



Debates

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Thursday, 11 February 2021

Canberra Hospital—expansion (Ministerial statement).....	429
Standing orders—suspension.....	433
Committees—Standing	433
Health and Community Wellbeing—Standing Committee	434
Standing orders—suspension.....	435
Planning and Development Amendment Bill 2021	436
Justice and Community Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2020.....	446
Standing orders—suspension.....	449
Drugs of Dependence (Personal Use) Amendment Bill 2021	450
Drugs of Dependence (Personal Use) Amendment Bill 2021—Select Committee...	453
Questions without notice:	
Canberra Hospital—emergency patient discharge	455
Transport Canberra—Whitlam bus services.....	457
Hospitals—waiting times	458
Budget—business support	460
Sport—facilities.....	461
Health workers—occupational violence.....	463
Light rail—stage 2A	464
Housing ACT—vacant property.....	466
Budget—emergency services	467
Homelessness—services.....	468
Animals—cat containment	469
Housing—funding	470
Government—assistance for veterans and seniors	473
Business—support.....	473
Waste—bulky waste collection	474
Supplementary answer to question without notice:	
Government—assistance for veterans and seniors	476
Papers.....	476
Official Visitor for Homelessness Services—annual report.....	477
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body—report	480
Bimberi Youth Justice Centre—report	482
Planning and Development Act 2007—variation No 377 to the Territory Plan.....	485
ACT disability justice strategy—report.....	486
Appropriation Bill 2020-2021.....	486
Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2020-2021	497
Official Visitor for Disability Services—annual report.....	497
Drugs of Dependence (Personal Use) Amendment Bill 2021—Select Committee...	498
Poverty task force	499
Molonglo Valley—community council	511
Standing orders—suspension.....	518
Adjournment:	
Valedictory	518
Mr Alistair Coe—tribute	521
Summernats Sunday School	523
Ms Indra Esguerra—tribute	523
Health Care Consumers Association	525

UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons	526
Women in the arts	527
Mr Alistair Coe—tribute	529
Green spaces	529
Schedule of amendments:	
Schedule 1: Justice and Community Safety Legislation Amendment	
Bill 2020	531
Answers to questions:	
Budget—capital works (Question No 2)	533
Planning—Holt (Question No 15)	533
Planning—transmission lines (Question No 16)	534
Community Services Directorate—contracts (Question No 56)	535
Community Services Directorate—Senior Practitioner (Question No 65)	536
Government—Discrimination, Health Services, Disability and	
Community Services Commissioner (Question No 69).....	538
Government—disability employment strategy (Question No 74).....	539
Education—students with a disability (Question No 75)	540
Government—carers strategy (Question No 76)	543

Thursday, 11 February 2021

MADAM SPEAKER (Ms Burch) (10.00): Members:

Dhawura nguna, dhawura Ngunnawal.
Yanggu ngalawiri, dhunimanyin Ngunnawalwari dhawurawari.
Nginggada Dindi dhawura Ngunnaawalbun yindjumaralidjinyin.

The words I have just spoken are in the language of the traditional custodians and translate to:

This is Ngunnawal country.
Today we are gathering on Ngunnawal country.
We always pay respect to Elders, female and male, and Ngunnawal country.

Members, I ask you to stand in silence and pray or reflect on our responsibilities to the people of the Australian Capital Territory.

Canberra Hospital—expansion Ministerial statement

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Families and Community Services and Minister for Health) (10.02): I am pleased to confirm that the Canberra Hospital expansion project, which will deliver a state-of-the-art emergency, surgical and critical care building, continues to develop at pace. The project remains on track for construction to be complete in 2024.

Since my last update to the Assembly, there has been substantial progress on the project. This can be clearly seen by anyone who has recently visited the Canberra Hospital campus, as I had the opportunity to do in January with the chair of the project's advisory board and members of the Major Projects Canberra team.

Demonstrable progress has been made on the enabling works required ahead of the demolition of buildings 5 and 24, which will clear the site for the new critical services building. The new building 8 is rising rapidly, with the levels 2 and 3 structural elements recently installed. Installation of the level 4 structural elements began on 25 January. The new building 8 will provide upgraded facilities for the Canberra Sexual Health Centre and key teaching and training facilities on the campus. Building 8 will be completed in May this year.

The Child at Risk Health Unit, CARHU, works are nearing completion, including the additional works in building 3 for Child and Youth Protection Services and the family violence team. Following my recent tour of the facility, I am pleased to advise the Assembly that a vibrant fit-out complements this important community health service.

The building 4 redevelopment is now complete and was handed over to Canberra Health Services on 22 December 2020. The upgrade of the ANU Medical School and

University of Canberra clinical training facilities has been welcomed by users, with the revamped Canberra Health Services library also very well received.

Projex Building Group has been engaged to deliver refurbishments of building 9, which will provide on-site accommodation for carers and families. Concept sketches have been submitted, with the draft finishes approved by Major Projects Canberra, ready to finalise with Canberra Health Services.

Off campus, positive progress has been made on the temporary car park on the former CIT Woden site. Levelling and trimming of the site is now well underway, with final stages due for completion around quarter 3 of 2021. This temporary car park will provide 1,100 car spaces for staff, freeing up space on the hospital campus for patients and visitors.

Stakeholder consultation has formed a significant component of the activities undertaken in respect of the project to date. Several consultation sessions and forums to ensure that the new main facility will meet the needs of patients, carers, families and the community have been completed. This consultation is ongoing, and I have had the pleasure of meeting a number of interested stakeholders during consultations, all of whom are providing meaningful feedback to the process.

Round 1 of the clinical design user groups has been completed for the intensive care unit, acute coronary care unit, surgical inpatient unit, sterilising services department, logistics and helipad. The design team also conducted consultation on repeatable rooms within the clinical areas of the building. Repeatable rooms are standardised rooms used throughout a hospital to ensure consistency in the delivery of health care. The consultation allows future users of the rooms to provide feedback on the fit-out prior to construction.

Round 2 of the clinical design user groups will commence in early February, followed by another workshop with consumers. These sessions will assist in finalising the design, ready for submission of the development application, and preparation of the design and construct offer to the territory from our ECI—early contractor involvement—partner, Multiplex.

The value of this consultation is demonstrated particularly in the detailed review of the emergency and peri-operative departments, which has delivered a further-improved layout for these areas. This design work has now been agreed by the Canberra Health Services executive along with the clinical champions and will inform the next stage of design development for these departments.

A review of the logistics required for the new building is also underway. It includes reviewing services such as catering, pathology, linen, laundry and waste management. Development of the early interiors design and finishes commenced in December. This will continue during the early contractor involvement phase of the project and beyond into the design and construct phase.

For the wider community, the pre-development application information package for the critical services building was made available via the project website on

18 December last year. Opportunity to provide feedback and comment is open for 10 weeks, closing in late February. I am advised that, as of 8 February 2021, the hospital expansion YourSay site had received almost 1,700 unique visitors, with 39 formal surveys submitted, in addition to feedback received through in-person sessions, emails, social media and website or email submissions. Of course, there is still plenty of time to respond to the survey, so I would expect this number of responses to increase substantially as people take up the various opportunities for engagement.

Multiplex and Major Projects Canberra are presenting at community councils to promote this consultation and hear feedback from engaged Canberrans across the city. I was pleased to join the team at last week's Woden Valley Community Council meeting, which also included a presentation on the Canberra Hospital master plan, which is also currently open for consultation. The pre-DA consultation will provide more input and feedback to the development application documentation for the critical services building and associated public realm, ahead of the development application being submitted in March 2021.

The critical services building will also continue to deliver on the government's progressive goals and targets in respect of the environment by targeting a five-star green rating. The integrated design team is working collaboratively to deliver a passive thermal design, which will reduce peak heating and cooling loads and reduce the demand on the 100 per cent electric infrastructure. The team is also aiming to reach zero net carbon emissions with the critical services building. This holistic approach to use the largest health infrastructure investment since self-government to improve sustainability alongside health outcomes is something that Canberrans can be very proud of.

Community consultation will continue through 2021, with a number of public consultation sessions occurring around Canberra in the coming months. This is supported by monthly meetings of the project's local community reference group and consumer reference group. The Canberra Hospital Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consumer reference group has also been consulted on the early design and will continue to be involved as the design and the project evolve.

The design team has adopted a "ground up" approach to delivering a cost-effective and sustainable critical services building. It will focus on incremental refinements throughout the design development, followed by ongoing enhancements and efficiency gains in the design and construction phases.

The territory is well-served by the Canberra Hospital expansion project team, including our ECI partner, Multiplex, along with their design consultants. Our shared commitment to engaging with the Canberra community ensures that we are delivering patient-centred health services for the future.

In summary, the Canberra Hospital expansion project is well and truly underway, with a significant amount of physical construction having already been undertaken on the Canberra Hospital campus. Major Projects Canberra is hard at work driving the

delivery of this project in coordination with Canberra Health Services and the Health Directorate.

Madam Speaker, this is a positive example of our government getting on and delivering what we have been elected to do. I am pleased with the progress to date and will continue to update the Assembly as we reach key milestones.

I present the following paper:

Canberra Hospital expansion—Ministerial statement, Thursday, 11 February 2021.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

MRS JONES (Murrumbidgee) (10.09): I welcome the update today from the minister about the Canberra Hospital expansion, and I appreciate her keeping the Assembly informed. However, the update misses the most important point. As the government embarks upon its 20th year in office, its broken promises and failure to deliver are most clear in the area of health.

Like most, I have seen significant deterioration in the health system, in particular in buildings. Our public hospitals are regularly operating at full capacity. At times, they are even overflowing, leaving some patients in beds in hospital corridors. Wait times for emergency department treatment and elective surgery are some of the longest in the country and have been for years.

Labor has been talking about the expansion of Canberra Hospital for over a decade and still has not delivered. In 2008, Katy Gallagher identified that we were facing a tsunami in health. In 2010, she promised a rebuild of the Canberra Hospital. By the 2016 election, we were being promised that the SPIRE building would be completed by 2022, which is just a year away. Now, SPIRE will not be completed until 2024 or possibly even later.

This government also promised that the expansion to the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children—absolutely necessary because the hospital was built with no more beds than its predecessor building—would be completed by 2021. That has now blown out to late 2023.

Today's update confirms what has been a common theme under the government: more delays and more failures. The people of Canberra and the staff of TCH deserve better.

On an additional note to do with buildings and facilities at the Canberra Hospital campus, the College of Surgeons has requested, in discussions with me, to seek consideration of a new facility for the practice of surgeons improving their professional skills. Such a facility would be ideally accommodated at the Canberra Hospital on site, as it requires a supply of bodies, cadavers. This skill improvement is

an essential element in surgeons being able to advance their professional skills. I invite public discussion of this needed facility so that we can keep our surgeons in Canberra, advancing their skills and knowledge. I invite the minister to consider it for future planning for the Canberra Hospital site.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Standing orders—suspension

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Manager of Government Business, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Industrial Relations and Workplace Safety, Minister for Planning and Land Management and Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (10.12): I move:

That so much of standing orders be suspended as would enable the order of business for Tuesday and Wednesday the 30th and 31st of March 2021 to be:

Prayer or reflection

Presentation of petitions

Ministerial statements

Presentation of Executive business bills

Assembly business

Executive business notices and orders of the day

Questions without notice

Presentation of papers

Ministerial statements

Private Members business (as ordered by the Standing Committee on Administration and Procedure)

Executive business notices and orders of the day.

Madam Speaker, the motion is to give effect to the new sitting pattern for the March sitting. I understand it is the intention of the whips to formulate changes to standing orders that will implement the new pattern for sittings and to bring this back to the Assembly for consideration, possibly at the March sittings.

Question resolved in the affirmative, with the concurrence of an absolute majority.

Committees—Standing Reporting date

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Manager of Government Business, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Industrial Relations and Workplace Safety, Minister for Planning and Land Management and Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (10.13): I move:

That the resolution of the Assembly of 2 December 2020, which established the standing committees of the Assembly and set a reporting date to those

committees to report in annual reports referred to them, be amended as follows:

In paragraph (3), omit “report by 31 March” and substitute “report by 9 April”.

I want to speak briefly on this motion. I thank Mr Hanson for his drafting. The motion arises from a matter Mr Hanson raised and seeks to simplify the work of the select committees in relation to annual report and estimates hearings. The intent of this motion is to align the reporting date for committee reports on annual reports with those of the reports on estimates, thereby enabling each committee to produce one report rather than two separate reports.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Health and Community Wellbeing—Standing Committee Statement by chair

MR DAVIS (Brindabella) (10.14): Pursuant to standing order 246A, I wish to make a statement on behalf of the Standing Committee on Health and Community Wellbeing relating to a self-referred inquiry which the committee has resolved to undertake.

Madam Speaker, this inquiry is the first inquiry which the standing committee has resolved to undertake in this Assembly. The inquiry has an aspect which the Assembly will be interested in. The Assembly will be aware that a petition was tabled on 9 February calling on the ACT government to conduct a thorough inquiry into the alcohol, tobacco and other drug services sector, including prevention and early intervention services and related treatment and rehabilitation services, in the ACT. The petition was presented by the committee’s deputy chair, Mrs Kikkert, and was referred to the committee for inquiry and report.

The committee has considered its inquiry path on the matters raised by the petition and has resolved to conduct an inquiry into the matters raised by the petition and a wide range of issues relating to the matters raised in the petition. Whilst not the complete list, these issues include the health and other social impacts of current policy, legislative, and criminal justice approaches to alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use in the ACT; the adequacy and implementation of the ACT government’s current funding commitments to support drug treatment and other harm reduction services, including funding for community-based and community-controlled organisations; the availability and access to best practice drug education to enable and support prevention, early intervention, and community safety; the benefits and challenges of establishing a clinically supervised drug consumption site in the ACT; and the issues and policy challenges, if any, for the ACT arising from the Australian government’s alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use policy frameworks and commonwealth legislation.

I seek leave to table the complete terms of reference for the committee inquiry.

Leave granted.

MR DAVIS: I table the following paper:

Health and Community Wellbeing—Standing Committee—Inquiry—Programs
for drug harm reduction—Terms of reference, dated 9 February 2021.

The committee will now invite submissions to the inquiry and will announce a hearing program in the near future. The committee will present its report to the Assembly by the end of 2021.

Standing orders—suspension

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Manager of Government Business, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Industrial Relations and Workplace Safety, Minister for Planning and Land Management and Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (10.16): I move:

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent Order of the day No 1, Executive business, being the Planning and Development Amendment Bill 2021, called on and debated forthwith.

As I reported to the Assembly yesterday, the Planning and Development Amendment Bill implements a clear tripartisan commitment made ahead of last October's election. The clear advice to the government from officials is that this bill needs to be made law to prevent new waste facilities from opening in Fyshwick.

Due to the legal risks, the government was not able to undertake public consultation on the bill. The risks also made it difficult to advise the Assembly of the bill ahead of its formal introduction. These risks include there being a development application for a new waste facility in Fyshwick before the independent planning and land authority. In the absence of the changes that this bill proposes, the authority is bound to process this application according to the existing Planning and Development Act 2007. This could result in the approval of the development prior to the next sitting of the Assembly on 30 March. Further, there is a risk that the introduction of this bill may trigger proponents to seek other means of having the development approved, perhaps through the courts.

