam) Determination 2019 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2019-264 (LR, 9 December 2019).

Public Place Names (Yarralumla) Determination 2020—Disallowable Instrument DI2020-1 (LR, 6 January 2020).

Rates Act and the Taxation Administration Act—Taxation Administration (Amounts Payable—Rates) Determination 2019 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2019-272 (LR, 12 December 2019).

Road Transport (Driver Licensing) Act and Road Transport (General) Act—Road Transport (Driver Licensing) Amendment Regulation 2019 (No 1), including a regulatory impact statement—Subordinate Law SL2019-29 (LR, 12 December 2019).

Road Transport (General) Act—

Road Transport (General) Application of Road Transport Legislation Declaration 2019 (No 11)—Disallowable Instrument DI2019-254 (LR, 13 November 2019).

Road Transport (General) Application of Road Transport Legislation Declaration 2019 (No 12)—Disallowable Instrument DI2019-258 (LR, 5 December 2019).

Road Transport (General) Application of Road Transport Legislation Declaration 2019 (No 13)—Disallowable Instrument DI2019-279 (LR, 19 December 2019).

Road Transport (General) Driver Licence and Related Fees Determination 2019 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2019-265 (LR, 12 December 2019).

Road Transport (General) Exclusion of Road Transport Legislation (Summernats) Declaration 2019 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2019-269 (LR, 12 December 2019).

Road Transport (General) Act, Road Transport (Safety and Traffic Management) Act and Road Transport (Vehicle Registration) Act—Road Transport Legislation Amendment Regulation 2019 (No 1)—Subordinate Law SL2019-31 (LR, 19 December 2019).

Senior Practitioner Act—

Senior Practitioner (Positive Behaviour Support Panel) Guideline 2019 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2019-274 (LR, 19 December 2019).

Senior Practitioner (Positive Behaviour Support Plan) Guideline 2019 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2019-273 (LR, 19 December 2019).

Taxation Administration Act—

Taxation Administration (Amounts Payable—Ambulance Levy) Determination 2019—Disallowable Instrument DI2019-275 (LR, 19 December 2019).

Taxation Administration (Amounts Payable—Home Buyer Concession Scheme) Determination 2019 (No 3)—Disallowable Instrument DI2019-271 (LR, 12 December 2019).

Tree Protection Act—Tree Protection (Advisory Panel) Appointment 2019 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2019-282 (LR, 19 December 2019).

Utilities Act—

Utilities (Consumer Protection Code) Determination 2020—Disallowable Instrument DI2020-6 (LR, 16 January 2020).

Utilities (Licensing) Exemption 2019—Disallowable Instrument DI2019-268 (LR, 12 December 2019).

Veterinary Practice Act—Veterinary Practice (Board) Appointment 2019 (No 3)—Disallowable Instrument DI2019-281 (LR, 19 December 2019).

Waste Management and Resource Recovery Act—Waste Management and Resource Recovery (Processing Refund Protocol) Determination 2020—Disallowable Instrument DI2020-5 (LR, 16 January 2020).

Work Health and Safety Act—Work Health and Safety (Work Safety Council)
Appointment Revocation 2019 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2019-262
(LR, 4 December 2019).

Inquest into the death of Lauren Maree Johnstone—coroner’s report and government response

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—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) (4.00): Pursuant to standing order 211, I move:

That the Assembly take note of the following paper:

Coroners Act, pursuant to subsection 57(4)—Report of Coroner—Inquest into the death of Lauren Maree Johnstone—Report and Government response.

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) (4.01): I rise to speak to the ACT government’s response to the coronial recommendations from the inquest into the death of Lauren Maree Johnstone. I would firstly like to acknowledge the tragedy of Ms Johnstone’s death and offer my sincere condolences to her family—her daughter Arian Bunyan, who is with us in the Assembly today; her other daughter, Tamara Johnstone; and her sister, Donna Jones; and all of her family and friends. On behalf of the ACT government, I extend our sincere sympathies for your loss.

Chief Coroner Walker found that Ms Johnstone died on 7 January 2015 from the combined toxic effect of prescription and non-prescription medications that were lawfully acquired. Ms Johnstone’s death came about as a result of compliance with her prescribed medication regime aggravated by the addition of non-prescription medication. The government has considered the coroner’s report and its five recommendations. The government supports two recommendations in full, supports two in part and notes one of the recommendations relevant to the government. The ACT Health Directorate will engage with representatives from the local professional and consumer bodies to progress the supported coronial recommendations.

The government notes the Chief Coroner’s recommendation to mandate the use of the DORA—Drugs and Poisons Information System Online Remote Access—real-time prescription monitoring website. Unfortunately, system limitations currently preclude making the ACT DORA system mandatory for prescribers and pharmacists. The ACT adoption of the national real-time prescription monitoring system by 2021 will, however, significantly increase functionality for prescribers and dispensers. Following the rollout of the new system, the government will re-evaluate the potential to mandate the use of real-time prescription monitoring in the ACT. More broadly, the ACT government is working with all jurisdictions to reduce the harm from medicines. This is why I supported making the quality use of medicines and medicine safety the tenth national health priority area at the Council of Australian Governments Health Council meeting in November 2019. This agreement will lead to a coordinated

national approach that identifies and promotes best practice models and measures to reduce medication related harm.

Monitoring the dispensing of controlled medicines is only one piece of the puzzle. We also need to focus our efforts on harm reduction in the community and the delivery of alcohol, drug and mental health services. The ACT government has a comprehensive plan to tackle the issues associated with drug and alcohol harm, and with an additional \$10 million in the 2019-20 budget we are backing up our plan with funding to commence a number of new initiatives. In accordance with the ACT government's obligations under the Coroners Act 1997, I am pleased to have been able to provide the government's response to the Chief Coroner's recommendations. The government will continue to work to reduce the risks and harms associated with unsafe use of medicines, and thanks the Chief Coroner for her recommendations. I commend the response to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee Report 6

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—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) (4.04): Pursuant to standing order 211, I move:

That the Assembly take note of the following paper:

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee—Report 6—*Report on inquiry into domestic and family violence—policy approaches and responses—Government response.*

MS BERRY (Ginninderra—Deputy Chief Minister, Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development, Minister for Housing and Suburban Development, Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, Minister for Sport and Recreation and Minister for Women) (4.05): It is my pleasure today to speak to the ACT government's response to the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety's *Report on inquiry into domestic and family violence—policy approaches and responses*.

On 30 March 2017 the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety informed the Legislative Assembly that it had resolved to inquire into domestic and family violence as it relates to policy approaches and responses in the ACT. The standing committee invited public submissions for its inquiry in June 2017. The committee also released a discussion paper in July 2017 to assist individuals and organisations to prepare submissions to the inquiry. Following this, the ACT government and 33 other organisations and individuals provided submissions to the standing committee in September 2017.

On 22 August 2019 the standing committee tabled its final report in the Legislative Assembly. In this report, the standing committee made 60 recommendations to

government. The recommendations related to the adequacy and effectiveness of current ACT policy approaches and responses, national funding and the national agenda for domestic and family violence that relate to work in the ACT, the implementation of the ACT safer families initiatives and associated programs, and the most effective current policy approaches and responses to domestic and family violence. The ACT government response highlights the breadth and depth of work underway across government and the community to reduce the impacts of domestic and family violence in the ACT.

The ACT government response agrees to 38 recommendations and agrees in principle to 12 recommendations of the standing committee inquiry. The ACT government noted eight recommendations, and only two recommendations were not agreed to. I would like to thank the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety for bringing a focus on domestic and family violence to the Assembly's work program. The response outlines the substantial work of the ACT government to address domestic and family violence in our community and considers where we can strengthen current efforts. I would also like to thank each of the 33 community organisations and individuals who provided submissions to this inquiry.

Sadly, domestic and family violence is a widespread issue in our society and affects people right across our community. The ACT government remains committed to keeping our community safe and will continue working towards stopping and preventing domestic and family violence.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Planning and Development Act 2007—variation No 367 to the Territory Plan

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—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) (4.07): Pursuant to standing order 211, I move:

That the Assembly take note of the following paper:

Planning and Environment Act, pursuant to subsection 79(1)—Approval—Variation to the Territory Plan No 367—Common Ground—Dickson section 72 block 25—Zone change and amendments to the Dickson precinct map and code.

Variation 367 to the Territory Plan rezones block 25 section 72 Dickson from commercial CZ6, leisure and accommodation zone, to CFZ, community facility zone, to facilitate development of the Common Ground housing model at Dickson. Common Ground will accommodate people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, as well as low income tenants.

The proposed development at Dickson will include 40 dwellings, with a mix of one, two and three-bedroom units. Fifty per cent of the total dwellings will be for supportive housing. The remaining dwellings will be for community housing,

comprising affordable rental that will be managed by a community housing provider. Shops and restaurants will only be allowed where undertaken as part of a social enterprise. A social enterprise exists to create social benefit that may include employment and skills development for on-site residents. Definitions of community housing and social enterprise are included in the Dickson precinct code.