This is a “wickedly simple bill”, as Mr Parton has remarked to my office. For this reason and because of the risks posed should the bill not be considered today, we should suspend standing orders to enable the bill to come on. Madam Speaker, the community has made its views about waste facilities in Fyshwick very clear, as have businesses. We have listened and we want to act. Therefore, we need to suspend standing orders.

MR HANSON (Murrumbidgee) (10.18): The opposition will not be opposing this motion. However, I want to comment on the record to make sure that it is very clear that this should not be established as a precedent. It is not good form; it is not good process. It is not good for democracy if we table and debate bills in the same sitting. This is referred to in standing order 172 in terms of urgency.

Based on briefings that the opposition has received, it seems that we have got ourselves into a position where it may be necessary to debate this bill in the same

sitting. That is disappointing. It means that this bill will not go to the scrutiny of bills committee and it will not be referred to the normal committee, which would be the planning committee, for review and possible inquiry.

I want to put on the record that this is not good process and it is not something that the opposition will support lightly. However, given the pickle that has been created, it is a mess that needs to be sorted, and we will not be opposing this motion.

Question resolved in the affirmative, with the concurrence of an absolute majority.

Planning and Development Amendment Bill 2021

Debate resumed from 10 February 2021, on motion by **Mr Gentleman**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

MS LEE (Kurrajong—Leader of the Opposition) (10.20): As the Assembly is aware, this legislation has been brought on for debate and resolution without the usual checks and balances attached to the procedures of the Assembly. We only became aware of its existence yesterday, when the minister for planning presented it, followed shortly afterwards by his office offering a briefing.

My first instinct was to resist such haste as being inappropriate and contrary to good parliamentary procedure, and I do not resile from that position. I note that Mr Hanson has spoken about the Canberra Liberals' concerns about the apparent urgency of this bill, so I will not dwell on the highly unusual and contrary way of dealing with it, the day after it was tabled, save to say that during the briefing we did put questions to officials and the minister's staff, and have accepted, on this occasion as a one-off, the need to deal with it today—the very next day after it was tabled.

This bill gives legislative backing to a, by and large, tri-partisan position taken during the 2020 election campaign and also referenced in the Labor-Greens parliamentary agreement. The purpose of this bill is to introduce a ban on the development of new waste facilities and the expansion of existing waste facilities in Fyshwick. Proposed section 137F specifically states that “the planning and land authority must not accept a prohibited waste facility development application”. This section goes on to define a “prohibited waste facility development application” as:

... a development application in relation to a development proposal for the use of land in the division of Fyshwick that would, if it were approved, permit—

- (a) the use of any part of the land as a waste facility; or
- (b) if the land is used, wholly or partly, as an existing waste facility—an increase in the amount of waste handled on the land each year.

It goes on to define a “waste facility” as:

- (a) ... a site used for the handling of waste and includes—
 - (i) an incineration facility; and

- (ii) a landfill site; and
- (iii) a recyclable material collection site; and
- (iv) a recycling facility; and
- (v) a waste transfer facility; and
- (vi) a hazardous waste facility ...

For my constituents in the electorate of Kurrajong, the prospect of a waste processing facility in Fyshwick has been the subject of much angst, much anger, many public meetings and an exhaustive number and depth of submissions from many concerned Canberrans.

During the Ninth Assembly, the question of inappropriate developments in Fyshwick became a growing and regular concern. The reality is that in recent years Fyshwick has become increasingly gentrified, with large-format retail, such as Harvey Norman and Bing Lee, as well as specialty shops, childcare centres, boutiques, cafes and bakeries. The prospect of two or even more waste facilities with significant increased traffic, and with the potential for interstate waste to be trucked in for processing, to name a few of the concerns, became, for many locals, a difficult development to support.

The ACT needs development, and we need upgraded and improved waste processing and recycling. I do not think that that is in dispute; and we do not want to stifle innovation being brought into our city. However, in this instance such developments were perhaps the right solution, but in the wrong location.

This bill addresses current applications but also covers any potential prohibited waste facility development applications made before the commencement day. If, before the commencement day, a person has made a prohibited waste facility development application, the bill directs the planning and land authority to refuse it.

One issue that I am significantly concerned about is the fact that the government has been handling at least one of the development applications that this bill applies to for a period of around three years. During that time the company in question has, in good faith, developed project proposals, purchased land, had plans drawn up and undertaken many community consultations, on the understanding that its project would be an acceptable use of the land in question. The time, money and resources that this company has invested in this venture are most likely staggering.

I draw attention to proposed section 137G, “Compensation—safety net”. The section says, *inter alia*:

- (1) This section applies if, apart from this section, the operation of this part would result in the acquisition of property from a person otherwise than on just terms under the Self-Government Act ...
- (2) The territory must pay reasonable compensation to the person for the acquisition in accordance with this section.
- (3) The territory and the person may agree on an amount of compensation or other terms in satisfaction of the Territory’s obligation ...

On that basis, what moral or other obligation does the government have when it took three years to consider, firstly, a pre-EIS scoping study, then an amended EIS, to ultimately determine it as not acceptable? The minister may care to comment on this.

The Fyshwick Business Association has been highlighting to government for some time the unsuitability of use of land in Fyshwick for such activities and this particular project, as have many community groups in the inner south. They have all been at pains to say that it is not the project that is objectionable; rather, it is the location. I know that they are keen to work with the government to develop a master plan for the future of Fyshwick, to progress future developments in the area. I would urge the government to do exactly that, so that such missteps and community anger are avoided in the future.

I would urge the government to do exactly that, so that genuine proponents are not led down an uncertain and rocky path, investing unnecessary time, money and resources in a venture that is pulled out from under them.

Let us not forget, and let us not allow this government to think that our support of this bill is because of anything good that they have done. Let us not forget, and let us not allow this government to think that the reason we are here, after years of angst from the community and the proponents involved, and now a potential risk of a significant compensation claim, was not all their own doing. The only thing that I can hope regarding this solution is that they have learnt their lesson and will take a more collaborative and mature approach, treating every stakeholder with some respect.

I am assured that the Government Solicitor's office has reviewed the legislation and believes it is in order. As Mr Hanson mentioned, the Assembly has not had the opportunity to undertake legislative scrutiny, so we will have to take the government on trust that it is in order. I thank officials for providing a briefing on this legislation and answering many questions that were brought to me by my community.

MS VASSAROTTI (Kurrajong) (10.27): The Greens will be supporting this bill today. It is an unusual situation, and I understand that the bill being debated in the same week that it is presented is highly unusual in itself.

It is no secret that the ACT Greens are extremely enthusiastic about reducing, re-using, recycling and safely disposing of waste, by individuals, households, small businesses and large corporations—everything from banana peels to paint cans, dead mattresses and building rubble. We know that waste needs to be treated as a resource, and that it offers opportunities to establish new industries that divert waste from landfill; but we have listened to the concerns of community and businesses, and agree that Fyshwick is not the right place anymore to process waste on a large scale.

This bill will ban new waste facilities in Fyshwick and will put in place a commitment that the Greens, as well as Labor and the Liberals, made to the community during last year's election campaign. All three parties raised concerns last year about the waste processing facilities being proposed for Fyshwick, and the impacts of those facilities on nearby residents and businesses.

As a result of the election outcome, Labor and the Greens agreed to address these concerns through a parliamentary and governing agreement item in providing that “the government will seek advice on the best way to facilitate the outcomes contained in the government’s waste strategy to locate waste processing facilities in Hume”, which is in line with the government’s overall plan to see new waste facilities collocated in Hume, as detailed in the ACT government’s waste management strategy.

We understand the urgency to pass this bill today, given the situation whereby our industrial zoning and planning rules are out of step with our waste strategy as well as community expectations in relation to waste processing operations in Fyshwick, and that there are currently proposals on the table.

The Greens agree that the objections raised to the two proposed major waste treatment and disposal projects have merit. We believe that traffic flow, noise levels, dust and pollutants would seem to be incompatible with the differing needs and general amenity of nearby businesses and residential developments, both existing and planned. Despite the phenomenal detail and thought that have been put into the Territory Plan and its zoning over many years by successive governments of different stripes, there are times when things do not quite mesh, and this is one of those times.

This bill will mean that the CRS, or Capital Recycling Solutions, and the Hi-Qual, or Hi-Quality Group, proposals for major waste facilities in Fyshwick will not be able to proceed. It will also prevent existing businesses from expanding their operations, but, as Minister Gentleman laid out, the ban will not affect the continued operation of existing approved waste management facilities.

The Greens understand that the government is undertaking a policy review relating to planning and waste policy matters, which will include consideration of the territory’s waste infrastructure needs into the future, and available land. This review will also consider the compatibility of waste management activities with other land uses in Fyshwick and surrounds to determine whether it is appropriate for further waste facilities to be developed in Fyshwick in the future.

We understand that once the review is complete, the government will be able to provide more guidance to the waste industry on where future development proposals for waste facilities may be built, as well as what kinds of operations are appropriate in Fyshwick into the future. This will ensure that some types of smaller or low impact businesses can be exempt from the legislation that we are passing today. Thus, we support this bill today, and the processes being put in train that I have just outlined, but we still believe that there is more work to be done.

More broadly, the Greens are concerned that our current planning processes, combined with the absence of clear waste policy guidelines, are leading to a problem whereby major waste proposals are largely evaluated only by the ACT government via the planning system.

This means that waste proposals are not assessed on their waste policy outcomes, but only on their planning impacts, with pollution taken into account through an EPA

referral mechanism. The assessment then relies on EPA pollution regulations to ensure that the proposal is not polluting excessively. However, it is not clear that TCCS, the EPA or EPSDD are currently able to consider the overall cumulative waste or pollution impacts and outcomes; nor can they ensure consistency with the government's waste policy goals through the planning process.

The Greens believe that the best way for new waste technologies, processes and proposals to be assessed is with full life cycle analysis, which takes into account the long-term impacts of a facility and the broader waste, emissions and recycling outcomes. We believe that this analysis should be undertaken by an ACT government agency with waste analysis expertise. This assessment should be done separately from the planning analysis. This waste life cycle analysis should probably be done by a referral mechanism in the planning legislation.

Another mechanism would be a requirement for waste facility proposals to be evaluated by waste experts for their alignment with ACT government waste policy goals and life cycle impacts, and for that evaluation to be approved prior to applying for planning approval.

As well as the process for assessing and approving waste proposals, the Greens are also concerned about industrial zones in Canberra, and whether they are appropriate for the needs of our growing city, today and into the future. Canberra has changed considerably since our industrial and commercial zones were designated many decades ago. Fyshwick has long been one of Canberra's key light industrial hubs, but it is located near environmentally sensitive areas like the Jerrabomberra wetlands.

As well, our population growth, residential suburbs and social and work patterns have changed drastically, and our industrial areas, particularly Fyshwick, are facing new development pressures. As well as the waste industry proposals we have discussed today, there is also the residential development proposed for Dairy Flat Road in Fyshwick, and we do not believe that growth in both higher industrial use and higher residential use are simultaneously compatible directions for the area.

We understand that there is a limited supply of alternative sites suitable for larger waste processing facilities in the ACT, which should also be addressed if we are going to grow our recycling industries in the ACT towards a circular economy. Members here today all understand that this current situation has already created considerable disagreement between local businesses, waste proponents and residents' groups.

The Greens believe that the competing visions of our industrial areas need to be reconciled. We understand that the government is already undertaking a review of industrial zones, and we look forward to broader community consultation and a planning committee inquiry to garner further views about the direction and siting of industrial zones across Canberra.

Opening up the issue even wider, I want to express some frustration with our state government colleagues across the border in New South Wales, as well as flagging a hope that we can ultimately bring an even larger and more integrated vision for this issue than the one I have just outlined.

I understand the logic behind waste proponents choosing Fyshwick as a place for waste processing, given the rail line. The decision to locate large-scale waste processing facilities in Hume would be much simpler and more obvious ones to proponents if we still had a working rail line passing close by. The line is right there. It runs all the way along the back of Hume, forming the ACT border. It is just a handful of kilometres between Hume and the current end of the line in Queanbeyan, and the line as far as Royalla was closed only in 2007 as a result of storm damage. It should surely be relatively simple and cost effective to restore that section to working order.

A closer look at the matter reveals competing interests and unexpected complexity. In August 2018, New South Wales Premier Gladys Berejiklian announced a million-dollar feasibility study into reopening the Queanbeyan to Bombala railway line and extending it as far as Canberra airport in the north and Eden on the coast. Unfortunately, the study concluded last year that, at an estimated capital cost of \$6.3 billion, the project was not economically viable.

However, not everyone agrees with that assessment. The Cooma and Monaro Progress Association commissioned an alternative examination and came up with a route that avoided the extensive tunnelling, which was the project's largest expense. The CMPA's costing was less than half of the New South Wales government's, at \$2.9 billion. With the federal government looking at an inland freight rail line between Sydney and Melbourne, a connecting line to Eden—to take advantage of its existing and potentially expanded deep-water port facilities—could change the economics of both the Canberra to Eden and the Sydney to Melbourne proposals.

The Greens would be keen to pursue discussions about this rail line with our interstate and federal colleagues, to see how much the shorter extensions of the line would cost and what the benefits could be.

Going back to the bill before us today, the Greens agree that we absolutely need to move forward on our ambitious vision for better waste treatment and creating a circular economy. A good step today is to support the Planning and Development Amendment Bill. This bill will help to clarify allowed and prohibited waste management activities, and will give territory residents, business owners and investors a clear pathway to a long-term solution that allows us all to plan with confidence. This Planning and Development Amendment Bill is an important step towards addressing the current situation, and the Greens will be supporting it today.

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee—Minister for Skills, Minister for Transport and City Services and Special Minister of State) (10.38): I am very pleased to speak today to support the Planning and Development Amendment Bill 2021. This legislation reinforces the clear direction for the management of waste in the ACT that is outlined in the ACT Waste Management Strategy 2011-2025 and subsequent waste feasibility study.

A key principle of the ACT government's approach to waste management is the proximity principle, which is described in section 9 of the Waste Management and

Resource Recovery Act 2016, which means that waste and recovered resources should be managed as close to the source of generation as possible. We have an obligation as a community to ensure that we are managing our own waste that we produce in the ACT and plan for the most appropriate location to manage this waste, including sites in the ACT, as the city grows and changes. Most Canberrans, who are very environmentally conscious, understand our responsibility to manage our own waste in the territory, just as other jurisdictions like New South Wales need to do the same.

The legislation builds on this objective to appropriately manage waste in the ACT and ensures that it occurs in the most appropriate location for doing so within our compact boundaries. Hume is currently the ACT's established resource recovery area, the site of the ACT's materials recovery facility, the MRF, which will soon be upgraded through our \$21 million co-funded investment under the Recycling Modernisation Fund. It is also home to a range of non-government and private waste facilities.

The role of Hume was set out in the ACT Waste Management Strategy 2011-2025, which is the guiding document for the development of solutions to waste issues in the ACT. In relation to the location of waste facilities, the document establishes the strategy to further develop the Hume resource recovery estate to collocate resource recovery facilities and that new waste infrastructure will primarily be located in the Hume resource recovery estate beside the Mugga Lane Resource Management Centre.