Variation 367 was released for public comment on 13 September 2019, until 1 November 2019. Fifty public submissions were received during this time. A report on consultation was prepared by the ACT planning and land authority, in accordance with section 69 of the Planning and Development Act.

A key issue raised by the community was the possible loss of trees within the Dickson channel corridor. In response to these concerns, additional rules and criteria have been added to the variation to protect the health of existing trees in the Dickson channel corridor, whilst providing appropriate access to the site, and to allow for the active transport connection to the south of the site. Other issues were raised by the community, all of which have been addressed in a report on the consultation.

I referred the draft variation to the Standing Committee on Planning and Urban Renewal to allow them the opportunity to consider the proposal, and the standing committee advised that it would not undertake an inquiry into the variation. I am satisfied that the issues raised by the community have been adequately addressed, and I subsequently approved the variation.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong) (4.10): I certainly welcome the changes made to variation 367 on Common Ground since it was released for public consultation. Members will recall that there was community concern when this variation was released as a draft. As Mr Gentleman noted in his remarks, locals were mostly concerned about the loss of trees, and this was raised in 48 out of the 50 public submissions that were made during the process.

The trees that were potentially under threat were not on the site per se but in the adjacent creek reserve. There were engineering drawings that suggested a road could be built in the creek reserve. This was a set of documents that members of the public drew both to my attention and to other members' attention and that was circulated in community discussion. If the road had gone ahead it would have removed over 50 established trees, and this clearly would have been a very disappointing outcome. The area under question is quite a popular informal walking track. The trees there are quite mature and provide really both a lovely environment themselves but also quite a buffer between the proposed section 72 site and the residential areas on the other side of the drain there.

Certainly I was concerned that this particular issue about the trees could derail the much-needed public and community housing, and I think that the two issues were largely unrelated. Most people said to me they were supportive of Common Ground but concerned about the potential loss of trees. That is why I put in a submission calling for removal of the road and, if there was something to be put in that area, replacing it with a well-lit walking and cycling path. At present, as I said, it is very much an informal area, which many people appreciate, but certainly a sealed footpath

could also be very beneficial to those who are perhaps less agile and certainly less capable of avoiding some of the tree roots in the area. The area is highly used by Dickson College students, dog walkers and also local residents going to Dickson pool and community facilities.

In conclusion, I am very pleased that the variation has been changed. I think this will significantly allay community concerns and will ensure the protection of a stand of mature trees that not only will, as I say, have aesthetic value but also be part of where we want to go with this city, which is making sure that, as there are changes in the city and in some areas redevelopment infill occurs, the greenery in the area, the living infrastructure as we formally call it in the living infrastructure strategy, is actually protected, and we continue to see Canberra as the bush capital it is renowned for being.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Planning and Development Act 2007—variation No 360 to the Territory Plan

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—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) (4.13): Pursuant to standing order 211, I move:

That the Assembly take note of the following paper:

Planning and Environment Act, pursuant to subsection 79(1)—Approval—Variation to the Territory Plan No 360—Molonglo River Reserve: changes to public land reserve overlay boundaries and minor zone adjustment.

Today I present variation 360 to the Territory Plan for the Molonglo River Reserve, a new reserve that follows the Molonglo River from Scrivener Dam to the Murrumbidgee River Corridor Reserve. It includes three current reserves—the Kama Nature Reserve, the lower Molonglo River Corridor Nature Reserve and the Molonglo River Special Purpose Reserve—and brings them together with some new areas to create the Molonglo River Reserve. The Molonglo River park in east Molonglo is included in the reserve, and the reserve has high conservation value and is becoming a recreation destination for residents of the Molonglo Valley.

A reserve management plan has been prepared for the reserve. Its purpose is to give clear direction on how the biodiversity, land and waters of the Molonglo River Reserve will be used and managed to satisfy both nature conservation and recreation objectives.

Variation 360 has been prepared to consolidate the public land reserve overlay boundaries and rezones part of block 485 Stromlo from rural zone to river corridor, to better reflect the management of this block as part of the reserve. These changes align the Territory Plan map with the reserve management plan for the new Molonglo River Reserve. Finalising variation 360 will facilitate the completion of the plan.

The draft variation was released for public comment from 23 November 2018 until 1 February 2019, and two public submissions were received. The key issues were future development on the Coombs peninsula and the effect on wildlife, especially platypus habitat; proposed development in the bushfire-prone area; and that the width of the reserve would not be enough to maintain environmental and public reserve functions. I referred a report on consultation and the recommended draft variation to the Standing Committee on Planning and Urban Renewal to facilitate its consideration of the draft variation. Following an inquiry into the variation, the standing committee made four recommendations. The government carefully considered the report, noted the first recommendation and declined to agree to the other three recommendations.

The standing committee recommended that the Coombs peninsula be considered for environmental and recreational purposes and that it be withdrawn from the land release program while this is completed. The committee also recommended that the bulk of the Coombs peninsula be rezoned to hills, ridges and buffer and that the future urban area overlay be removed. The government did not agree with these recommendations, as the future development of the Molonglo Valley has undergone numerous environmental and planning assessments under both ACT and commonwealth legislation and the Coombs peninsula has so far been determined to be suitable for urban development.

The site was originally zoned for urban development in 2008. The Coombs peninsula was previously a commercial pine plantation, which left the peninsula with low environmental value, including patches of pink-tailed worm-lizard habitat of low quality. The peninsula is currently dominated by exotic and native grasses, does not contain platypus habitat and would require significant effort to restore it to native grassland or box gum grassy woodland. Environmental approval for development of the Coombs peninsula was granted in 2009 under the commonwealth's Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 and remains valid.

To finalise the land use of the Coombs peninsula, an estate development plan will be submitted to the planning and land authority for assessment. The estate development plan requires public consultation. The plan will set out the proposed development of the land, including the proposed zoning and associated land uses. It will also do the subdivision pattern, the number of residential dwellings, road layout, bushfire risk assessment and mitigation measures. This plan will also take into consideration the requirements of the Coombs and Wright concept plan, including environmental values, tree assessment, slope, heritage, stormwater management and bushfire impacts when determining the most appropriate use for the land on the Coombs peninsula. The environmental studies undertaken to support the estate development plan will identify which parts, if any, of the Coombs peninsula are suitable for environmental and recreational purposes.

Variation 360 was prepared to bring the reserve boundaries on the Territory Plan map into line with the reserve management plan for the new Molonglo River Reserve. It was not prepared to finalise the zoning for the Coombs peninsula or any other future urban area. Public consultation on the variation was about the public land reserve boundaries and did not include changes to the Coombs peninsula. The appropriate

way to remove a future urban area overlay and confirm the final zoning for land is through the estate development plan assessment process, which includes public consultation. Following consideration of the standing committee's recommendations, I approved variation 360, Molonglo River Reserve. I thank the Assembly for its time.

MS LE COUTEUR (Murrumbidgee) (4.19): There is good and bad in everything, and the good in the Territory Plan variation 360 is the changes that it makes to the planning rules for the Molonglo River Reserve. These changes are necessary and are supported by the Greens and, I am sure, by everybody else.

However, there is one startling omission in this Territory Plan variation, that omission being the Coombs peninsula. The peninsula is a small site. It is also known as the Coombs tip, because it is on the tip. It is surrounded by the Molonglo River Reserve on three sides. It is, however, also on the land release program. The Greens believe that the bulk of the Coombs peninsula should not be developed. As Minister Gentleman noted, it has been considered a possibility for development for 11 years, but the reason it has not been developed is that there have been a considerable number of people who believe it should be protected.

People have a number of different views. The local community wants the peninsula protected for recreation, because if you go there it has got some really beautiful views. From a recreational point of view, it is a great idea. The other way of looking at it is that it contains an area of pink-tailed worm-lizard habitat and this lizard, of course, is listed as vulnerable both nationally and in the ACT.

Where the peninsula is situated is on a very narrow part of the reserve. The reserve at this point is less than 200 metres wide, and research has shown that reserves that are that narrow actually do not work very well to protect biodiversity. If the reserve was going to work well to protect biodiversity, it would work a lot better if it was a bit wider. Of course, what happens on the peninsula will directly impact on the reserve. Builders' rubbish will go there when the buildings are being done. Any pets, particularly cats and dogs, that are owned by people who live there will undoubtedly go straight into the reserve. There will be rubbish and all the usual impacts of human habitation.

There are only 30 dwellings planned on this peninsula because, let's face it, we are not talking about a very big bit of land. While, yes, Canberra does have some significant issues with housing supply, 30 dwellings is not going to solve it.

The government and Minister Gentleman have been repeatedly told that the peninsula should be protected. Environment groups have said this. The local community has said this. The planning and urban renewal standing committee has said this. I have the honour of being the chair of that committee, and I thank Minister Gentleman for reading out our recommendations so that I do not have to repeat them. But I am very disappointed that the minister has chosen to ignore the recommendations of what is a tripartisan committee.