The strategy notes that there are a number of benefits that arise from the collocation of waste facilities in the Hume resource recovery estate, including the synergies between different parts of the recycling industry which could result in increased resource recovery, reduced costs and reduced traffic movements.

Following the waste management strategy, the ACT government's waste feasibility study in 2018 delivered a road map required to continue our efforts and drive resource recovery in the territory. The study highlighted that planning for future waste facilities and infrastructure would need to consider demographic changes, societal trends and the patterns of urban growth over time.

It was noted that while the existing system of waste facilities and services were well suited to Canberra's low-density suburban form and lifestyles prevalent in previous decades, the composition of our community and how we live and work is fundamentally changing. To this end, there are increasing pressures on planning for waste facilities, and government and non-government waste facilities need to consider appropriate geographic location, efficient design and effectively laid out facilities. In no area is this more pertinent than Fyshwick.

Fyshwick was originally conceived of and zoned for industrial uses; however, it has evolved over many years to include a diverse range of activity and uses, including a mix of cafes, retail stores, breweries, recreational facilities, industrial sites and hardware stores. A range of waste facilities already operate in Fyshwick; for example, small scale-waste facilities, including the ACT's container deposit scheme Return-it depot on Gladstone Street.

The government understands that it is important that we maintain areas in the ACT where industrial activity can occur. However, we also recognise that uses that may have originally been appropriate in this estate, such as large-scale waste facilities and their impacts, may no longer be consistent with the character of the Fyshwick industrial estate.

The Planning and Development Amendment Bill seeks to ensure that we are locating waste facilities in the most appropriate areas of the ACT. The bill supports positioning such facilities in the most practical and safe settings possible while working towards achieving our other strategic waste management objectives and our obligations to manage waste in the ACT under the proximity principle.

To achieve this in the first instance, the legislation will prohibit the development of waste facilities in Fyshwick, both new facilities or for an existing waste facility that proposes expansion to the amount of waste handled on the land each year. This will not affect the existing 10 waste-related businesses in Fyshwick unless they propose to process more waste in the short-term.

Once the legislation is in force, the government will undertake a detailed review of planning policy to determine what waste activities are appropriate in Fyshwick. This will include assessing current and future activities and how they fit in with the character of the suburb into the future. This will include an assessment of the continuation of low-impact waste facilities in Fyshwick so that we can provide certainty to small and medium low-impact facilities about being able to establish new sites or expand in Fyshwick into the future. Accordingly, the bill provides an ability to make regulations so that sites or classes of waste facilities can be carved out from that prohibition in the future, under regulation.

This planning policy will be followed by a more holistic review of ACT's long-term waste needs, including the potential need for large waste processing infrastructure and where this would be most appropriately located in the ACT. The government has a key role to play in balancing the needs of the community, business and industry while continuing to support the delivery of waste services for the fast-growing community of Canberra. The ACT government has continuously worked with industry and the community towards the shared goal of reducing waste and transitioning to a circular economy. This is important to ensure that waste facilities have a social licence to operate.

The issue of social licence was recognised in early 2020 when the ACT government released the ACT's waste to energy policy, following extensive community consultation. The policy makes it clear that the thermal treatment of waste, including incineration, gasification and pyrolysis, will not be permitted in the ACT and does not have a social licence to operate. It also provides clear direction about the types of activities that are permitted under the policy, focusing on improving, avoiding, re-using and recycling waste in line with the waste hierarchy.

Just as we have been clear about our approach to waste to energy, this legislation provides a clear approach on the location of large-scale waste facilities in Fyshwick

that will result in further certainty about our waste strategy to business, industry and the community.

This legislation represents the most effective and efficient way to address the development of large-scale waste facilities in Fyshwick and are in line with the needs of the community and delivers on what was a tri-partisan public commitment to address community concerns regarding the development of large-scale waste facilities in Fyshwick.

Responding to Minister Vassarotti's comments in relation to the circular economy, this legislation is supported by the actions under the parliamentary and governing agreement, and it should be no surprise to anyone in the Assembly that this legislation has been brought forward to address the issue that was identified both at the election and then in the subsequent parliamentary and governing agreement.

In relation to looking at waste facilities and their regulation, we actually require all waste facilities to be licensed under the Waste Management and Resource Recovery Act 2016, which includes a range of environmental objectives. We seek to build on that further with the agreed legislation that we will be bringing forward, to build a circular economy into the future in consultation with the community under the parliamentary and governing agreement.

We will continue to ensure that the ACT develops a sustainable waste industry that is appropriate to meet our local needs and to support our goal of building a circular economy. I am pleased to support this legislation and the further development of planning and waste management policies that will ensure that waste facilities are built in the most appropriate location in the ACT.

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Manager of Government Business, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Industrial Relations and Workplace Safety, Minister for Planning and Land Management and Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (10.48), in reply: I thank members for their contribution to the debate on this bill. Building on the discussion of the important elements of the bill, which I dealt with when introducing it, I will now speak further about the current waste facilities operating in Fyshwick and the government's plans for a policy review to investigate the types of waste facilities which could be developed in Fyshwick in the future.

These are important matters to explore further. As we have heard, the bill contains regulation-making provisions to carve out sites from being affected by the ban. Eight facilities in Fyshwick currently operate under a waste licence and these are all small to medium operators processing waste streams such as electronic and computer waste; the container deposit scheme; construction and demolition; commercial and industrial waste; and metal recycling. The largest of these facilities processes about 30 tonnes of waste per year, with conditions on the waste licence about the amount of waste which can be stockpiled on the site at any one time.

As I noted when introducing the bill, the Capital Recycling Solutions proposal is for a facility processing up to 300,000 tonnes, while the Hi-Quality proposal is for a facility processing up to 1.1 million tonnes of waste. The proposed facilities are significantly

bigger than the existing facilities, which have been able to operate without too much disruption to neighbouring businesses and the surrounding street network.

The EIS for the facilities is not an approval but, rather, a step in the development process to ensure that there is sufficient information to assess environmental impacts. For these reasons, amongst the others which my colleagues have discussed, the government cannot allow these two development proposals to proceed to be constructed and operate in Fyshwick.

The ACT government is still very supportive of Fyshwick as a home to industrial businesses. Fyshwick continues to be a thriving business hub for the territory, with many varied businesses co-existing and offering quality locations to their customers. However, Fyshwick cannot be a home to businesses with the potential to impact negatively on the surrounding businesses and the suburb more broadly.

There are other more suitable locations across the territory to develop the waste infrastructure that we need to meet the future demands of our citizens. These facilities are better placed in areas of the territory where they will have less of an impact on other businesses and residents. Given that there are only two very large proposals affected directly by this legislation, I am confident that there will not be a widespread impact from this ban. Based on advice received, the government believes that compensation is not payable. However, we will respond to and consider the merits of any claim.

Finally, I will provide a little more detail on the policy review work which is underway, and which will be completed in the months ahead. The government recognises that the territory will require new waste infrastructure into the future, to meet our ongoing needs. The government also recognises that it needs to provide opportunities for innovation and for the private sector to contribute solutions to our waste challenges.

The policy review work will be undertaken in two stages—the first stage will be focused on Fyshwick and looking at what types of facilities could be developed there in the future. This work is expected to result in a regulation being made to carve out certain types of smaller facilities from the ban, similar to what is already operating there. This will be achieved through a regulation which affects the definition of “waste facility” for the purposes of a prohibited waste facility development application. The bill provides that a regulation can be made which excludes sites from the definition of “waste facility”.

The second stage of the review will look more broadly at the future need, type and scale of waste facilities in the territory. This work will consider waste policy and planning policy issues and will be completed over the coming year. Once the review is complete, the government will be able to provide more guidance to the waste industry on where future development proposals for waste facilities may be built.

In summary, this bill achieves important commitments both from ACT Labor and the Greens that were made during the election campaign. I am pleased to see us move

quickly to deliver this outcome and provide certainty to businesses in Fyshwick and surrounding residents. I commend the bill to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Leave granted to dispense with the detail stage.

Bill agreed to.

Justice and Community Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2020

Debate resumed from 3 December 2020, on motion by **Mr Rattenbury**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (10.53): This amendment bill has been appropriately described as not significant. However, the number of pieces of legislation it affects demonstrates that it, nevertheless, is of some importance. There are numerous minor changes to 17 acts and regulations, some as a consequence of COVID emergency response legislation, and others to correct numbering, definitions and other incidental matters.

I do not propose to go through each act other than to note one issue raised in the scrutiny of bills committee's report No 1, 2021, in relation to amendments to the Legal Profession Act 2006. The changes to this act allow the inclusion of a suitability matter and show cause event for the purposes of deciding whether a person is a fit and proper person to be admitted to the territory legal profession or to hold a local practising certificate. The scrutiny report suggests that these changes may be cause to consideration under the Human Rights Act.

The committee makes the same comment in respect of the Guardianship and Management of Property Act 1991 and the Powers of Attorney Act 2006. I would welcome the attorney's response to these comments. The Canberra Liberals have no issues to raise either in respect of this omnibus bill or the proposed amendments.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong—Attorney-General, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Gaming and Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction) (10.55), in reply: I am pleased to close the debate today on the Justice and Community Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2020. This omnibus bill makes many amendments, primarily across justice and community safety legislation and regulations. The need for the amendments has been identified through direct consultation with government directorates and agencies, and the legal community. As a result of this consultation, the bill will make minor, technical or non-controversial amendments which improve the administration and operation of the territory's laws. Importantly, many of these amendments engage and promote human rights.

It is important to recognise the valuable contributions made by stakeholders to this bill. Their contributions support our ongoing efforts to improve the administration and operation of the territory's laws. A significant feature of this bill is that it improves the protections and services for vulnerable persons in the territory. This has led to the amendments to the Guardianship and Management of Property Act 1991, the Powers of Attorney Act 2006 and the Public Trustee and Guardian Act 1985.

The amendments provide protections to principals under enduring powers of attorney who have decision-making capacity. This includes an obligation on attorneys to keep accurate records and accounts for these principals in property matters. This also includes providing statutory authorities, such as the Public Trustee and Guardian, powers to require attorneys to produce records of transactions made for principals. Together, these amendments will bolster the accountability of attorneys and means that principals enjoy more confidence in the administration of their affairs.

In the same spirit, there are improved services for persons with an interest in the affected person register and Youth Justice Victims Register. This is achieved by the amendments to the Crimes (Sentence Administration) Act 2005 and Mental Health Act 2015. The registers recently transferred from the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal and Community Services Directorate to Victim Support ACT. This relocation occurred as part of the implementation of changes introduced by the Victims Rights Legislation Amendment Act 2020, which commenced on 1 January this year. The amendments will ensure that efficient and specialised services for the registers can be provided from one central location.

A further benefit of this bill is that it has identified opportunities to strengthen regulations in the territory. The bill amends the Legislation Act 2001 and the Public Sector Management Act 1994 to better regulate government and promote good governance. Its amendments bolster oversight over the regulation-making powers of the territory's executive. They ensure that the responsible minister and Chief Minister must sign a statutory instrument if it is to be taken to be signed by the executive. They also overcome any practical inefficiencies of those amendments by allowing the responsible minister and Chief Minister to delegate their responsibility to sign a statutory instrument in certain circumstances.

Amendments to the Legal Profession Act 2006 regulate the legal profession more effectively, meaning protection for the community and better integrity of the territory's legal profession. For example, persons who are or were a director of an incorporated legal practice under external administration must disclose this to relevant territory legal authorities. This amendment serves as another standard which persons seeking to practise or continue to practise law will meet.

An additional amendment to the Legal Profession Act 2006 requires territory law councils to erase the information of a deceased person from their registers of disciplinary action. This will protect the integrity of the registers and alleviate any distress to the families of deceased persons, as well as promoting the right to privacy.

I note Mr Cain's observations about the comments from the scrutiny of bills committee. I hope from my remarks today that he and other members will see that issues of human rights consideration have been addressed in the development and consideration of this bill.

There is an ongoing need to update our legislation to make it clearer, more user friendly, and better aligned with community expectations and standards. Amendments to the Administration and Probate Act 1929 promote equality and non-discrimination. Intestate estates will now vest in persons who are unmarried and under the age of 18, thereby removing any discrimination based on age and relationship status. Further, the current legislation has an outdated reference to the common-law notion of the "Ordinary in England" which describes the Public Trustee and Guardian's role in administering estates. The bill will modernise this anachronism to improve accessibility.

The bill also amends the Residential Tenancies Act 1997 to clarify the definition of "occupancy agreement", as introduced by the Residential Tenancies Amendment Act 2020 (No 2). One of its amendments will ensure that agreements to occupy premises that are subject to the sales process are not an occupancy agreement. If such agreements are considered to be occupancy agreements, this could create unintended consequences for the sale process.

Further, minor amendments to the Retirement Villages Regulation 2013 and Security Industry Regulation 2003 will correct references to other legislation referred to in the regulations.

Another important aspect of the bill is that it makes amendments to harmonise legislative provisions within the same legislation and related legislation. The amendments to the Wills Act 1968 introduce a survivorship clause in cases of intestacy, to ensure consistency with similar provisions where a person has a will upon the date of death. These amendments will reduce delays resulting from the administration of an intestate estate.

The bill also amends the Lotteries Act 1964 to transfer the power to determine fees under the legislation from the ACT Gambling and Racing Commission to the administering minister. The amendment will achieve consistency across gaming legislation administered by the commission and ensure that the commission has a consistent approach to fees collected under the Gambling and Racing Control Act 1999. This means more consistent expectations for the community and a more efficient approach for government.

An additional government amendment to the Civil Law (Wrongs) Act 2002 that I propose to move will reduce any inefficiencies in making appointments to the ACT Professional Standards Council. Under the national scheme, the minister has no discretion in making appointments relating to interstate members to the territory's council. By extension, the generally important role of the standing committee in providing input on proposed appointments does not apply and the amendments that I will move today remove that requirement. These are government amendments. I did

not bring them forward in the initial bill because we wanted time to consult with the committees, which has been done in the period since. That is why they come forward today as government amendments.

It is also important to highlight that the bill makes other notable amendments. These include amendments to the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 2008 and the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal Regulation 2009. These clarify the operation of the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal Trust and its related processes. Amendments to the Associations Incorporation Act 1991 simplify compliance requirements for small incorporated associations in the territory, and amendments to the Public Trustee and Guardian Act 1985 remove legal impediments for the Public Trustee and Guardian to establish a wills bank in the future.

As flagged, I will be moving government amendments to this bill. These include the amendments to the previously mentioned Administration and Probate Act 1929 and the Civil Law (Wrongs) Act 2002. Further, an inconsistency in the Crimes Act 1900 will also be addressed through the government amendments that I propose to move. The amendments to the Crimes Act will ensure that the fault elements for the partial defence of provocation appropriately correspond with the fault elements for the offence of murder and avoid the potential for unfair and inconsistent outcomes for accused people.

The amendments in this bill will improve numerous elements of our legal system, resulting in better protections for vulnerable people, more accessible laws and aligning government functions more closely with community expectations. On that basis, I commend the bill to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Detail stage

Bill, by leave, taken as a whole.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong—Attorney-General, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Gaming and Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction) (11.04), by leave: I move amendments Nos 1 to 5 circulated in my name together and table a supplementary explanatory statement [*see schedule 1 at page 531*].

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill as a whole, as amended, agreed to.

Bill, as amended, agreed to.

Standing orders—suspension

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

That the resolution of the Assembly for Tuesday 9 February 2020 setting the Assembly's program of business for today be amended to allow Private Members business Notice No 1 being called on forthwith.

Drugs of Dependence (Personal Use) Amendment Bill 2021

Mr Pettersson, pursuant to notice, presented the bill and its explanatory statement.

Title read by Clerk.

MR PETTERSSON (Yerrabi) (11.07): I move:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

I rise today to introduce the Drugs of Dependence (Personal Use) Amendment Bill 2021. This bill will amend the Drugs of Dependence Act 1989 with the effect of decriminalising the possession of small amounts of some illicit drugs. Instead of penalising with a criminal conviction people who use drugs, this bill will allow a simple offence notice to be issued, the substance to be confiscated and the user referred to a medical professional. I believe that it is time for our drug laws to reflect our values. Thanks to the National Drug Strategy household survey 2019, we know that the overwhelming majority of Australians want to see people who use drugs given a warning or a fine or be referred to a medical program when caught in possession of small amounts.

The community has moved on from the war on drugs and it is time to move on from criminalisation. We know that the traditional "just say no" approach has not worked. Try as we might, trying to scare people into not using drugs by threatening them with jail has not stopped people using drugs. Instead, it has just criminalised people and put people in jail. This approach has not and will never neutralise the complex reasons behind why a person chooses to use drugs in the first place. Put simply, the threat of jail time or a criminal record does not deter people from taking drugs. It never has and it never will.

We know that more than 43 per cent of Australians aged over 14 have used at some point in their life what has been considered an illicit drug. Should every one of these people receive a prison sentence or criminal conviction? Of course, the answer is no, but our laws say they can and often have. I think that a lot of us in this chamber can agree that the historical approach is flawed and is not working as intended.

Since the announcement of this bill back in December, I have had many members of the community reach out to me in support. I have heard from people struggling with addiction who are too afraid to reach out for help for fear of criminal justice repercussions. I have met with grieving parents who have lost their children to these substances. I have met with experts and researchers who desperately want to see our laws changed. I have also met with law enforcement members and their representatives. United across all of these different groups, these people want to reduce harm. Seemingly, it is a question of "how" not "if".

I have talked with people from all walks of life, and I have learnt that community values towards drug use are completely different to what they were 30 years ago when this Assembly became responsible for our drug laws. Even the Standing Committee on Education, Employment and Youth Affairs of the previous Assembly recognised this, and recommendation 46 of the report on youth mental health in the ACT was to “consider further criminal justice diversion for young drug users by investigating a simple drug offence”. That was not a majority Labor committee; that was a majority Liberal committee with the now Leader of the Opposition a member. Following that committee report, I moved a motion in the Assembly on 20 August 2020, just two months before the ACT election, calling on the ACT government to decriminalise the personal possession of small amounts of drugs by investigating a simple drug offence notice. For the record, this received tri-partisan support two months before the ACT election.

If the experts, the community and legislators on all sides of politics recognise that our drug laws need to be reformed, then now is the time to act. So let us make it happen. Here is a bill to do just that. There are some in the community who have sought to miscategorise what drug law reform is all about. There are some who are saying that I am encouraging drug use. I want to be very clear: drugs are very dangerous. I urge people not to use them, for their own wellbeing and for the community’s sake. The quality of these illicit substances varies from batch to batch. More often than not, these illicit drugs are cooked up in terrible circumstances—in bikies’ bathtubs with no safety measures or precautions. Drugs can cause lifelong health complications or even death.

The pill-testing trial of the 2019 Groovin the Moo music festival uncovered at least seven pills that contained potentially deadly additives; but we all know that this does not stop people from using them. If it did, we would not be where we are currently. If people choose to consume drugs, regardless of health or legal risks, we as legislators have a responsibility to ensure that, where we can, we reduce the harm. After the changes to our cannabis laws in 2019, we have seen how people who need to seek treatment for their drug use are able to access that help free of the spectre of the justice system.

Since personal possession of cannabis was legalised, according to wastewater analysis, usage has remained the same. Police data shows that drug driving offences have remained steady. ACT Health data shows that there has been no increase in cannabis-related hospital visits. At the time, conservative voices from all over the country criticised this step in the ACT. They said that the sky would fall in, and whilst COVID-19 did happen, so they are partly right, it had very little to do with cannabis law reform in the ACT. Well, it has been over a year since cannabis was legalised. We can all see that those worst predictions did not come true.

For those conservative naysayers, I want to be very clear on what these new laws propose and do not propose. Drug driving, trafficking and supply will all still be criminal offences, as they should be. This bill is not about encouraging drug use. This bill aims to give people the support and help that they need instead of being unnecessarily put through a criminal justice system that is not designed to provide health care. Most of the time, drug consumers, instead of suppliers, are the ones

facing the judicial system, and I think that we can all agree that those who traffic and supply drugs should be the ones who face criminal charges, not consumers. People should not be arrested and shamed for their drug use. This can lead to a terrible cycle of recidivism—put simply, there is a terrible outcome for everyone.

I would like to point out that the decriminalisation model presented in this bill is exactly the same decriminalisation model that still exists in ACT law for certain users of cannabis. I have not conjured up a new system here. All I am saying is that if people thought that that system was good enough for decriminalisation before, let us start the conversation there and see where it goes. While I have proposed amendments to our decriminalisation framework for possession, there are other relevant laws that still leave people open to criminal prosecution that have not been included in this drafting. If we can now agree that drug use is a public health issue, offences such as self-administering in the ACT Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act need to be reviewed. These charges carry a maximum penalty of a \$16,000 fine and/or a year in prison. This bill does not fix the entire problem, but it is a first step in the right direction, and this, too, should be considered.

Whilst I most commonly speak about the health benefits in changing how we treat this issue, there are clear benefits to the justice system, too. In the year after cannabis was legalised, cannabis-related offences have decreased by 90 per cent, freeing up police time and resources to tackle the real issues in our community. A simple offence notice system, confiscation and referral to proper treatment options saves court time, legal costs, police time and taxpayer money. In the end, it provides a better outcome, too.

The personal possession limits set out in this legislation have been chosen so as not to coincide with trafficable amounts set out in commonwealth law. When drafting this bill I wanted to avoid ambiguity that might result in a person possessing a certain quantity of drugs, which, under two different legal frameworks, have wildly different consequences—one being a civil offence for possession, the other being a commonwealth trafficking charge. I acknowledge that the possession limits under commonwealth and territory law are wildly different. I think that it is obvious to most people who look at commonwealth thresholds that they are not grounded in lived experience. The current ACT criminal possession thresholds are far more informed by what happens in the real world.

I hope that in the consideration of this bill we can have a sensible discussion about what these thresholds should be, because I do not think that the current thresholds, as I present this bill to you, are perfect, but are simply based on minimising conflict. I think that it is also worth acknowledging that the limits in this proposed legislation are based on the weight of the substance as opposed to a normal consumption unit, like a pill or a tab. I understand that this is not a perfect model but our current legislation is specified by weight. I think that it is worth starting a conversation about these limits; and I note that there is community interest in this too. There are benefits to this framework because it is simpler for people who consume drugs and for police, and it acknowledges the reality of people being unaware of the specifics of what they are consuming.

I have also heard from members of the community who want to see some of the proposed substances decriminalised and others who do not. I have also heard from others that they want further drugs to be considered for decriminalisation. Ultimately, I think that this is a good debate, and one I hoped to start by proposing this bill. I think that this will be well guided by a committee inquiry and government working with stakeholders. I know that I have barely scratched the surface of substances that cause harm in our community, but these are some of the most common. I would particularly like to draw to the attention of those considering this bill, in the committee and government, what I would consider the major omission from the list as it stands—that being prescription medications and pharmaceuticals. Opiates are the biggest killer, and they need to be a part of this conversation.

It is my firm belief that decriminalising drugs is the best way to move forward, and we would be best served by discussing what else needs to be included instead of trying to demonise specific drugs. We need to have a holistic response that does not discriminate against a person for the drug they consume—a plan that would allow everyone, regardless of the substance, to seek professional help and treatment, should they want it, is what I aspire to. Whilst I am proposing these changes, I also know that funding for more drug and alcohol services must be enacted alongside this legislation, not in lieu of it. For a comprehensive response to be successful, a well-resourced health and education system is absolutely vital.

I believe that the decriminalisation of a small quantity of drugs better allows us to treat drug use as a public health problem. This is a commonsense step forward that will continue the ACT government's track record of helping those in our community who need help. I encourage all members in this place to engage with this bill. I think that Canberra is well served when all members of this place play a part in shaping our legislation through the committee process and through amendment.

Debate (on motion by **Ms Stephen-Smith**) adjourned to the next sitting.

Drugs of Dependence (Personal Use) Amendment Bill 2021— Select Committee Establishment

MR HANSON (Murrumbidgee) (11.19), by leave, I move:

That:

- (1) a Select Committee on the Drugs of Dependence (Personal Use) Amendment Bill 2021 be appointed to examine the Bill and any other related matters
- (2) the Committee be composed of:
 - (a) one Member to be nominated by the Government;
 - (b) one Member to be nominated by the Opposition; and
 - (c) one Member to be nominated by The Greens;to be notified in writing to the Speaker by 3 pm today;

- (3) the Chair of the committee shall be an Opposition Member;
- (4) the Committee is to report by the last sitting day in October 2021; and
- (5) the foregoing provisions of this resolution, so far as they are inconsistent with the standing orders, have effect notwithstanding anything contained in the standing orders or in the resolution of 2 December 2020.

The motion which has been circulated is to move this debate to a select committee. I thank Mr Pettersson for agreeing to that today because there has been some debate as to what we would do with this bill—should it be going to the health committee; should it be going to the justice committee? If you listened to what Mr Pettersson was saying, I think you would agree that quite a bit of what he said, whether you agree with it or not, sits across a spectrum of health and justice issues. If we are to look at this issue holistically, it would be very difficult to refer it just to a single committee. There was some consideration about whether to send it to both committees. I think that would not have been helpful; that would have been a clunky way of doing it and would have risked some of the important issues being lost through the gaps.

The motion proposes that the committee be composed of one member nominated by the government, one member nominated by the opposition and one member nominated by the Greens, and I would ask that those members be notified to the Speaker in writing by 3 pm. The chair of the committee would be an opposition member and will report on the last sitting day this year with the intention—I have discussed this with Mr Pettersson—that a debate will occur in December, but it will be a matter for whoever is the chair to negotiate any extensions should that be required. I note that paragraph 5 is about the fact that our standing orders now require bills to be automatically sent to a committee, and that that is not required, given that the select committee, hopefully, is going to be established.

This is an important issue and I would like to put on the record that the opposition goes into this with an open mind. Certainly, if we can refer to my words in the debate on the motion that Mr Pettersson raised a couple of months before the election, there is merit in looking at this. Ms Lee has made comments, also, that she remains open to looking at this. I think it is unlikely that the bill that we debate in December will mirror what was tabled today. Indeed, if I refer to Mr Pettersson's cannabis bill, that changed significantly. I think that there were 30-odd amendments from the government. I think that this is perhaps a better process.

We have all learned from the cannabis bill. Members who were here may recall that at that stage Mr Pettersson did not want it to go to a committee. He did not want it to be looked at and it was, I think, Mr Rattenbury who supported me moving that bill to an inquiry. So it is good that Mr Pettersson has now recognised that there are improvements that can be made to pieces of legislation through the committee process, and I would hope that that is the case today. We welcome it.

It is my understanding, based on my discussions with the Labor Party and the Greens, that they will be supporting this motion. I thank them for that, and I look forward to engaging in that debate. Hopefully, a committee report can value-add to the bill that has been tabled by Mr Pettersson. I am not foreshadowing that important debate and

whether we will agree to whatever aspects there are, but I think that we would all acknowledge that a select committee will enhance the debate and make it, whether we support it or not, a better form of legislation. I commend my motion to the Assembly.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Families and Community Services and Minister for Health) (11.24): As Mr Hanson has indicated, the government will be supporting his motion to refer the bill to a select committee, and I think that Mr Hanson has clearly articulated the reasons for that. The Drugs of Dependence (Personal Use) Amendment Bill is the responsibility of the health minister but the issues in relation to decriminalisation go very clearly also to justice and Attorney-General issues. So we agree that this is an appropriate course of action and we will support Mr Hanson's motion today.

MR DAVIS (Brindabella) (11.25): I rise on behalf of the ACT Greens to say that we will be supporting Mr Hanson's motion. Obviously, the ACT Greens have a long track record of being strong advocates for law reform in the drug space. While it would have been our preference—and we have always maintained a strong preference for a health approach to drug law reform—to have seen this bill reviewed in the health committee, no doubt this select committee is a perfectly good compromise in this place to make sure that the bill gets the scrutiny it needs from all angles. I look forward to being able to contribute to this debate, as the health committee concurrently reviews a range of alcohol, tobacco and other drug-related law reform.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Sitting suspended from 11.26 am to 2.00 pm.

Questions without notice

Canberra Hospital—emergency patient discharge

MS LEE: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, on the night of February 2021, when asked about what you would do differently to ensure that you meet your October deadline of 70 per cent of patients seen on time in ACT emergency departments, you said that you would take a “whole-of-hospital approach”. In 2020 the CEO of CHS talked about implementing a whole-of-hospital approach. Ms Fitzharris, in June and November 2018, also said that she would take a whole-of-hospital approach. Ms Gallagher, in June, July and October 2013, also said that she would take a whole-of-hospital approach. Minister, given that a whole-of-hospital approach has been what your government has been doing for the last eight years or more, what will you do differently to meet your deadline of October 2021?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for her question and remind her again that the data that we are looking at in terms of meeting that timeliness relates to the number of people who are admitted and discharged, present and are discharged from the emergency department, or admitted to the hospital within four hours, to reach that 70 per cent benchmark. That is what I was talking to the journalist about in relation to that comment, and that is the figure that we focused on.

What the Leader of the Opposition's question highlights is that it is really important to take a whole-of-hospital approach. It also highlights that it is really challenging to do that. The CEO of Canberra Health Services has spoken a number of times about how that is happening. She has spoken in particular about the timely care strategy, which is focused on a series of redesign and improvement initiatives to ensure that patients receive the right care at the right time in the right place.

CHS has really taken a methodological approach and developed targeted redesign and improvement initiatives. One of those, as I spoke about the other day, has been the full care discharge lounge, where people are able to be discharged from a ward to a lounge where they are still able to receive ongoing care. They do not need to be ambulatory and self-supporting to be in the discharge lounge if they are being discharged, for example, to residential aged-care facilities, a hospital in the home environment or a home environment where they are receiving carer support. That is something different. That has not been done in Canberra Hospital before. The Leader of the Opposition asked me what we are doing differently. That is different. The full care discharge lounge is up and running and has recently been expanded. It has been very successful.

MS LEE: Minister, what did Ms Gallagher and Ms Fitzharris get wrong with their whole-of-hospital approach that you will get right in your whole-of-hospital approach?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I have never suggested that previous ministers got anything wrong.