Also, this Assembly, in Mrs Jones's motion of 27 November 2019, asked to protect the peninsula. The Greens, of course, supported this motion and we expanded it to add

“and rezone it for environmental and recreational purposes by 30 June 2020”. The easiest way for the government to do that would be to add this on to variation 360 about the Molonglo River Reserve. As I have said, on three sides the area in question is surrounded by the reserve and logically you see it as an extension to the reserve. I am very disappointed to find that the government appears to have closed off that option in tabling the Territory Plan variation today. I guess the question is: how is the government planning to fulfil the will of the Assembly, as voted for on 27 November last year? I think this is a significant question and I look forward to a response from the government.

I also know that local community and environment groups will be concerned. They had really hoped, after the planning committee made its recommendation, being a tripartisan recommendation, that the government would take it on board. That does not appear to be the case. I have been informed by our local residents that the Suburban Land Agency is still out there digging holes and getting organised to include this land as part of the land release program, which I know is very distressing to the local residents. Therefore, I cannot exactly welcome this Territory Plan variation.

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (4.25): It is very rare that I get to say that I am standing alongside Ms Le Couteur on this matter, but it is one that we agree on. I just wanted to put on the record that I, too, am dismayed by the government ignoring the strong recommendation made by the tripartisan planning committee regarding the removal of Coombs peninsula from the land release program. Again, as Ms Le Couteur has pointed out, we are talking about 30 potential dwellings. From the overwhelming evidence and the tripartisan agreement in that committee, I am dismayed. I just wanted to place that on the record. Thank you.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Planning and Development Act 2007—variation No 355 to the Territory Plan

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—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) (4.26): Pursuant to standing order 211, I move:

That the Assembly take note of the following paper:

Planning and Environment Act, pursuant to subsection 79(1)—Approval—Variation to the Territory Plan No 355—Calwell Group Centre—Zone changes and amendments to the Calwell Precinct Map and Code.

Variation 355 to the Territory Plan implements the planning recommendations of the Calwell group centre master plan 2016. The master planning program has been undertaken as part of an ACT government initiative to encourage the rejuvenation of selected commercial centres and to direct development within the centre over time.

The Territory Plan amendments are intended to provide guidance for future development in the Calwell group centre, particularly in relation to the desired built form and character. This variation consolidates the commercial CZ1 core zoned area of the group centre—specifically, block 41 section 787, which is the strategic location within the group centre that was previously included in two different commercial zones.

It is now entirely within the CZ1 core zone and earmarked for increased building heights. The variation also increases the area of land in the CFZ, community facilities, zone by rezoning part of block 8 section 788, along Johnson Drive, from the transport services zone, TSZ, to CFZ, community facilities zone. This is intended to promote community uses in the location consistent with the master plan.

Restrictions on the use have been implemented to focus commercial services uses, particularly industrial trades and the like, within the existing commercial CZ3 services zone areas. This will improve the amenity of the group centre, consistent with the recommendations of the master plan.

The existing building heights in the Calwell group centre have been retained, predominantly two storeys, under variation 355. However, there is a site-specific allowance for up to four storeys towards the eastern edge of the centre. This is intended to provide a moderate increase in development opportunities in this location, consistent with the master plan.

Variation 355 introduces new rules and criteria into the Calwell precinct code to improve public spaces, pedestrian places and thoroughfares. These include requiring active building frontages to have awnings, to maintain solar access to public places and to improve public safety throughout passive surveillance measures.

Variation 355 was released for public comment between Friday, 10 August 2018 and Monday, 24 September 2018. A total of three written submissions were received. A range of issues were raised, including car parking, solar access and upgrades to public domain. The key issue relating to the suitability of block 41 section 787 for residential ground floor uses was raised as well. In consultation with the Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate the variation was amended to retain ground floor commercial uses on this block. This is consistent with the intent of the master plan.

I referred the draft variation to the Standing Committee on Planning and Urban Renewal. The standing committee conducted an inquiry into the variation and released its report in September 2019. The report recommended the approval of draft variation 355, subject to five recommendations. The ACT government prepared a response to this standing committee report, which was tabled on 26 November 2019.

The government agreed to amend draft variation 355 in response to recommendation 4 to allow residential ground floor uses on block 41 section 787 Calwell, except on the primary active frontages. The variation has been amended accordingly.

The government did not agree with recommendation 5, which requested the expansion of the area for taller building elements up four storeys, primarily because the level of redevelopment exceeds the outcomes sought by the master plan for growth in the group centre. It would also place residential uses in proximity to the commercial CZ2 services uses and the loading docks. I am satisfied that the issues raised by the community have been adequately addressed and I subsequently approved the variation.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Education, Employment and Youth Affairs—Standing Committee Membership

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Pursuant to standing order 223, the opposition whip wrote to the Speaker on 2 December 2019 advising of proposed changes to the membership of the Standing Committee on Education, Employment and Youth Affairs. On 2 December 2019 the Speaker agreed that Mr Parton be discharged from the Standing Committee on Education, Employment and Youth Affairs and Ms Lee be appointed in his place.

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

That the change to the membership of the Standing Committee on Education, Employment and Youth Affairs, as proposed to and agreed by the Speaker, pursuant to standing order 223, be adopted.

Peaceful protest Discussion of matter of public importance

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Madam Speaker has received letters from Ms Cheyne, Ms Cody, Mr Coe, Mrs Dunne, Mr Gupta, Mr Hanson, Mrs Kikkert, Ms Lawder, Ms Le Couteur, Ms Lee, Mr Milligan, Mr Parton, Mr Pettersson and Mr Wall proposing that matters of public importance be submitted to the Assembly. In accordance with standing order 79, Madam Speaker has determined that the matter proposed by Ms Le Couteur be submitted to the Assembly, namely:

The importance of peaceful protest.

MS LE COUTEUR (Murrumbidgee) (4.31): Just over 187 years ago, in 1832, the first women's suffrage petition was presented to the British House of Commons. Immediately recognising the validity of the arguments and the justice of the cause, the House voted at once to grant women voting rights fully equal to those of—no. Look, who are we kidding? The petition went nowhere. Thirty-five years later, the Manchester National Society for Women's Suffrage was formed. Thirty years after that, 17 women's suffrage societies united to form the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies. They favoured peaceful methods of campaigning, such as the petition that had been introduced a full 65 years earlier.

It was not until a further eight years had passed, bringing us to 1907, that women finally reached the point of taking militant action. Over 3,000 women marched from Hyde Park to Exeter Hall in the rain. Seventy-five suffragettes were arrested after attempting to storm the Houses of Parliament. Herbert Asquith, a strong opponent of women's suffrage, became Prime Minister that same year. In 1908, 250,000 people attended a Sunday demonstration in Hyde Park. Asquith ignored the message. Women began smashing windows in Downing Street and tying themselves to railings. In 1909, hunger strikes began, along with a "No vote, no tax" campaign.

The First World War broke out the following year. The vital support of women for the war effort made a strong case for their voting rights, which of course were immediately granted. Again, who are we kidding? No way. Women over the age of 30 were finally given the right to vote in February 1918, 3½ years after the war began, but it was not until 1928 that all adult women could finally cast a vote.

Looking around this chamber, in which women outnumber men, it seems hard to believe that the fight for full women's suffrage in Britain took the better part of 100 years. Of course we were not that backward here in Australia. Women had attained full voting rights and the right to stand for parliament in South Australia by 1895, as, importantly, had Indigenous men and women. Federally women could vote and stand for parliament in 1902.

But the point remains that after 70 years of polite petition signing, society forming, meeting organising and cogent argument making, British women in 1907 were barely closer to having the vote than they had been in 1832. And who knows if Australian women would have been listened to as quickly without the efforts of their counterparts in England.

Movements pushing for the abolition of slavery in America and throughout the British Empire and for the emancipation of the serfs in tsarist Russia went through similarly lengthy and increasingly frustrated struggles to be heard. More recently, movements for ending the Vietnam War, for no dams on the Franklin River, for LGBTQI rights and marriage equality, all these movements and more worked, petitioned, argued, agitated and protested over a period of years before seeing success.

Imagine a world in which the pioneers and leaders of these movements had not acted with such courage and persistence, had not gained the support of large segments of the population, had not kept working, had not gone out into the streets. It is a much less pleasant, much less equitable place. Protest is a vital part of any public conversation about change. Peaceful protest is a right.

Peaceful protest has been in the news again as a result of the growing demands for ambitious government action on climate change around the world. Here in Australia these demands have grown even louder this summer in the wake of our devastating fires. We are seeing the same attempts to repress protests that we have always seen.

The reason why some want to stop climate change protests is, of course, that they make a difference.

In Canberra, in Australia and globally, the climate action movement has never given up on our collective hope for serious and urgent climate action at every level of government. As the Greens know, it is this grassroots commitment that has so often made the difference when it comes to bringing about significant change. This grassroots commitment and action is one of the reasons why we here in the ACT have been able to achieve so much more than in some other jurisdictions on climate actions.

With hindsight, it is often easy to know which side of history to be on. I highly doubt that there is anyone in this chamber who would support slavery or question the right of women and indigenous people to vote. It now seems barbaric to us that a civil war was fought over the slavery issue and that women were driven to starving themselves in prison to draw attention to their cause. But things seem to look different when they are actually happening. Right now we are very clearly seeing people come down on what I strongly believe will turn out to be the wrong side of history.