MRS JONES: Minister, will you stop using your buzzwords and give us a detailed plan of what will be done to meet your goal by the end of October 2021?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I refer Mrs Jones to my previous answer, where I detailed one initiative that is being done. Another one is whole ward huddles to identify patients who can be discharged in a timely way. And there is what is called a red to green strategy—I spoke about this the other day in the Assembly—about identifying the blockages to patient discharge, making sure that those are addressed, and ensuring that people take responsibility for the timely discharge of their patients.

I have also spoken about the emergency department redesign projects and the interaction between the emergency department and the rest of the hospital, in particular the new admission procedure from the emergency department to the wards, the direct admission procedure. That is something that is different. In fact, the director of the emergency department said that that is something that would not have been able to be done in Canberra Hospital in previous years.

It really speaks to the change in the culture of the hospital that the current CEO, Bernadette McDonald, and her leadership team are delivering, making sure that everybody understands that it is a whole-of-hospital responsibility to improve the timeliness of care and to improve the experience of patient care right across the hospital. Being discharged in a timely way is not only important in terms of

addressing bed block; it is also important in terms of patient experience. We do not want patients to be in the hospital longer than they need to be. It is not good for them to have that experience.

Another element of the emergency department redesign project is a review of triage processes and workforce models that support patient flow within the emergency department. I spoke the other day about needing to ensure that people who are not going to be admitted to the hospital are seen and discharged from the emergency department in a timely way. We are speaking in detail about the things that we are doing.

Transport Canberra—Whitlam bus services

MS CLAY: My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services and relates to bus services in new suburbs. Given that we know there was good uptake from day one for bus services for Coombs and Wright, and given that we know that transport habits are formed when people first purchase and then move into a new property, can you guarantee that the residents of the new suburb of Whitlam will have regular bus services from the moment that they move into their new homes?

MR STEEL: I thank Ms Clay for her question. I agree that it is important to have bus services as soon as possible, as people move into new suburbs, so that they can form those habits of using public transport rather than relying on private vehicles, particularly to commute through to the city. Extensive planning has been underway for well over a decade for Molonglo, including transport planning for the suburb. That included extensive work that was undertaken with expert advice from transport planner Jarrett Walker, who has written a whole case study in his book *Human Transit* about Molonglo transport planning. This book was used at the time to inform the estate development plans that have been associated with the rollout of Molonglo and will continue to inform our work around transport planning for future stages of Molonglo, including Molonglo 3.

We know that the Molonglo River bridge will be a key enabling project for transport in the Molonglo region. We would like to see the Rapid 10 service—which has been incredibly popular and which will also have stops directly outside Whitlam on John Gorton Drive—provided to that suburb in the future. But, of course, that will rely on the bridge being built. In the future, the ACT government will look at whether we can extend that north, potentially to Belconnen.

We also want to make sure that those people have a good trip to the city, so rapid transit is going to be important for the future of Molonglo suburbs. We know how incredibly popular those services have been since we introduced them in 2019, and we have since increased the frequency. We also know that the connecting feeder route bus services are going to play an incredibly important role. The exact timing of that will be determined once we go through the network update. (*Time expired.*)

MS CLAY: Minister, I am really pleased to hear about all that detailed planning work and those future plans, but what I really want to know is whether the residents will have a bus service from the first day they move in, because once they have bought a

car they have made a decision for the next 15 or 20 years, and they may not come back.

MR STEEL: I thank Ms Clay for her question. We hope to provide those services as soon as possible. We expect that Whitlam will have a local route bus through the suburb, which will be using Sculthorpe Avenue. The road has been designed to accommodate buses to ensure that there is enough room. Of course, there are currently bus stops on John Gorton Drive, adjacent to the suburb, ready for a future bus route, potentially that rapid service, once it comes north. Transport Canberra will also continue to work on the future planning around the bus system, including future bus depots. We are looking at a future bus depot in the north—potentially in west Belconnen or the Gungahlin region to enable us to grow the fleet and meet the growing number of people and suburbs that will be coming on line, including Whitlam, over the coming years.

MR DAVIS: Minister, can you confirm that, going forward, all new suburbs and subdivisions will be serviced by buses from day one?

MR STEEL: As I mentioned, we are continuing to work on the transport planning for the new suburb of Whitlam. We have also been working on other suburbs. One great example is Ginninderry, where we have worked with the Ginninderry developer to establish a bus service very early in the life of that suburb. That has seen local small buses, which are known as Hino Ponchos, via a service feeder through to—

Mr Parton: I have a point of order with respect to relevance. The question was very specific in terms of whether the government could guarantee bus services from day one.

MADAM SPEAKER: I think the minister covered that fairly early in his question, Mr Parton. There is no point of order.

MR STEEL: We are providing services from Ginninderry into Kippax and also to the local schools. We know how important those services are so that people can form good early habits in using public transport, and we will continue to ensure that we extend bus services through to those suburbs as soon as we can.

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: If your colleagues remain quiet, Mrs Jones, you may be able to ask your question.

Hospitals—waiting times

MRS JONES: My question is to the Minister for Health. On Friday, 22 January 2021, the ABC reported that a Canberra man grew sick of waiting for elective surgery at Canberra Hospital and took matters into his own hands, using a utility knife to remove a painful grape-sized cyst that was affecting his work. This was after waiting more than two years after being referred for elective surgery by his GP. Minister, how do you respond to this distressing case?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mrs Jones for the question. The first response is, as the president or past president—I am not sure—of the ACT AMA, Antonio Di Dio, indicated, “Please do not try this at home.” It is not a safe practice to perform surgery on yourself. If your condition is causing more disruption to your work or your life, please return to your GP and get re-referred if your condition is worsening. That is the advice that we provide to anybody who is on the waiting list. Without the specific details in relation to what this individual was waiting for, it is hard to provide a response, and obviously I would not be commenting on individual matters anyway.

More broadly, it does point to the fact that this appeared to be, potentially, a relatively straightforward procedure that could have been done outside the hospital system. One of the things that we are working with the Capital Health Network on is improving referrals between GPs, from one GP to another, where they have the capacity to do a different type of work, whether that is in a particular area of specialisation or whether that is in terms of performing more surgical procedures than their own GP possibly could do.

Another thing we have committed to through the election campaign is establishing a north-side elective surgery centre so that things that can be done in day surgery, where you do not need to be admitted to hospital overnight, can be done in a clearer and more timely fashion that will not be disrupted by the advent of an emergency surgery that might push back an elective procedure. So there are a range of things that we have underway to address some of those issues.

MRS JONES: Minister, is more than two years an acceptable wait for this kind of surgery, and can you understand why this man took matters into his own hands?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I do understand that it can be extremely frustrating for people who are waiting for elective surgery. But the ACT system, like all health systems across the country, has a triage process when it comes to elective surgery prioritisation and, indeed, outpatients prioritisation. One of the questions here is whether this individual was in fact waiting for elective surgery or whether he was waiting for an outpatients appointment. That, in the story, is not very clear. There is a lack of clarity in relation to this individual matter. But I certainly understand that it is extremely frustrating for people when they are waiting, whether it is for outpatients or for elective surgery. We do not want to see that. But it is the reality of a public health system that there will always be some people who are waiting. That is the case not only here in the ACT but also across the country and around the world.

MR HANSON: Minister, will your nine-month deadline to fix hospital wait times include fixing elective surgery waiting times?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Hanson for the question. We have actually had great success in growing our elective surgery numbers over the last few years. Over the last five years, pre-COVID-19 the ACT had been growing elective surgery numbers at twice the national average rate. We have seen our seen-on-time numbers improving, particularly for category 2 elective surgeries, over that period. Over the decade they improved from about 44 per cent of category 2 patients seen on time to

more than 70 per cent of category 2 patients seen on time. Through the response to the COVID-19 situation, where we saw non-urgent category 2 and 3 elective surgeries reduced as a response—

Mr Hanson: I raise a point of order on relevance, Madam Speaker. The minister is giving us a bit of a history lesson, but the question was whether the elective surgery wait times are included in her promise to fix wait times at the hospital. I ask her to be succinct and directly relevant, please.

MADAM SPEAKER: She is on the policy area and she has a minute left.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: In response to those delayed elective surgeries, we are on track to deliver more than 16,000 elective surgeries this financial year. We were, pre-COVID, on track to deliver 14,250 elective surgeries, and in the previous year we delivered more than 14,000, which was more than ever before. During the election campaign, we committed to continuing to increase our rate of elective surgery. That will continue to address both waiting times and the number of people on the waiting list. We will continue to improve, as we have been over time. We will not make ridiculous promises that could never be delivered, which is what we saw the Canberra Liberals do during the election campaign.

Budget—business support

MR PETTERSSON: My question is to the Minister for Business and Better Regulation. Minister, can you please outline to the Assembly how the budget supports clubs?

MS CHEYNE: I thank Mr Pettersson for the question. We recognise that our clubs, like many businesses, had an exceptional 2020, impacted by a dry summer, bushfires and then, of course, the pandemic. We are committed to supporting our clubs, and one of the ways we are doing this is in regard to water. Water costs make up a significant proportion of clubs' costs, and they are fixed costs that cannot be lowered just because patronage might be down.

With this budget the government will be immediately establishing a hardship fund for clubs who are high intensity users of non-potable water. We will provide a full rebate of those clubs' non-potable water costs for the 2020-21 financial year. This is an immediate, tangible outcome that will help clubs as they come through the recovery and continue to provide the services and spaces that so many Canberrans enjoy.

To support clubs with cost pressures in the long term, we are conducting a review of non-potable water costs for high-intensity users. The government will work with clubs in understanding their costs, together with an ICRC investigation, with a view to learning how these costs can be more sustainable.

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, how does the budget provide support to local businesses more generally?

MS CHEYNE: This question goes to the heart of the government's agenda and the heart of the budget. We are focused on helping Canberrans drive the recovery from the pandemic. Local businesses and clubs throughout Canberra are at the forefront of that effort. In December the government trialled the ChooseCBR digital discount scheme. Canberrans redeemed \$310,000 worth of discounts on transactions, and those transactions totalled over \$1.9 million. This has a multiplier effect of 6.3.

This budget allows for the full rollout of the scheme this year, meaning \$2 million is available in digital discounts. This will further encourage discretionary consumer spending, increase consumer and business confidence and ensure that spending goes straight to the Canberra businesses who did it tough in 2020.

The budget also supports local businesses in the hospitality sector, which was hit particularly hard by COVID-19. The government will continue to waive or reduce a number of fees, saving cafes and restaurants an estimated \$2.25 million. The food business registration fee will be waived for a further 12 months, through to the end of March 2022, benefiting over 3,000 businesses. The outdoor dining permit fee will continue to be waived for a further year, through to the end of June 2022, benefiting 270 businesses. Liquor licensing fees for "on" liquor and for general liquor licensed venues will be reduced by 50 per cent for a year, through to 1 April 2022, benefiting over 570 businesses.

DR PATERSON: Minister, how does the budget provide longer term support to businesses working through the recovery?

MS CHEYNE: I thank Dr Paterson for her question and her interest in business recovery. The recovery period provides an opportunity to pursue reforms that will ensure that Canberra's economic growth continues. This budget creates the better regulation task force. The task force's purpose is to review the business environment in the ACT and pursue reforms that will make doing business in the ACT easier. Our economy is changing, driven by some of the most innovative businesses in the country, and the government is committed to assisting them, together with our more traditional businesses, to do what they do best within a regulatory environment that just makes things easier.

Sport—facilities

MR DAVIS: My question is to the Minister for Sport and Recreation and relates to the Mpowerdome. Minister, on reflection, I fear my question to you on Tuesday lacked clarity, so I thought I would ask a more specific question to ensure a more specific answer. Will the government commit to at least exploring the option of acquiring the Mpowerdome?

MS BERRY: No, not at this stage. The Mpowerdome story is a long one and started before I was Minister for Sport and Recreation. Mr Rattenbury will recall some of the difficulties with dealing with Mpowerdome and trying to ensure that that for-profit commercial organisation could stay operational and offer multi-sports to the Tuggeranong community but more broadly the Canberra community as well.

I know how disappointed the Canberra community is about the Mpowerdome, and we have had many discussions in this place about it. Mr Wall was very passionate in his concern for Mpowerdome in the community, as, of course, are you, Madam Speaker. I do not think a week went by where I was not contacted by you about Mpowerdome.

Unfortunately, Mpowerdome, being a commercial business, decided to close its doors in 2016. As far as I know, it still remains for sale and on the market. As far as I could see today when I checked, the asking price is \$4 million-plus on Allhomes. I understand that a number of organisations are interested in either purchasing or leasing Mpowerdome. At the moment I also understand that a community Aboriginal organisation, Yeddung Mura, have leased some of the facilities at Mpowerdome and are operating out of there.

Of course, the Kambah multi-sport facility has opened its doors again and it offers a whole range of different sports for the Tuggeranong community to engage in, similar to the ones Mpowerdome offered—soccer, netball, volleyball and cricket, as well as inflatable world. I understand the concerns around Mpowerdome. It has had a long story and engagement from a number of ministers in this place. (*Time expired.*)

MR DAVIS: Thank you, Minister. What is your alternative proposal for the placement of a multi-sport facility in South Tuggeranong?

MS BERRY: I refer Mr Davis to my previous answer. The Kambah private commercial organisation which has reopened its doors is offering multi-sports facilities to communities in Tuggeranong.

MR BRADDOCK: Minister, what advice would you give to community sports organisations, many of whom are currently at the mercy of private providers for the provision of appropriate sporting facilities?

MS BERRY: I thank Mr Braddock for his supplementary question. The government provides sports facilities all across the ACT for community sports organisations. I ran through a few yesterday in Tuggeranong where upgrades have happened, and they have been done across the ACT, including sports facilities in Belconnen, with the restoration of Higgins neighbourhood oval, lighting upgrades at Hawker, improvements to Hawker oval, improved drainage at Kippax enclosed field, and improvements at GIO Stadium, including family-friendly change rooms. I have referred a number of times to the upgrades that we are doing with regard to female-friendly change rooms to ensure that they remain inclusive for everybody who wants to play sports.

At Gungahlin we have continued work on the design of the Throsby home of football, completed stage 1 of Taylor district playing fields, installed synthetic grass at Nicholls, developed Moncrieff Community Park, upgraded irrigation at Gungahlin enclosed oval, and upgraded lighting at Nicholls.

In central Canberra upgrades have been made to: the Canberra District Rugby League Centre of Excellence at Braddon for the Canberra Raiders and Region Football;

Boomanulla Oval; and grandstands and amenities at Narrabundah Park, to name a few.

In Woden, Weston Creek and Molonglo we have completed the Stromlo Leisure Centre. If anybody has not visited yet, I really encourage you to get up there. It is an amazing facility, funded by the ACT government and operated by the YMCA. We have also upgraded the pavilion at Waramanga district playing fields, redeveloped Phillip oval, and undergone planning and design for Stromlo district playing fields. They are just a few of the things that the ACT government has done in upgrading and providing sports facilities for community clubs all across the ACT.

MADAM SPEAKER: Before giving the next call, I remind members of standing order 117 and the rules for all questions. I understand your interest, Mr Davis, in Mpowerdome, but I hope you were not seeking to ask the minister to announce executive or government policy. I remind members about the standing order rules of engagement.

Health workers—occupational violence

MR HANSON: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, on 7 February this year, a constituent who is also an emergency doctor said that he is attacked by ice addicts and other illicit drug users almost every day at work. What is the government doing to protect emergency and frontline workers from being attacked while doing their job?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: As members would be aware, Canberra Health Services released its occupational violence strategy last year. Calvary hospital also is very focused on this. It is becoming a more and more significant issue.