In Queensland a few months ago, Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk announced a suite of new laws to be fast-tracked through the Queensland parliament in order to crack down on protests, citing a single ambiguous incident from 2005 in which a protestor allegedly claimed to have aerosol cans attached to a locking device. Queensland's human rights commissioner has come out strongly in opposition to the proposed bill. In New South Wales, Premier Gladys Berejiklian labelled Labor leader Michael Daley's support of the September 20 student climate strike as "appalling". She claimed to support their right to have views about the world and express themselves, but not during school. I believe that there are people in this chamber who have expressed some similar views. On the ABC's *The Drum* on October 13 last year, Georgina Downer self-righteously and with no evidence claimed that Extinction Rebellion protesters were impeding the passage of emergency vehicles and endangering lives.

It is no accident that I have chosen to highlight the anti-protest views of three women here. Premiers Palaszczuk and Berejiklian and would-be federal parliamentarian Downer would not be where they are today without the efforts of women like Mary Smith, Millicent Garrett Fawcett, Catherine Helen Spence and Henrietta Dugdale. These are all women who challenged the prevailing system and angered those in power as they argued for change. They protested. Yet, having benefited from the willingness of their historical sisters to protest for women's rights, these women are now attempting to clamp down on vital protest movements that we see today.

The most important of these are climate protests by thousands of environment groups as well as Extinction Rebellion, Stop Adani, the School Strike 4 Climate and many more. This is a truly global movement. But there are and will continue to be other issues on which people's voices need to be raised peacefully in public in order to be heard. These are the voices that need to be heard, and heard repeatedly, in order for action to be taken. If we constrain, limit or suppress the right of ordinary people to peaceful protest we are not only stalling the kind of focus we have all benefited from up to this point; we are actively moving ourselves backwards.

Here in the ACT we need to affirm and protect this fundamental right so that our society can continue to positively evolve. This society needs to support our citizens in

their desire to have their voices heard. In fact the biggest risk around the issue of peaceful protest is not marches in the street; it is that the Prime Minister might one day get what he wants, which, as he said, is a population of quiet Australians.

MRS DUNNE (Ginninderra) (4.40): I was a little perplexed about what Ms Le Couteur might speak about today under this somewhat unusual and possibly not in order matter of public importance. The importance of peaceful protest does not quite fit the standing orders as I would have interpreted them. But I am quite happy to speak on the subject.

Ms Le Couteur started off with issues relating to protests which were not so peaceful, possibly for good reason, in relation to the awarding of women's suffrage in the UK, and she did go on to say that there were disruptive protests and there was the breaking of windows around Downing Street. So I am not quite sure how that relates to the notion of the importance of peaceful protest. It may relate to the importance of women's suffrage. But more than a century on from that, I think that that debate has been put to bed once and for all. In a chamber where there are more women than men, which is an oddity, it has definitely been put to bed in the ACT.

Ms Le Couteur went on to talk about the importance of peaceful demonstrations in relation to the climate and put together a sort of grab bag of issues related to people who did not quite agree with the climate protesters. It is interesting that we had a perspective that the people who are protesting that we agree with have a whole lot of rights but the people who are protesting about things that we do not have a view about or might disagree with do not have the same rights.

Your peaceful protest is somebody else's outrageous protest. For instance, I draw to members' recollection the protest by anti-GM protestors who broke into the CSIRO with their whipper snippers and destroyed crops. It was interesting that today Mr Rattenbury quoted at length from CSIRO scientists but was not keen to come down and admonish those people who had ruined years of work, years of research in the CSIRO, when it did not quite suit.

The power of real protest which is peaceful is quite legendary. The work of Mahatma Gandhi and his civil disobedience protests in the face of vast amounts of cruelty, oppression and police brutality have shown how effective peaceful demonstrations can be. Wind forward 50 or 60 years and look at the half a million, sometimes a million, people who turned out in Hong Kong to protest the rules on extradition to mainland China when the Hong Kong Legislative Council proposed blanket extradition rules. That is a demonstration of how effective peaceful protests can be: when a million people turn out on the streets in support of what they see as human rights.

The response of the police in Hong Kong has been to gradually ramp up and escalate the violence against peaceful protestors. The first of those protests, a lantern demonstration on Lion Mountain, was an extraordinary manifestation of what a peaceful protest could do and what you could say to the world about your position. The Hong Kong government's responses to that over the past six months—tens of thousands of tear gas canisters being fired into the crowd, brutality, the disappearance

of protestors, bodies turning up in odd places, the sudden uptick in the apparent suicide rate in Hong Kong, with people apparently throwing themselves out of windows—all show the extent to which the Hong Kong and Chinese authorities have arced up at peaceful protest.

We must support those people, both at home and abroad, who manifest their concerns in a peaceful way. I would extend that to the people of the ACT and other places across Australia who are explicitly prohibited from protesting their views about abortion in particular places, no matter how peaceful. People praying are considered to be protesting against abortion and prohibited from doing so in a first world country, in a country where we are supposed to uphold people's right to free speech. This piece of legislation was brought in by Ms Le Couteur's colleague on the Green crossbench.

We have to be very careful when we stand up to extol the importance of peaceful protest that we get our message clear and that we clearly understand. I clearly understand the importance of peaceful protest. I clearly understand that young people from schools and people across the country are entitled to protest in favour of a particular view in relation to climate change. I may not agree with some of the things that they put forward. I may not necessarily agree with their method of protest. But they have a right to do it. But it is ironic that the people who stand up in a Voltairean way for people's right to speak are not the Greens and not the Labor Party; they are the Liberal Party.

MR PETTERSSON (Yerrabi) (4.47): I rise to speak on a very important matter of public importance: the importance of peaceful protest. From the civil rights marches of the past to the school climate strikes of today, peaceful protest has always been a part of a healthy and strong democratic society. We are blessed to live in a society here in Canberra that embraces these ideals.

When we think about protest, we conjure up defining moments in our history. We think of the civil rights movement in America with the marches from Selma to Montgomery where state troopers attacked peaceful protestors who wanted racial equality. We think of Gandhi and his peaceful struggle for independence against the British Empire. We think of the unknown protestor bravely facing down tanks in Tiananmen Square. We think of the countless suffragettes who stood up generation after generation right around this world.

In our rich history of protest, we think about the freedom rides of Charlie Perkins; the Aboriginal tent embassy; the Wave Hill walk-off; Peter Norman giving up a hero's welcome from the 1968 Olympic Games to stand in solidarity with fellow athletes; the green bans in the 70s by the then construction workers union, the BLF; the fight against damming the Franklin in Tasmania; the 1978 Sydney Mardi Gras; and the early organising of the trade union movement in shearing sheds in Queensland.

I mention these protests and movements, both big and small, because they were all peaceful protests fighting for the greater good: equality of race, wealth and opportunity. And they are all important turning points in our society. They signify a form of progress as society learns to wash away racism, hate and entrenched power structures.

Unfortunately, despite our rich history of peaceful protest, there is always a countervailing force pressing down to stop change from happening. The right to peaceful protest has always been under attack. At times in our past, and even today, the right to peaceful protest has been curtailed. From the disgraceful policy of the Bjelke-Petersen government in Queensland to the actions of this federal government, the right to peaceful protest cannot be taken for granted.

Workers today can be fined up to \$42,000 for simply attending union protests without written permission from their employer. Their names and addresses are required to be handed over, on request, to the government. This sort of policy belongs in a totalitarian state, not modern Australia.

It is not just governments that are having this effect. Large corporations are also having a chilling effect on democratic rights to peaceful protest in this country. Companies like Adani are taking an aggressive approach to litigation with an eye to silencing those who speak out. According to leaked documents, the law firm engaged by Adani, AJ & Co, is attempting to use the legal system to inflict prohibitive costs on those speaking out against the project. This sort of behaviour chills peaceful democratic actions like protest. It makes people worried about standing up for their community. It makes it harder for the little guy to stand up to the big corporation, which in this case is a very big corporation.

In contrast, the ACT government has a strong track record of backing the right to protest. The right to peaceful assembly and freedom of association is enshrined in the ACT Human Rights Act under section 15. The ACT government has taken action to proactively support peaceful protests such as the recent school climate strikes. While federal MPs and some of those opposite have ridiculed these protests, we support children wanting to have their voice heard. History has never been made in the classroom; it is made outside of it. Hitting the streets and demanding that the government secure your future is a patriotic act by those schoolchildren, not something to be laughed at.

One important aspect of protest is civil disobedience. It is a legitimate and peaceful tool that people can use to get their point across. It often comes in for heavy scrutiny by the conservatives, for instance in relation to breaking the law if you feel it is unjust. Conservatives everywhere were outraged when Sally McManus made the point that unjust laws should be broken. Conservatives believe that this is tantamount to societal collapse. That exact same mindset would have seen the same conservatives diligently upholding all sorts of terrible laws.

I am not advocating for a lawless society. People who break unjust and immoral laws throughout history have always been prepared to suffer the consequences for the greater good. The right to peaceful protest is something we should cherish and hold dear. As a society we can only progress when we push the boundaries of what is acceptable and agitate for action.

MS ORR (Yerrabi—Minister for Community Services and Facilities, Minister for Disability, Minister for Employment and Workplace Safety and Minister for

Government Services and Procurement) (4.53): I am pleased to contribute to today's discussion on the importance of peaceful protest. Like Ms Le Couteur, I think that the time for climate action is now. I am proud to serve as a minister in the ACT government, a government which takes the responsibility of acting on climate change extremely seriously.

While bushfires were burning across the country and Canberra was recorded as having some of the poorest air quality in the world, recent protests called for the federal government to declare a climate emergency. I support these protesters in calling on all elected representatives to take real action on climate change.

The ACT government has shown great leadership on climate change and will continue to respond to the challenges a changing climate presents and adopt measures to protect our environment.

The importance and power of peaceful protest can be seen across history as a form of human rights protection, influencing government policy and driving positive social change. Some notable examples include the Indian independence movement, during which Gandhi pioneered nonviolent action leading to the successful campaign for India's independence from British rule and inspiring movements for civil rights and freedom across the world. There was the civil rights movement in the United States, a decades-long struggle to end legalised racial discrimination, disenfranchisement and segregation. Specifically, there were the freedom rides, which united and galvanised a movement and drew necessary public attention to the cause. There is also the example of a range of women's rights movements, including the women's suffrage and pro-choice movements.

Our very own Labor movement was born from the collective organisation of working people. In Australia, the union movement continues to lead to better working conditions through changes in labour and employment laws and practices. Even into the 21st century the equality campaign and the rights for LGBTI people mobilised millions of Australians to support marriage equality. The Indigenous rights and Aboriginal land rights movements remain as important as ever.

The success of these movements would not have been possible without ordinary people coming together in support of change. I hope that all those who have participated in climate strikes and protests are also able to reflect that they were on the right side of history in helping to guarantee a livable planet for future generations.

Whether the issue is big or small, individuals working together in peaceful protest can bring about significant change. Green bans, led by the Builders Labourers Federation, were a remarkable form of environmental activism where labourers refused to work on projects that were deemed environmentally or socially irresponsible. These bans protected parklands and buildings with historical significance. An important aspect of the green bans movement was the emphasis on protecting traditional working-class areas from commercial development. As an urban planner, I can see that this movement helped shape city and town planning for the better.

Recent grassroots action in response to the war on waste has prompted a range of legislative changes and the development of innovative solutions to waste reduction. Even the South Sydney Rabbitohs were brought back by protest; although I would like to note that I go for the Raiders.

The ACT government supports the right of Canberrans to peaceful assembly and freedom of association. This includes supporting the right to protest and strike, extending that right to young people and students in our schools and colleges.

Many Canberrans, including young people, have already taken part in the global climate movement, including through protest, because they are rightly worried about climate change. The unprecedented bushfires have justified their protest; they have not only destroyed lives, homes and habitats but sent billions of tonnes of CO₂ into the atmosphere.

I am pleased to contribute to this matter of public importance and hope to see the action of active ACT residents come to fruition in the form of good climate policy and progress on many other important social issues.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong) (4.57): I thank my colleague Ms Le Couteur for her thoughts on this important topic, one which, unfortunately, is relevant at the moment for all of the wrong reasons.

A quick and dirty Google search of the words “crackdown on protesters” yielded the usual 10-million-plus results, most of them from overseas. England, Hong Kong, Sudan, Egypt, Russia, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, France and Ecuador all appeared on the first few pages. But thanks to some very rushed legislation in Queensland last year, which I will talk more about in a minute, Australia appeared, too; and, really, we should not be on that list. We have democratic rights in this country, and those include the right to peaceful protest, so why are we seeing “crackdowns” and what do we need to do about it?

We are and have been fortunate in the ACT that our citizens’ protest rights have been strongly defended in law. I am thinking in particular of the Protection of Public Participation Act 2008, which, to quote the act, is “to protect public participation, and discourage certain civil proceedings that a reasonable person would consider interfere with engagement in public participation”. What the legislation does not do, as former Greens MLA Dr Deb Foskey said when she introduced it, is “protect illegal, violent or intimidatory behaviour”; nor can it be used “as a defence against any offence”. But it does stop those with deep pockets using the legal system to intimidate legitimate community protest and legitimate community participation in protests in which they have a right to be involved. I think this is great for protesters in the ACT.

I did note, Madam Deputy Speaker, your comments about the prohibition on people protesting against abortion in the ACT. Of course, it is right to remind the chamber that there is not a prohibition on protesting. There is an exclusion zone around one medical facility in the ACT so that those who are seeking those medical services can seek those services in some degree of privacy. Those who wish to protest are free to

do so anywhere in the ACT except within 100 metres of the said medical facility. That is an important distinction that we remind this chamber of. We remind it that there are a range of competing rights, often, and it is about trying to find the balance when it comes to those rights.

What we are sometimes seeing in other jurisdictions, though, is that the rights are not being balanced appropriately and the rights that we think we have, do have or did once have can be taken away by small, insidious steps if we are not paying attention. Last October former Greens Senator Scott Ludlam was hit with what civil liberties campaigners described as “absurd” bail conditions following his attendance at an Extinction Rebellion event in Sydney. Thankfully, the New South Wales Deputy Chief Magistrate, Jane Mottley, dismissed these bail conditions as unnecessary, in view of the fact that the alleged offences were fine-only, and not ones that would ordinarily attract bail conditions.

It is possible, of course, that not all judges would display this commonsense attitude. There have been some fairly extreme claims made at the moment by members of the police, members of parliament and others in certain jurisdictions regarding the supposed “endangering of safety”, claims seemingly being made in order to justify the “crackdown on protesters” that was so easy to find in a Google search. In Townsville in 2018 there was even a case that saw the safety risk claim being applied to the screening of a documentary film on climate change.

There are also significant deterrents to the right to protest being imposed in the form of high fines. In March 2018 protesters who shut down a part of the Adani company’s coal port in North Queensland were collectively fined almost \$80,000, quite a stark and, I would argue, disproportionate contrast to the fine of a mere \$12,000 imposed on the Adani company itself for polluting a nearby beach with over eight times the permitted level of coal sediment.

Further, instead of accepting the fine, Adani chose to use its deep pockets to fight it in court, which is something that ordinary people engaging in their democratic right to peaceful protest are not always able to do. Are we really happy to live in a society where the fear of unaffordable fines keeps people from expressing their views in a way that creates, at worst, minor and temporary inconvenience?

Last October, as I mentioned a moment ago, the Queensland parliament passed laws criminalising locking devices, with Greens MP Michael Berkman as the sole dissenting voice. I share one of his key concerns—that the new law provides the thin end of a very concerning wedge. I will quote him on this. He said:

Any moves to restrict protests would legitimatise a more extreme approach from a future conservative government. By blindly obeying the Courier-Mail, Labor has started a pointless culture war with the LNP that it can’t win. The LNP’s amendments were even worse than Labor’s bill, and this kind of slippery slope is exactly what we’ve been trying to warn them about.

That was a quote from Michael Berkman. I can assure the chamber that the LNP amendments did not pass, which was fortunate, because they included, as

reported by the *Guardian*, “mandatory prison terms for second protest offences” and “a new offence of ‘unlawful assembly’ for gatherings of three or more” people.

As Ms Le Couteur outlined very well today, protest movements are a vital mechanism for effecting positive change in human societies. They form a necessary part of the ongoing public conversation about who we are and who we want to be. They get people thinking. We will all be the poorer in the long run if peaceful public protest is withered on the vine by unnecessary, punitive and undemocratic legislation.

I thank Ms Le Couteur for bringing this issue forward today. It is important to have these sorts of discussions from time to time. I think it is well within order. It is appropriate to reflect on these matters—what is happening in Australia and the sort of proposals that could come forward in the ACT. It is important that we resist those, now and into the future.

I think Canberra residents value the right to protest. They recognise that there can be limitations on that at times. We see it on the lawns of Parliament House, where there is a really clear protest zone, and there are some limitations around that as well. I think people respect those differences, just as I think, unlike the example Mrs Dunne cited about protecting people around medical facilities, there is a reasonable limitation there. At the same time creating an offence of unlawful assembly for gatherings of three or more clearly is not the sort of standard we would expect.

As I said I thank Ms Le Couteur for bringing this forward. I look forward to seeing many more colourful protests in the ACT over the years for a whole range of reasons, some of which I expect I will agree with, and some I am sure I will not, and that continued ability for our citizens to express their views.

Discussion concluded.

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee Scrutiny report 38

MRS JONES (Murrumbidgee) (5.05): I present the following report:

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee (Legislative Scrutiny Role)—Scrutiny Report 38, dated 4 February 2020, together with a copy of the extracts of the relevant minutes of proceedings.

I seek leave to make a brief statement.

Leave granted.