One of the things that we have been doing is ensuring that people feel empowered to report occupational violence. The type of violence that Mr Hanson refers to is very serious. One of the elements of the strategy and one of the elements of the work that we are doing is to introduce a code grey that will call in additional support in relation to a situation that can be de-escalated. We have a whole range of other supports that do not go specifically to the type of situation that Mr Hanson is talking about, but the Occupational Violence Prevention and Management Committee has a broad representation of ACT Policing, the ACT Ambulance Service, Corrections ACT, WorkSafe ACT, Carers ACT, healthcare consumers and the Mental Health Consumer Network, as well as managers and staff from Canberra Health Services, who are working through these issues.

It is a very difficult situation when you have drug-affected people in the emergency department. It is something that I recently discussed with wardspeople in a meeting about their experience. Canberra Health Services and Calvary hospital will continue to work with staff on what strategies they can use to ensure that these incidents are minimised and appropriately addressed—preferably that they do not occur at all.

MR HANSON: Minister, what specific support services are available to emergency and frontline workers who suffer physical or mental injury, including PTSD, as a result of being attacked on the job?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: There are a range of support services that are available to staff right across the ACT public service, specifically in our healthcare services. Those include the standard employee support services, but also respect and development officers—independent people you can go to to report specific instances not just of occupational violence from patients or family members but also in relation to other matters that might occur in the workplace.

People also have access to work health and safety and WorkCover arrangements. Workers compensation arrangements are fairly standard in being able to address some of those issues. If someone has a psychosocial injury or a psychological injury as a result of an injury in their workplace, there are a whole range of other measures that come into play in relation to both supporting those people to recover and return to work and providing financial support through workers compensation if that is what is required.

MRS JONES: Minister, given the occupational violence strategy you discussed, why is this issue, as you just said, becoming a more and more significant issue—in your own words?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: Thank you for the supplementary question. There are some behavioural factors where we seem to be seeing an increase in occupational violence, but I think it is also that people are noticing it more and not accepting it as part of the job in the way that doctors and nurses and their support staff have previously done, in the same way that other professions have accepted that this is just part of the job.

Part of the awareness raising about occupational violence, both by unions and by management, has been to make sure that staff understand that this is not acceptable and it should be reported so that something can be done about it, so that appropriate responses can be made, both at the time and subsequently, to support staff.

We are seeing much greater awareness of the issue of occupational violence. That is contributing to the increased reporting that we see. People are being encouraged to report. They are being encouraged to report not just the most serious physical instances of occupational violence but also things that they may not previously have considered to be occupational violence but which do pose a threat to their physical safety or their psychological safety.

It is about a whole-of-service response to ensure that people feel safe and that people work together to understand how to de-escalate when there is a risk of violence occurring and how to respond to it.

Light rail—stage 2A

MR PARTON: My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services. Minister, in recent weeks it has been revealed that light rail stage 2A has cleared a major hurdle, with federal environmental approvals being signed off. Now that stage 2A is a step closer to becoming reality, can you explain to us exactly how motorists, commuters and pedestrians will be impacted by construction along the proposed route from Alinga Street, around London Circuit, to Commonwealth Avenue Bridge?

MR STEEL: I thank Mr Parton for his question. We have been very clear from the very beginning that we know there will be some short-term disruption while this major transport infrastructure project is built. That also includes the raising of London Circuit, providing an upgraded intersection between London Circuit and Commonwealth Avenue. We will seek to minimise that as much as possible. We will be working as closely as we can with the National Capital Authority in relation to their major infrastructure project around the strengthening of the Commonwealth Avenue Bridge, so that work can potentially take place at a similar time to parts of the construction of light rail stage 2A.

The ACT government has required the owner of the section 63 block to build an extension to Edinburgh Avenue, which has recently been completed, and which connects from London Circuit through to Vernon Circle. It provides another way for people to get through to the western side of the CBD.

We will be clearly communicating with Canberra residents as well as businesses in the stage 2A project footprint about potential disruptions during the construction period. Those communications will be made available closer to the start of construction, once we have got through the important approvals processes that still need to be obtained from the NCA and the ACT planning and land authority, and once procurement has been finalised for the project.

MR PARTON: Minister, will businesses hindered by light rail 2A's construction be offered compensation for lost sales caused by the development?

MR STEEL: No, we do not expect that to be the case, similar to stage 1. What we have learned from stage 1 is that we need to communicate early with businesses that may be affected along this route. The 1.7-kilometre extension to the line goes through the courts precinct. We have already begun communication with those who are affected in the courts precinct, as well as businesses along London Circuit, the Australian National University, and hotels, including QT, along the route.

Those are the majority of businesses along the corridor. Once the light rail extends down onto the median strip of Commonwealth Avenue and then further on, we will be consulting further with businesses that may be affected, and other organisations like the parliament, around State Circle. Thankfully, with stage 2B, once it goes on to Adelaide Avenue, there are very few people that are affected along the median strip there. We are looking forward and hope to have reduced disruptions as a result along the Adelaide Avenue part of the extension of 2B in the future.

MR CAIN: Minister, what impact will the construction have on traffic flow around the entirety of Vernon Circle, including the linking lanes on the northern and southern ends, and what flow-on effects will there be?

MR STEEL: I thank Mr Cain for his question. This will be disruptive for traffic and it may mean that people will have to think about a different way of getting in to the city than they have been used to, rather than using Commonwealth Avenue, particularly during the construction period. We are also working closely with Transport Canberra and through MPC to look at the impacts on the transport system.

There are a range of ways to get through to the city. Of course, this was planned for many decades ago, with the construction of major new roads, including the Gungahlin Drive extension, that provides an arterial road on the western side of the city, and on the eastern side with the extension to the Monaro Highway through the Majura Parkway. These roads do provide new ways of getting in to the city, new major thoroughfares through the city, that can be used by people, rather than needing to use the ceremonial gateway into the city on Commonwealth Avenue. That will have to be, potentially, closed for a period of time while works are undertaken to raise London Circuit up to that grade level.

We will be clearly communicating what those disruptions will be so that Canberrans can make their choices about how they can best make their way into the city, if they are commuting to the city, or indeed avoid the city and not take a route through the city, if they are going elsewhere.

Housing ACT—vacant property

MR COE: Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development. I refer to the 30 properties at the mixed-use Toolangi complex in Kaleen, which sat unoccupied for 15 months while the government sought a higher revenue deal from CatholicCare. Documents released in an FOI request also state that Housing ACT was using a “fairly targeted” and “selective” approach when determining who would be offered those properties. Minister, why was the government willing to let these units sit vacant for 450 days while over 2,400 people were on the waiting list for a public housing property at the same time?

MS BERRY: Yes, it was an unacceptable time for those places to be empty when there are people in need of housing in the ACT. I have already expressed my frustration at the length of time it took. However, I am convinced that Housing ACT and the community housing provider, CatholicCare, have worked together on a really good arrangement that provides support for different people in our community who need different kinds of wraparound supports, including people who have mental health conditions or other disabilities.

Some of those units were changed to make sure that they were even more inclusive and had automatic door opening so that people who were living with a disability were able to get more access to that accommodation, with more accessibility. CatholicCare and Housing ACT were working on the best possible model for that complex. It is a different model for the ACT and it was a complex negotiation because it is a 20-year contract with CatholicCare. I am comfortable now with the work that Housing ACT and CatholicCare have done to get this arrangement. But I do share the opposition members’ frustration at the length of time that it took to get to this place.

MR COE: Minister, did you raise any concerns along the way—that is, perhaps at the three-month or the six-month mark, did you raise concerns as to why these properties were vacant? If so, why did it still take many months to actually get tenants into those properties?

MS BERRY: Yes, I did raise concerns along the way. I have already explained in my first answer that this was a complex negotiation for a 20-year contract, something different for the ACT. I am now confident that that arrangement is a good one and will serve those residents well into the future.

MR PARTON: Minister, which types of tenants were being targeted when these properties were being offered? More specifically, were these properties offered on the basis of greatest need, or were other factors at play when these properties were allocated?

MS BERRY: I am not sure what you are implying with “other factors in play”. But these are community properties, not public housing properties, so, yes, they were targeted for people who are living with different kinds of disabilities, including mental health conditions.

Budget—emergency services

DR PATERSON: My question is to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. How is the government driving innovation in the ACT Ambulance Service and ACT Policing?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Dr Paterson for her question and for her interest in the safety of Canberrans. I have been proud to have worked with staff across ACT Policing and the ACT Ambulance Service to implement the new innovative Police, Ambulance and Clinician Early Response Service. PACER is an integrated service model that brings together police, paramedics and mental health clinicians to support the safe assessment and treatment of people experiencing acute mental health episodes. The PACER model has been proven to reduce demand on our crucial policing, paramedics and emergency departments and secure better outcomes for people in need.

We have invested an additional \$14.1 million for PACER in this budget, a top-up of the \$720,000 provided as part of the mental health support program last year so that our 29 highly trained PACER members can continue to achieve positive results for the Canberra community. This is just one of the many innovations we are delivering as part of our ongoing commitment to supporting our first responders to keep Canberrans safe and to achieve better outcomes for those in need.

DR PATERSON: Thank you, Minister. What benefits will PACER bring to the ACT community?

MR GENTLEMAN: I am pleased to report that PACER has already resulted in better mental health outcomes for people in need, while reducing demand in our emergency responders. PACER has resulted in a significant downturn in the number of mental health patients apprehended under the Mental Health Act and presenting to the emergency departments. During 2020 PACER teams responded to 1,249 mental health callouts that resulted in 963 Canberrans receiving care in the home and remaining in the community.

I am pleased that patients responded to by PACER have been able to receive alternative appropriate care in the community, rather than being taken to hospital. Diverting someone experiencing a mental health crisis away from the emergency departments and police custody means they can start recovering sooner from a better starting point. This delivers on our commitment to provide better outcomes for Canberrans experiencing mental health challenges by reducing avoidable hospital presentations and contact with the justice system while also reducing demand on our hardworking emergency responders.

MS ORR: Minister, how is the government supporting staff across emergency services?

MR GENTLEMAN: I think Ms Orr for her interest in our staff as well. The government is committed to supporting staff across our emergency services so that they can keep our community safe. We have been working hard to ensure that our emergency service responders are able to deliver well-resourced, community-focused services that enhance public safety and respond to the changing needs of our growing city. We have made and will continue to make significant staffing investments, provide new vehicles and equipment, fund new and upgraded facilities and ensure that our staff receive the training and opportunities they need to best serve our community.

We will also continue to invest in innovative and creative solutions such as PACER that help to reduce demand on the emergency responders and enable them to achieve better outcomes. These investments have enabled our first responders to consistently achieve the fastest response times in the country, ensuring that Canberrans receive swift help in emergencies. Thank you to our hardworking staff across our emergency services for their ongoing commitment and dedication to our community.

Homelessness—services

MRS KIKKERT: My question is to the Minister for Homelessness and Housing Services. Minister, it has been reported that over the past year the territory had the second highest rate of repeat homelessness in Australia. In 2017 there were 34 people on the priority waiting list and now there are 191, including those in the tent city behind CMAG, which many of us walk past every day. Minister, why are more Canberrans failing to receive the homelessness services they desperately need?

MS VASSAROTTI: I thank Mrs Kikkert for the question. As reported in the *RoGS* report, which was referred to by Mrs Kikkert, we saw an increase in homelessness in the ACT last year, which was really disappointing. We have seen an increase in funding of homelessness services over the last three years, as well. We have seen an increase in the number of people accessing our homelessness services, but there has been an increase in the complexity of their needs as well. We have seen an increase in the numbers of people, largely due to the COVID-19 pandemic in March. We are looking at how we respond to these issues. We have seen a number of new services introduced through the COVID-19 period. We have announced additional funding for these services through the budget that has just been announced.

MRS KIKKERT: Why, Minister, with an increase in funding, is your Labor-Greens government still leaving people out on the streets in places like Dickson, Civic, Cooleman Court and Phillip?

MS VASSAROTTI: The responses to homelessness are really complex, and there are a range of services in the specialist homelessness services sector which are working really hard to address these issues. One of the key things that we have in the ACT is a central intake service model that is trying to integrate services and provide a single place where people can come in and get their needs responded to by the services they need.

We have a number of other services, particularly the St Vincent's Street to Home program, which is trying to respond to the issue of rough sleeping and is working with people on a very regular basis and trying to meet them where they are. In some instances, people are not ready to access services. In those instances, ongoing services are provided through programs such as Street to Home and the night patrol service. Certainly, the new Axial Housing service is specifically working with rough sleepers who have complex needs, to provide them with permanent housing. This is not an issue that is easy to solve, but it is one that the government is absolutely focused on. We are providing additional funding to ensure that we are able to meet people and provide everyone with a decent home.

MR PARTON: Minister, can you guarantee, as per your party's pre-election rhetoric, that no Canberran will be homeless by the end of this year?

MS VASSAROTTI: Thank you, Mr Parton, for the question. Certainly, we did not guarantee that no person would be homeless by the end of the year. We have spoken a lot about providing everyone with a decent home, and I am absolutely committed to working with the specialist homelessness sector to reduce homelessness and eliminate homelessness if we possibly can. These are complex issues. They are issues that we all need to work on, and we will be providing support to specialist homelessness services, as well as other housing services and the whole community to do everything we can to reduce and eliminate homelessness.

Animals—cat containment

MR BRADDOCK: My question is to the Minister for the Environment. Yerrabi has many cat containment suburbs, but there are some suburbs that are not. The parliamentary and governing agreement includes mention of increasing cat containment measures. Minister, can you please explain what this might look like?

MS VASSAROTTI: I thank Mr Braddock for the question. The issue of cat containment has had a bit of focus over the last little while. It has been looked at by ACT government for some time, and cat containment is something that we will be working on as a government over the coming months.

While cats are much-loved family members—about a quarter of households in the ACT have cats—we also know they have quite significant impacts in the community.

As Mr Braddock noted, there are a number of cat containment suburbs—in fact, 17 areas have been declared catchment areas under the Domestic Animals Act—and all new suburbs will be cat containment suburbs, moving forward.

In a draft cat plan released in 2019 we sought people’s views about cat containment. While there was an understanding that one of the objectives is around expanding cat containment, there was not consensus regarding exactly how additional cat containment could be moved forward. This is an issue we will be looking at in coming months. I look forward to working with Minister Steel, in particular, in terms of how we increase cat containment across the suburbs in a way that considers animal welfare as well as the impact on the community.

MR BRADDOCK: Will the government be moving towards a territory-wide cat containment system?

MADAM SPEAKER: Earlier during question time I referred to standing order 117(c). Members need to be very mindful about seeking any announcements out of the executive.

MR BRADDOCK: Fair enough, Madam Speaker. I will change to the question to: what information assistance will be made available to cat owners during that process?

Mr Hanson: Do you get to change a question because you don’t like it?

MADAM SPEAKER: You can stand on your feet and raise a point of order or you can just be quiet, Mr Hanson.

Mr Hanson: Well, Madam Speaker, you make the rulings, and you did not seem to rule. Are you ruling it out of order or not? I am confused.