MRS JONES: Scrutiny report No 38 contains the committee’s comments on four bills, proposed amendments to the Electoral Legislation Amendment Bill 2019, 29 pieces of subordinate legislation, one regulatory impact statement and five government responses. The report was circulated to members when the Assembly was not sitting. I commend the report to the Assembly.

Education, Employment and Youth Affairs—Standing Committee

Statement by chair

MR PETTERSSON (Yerrabi) (5.06): Pursuant to standing order 246A, I wish to make a statement on behalf of the Standing Committee on Education, Employment and Youth Affairs. Pursuant to standing order 216, I advise the Assembly that at a private meeting on 17 December 2019, the committee resolved to conduct an inquiry into youth mental health in the ACT.

Youth services falls within the resolution of establishment of this committee; however, mental health is within the resolution of establishment for the Assembly's Standing Committee on Health, Ageing and Community Services. Noting this inquiry's crossover between committee resolutions, agreement was sought and received from the HACS committee to proceed with this inquiry topic.

The committee will inquire into and report on the state of youth—under 25 years of age—mental health and operation of youth mental health services across the ACT. The committee will focus on the ACT's current approach to prevention and early intervention strategies and services for youth mental health and addiction, supports available through ACT schools, and family-based prevention.

The terms of reference for this inquiry will be published on the committee website. The committee will today call for public submissions, with a closing date of Friday, 20 March 2020.

Education, Employment and Youth Affairs—Standing Committee

Statement by chair

MR PETTERSSON (Yerrabi) (5.07): Pursuant to standing order 246A, I wish to make a statement on behalf of the Standing Committee on Education, Employment and Youth Affairs for the Ninth Assembly relating to statutory appointments in accordance with continuing resolution 5A.

I wish to inform the Assembly that during the applicable reporting period—1 July 2019 to 31 December 2019—the standing committee considered a total of seven appointments and reappointments to the following bodies: the board of the ACT Teacher Quality Institute; the Board of Senior Secondary Studies; and the ACT Building and Construction Industry Training Fund Authority board.

I present the following paper:

Education, Employment and Youth Affairs—Standing Committee—Schedule of Statutory Appointments—9th Assembly—Period 1 July to 31 December 2019.

Environment and Transport and City Services—Standing Committee

Statement by chair

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra) (5.07): Pursuant to standing order 246A, I wish to make a statement on behalf of the Standing Committee on Environment and Transport and City Services relating to petition 14-19. The petition was received by the Assembly on 30 July 2019 and referred to the committee under standing order 99A.

As signatories to petition 14-19, 565 residents of the ACT sought to draw to the attention of the Assembly the perceived need for “a new destination recreation park” in Canberra’s inner north. The petitioners pointed out that play spaces in Dickson, Downer, Watson and Hackett “were largely established in the 1960s and 1970s” and that “Most of the existing equipment is basic and outdated”. They further noted that most of these play spaces are “unshaded, made of non-renewable materials and can be prohibitively hot during summer”.

The petition called on the Assembly “to request the Government to build a new playground” that is inclusive, adventurous, distinctive and integrated.

In response to the petition, the minister noted:

Community views and priorities for city services in general and play spaces in particular have been informed by the outcomes of the “Better Suburbs” deliberative democracy initiative.

As a result of this process, according to the minister, \$1.9 million has been allocated to playground upgrades and improvements across the city, including “the funding of a new Nature Play Space at Glebe Park”. The ministerial response further noted that a nature play area has been built in Haig Park, that additional activities and equipment are located in Garema Place and that “the Boundless destination playground is located on the Lake Burley Griffin foreshore near the National Carillon and offers a wealth of activities and inclusive equipment for children’s play”.

Given the government’s allocation of funding for playground upgrades and improvements in Glebe Park, in addition to the existing playground facilities in Canberra’s inner north, the committee has decided not to inquire further into the matters raised in petition 14-19.

Environment and Transport and City Services—Standing Committee

Statement by chair

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra) (5.10): Pursuant to standing order 246A, I wish to make a statement on behalf of the Standing Committee on Environment and Transport and City Services relating to petition 20-19. The petition was received by the Assembly on 13 August 2019 and referred to the committee under standing order 99A.

As signatories to petition 20-19, 542 residents of the ACT sought to draw to the attention of the Assembly the apparent “lack of indoor facilities for training and competition games for roller derby in the ACT”.

The petition called on the Assembly “to urgently review existing facilities in both public and private ownership and to ensure that roller derby in the ACT has the required facilities for future growth and demand”.

In response to the petition, the minister noted that “the ACT Government has progressed several initiatives to support the sport of roller derby, including greater access to several ACT Government school facilities now and into the future”. Specifically, the minister mentioned “improvements to the gymnasium at the Hedley Beare Centre for Teaching and Learning in Stirling to support increased community access and usage” and noted the capacity to hire the gymnasium at Hawker College.

The minister further advised that “the new ACT Government school to be located in Denman Prospect is being designed to accommodate a range of community programs outside of school hours”. Within this design project, according to the minister:

... the local roller derby leagues—

Canberra Roller Derby League and Varsity Derby League—

have been identified as priority user groups and will be provided with the first opportunity to hire/access the indoor courts, outside of school hours, when the school opens in early 2021.

The minister concluded by noting that “the Southern Cross Stadium in Greenway has supported the delivery of roller derby events for many years” and by acknowledging that the private sector plays “an important role in providing indoor sport court facilities across the ACT”.

The committee notes the minister’s response in relation to this petition and has decided not to inquire further into the matters raised in petition 20-19.

Environment and Transport and City Services—Standing Committee

Statement by chair

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra) (5.10): Pursuant to standing order 246A, I wish to make a statement on behalf of the Standing Committee on Environment and Transport and City Services relating to petition 24-19. The petition was received by the Assembly on 20 August 2019 and referred to the committee under standing order 99A.

As signatories to petition 24-19, 544 residents of the ACT sought to draw to the attention of the Assembly that the “Yarralumla shops are in a state of disrepair”. The petition called on the Assembly to “fix safety and security issues including but not limited to the installation of bollards and improved lighting; improve and increase the

availability of parking; upgrade footpaths, kerbsides, toilets, benches and seating, other public facilities and amenity”.

In response to the petition, the minister noted:

In the ACT there are 90 commercial shopping centres, including 66 local shops, 19 group centres, four town centres and Civic. All buildings within the centres are privately owned with the surrounding public areas on unleased land, in most instances, managed by the ACT Government.

Priorities for upgrades and improvements to shopping precincts, according to the ministerial response, is set through an assessment process by TCCS which “considers the current provision, condition and suitability of the public realm ... including public infrastructure such as parking areas, lighting, accessibility of public walkways, landscaping, signage, trees, etc.” The minister noted:

Where public realm falls within leased land, the lessee is responsible for these areas.

In relation to the lighting at Yarralumla shops under government responsibility, the minister mentioned that “The streetlights on Bentham Street were updated approximately five years ago by TCCS” and that “The remaining streetlights in the area have been added to the list for future replacement”. In relation to car parking, the minister pointed out that “The current arrangements for the Yarralumla Shops meet the provision guide of six spaces per 100 sqm of gross floor area, with visitor’s parking within 200 metres of the shops”. Additionally, the minister stated that “As an alternative to providing additional parking spaces, time restrictions have been applied to the public parking areas and on the nearby streets to improve the turnover”.

On the other matters mentioned in the petition, the minister provided the following response:

Improvements to the pavement in the pedestrian area have also been undertaken to increase accessibility to amenities. In relation to other supporting public facilities and amenity, TCCS has repainted and repaired the seats and walls to improve amenity and has a regular cleaning program for the public realm, including daily cleaning of the toilet.

The committee notes the minister’s response in relation to this petition and has decided not to inquire further into the matters raised in petition 24-19.

Environment and Transport and City Services—Standing Committee

Statement by chair

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra) (5.15): Pursuant to standing order 246A, I wish to make a statement on behalf of the Standing Committee on Environment and Transport and City Services relating to petition 26-19. The petition was received by the Assembly on 22 October 2019 and referred to the committee under standing order 99A.

As signatories to petition 26-19, 542 residents of the ACT sought to draw to the attention of the Assembly certain comments made by broadcaster Alan Jones, which show that he “does not uphold acceptable community values and does not respect women publicly”. The petition noted that Transport Canberra advertising policy currently “restricts the type of material that can be promoted, including political advertising, tobacco products and anti-social or offensive messages”.

The petition called on the Assembly to “ensure that promotion of people who make sexist public comments is added to the bans in the Transport Canberra advertising guidelines, and called on Transport Canberra to immediately remove from bus advertising all advertisements promoting people who make sexist comments, including Alan Jones”.

In response to the petition, the minister noted that “each advertisement that is placed on Transport Canberra buses is reviewed by Go Transit Australia who manages advertising on the Transport Canberra bus fleet on behalf of the government”. The minister stated that while he understands and agrees “with the outrage from the community about the comments made by Mr Jones”, in this case, “as the advertisement advertises a radio station, and the advertisement does not display an offensive message, the advertisement meets the Australian Advertising Standards and Transport Canberra’s guidelines”.

The ministerial response concluded that “unfortunately, the ACT government is not in a position to ban or remove the advertising at this time”, but also confirmed that the government “will be working to ensure that there will not be any government advertising during the Alan Jones program”.

The committee notes the minister’s response in relation to this petition and has decided not to inquire further into the matters raised in petition 26-19.

Planning and Urban Renewal—Standing Committee Statement by chair

MS LE COUTEUR (Murrumbidgee) (5.17): Pursuant to standing order 246A, I wish to make a statement on behalf of the Standing Committee on Planning and Urban Renewal.

At a private meeting on 11 December 2019, the committee resolved to undertake an inquiry into planning for the surgical procedures, interventional radiology and emergency centre, SPIRE, and the Canberra Hospital campus and immediate surrounds.

The committee, noting the high level of public interest in the processes involved in, and the outcomes of, planning and development within the Canberra Hospital campus, in particular the surgical procedures, interventional radiology and emergency centre, SPIRE, resolved to inquire into and report on:

Planning for the surgical procedures, interventional radiology and emergency centre (SPIRE) and the Canberra Hospital campus and immediate surrounds, with reference to:

- 1) Planning for the SPIRE project, including:
 - (a) site selection
 - (b) consultation process(es)
 - (c) project timeline
 - (d) vehicle (including public and ambulance) access via Palmer Street and Gilmore Crescent to the Canberra Hospital
 - (e) other traffic and parking issues
 - (f) community safety and environmental considerations
 - (g) impact on surrounding residences, school and community facilities
 - (h) impact on existing hospital and emergency infrastructure and services.

- 2) Longer term planning for the Canberra Hospital campus and immediate surrounds, including:
 - (a) development of Master Plan and possible Canberra Hospital Precinct Plan
 - (b) mechanisms for ongoing consultation with the local community
 - (c) safe traffic flow within the Canberra Hospital campus
 - (d) traffic and parking within the Canberra Hospital campus
 - (e) management of impacts on local community and school
 - (f) management of impacts on the safety of the community
 - (g) emergency vehicle and helicopter access
 - (h) impact of helicopter noise on surrounding residences and school.

- 3) Any other relevant matter.

The committee will report by the last sitting day in May 2020.

Adjournment

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

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Canberra—*Our Bush Capital*

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) (5.20): Thank you, members. I take the chance today to congratulate the author of *Our Bush Capital*, Samantha Tidy, and illustrator Juliette Dudley, on this wonderful new book.

The book's production was crowdfunded by very passionate Canberrans, including me and Ms Cheyne. It is described as a keepsake to celebrate childhood in the nation's capital. As you read, you join Brindy as she celebrates and explores all the wonderful things that Canberra has to offer. For those of us who grew up here, it brings some of our old memories to the front of our minds again. It goes like this:

Canberra is my community.
Won't you come explore with me?

My house has windows, doors and bricks
But home is so much more than this.

The streets are filled with lots of trees,
I wear my boots and kick up leaves.

Autumn shades of pink and red,
In winter's chill, they start to shed.

King parrots, gang-gangs, lorikeets,
The sulphur-crested cockies shriek.

The Brindabellas cloaked in white,
A rare and brilliant winter sight.

The Carillon calls a melody.
The swans glide past so gracefully.

Kayaks break the morning fog.
From bridge to bridge, the people jog.

In the city I see the carousel.
I'm so excited, can you tell?

We jump on board and choose a horse,
Three trips round, perhaps a fourth?

At the museum, I spy a dinosaur.
Oh how I wish that she could roar!

Barrels of glittering coins I see.
Titan can lift them
—could he lift me?

A zoo with lions and giraffes,
The meerkats pose and make us laugh!

A treehouse for pirates,
and a bush tepee,

The dragons appear but
they don't scare me!

I find treasures in our Library,
Kept safe for all eternity.

A gallery of portraits bold,
Blue Poles and pears
and cultures old.

At Questacon I learn and make,
There's thunder, lightning, mass and weight!

Cockington Green
is a world so small,

I feel like a giant,
brave and tall!

Sleepy eyed, we wake at dawn,
And find our way to
Old Parliament lawns.

Balloons lift off and rise above.
A hummingbird, one shaped like love.

Where fires once blazed, some saplings grew.
The Arboretum grows
as we grow too.

From Parliament's door, the axis is drawn,
To an unknown soldier; for those that mourn.

Poppies placed by old and young,
Generations remembered; some unsung.

In springtime, tulips rise and open,
The Ferris wheel at last in motion.

In summer, picnics fill the park,
And fireworks sparkle in the dark.

Canberra is where my heart is full
Of people, places memorable.

Home doesn't mean a roof and door,
It really is so, so much more.

Home is where you are, you see,
Where is your home, can you tell me?

Madam Speaker, I have a copy of this book available in my office if people would like to view it or share it with their young people or themselves for their great memories of the bush capital, and I take a chance again to congratulate Samantha Tidy and Juliette Dudley for breaking Canberra's bubble to make sure that politicians who visit the ACT know that it is so much more than what they see when they visit. Thank you.

Gungahlin sports and recreation fair

MR MILLIGAN (Yerrabi) (5.23): I want to speak briefly today on a fantastic community event I attended recently, the Gungahlin sports and recreation fair,

which was held on Friday, 7 February. This is the third fair that I have attended. The first one was held at Moncrieff Park, the second was held at the Gungahlin oval, and this one was held at Amaroo District Playing Fields. It was great to see so many local sporting clubs and recreation groups in attendance.

I would like to thank the organisers, Northside Community Service, who have reported a 30 per cent increase in clubs wanting to have a stall. This has been matched by an increase in the attendance, with over 500 people dropping in to talk to clubs and to try a few different activities. On offer there were a lot of traditional sporting clubs, such as soccer, basketball, softball, netball, AFL, NRL, hockey, tennis and volleyball, just to mention a few, and other sporting and recreational interests, such as martial arts, Oztag, calisthenics, dance, orienteering, Girl Guides, local gyms, and Mums Exercise Group Australia.

Lots of kids and families stopped by on their way home from school, and it was really heartening to watch people try an activity they have never done before. There was much on offer at that event. However, it was frustrating to hear, again, from the clubs and parents about the issues they face with affordability and access. We have heard loud and clear from residents about the impact that the rising cost of living in the ACT is having: rental stress, rates stress, higher fees and charges, as well as increasing everyday expenses.

On average, the cost of kids participating in sports ranges from \$1,000 to \$1,500 per season, which includes things such as equipment, uniforms, fees and transport. And the cost is just one aspect; other barriers include time due to work and other family commitments, and a lack of appropriate options and issues around access and transport. Canberra as a community deserves better than this current tired Labor government, and that is why events like the Gungahlin sports and recreation fair are so great. It shows families what is possible and what options are available if clubs and families are supported to achieve their aspirations.

That is what I firmly believe the policy vision and objectives and targets within the Canberra Liberals sport and recreation policy, *find your game*, aims to achieve. The Gungahlin sports and recreation fair provided me with an opportunity to chat to clubs and families about our plan. *Find your game* has a specific target to increase participation for children and young people so that they continue to stay active throughout adulthood. We have an initiative to increase sport in schools and an initiative to help make sport more affordable for families. These are matters that can really make a difference for our local community.

In conclusion, it was great to talk to residents about these issues, and I look forward to providing Canberra families with a better choice come October 2020. The Canberra Liberals want to make Canberra the best place to live, work, and to raise a family, where more people can enjoy what is on offer at events like the Gungahlin sports fair. I would like to thank the organisers, Northside Community Service, and the volunteers for putting on such a great event. I look forward to attending the next event when it comes up.

Work safety—fatal accidents

MR PETTERSSON (Yerrabi) (5.27): I rise today to speak on the recent deaths of two workers on construction sites in Denman Prospect. When all of us come here to work each day we never have to consider the possibility that we may not make it home. That expectation should be no different for our construction workers.

The death of two construction workers on sites within a month of each other is nothing short of a tragedy. My heart breaks for the families of the two workers, and I offer my condolences to them. Serious injuries and death at work are not things that we should ever accept as inevitable or freak accidents. Deaths such as the ones we have already seen this year are preventable. To act like they are otherwise would be to do a disservice to construction workers across the territory.

Almost a month ago a 47-year-old man died following an incident when a pallet of tiles fell on him. A few weeks later an incident on another site in Denman Prospect involving a 60-year-old man resulted in the second death on an unsafe site in less than a month. The man fell from the second storey of a residential complex a mere 150 metres from where the first incident occurred. The idea that already this year there have been two deaths on residential construction sites is appalling. Tragic and preventable deaths such as these only go to show the serious consequences of dodgy developers and their unsafe work practices.

Canberra can and should be the safest place to work in the country but a bad culture in the construction industry where bosses feel it is acceptable to put profits ahead of safety prevents this being the case. Already in 2020 we have seen the number of construction site-related deaths double across the country in just the first month of the year compared to January 2019. Moreover, falls from a height and being hit by falling objects, combined, account for almost a quarter of work-related deaths.