MADAM SPEAKER: I have given him grace to change his question. Ms Vassarotti, you have the floor.

MS VASSAROTTI: Thank you, Mr Braddock, for the question. As noted, we will be looking at cat containment and whether we will be increasing cat containment further in the next period. If we make any changes to the way that we manage cats, absolutely, education and support to the community will be part of that process.

Housing—funding

MR CAIN: My question is to the Minister for Homelessness and Housing Services. Minister, in January you announced that the Labor-Greens coalition government will dedicate \$2.6 million for ACT homelessness services. At the time you, said that secure housing is fundamental for the wellbeing of our community as a whole. Figures from the ACT Council of Social Service indicate that 9,500 low income households in Canberra experienced rental stress in the past year. Data from Homelessness Australia and Everybody’s Home show that Canberra needs another 3,000 social housing properties to keep up with demand. Minister, what is the

Labor-Greens coalition government doing to fix this shortfall in social housing for Canberrans?

MS BERRY: Madam Speaker, I should probably answer that question. I am responsible for implementing the housing strategy, as well as the growth and renewal program that the ACT government has embarked on. It is more appropriate for me to answer the question.

There has been significant work in the ACT on our growth and renewal program for the next years. Over the 10 years to 2025, the ACT government will have spent over \$1 billion on our growth and renewal program, increasing the amount of public housing but also making sure that housing is appropriate and meets the needs of each tenant, and that it is sustainable, accessible and affordable in the sense of heating and cooling in Canberra's changing climate.

The growth and renewal program for the next four years has over 1,000 homes being renewed across the ACT. Once that is completed, over 20 per cent of the ACT's public housing stock will have been renewed as part of this program. As well, in accordance with the parliamentary and governing agreement, there will be an increase in the number of public housing properties, to 400.

In addition to that, OneLink provides services to put people in touch with different service organisations to get them into homes of their own. It might not be public housing; it might not be community housing. It might be private rental or it might be opportunities to get into different housing and accommodation. Housing ACT does all this work, along with its partners in OneLink, to provide services to people in our community who need them. Public housing might not always be the appropriate option for them.

MR CAIN: What is the coalition government doing to alleviate the rental stress of those 9,500 low income rental households?

MS BERRY: There has been significant work done by the ACT government. I refer Peter Cain to answers to questions this week by Mr Parton.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Don't respond to interjections, Ms Berry.

MS BERRY: Yes, Madam Speaker. We are making sure that people can have rental support in the ACT but also making sure that there are properties available. We talked yesterday about the supply of land in the ACT, and there is land available for purchase. Affordable community and public housing are committed to be 15 per cent across all of the ACT, brownfields and greenfields, to ensure that all housing meets everybody's needs, regardless of where they are, their incomes or their backgrounds, so that they are supported into accommodation that meets their needs.

MR PARTON: Minister, when will the government acknowledge its pure neglect of the thousands of Canberrans who are suffering housing stress?

MS BERRY: This is not an issue that the ACT government faces on its own. Mr Parton will know that this week I referred to the National Rental Affordability Scheme, which finishes up soon, which really did assist people to get into their homes. That is in the federal government's program areas and is a way that they can provide funding to support community housing and public housing to make sure that accommodation is available for people.

In addition to that, the decrease in the JobSeeker funding—whatever it is called, whatever the welfare arrangement is—is affecting people's ability to afford to get into homes of their own, whether that is public housing or not. In addition to that, former governments' decisions to cut penalty rates for low income earners in the ACT have definitely affected their ability to have a home of their own and to be able to live a decent life. It is not just an ACT problem.

Opposition members interjecting—

MS BERRY: It has got worse.

MADAM SPEAKER: Members, allow the minister to answer.

Mr Coe interjecting—

MS BERRY: I had not finished.

MADAM SPEAKER: I was calling people to order. Ms Berry, you have the floor and you have 40 seconds left.

Mr Hanson: Madam Speaker, on calling people to order, I note that it was Mr Barr who was debating Mr Parton, and Mr Barr debated Mrs Jones and Mr Coe.

MADAM SPEAKER: Sit down, Mr Hanson.

Mr Hanson: You only call opposition members to order. I ask that you be even-handed in these matters.

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members, please allow the minister to conclude in the time she has left, if she wishes to.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: No more, Mr Hanson. Are you finishing, Ms Berry?

MS BERRY: Yes, thank you, Madam Speaker. As I said, the ACT government is doing its bit—absolutely its bit, way more than the rest of the country—in its per capita contribution to public housing in the ACT: \$1 billion over 10 years to increase and provide different kinds of public housing in the ACT. We cannot do it on our

own. If the same investment or partnerships were made across the country, including by the federal government, we could do so much more. This is not an ACT situation alone.

Government—assistance for veterans and seniors

MS LAWDER: My question is to the Chief Minister. On 3 December 2020 you were asked if you would commit to re-establishing a dedicated minister for seniors and veterans. You said that “if it was of such importance” you would update the administrative orders accordingly. In the public hearings schedule for the upcoming annual reports and estimates hearings, there is still no minister or output class recorded for veterans and seniors. Chief Minister, is your failure to update the administrative orders an admission that you do not consider this to be a matter of “such importance”?

MR BARR: I believe the administrative orders were, in fact, updated on 1 February.

MS LAWDER: Chief Minister, what has your government actually done for veterans and seniors organisations since disbanding the ministry for the Tenth Assembly?

MR BARR: That would be less than a hundred days ago, so I will take the detail on notice but observe that the government, through the budget released on Tuesday, has provided ongoing support in those portfolio areas.

MR HANSON: Chief Minister, can you outline any specific initiatives that are in the budget for veterans or seniors?

MR BARR: There are millions of dollars allocated in the portfolio areas and in the directorates—many ongoing initiatives. There are not new initiatives in every area in every budget.

Business—support

MS CASTLEY: My question is to the Minister for Business and Better Regulation. The government’s ChooseCBR scheme last December was supposed to help struggling small businesses but had to be extended because the uptake was so low, with less than half of the \$500,000 claimed. Business owners criticised the scheme, saying that it was confusing and that some customers with vouchers did not spend much extra, while Canberra Business Chamber executive Graham Catt said it should have been extended to microbusinesses also. Minister, how do you respond to the Canberra Business Chamber, which said it had hoped for more measures in Tuesday’s budget to support local businesses?

MS CHEYNE: ChooseCBR was an ambitious scheme and it was a trial. It was the very first time that we had done anything like that in the ACT. As I said earlier today, \$310,000 of discounts were redeemed in a very short period of time. This was less than the \$500,000 allocated but it is nothing to be sneezed at, and the multiplier effect was 6.3—so \$1.9 million contributed overall to the ACT economy. I have outlined a number of measures that are throughout the budget that are supporting local

businesses. I did it earlier, in response to several questions from my own colleagues. So I refer the member to my previous answer. In relation to ChooseCBR, we have had feedback and we have been listening. We will be updating the scheme, and I look forward to having more to say about that in the coming months, when \$2 million of it is rolled out.

MS CASTLEY: Was a review of the ChooseCBR trial done? If so, what did it find and when will we get to see that information?

MS CHEYNE: I thank Ms Castley for the question. I do not think I thanked her earlier. Yes, there is a review underway in the directorate at the moment. It is not a formal review. I do not expect that there will be something that will be published. But we have been taking advice from businesses that have reached out to us and some businesses to which we have reached out. A survey was conducted towards the end of last year. We have heard from peak bodies like the Canberra Business Chamber.

One example of things that I would like to see done differently is better visual cues. While we made changes to the website that helped to improve it, including adding a map, there were perhaps improvements that we could have had at some of the shopfronts for people, if they were going from shop to shop, so that they would have known that they could use their discounts at an available shop. That is certainly something that we will be doing differently with the further rollout.

MR CAIN: Minister, given that \$2 million has been allocated to the scheme, which will continue this year, what will change so that it actually helps small business?

MS CHEYNE: I do not quite agree with the entire premise of the question. I think that \$310,000 of government expenditure that had a 6.3 multiplier effect did help businesses. We also extended the scheme until Christmas Eve, and I think we had, overall, a pretty good response from businesses and from take-up: 336 businesses participated in the scheme. We will be looking to increase that amount. I refer the member to some of my previous responses about how we will be improving the scheme to see greater take-up from businesses and consumers.

Waste—bulky waste collection

MS ORR: My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services. Can you outline what the fast-track of the bulky waste service rollout will mean for Canberrans?

MR STEEL: I thank Ms Orr for her question. I was very pleased to announce last week that the bulky waste collection service will be fast-tracked to all Canberra suburbs by July this year. This follows on from the successful trial of the service in both Gungahlin and Tuggeranong, which commenced on 1 July 2020. Our government is getting on with the job of delivering the bulky waste collection service to the whole of Canberra, doing what we said we would do at the election.

Last week I joined my colleague Minister Cheyne in the suburb of Macquarie, along with local residents Michael and Jacinta, who were very excited to see the service

arriving sooner than expected. Michael previously had to borrow a car and trailer to get bulky waste to the tip. With the fast-track of the rollout, Belconnen residents like Michael will be able to access the service from 1 April to make it easier to recycle and get rid of unwanted hard waste from the kerb. Residents in Molonglo, Hall, Woden, Weston, the inner north and the inner south will then have collections commencing from 1 July.

Some suburbs were not originally due to receive this service until 2024, and I look forward to our government delivering more services for them almost three years ahead of schedule, in line with our election commitment. As demonstrated in the budget this week, in 2021 we are getting on with the job and delivering better services for Canberrans.

MS ORR: Minister, what types of materials are Canberrans currently disposing of through the service?

MR STEEL: I thank Ms Orr for her supplementary and her interest in recycling. It has been about seven months since the first bulky waste collections took place in Canberra and we are now getting a much better picture of the type of bulky waste or hard rubbish that Canberrans are leaving out on their kerb, in Gungahlin and Tuggeranong in particular but also through the concession cardholder scheme, which has always been in place around Canberra.

Several hundred tonnes of material have been collected in Tuggeranong and Gungahlin, with 6,000 pieces of furniture collected, almost 6,000 items of scrap timber and metal, 2,000 appliances and 2,000 pieces of electrical equipment, along with thousands of garden tools, camping equipment and building materials.

This is a good opportunity to remind Canberrans that the items that can be collected include furniture, tools, timber, whitegoods, building materials, metal products, electrical equipment including those with batteries removed, blankets, linen, manchester, lighting, automotive parts—fuel and batteries removed, of course—camping and outdoor equipment, as well televisions and computers. We are looking forward to other Canberrans being able to benefit from the service and putting those out to be recycled.

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, what happens after these materials are collected?

MR STEEL: I thank Mr Pettersson for his supplementary. In addition to providing an easier way for Canberrans to dispose of unwanted materials, resource recovery is also an important objective of the service. We have set quite a high resource recovery target of 30 per cent for these items, meaning that we want at least 30 per cent of the collected materials to find a new home, rather than ending up in landfill. So far, the service is achieving a recovery rate of 38.8 per cent, which is a great result and exceeds rates achieved by many local councils around Australia.

Items collected are sorted, recovered and recycled, where possible, to maximise the diversion to landfill. That is also being achieved through new trucks, which sees those items separated on the truck. To do this the ACT government has also partnered with

charities, including St Vincent de Paul and the Salvation Army, to give them the first choice of items that can then go to those in need or be sold through their charity shopfronts.

We are also the first government in Australia that has partnered with GIVIT to link people in need who have identified that they want something in particular, so we will provide that through the bulky waste collection service as well. Popular items for these charities include furniture, bikes and gardening equipment, which are always able to find a new home. Indeed, in just the last three months of the service 1,800 pieces of furniture, 400 appliances, 275 electrical items and 250 pieces of outdoor equipment have been recovered and rehomed. This is a great result. We hope to see even more items being rehomed, with the service expanding to even more suburbs across Canberra, and I look forward to updating the Assembly as it progresses.

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

Supplementary answer to question without notice Government—assistance for veterans and seniors

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism) (3.11): I need to apologise to Ms Lawder. I misread. The admin order update No 3 was late last year. The first admin order update of 2021 will be next week, I believe around 17 February.

Papers

Mr Gentleman presented the following papers:

ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body—Report on the outcomes of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body Hearings 2020—

10th Report.

Government response.

Bimberi Youth Justice Centre—Bimberi Headline Indicators Report—December 2020.

Children and Young People Act—Pursuant to subsection 727T(3)—ACT Children and Young People Death Review Committee—Report—Review of Children and Young People Who Have Died as a Result of Intentional Self-Harm, dated 11 January 2021.

Coroners Act—Pursuant to subsection 102(8)—ACT Coroner’s Court—2019/20, dated 24 December 2020.

Disability Justice Strategy—Annual Progress Report 2020.

Inspector of Correctional Services Act, pursuant to section 27—Report of a review of a correctional service—ACT Corrective Services Court Transport Unit 2020, by the ACT Inspector of Correctional Services—Government response.

Freedom of Information Act—Pursuant to section 39—Copy of notice provided to the Ombudsman—Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate—

Decision not made in time (TCCS 20-016), dated 29 June 2020, together with a statement.

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee—(9th Assembly)—Reports presented—2020—No 10—Report on Review of ACT emergency services responses to the 2019-20 bushfire season, dated 28 September 2020, together with a copy of extracts of the relevant minutes of proceedings—Government response.

Official Visitor Act—Pursuant to section 17—Annual Report 2019-20—

Official Visitor (Children and Young People), together with a statement.

Official Visitor (Disability Service).

Official Visitor (Homelessness Services).

Planning and Development Act—

Pursuant to subsection 242(2)—Schedule of Leases Granted—1 October 2020 - 31 December 2020.

Pursuant to subsection 79(1)—Variations to the Territory Plan together with associated documents—

No 363—Approval—Curtin group centre and adjacent residential areas: Zone changes and amendments to the Curtin precinct map and code, dated February 2021.

No 377—Approval—1 Dairy Road Fyshwick - Rezoning from Industrial IZ1 General Industrial Zone to Commercial CZ3 Services Zone and Non-Urban Hills Ridges and Buffer Zone and changes to the Fyshwick Precinct Map and Code.

Public Accounts—Standing Committee—Ninth Assembly—Reports presented—2020—No 13—Inquiry into Auditor-General Report No 8 of 2018: Assembly of Rural Land West of Canberra—Government response.

Waste Management and Resource Recovery Act—Pursuant to subsection 64U(2)—ACT Container Deposit Scheme—Annual statutory report 2019-20.

Official Visitor for Homelessness Services—annual report

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Manager of Government Business, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Industrial Relations and Workplace Safety, Minister for Planning and Land Management and Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (3.12): Pursuant to standing order 211, I move:

That the Assembly take note of the following paper:

Official Visitor Act—Pursuant to section 17—Annual Report 2019-20—Official Visitor (Homelessness Services).

MS VASSAROTTI (Kurrajong—Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, Minister for Homelessness and Housing Services and Minister for Sustainable Building and Construction) (3.13): I am pleased to table today the 2019-20 annual report for the Official Visitor for Homelessness Services. Since its establishment in 2012, the Official Visitor for Homelessness Services has progressed and evolved into a position of trust, highly regarded and recognised by individuals who find themselves in specialist homelessness service facilities across Canberra.