Alarming, in the past month WorkSafe investigations resulted in over 70 non-compliance notices being issued over 28 construction sites across the territory. The rapid residential development of Canberra's suburbs has led to developers cutting corners in an attempt to meet unrealistic deadlines, putting workers increasingly at risk of serious injury or death, particularly during the extreme heat and smoke conditions of the past month.

There are no excuses for bosses that put their workers' lives at risk. The risky nature of construction work does not mean that it is excusable for developers to be lax on safety. In fact, the exact opposite should be the case. We must hold to account those who do not take safety seriously. It is the least we can do in response to the deaths of Canberra workers.

Transport—Liberal Party policy

MISS C BURCH (Kurrajong) (5.30): I rise this evening to respond to a couple of bizarre and fictional assertions made repeatedly in question time today by the transport minister regarding the Canberra Liberals' transport policy. We have heard

the minister claim on a number of occasions that the Canberra Liberals have plans to privatise our bus network. This is despite the fact that I have categorically ruled that out in this place and in the media on numerous occasions. Once again, for Minister Steel, let me be quite clear. A Canberra Liberal government will not privatise bus services.

The minister also claimed today that we have apparently announced that we will be cutting 22 local bus services. I have no idea where or when he got this information, because we have absolutely made no such commitment. We have continued to advocate for more bus services. I am not really sure whether I should be flattered that I feature so prominently in Minister Steel's imagination or if he should be looking to get better advice.

Instead of pointing the finger at the Canberra Liberals, the minister needs a mirror. It is his government which has privatised light rail. It is his government which has cut school bus services. It is his government which has cut weekend and commuter services. And it is his government which has cut 752 bus stops across Canberra.

We have continued to advocate for more regular and reliable services. The Canberra Liberals have lodged petition after petition. We continue to listen to and advocate for the hundreds of Canberrans who have contacted us because of services that have been cut by this government.

We continue to be the only party in this place which is committed to getting Canberra's school children to and from school safely with dedicated school bus services. We have today already seen dirty media election tactics commencing, and it is disappointing that, rather than taking responsibility and owning up to the failures of his bus network and apologising to the thousands of Canberrans that have been impacted, we are today seeing the minister succumbing to such behaviour.

Sophia Hamblin Wang—tribute

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra) (5.32): I want to kick off the year with some inspiration. It is in the form not of a quote, an event or a parable but of a person. It is Sophia Hamblin Wang, whom I first mentioned in this place back in 2018. Back then, Sophia had just accepted the award for resource innovator of the year at the Raw Materials Summit in Berlin. Mineral Carbonation International, of which Sophia is the chief operating officer, is an Australian-led start-up which is developing technology which not only captures CO₂ from emitters and by sucking it from the atmosphere but also then utilises that CO₂, turning it from a waste product into something useful like cement, pavers and plasterboards. That is right: emitters can be making money out of their carbon dioxide. I think we can see why they won.

Since then, Sophia has continued to be a leading voice on the national and international stages. I want to take a moment to draw some attention to just a very small selection of her recent achievements, where she has represented not only herself and her company but also Canberra and Australia. The first is that Sophia recently attended the World Economic Forum's annual meeting in Davos, Switzerland, invited as one of 50 "global shapers", who are people aged between 20 and 30 who have been

able to demonstrate their meaningful impact, usually in an organisation they have led or created. These people came from around the world to not only observe but also participate. One of 50 was our very own Canberran; Sophia was one of those who were chosen.

Not only that but Sophia was also invited to be part of a panel discussion—and this is a really big deal—on building a new carbon economy, where she provided valuable insights to a room of change-makers. Sophia met with the likes of Sheryl Sandberg and Dr Jane Goodall, as well as other representatives from Australia, and indeed Canberra, like Professor Brian Schmidt and Professor Genevieve Bell.

What is absolutely remarkable is that just days before Sophia arrived in Switzerland, and while appearing across *Time* magazine, the *New York Times*, and our own ABC Canberra, she was at her family's property in New South Wales defending it from bushfires.

Just last night Sophia appeared on *Q&A* on a decidedly not political panel featuring other prominent Australians speaking about climate solutions. Sophia was confident and articulate, and again represented this community and the broader community that she stands for so incredibly well. It was Sophia's statement at the end of the show which I think I can objectively say had the audience sitting up and listening, both in the physical audience right in front of her and from our couches at home. They applauded it. I would like to quote it and put it on the record, because it kind of sends shivers up my spine too. She said:

I think we have the opportunity in Australia to have our man-on-the-moon moment ... when America said they'd put on a man on the moon in eight years' time, they didn't have the technological capability yet. They didn't know how they were going to do it. But they set forward a vision and a leadership plan, and industry aligned behind them. This is the time that Australia can do that. 2050 is probably too far. We can make it sooner. 2040. We can achieve negative emissions. We need to be ambitious. And this is the time that we can do it.

The host described this as national leadership, and it is.

In addition to these important representations, Sophia makes an impact in other ways, including as a member of the ACT Climate Change Council, in lecturing at the University of Sydney, as curator of the Global Shapers Canberra hub, in operations for Health Horizon and as co-founder of Kingfisher Cohousing.

At just 31, Sophia has achieved so much. She is not only an important voice for Canberrans, for youth, for women and for women of colour but also a leader in the conversation, the rhetoric and the necessary actions on an issue that affects us all and should matter to us all.

Health—nurse graduates World Cancer Day

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) (5.37): Today, Canberra Health Services welcomed 130 graduate nurses. Nurse graduates are a vital part of our health system, as you are no doubt familiar, Madam Speaker. They provide essential healthcare to the Canberra region and will continue to do so, I hope, for many years to come for each of them. The graduate nurses will complete a four-day orientation program before working across a range of areas in Canberra Health Services, including our medical wards, operating theatres, emergency department and intensive care and at the University of Canberra Hospital.

I want to thank the teams at Canberra Health Services who will be supporting our graduate nurses, and also the Australian College of Nursing, which encourages, educates and supports our nurses. We know that starting any new job can be intimidating. I have certainly heard from nurses themselves that the first time you are there on your own in charge of looking after patients can be tough, so it is great to see that there is so much support now for our graduate nurses in Canberra Health Services. I also encourage all of them to check out the support offered by their union, the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation, if they have not already done so.

Many of the nurses who are starting today will go on to become leaders in their chosen areas, with the strong support and the backing of the College of Nursing. They will continue to be supported by Canberra Health Services through formal training programs, mentorships and support from the clinical teams in their placement areas. I wish them all the very best.

Last week I met some of our fantastic nursing staff at Canberra Health Services on World Cancer Day. It is held internationally every year on 4 February. The theme of this year's World Cancer Day was "I am and I will". The theme recognises that progress is possible, and that, whoever you are, your actions big and small can make lasting, positive change.

World Cancer Today is an opportunity for all of us to reflect on how we as a community, including government and healthcare workers can act to reduce the incidence and the impact of cancer. There are many ways we can do this: encouraging a friend to quit smoking; having regular breast checks ourselves; or supporting cancer research. Canberra Health Services staff at the Canberra Region Cancer Centre help hundreds of patients every week by providing exceptional cancer care and support to our community. Every weekday, staff at the Canberra Region Cancer Centre on average treat a hundred patients a day with radiation therapy, conduct 110 medical appointments and provide between 50 and 100 chemotherapy and other treatments.

Madam Speaker, as you know, facing cancer diagnosis and treatment can be a challenge physically, mentally and emotionally. Our Canberra Health Services staff are passionate about delivering exceptional health care to all people living with cancer. Among the "I am and I will" quotes pasted around the Canberra Region Cancer Centre last week, the one that struck me was, "I am and I will hold your hand." This is what our nurses do in addition to providing exceptional professional health care.

As a community we are also grateful for the generous bequests that have been provided through the Canberra Hospital Foundation. Similarly fundraising events

such as Dry July and the recent Walk for Wellness Larapinta trek have contributed significantly to the current and future functioning of the centre. I would like to acknowledge Penelope Ford and Sarah Darmody who, since returning from the Larapinta trek, have made a quilt that represents their journey. This quilt will be displayed as a proud reminder of the generosity and close engagement of our community in the Canberra Region Cancer Centre.

I would also like to acknowledge the many volunteers and community groups who work alongside Canberra Health Services offering advice, comfort and support to people facing cancer and to their families, friends and carers. By sharing their experiences, committing their time and providing invaluable advice, they are making a real difference in the lives of many people in our community.

On World Cancer Day I was pleased to announce that, as a demonstration of Canberra Health Services' commitment to engaging with our community and the important contribution the community makes to our health services, the Canberra Region Cancer Centre is establishing the cancer community reference group. The establishment of this group will increase consumer, carer and community participation in the planning and delivery of cancer services within Canberra Health Services. The establishment of this group will ensure that we continue to learn from the experiences of patients, carers, family and friends.

I would particularly like to thank one of the patients, Kim, who showed me around the lounge and some of the things that have made a difference in her journey.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 5.43 pm.