The role has become embedded within the sector landscape, and the official visitor is a respected figure who residents can access and who oversees and observes the daily activities of the services they use. For Canberrans in “visitable places”, whether in a homelessness service facility or in another area of the sector, the official visitor bears witness to their experiences and validates the effects of systemic impacts on their lives, both positive and negative. Furthermore, the official visitor has the capacity to form an opinion independent of the service provider, the system, and the government of the day.

The Official Visitor Amendment Act 2019 altered “visitable places” to include “single occupancy independent accommodation” under the management of a specialist homelessness service. This welcome change means that all people who are residing in properties managed by a specialist homelessness service, and reliant on this service for their accommodation and other needs, can access the official visitor.

On 28 June 2019 the Official Visitor (Homelessness Services) Visit and Complaint Guidelines 2019 (No 1) also came into effect. These guidelines broadened the scope of the visitable places to include cluster housing and foyer models of service provision.

This change brings the total number of visitable places from 18 to 21, including for the first time the Our Place program, a youth accommodation service with Barnardos; Room4Change, a men’s behaviour change program with the Domestic Violence Crisis Service; and Doris Women’s Refuge, a supported crisis and transitional accommodation program for women and accompanying children.

Until the legislative changes in 2019, the Official Visitor Scheme also allowed for an official visitor with different jurisdictional responsibilities to cover for another in the event of absences such as for sickness or planned leave.

This was a welcome change for the Official Visitor (Homelessness Services), who operates solely within this space. Prior to the amendment, when the official visitor was absent, client inquiries were diverted to the Public Trustee and Guardian. This new change means that official visitors with a different jurisdictional responsibility such as disability or mental health may now assist each other to fulfil their duties.

As outlined in the Official Visitor (Homelessness Services) Visit and Complaint Guidelines 2019, the official visitor must make at least two scheduled visits to a visitable place each year. Ad hoc visits may also be undertaken following a complaint or if there are concerns. Records of visits to visitable places by the official visitor are provided to homelessness services, Housing ACT, detailing any complaints or comments received and actions taken. A quarterly report is prepared for the operational minister to advise of any complaints received and any systemic issues that have arisen.

In the 2019-20 report, Ms Dianne Lucas, Official Visitor for Homelessness Services, reports that, in general, the clients of the specialist homelessness services expressed satisfaction with and gratitude for the support and accommodation they received. Ms Lucas reports that the visits generally consisted of informal chats with clients

about their experience of homelessness and the support and accommodation they had been provided.

She often took a proactive role, helping to explain sector processes to residents and to clarify the requirements of the service. Any complaints or grievances are communicated to the service provider, and an opportunity was provided to discuss the situation from their perspective or undertake to remedy the situation. Ms Lucas advises that all the visitable services were welcoming and responsive. The COVID-19 pandemic meant that no visits could be conducted between March and June 2020, including to the three new visitable sites.

Ms Lucas was the first appointee to the Official Visitor for Homelessness Services role since its inception in 2012. Over this period, she has fulfilled her role competently and compassionately by ensuring that individuals who were homeless or at risk of homelessness and dependent on service providers for accommodation and support had their rights upheld and were treated with respect and dignity.

Ms Lucas's term expired in September 2020. In her final report, Ms Lucas wrote that she is honoured to have held the position since its establishment, and she is grateful for the support provided to her over the years by the government, by the management and staff of visitable places, and by the Public Trustee and Guardian and other official visitors.

She also thanks the hundreds of entitled persons who shared their stories and concerns with her over the past eight years. They helped to shape specialist homelessness services into the responsive, accountable, cooperative and ethical sector and organisations that they are today.

In her 2019-20 annual report, Ms Lucas concludes with these words:

The ACT response to homelessness may never be perfect, due to the demand and the resources available, but the system seems to be working as well as it can within those constraints. Housing ACT, OneLink, and the Specialist Homelessness Service Providers provide a streamlined 'partnership' to move people from homelessness to some kind of permanent housing. Specialist Homelessness services manage a diverse range of clients with a multitude of issues, many of them very complex. They have to tailor their responses to the individual clients and also have to manage clients' expectations. A lot of it depends on the quality of the staff and leadership in the services, and I am, as usual, impressed by their commitment and dedication.

I thank Ms Lucas for her commitment and her contribution over these past eight years. Her dedication saw the realisation of this role within the homelessness sector and the Canberra community. Her work has been vital to safeguarding and promoting the interests of vulnerable individuals in our community.

The ACT community is lucky to have benefited from Ms Lucas's dedication to championing an approach to human service delivery that puts people at its centre and ensures that services are responsive to the diverse needs of people. We thank her for her work in this role and wish her the very best in her future endeavours.

I warmly welcome the newly appointed Official Visitor for Homelessness Services, Mr Simon Rosenberg. Mr Rosenberg has worked at senior levels of the commonwealth, state and local governments and for community organisations. His most recent roles were the national policy manager for ARACY and CEO of Northside Community Service in Canberra. I have every confidence that he will build on the great work of Ms Lucas, as well as bringing his insights and perspectives to the role.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body—report

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Manager of Government Business, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Industrial Relations and Workplace Safety, Minister for Planning and Land Management and Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (3.21): Pursuant to standing order 211, I move:

That the Assembly take note of the following papers:

ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body—Report on the outcomes of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body Hearings 2020—

Report.

Government response.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Families and Community Services and Minister for Health) (3.21): I am pleased to have tabled today the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body report on the outcomes of the Elected Body hearings held from 11 to 13 march 2020 and the government response to the hearings report.

The Elected Body is the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community's voice to the Assembly and to the ACT government. I welcome the 10th report prepared by the Elected Body on its hearings. I thank the chair and members of the Elected Body for their hard work in preparing this report on behalf of the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

The report focuses on the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2019-2028 and assesses what progress has been made on initial priority actions and targets. The report makes four overarching recommendations that are important to all ACT government directorates. It also makes a considerable number of recommendations in relation to specific commitments made under the agreement.

Before addressing some of the overarching recommendations, I would like to take the opportunity to reconfirm the government's commitment to working in a positive partnership with the Elected Body, to supporting self-determination, and to achieving equitable outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in our region. We are committed to hearing and learning from the valuable insights provided by the Elected Body.

The hearings report is already creating positive change within the government and presents an opportunity to improve the way that directorates work together. This report demonstrates the value that a statutory representative voice of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people brings to ensuring that government is responsive to and accountable to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

It is important that we take the opportunity to listen and act now, while we are still in the early terms of both the ACT agreement and the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. The government's response to the hearing report reflects our determination to embrace this opportunity.

At the time of the hearings last March, we were just over 12 months into the term of the ACT agreement. There had already been achievements made under the agreement at that time, and I appreciate the Elected Body acknowledging these in the report, including strong enrolment of four-year-olds in early childhood education, increased support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families, helpful integrity training for all ACT public school teachers, support for on-country cultural learning and connection, formal recognition of the cultural expertise of traditional custodians, promoting and educating the ACT community about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures through libraries, support for community-led solutions, raising awareness of Ngunnawal cultural values in partnership with the community, and increasing strategic partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations and businesses.

Of course there is more to be done. The report is very clear that we are not doing enough to combine our efforts and work across government to achieve significant, measurable progress on agreed outcomes in the ACT agreement. I accept that, as a government, we need to consider how we can work more effectively across policy, program, and service boundaries.

I acknowledge that we are only going to deliver on the commitments we have made and achieve the targets we have agreed if agencies and individuals across government are working together constructively. In December last year, a group of senior officials was appointed to work collaboratively across government to accelerate progress and achieve tangible outcomes on six important cross-cutting priorities.

Priority areas identified for accelerated effort include reducing experiences of racism and discrimination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within government systems, strengthening culturally appropriate early support for vulnerable families and reducing child concern reports, embedding the requirement for all services to be culturally appropriate and accessible, increasing the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in senior positions across the ACT public service, increasing the number and value of contracts awarded to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses, and supporting the growth of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations.

We have heard a clear message from the Elected Body that we need to report on the impact of the work being done under the agreement and not on activity alone.

I acknowledge the importance of being clear on the intended impact of activity and of measuring and reporting on the outcomes achieved. I also acknowledge the challenges in gathering some of the data we need in order to do that.

I am pleased to report that, since the Elected Body hearings in March last year, there has been significant progress in the development of an outcomes framework for the agreement. Strengthening our reporting on outcomes will allow the community to see what is working and what is not, and will support the Elected Body to advocate on behalf of the community using this evidence. This work will also support the government to invest resources strategically.

I greatly appreciate the work of the Elected Body in developing its 10th hearings report and I look forward to continuing the government's positive and productive engagement with the Elected Body. The ACT government response to the 10th hearings report reflects our intention to build positive partnerships and work collaboratively over the life of the ACT agreement and beyond.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bimberi Youth Justice Centre—report

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Manager of Government Business, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Industrial Relations and Workplace Safety, Minister for Planning and Land Management and Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (3.27): Pursuant to standing order 211, I move:

That the Assembly take note of the following paper:

Bimberi Youth Justice Centre—Bimberi Headline Indicators Report—December 2020.

MS DAVIDSON (Murrumbidgee—Assistant Minister for Families and Community Services, Minister for Disability, Minister for Justice Health and Minister for Mental Health) (3.27): I am pleased to present the sixth *Bimberi Headline Indicators Report*. This report demonstrates the ACT government's ongoing commitment to both transparency of Bimberi Youth Justice Centre's operations and performance and the safety, health and wellbeing of the young people detained there.

The sixth report provides data for the third and fourth quarters of the 2019-20 financial year. It provides for continuing scrutiny of a range of indicators relating to the safety and care of the young people in Bimberi and provides baseline data to monitor performance against operational indicators.

The tabling statement for the May 2020 *Bimberi Headline Indicators Report* noted that a critical incident on 26 August 2019 had a significant impact on operations at Bimberi in the first half of 2019-20. The incident was one of two category 1 incidents during 2019-20. The other was an incident in which a young person absconded during escorted leave on the evening of 25 August 2019. Both incidents were independently investigated by Mr Peter Muir.

There were 277 operational lockdowns in 2019-20, largely due to staff shortages. For several months during the 2019-20 financial year, Bimberi experienced extensive staffing shortages. These were exacerbated by unpredictable staff availability due to unplanned personal leave, the unprecedented bushfire season, and COVID-19 restrictions.

Operational lockdowns occur for the minimum amount of time possible and they occur on a rotational basis. This means that an individual young person will be in their cabin for half of the total lockdown period, generally in one or two-hour blocks of time. It is good news that, after a successful recruitment round, 17 new youth workers commenced employment in June 2020. The number of operational lockdowns has significantly reduced since these staff commenced full-time duties.

I visited Bimberi last week and was pleased to meet many of the dedicated staff and see some of the impressive artwork created by young people in the centre. As there were only a small number of young people currently detained, the staff were participating in training and development.

A skilled and available workforce will ensure that staff shortages do not result in increased use of lockdowns. The first induction training for 2020-21 was completed by four new youth workers in early December 2020. A second induction training program commenced on 18 January 2021.

The 26 August 2019 critical incident and the public health emergency in the ACT due to COVID-19 have also impacted the number of segregation directions made in 2019-20. There were 36 made in the financial year, up from two the previous year. The 36 segregation directions include 11 safety and security segregation directions, six of which were a result of the major incident in August 2019, and 25 health segregations.

Bimberi has been working closely with ACT Health to ensure the risk of COVID-19 entering the centre is minimised. As a precaution, all young people in the centre displaying symptoms of COVID-19 have been tested and 19 health segregations were issued while young people were awaiting test results. All young people tested for COVID-19 have returned a negative result.

Positively, the number of assaults is down from the past two years, with 11 assaults occurring in the 2019-20 financial year. This trend has continued a 10-year low; down from 64 assaults in 2009-10.

I am pleased to say that the number of strip-searches for young people entering detention remains low as staff continue to apply risk-based assessment of the types of searches necessary. In 2019-20, less than one per cent of young people inducted into the centre were required to participate in a strip-search. We maintain our commitment to human rights by minimising strip-searches. They may at times be necessary to protect safety by preventing dangerous items from being smuggled into the centre.

The past year has challenged our community. Nevertheless, Bimberi has continued to work with government and community organisations to deliver programs and services

that support young people to achieve their goals. This includes access to education, vocational training, work experience, rehabilitation programs and recreation. Young people are continuously supported to maintain engagement in education, build and maintain family ties and develop the skills to successfully return to the community.

While visiting changed during the public health emergency, young people have continued to receive visits from their loved ones. School in Bimberi has also continued, with the Murrumbidgee School providing a range of education and vocational programs, including recognised certificate programs, tutoring and transitional support back into the community and community education settings.

During the 2019-20 financial year, 100 per cent of young people residing at Bimberi engaged in educational programs. Two young people completed modules towards their year 12 certificates, six young people obtained a white card and seven young people completed asbestos awareness training.

Although the availability of service providers was limited during the December-January bushfires and at the height of COVID-19 restrictions in the ACT, our valuable government and community service providers continued to visit as much as possible. I thank these services for their flexibility and their ongoing support of young people in Bimberi.

As Assistant Minister for Families and Community Services, I am committed to ensuring our youth justice centre operates transparently. I am satisfied that Bimberi continues to apply human rights legislation in practice and is well overseen by the Human Rights Commission, the Public Advocate, the official visitors and the Inspector for Correctional Services.

I commend the staff of Bimberi for their hard work over the reporting period. Throughout a difficult year, the staff have continued to provide a safe, secure and supportive environment for some of the ACT's most at-risk young people. Over the next term we will continue to work hard to reduce the numbers of young people in the Bimberi Youth Justice Centre by ensuring that the best possible support is available in the community and within the centre.

I am committed to supporting Bimberi staff, the Community Services Directorate and community organisations to ensure that all young people can live full and connected lives away from the youth justice system. This includes supporting initiatives that will reduce the factors that contribute to young people coming into contact with the justice system, such as improved services for homelessness, mental health, drugs and alcohol, family support, and disability. It also includes funding for initiatives such as the OzChild functional family therapy youth justice pilot, which will support 20 young people and their families, to divert young people from entering or re-entering the youth justice system.

I look forward to the day when we no longer need youth detention facilities because the support services and rehabilitation facilities that we have already been working on are able to meet the needs of young people, their families and our community.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Planning and Development Act 2007—variation No 377 to the Territory Plan

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Manager of Government Business, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Industrial Relations and Workplace Safety, Minister for Planning and Land Management and Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (3.34): Pursuant to standing order 211, I move:

That the Assembly take note of the following paper:

Pursuant to subsection 79(1)—Variations to the Territory Plan together with associated documents—No 377—Approval—1 Dairy Road Fyshwick—Rezoning from Industrial IZ1 General Industrial Zone to Commercial CZ3 Services Zone and Non-Urban Hills Ridges and Buffer Zone and changes to the Fyshwick Precinct Map and Code.

MS VASSAROTTI (Kurrajong—Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, Minister for Homelessness and Housing Services and Minister for Sustainable Building and Construction) (3.34): In broad terms, the Greens welcome this variation to the Territory Plan, as it has substantial, positive benefits for the Jerrabomberra Wetlands Nature Reserve into the future. I had the pleasure of visiting the Jerrabomberra Wetlands last week with the Capital Woodlands and Wetlands Trust and the Canberra Ornithological Group, to be shown around this beautiful and important wetland. I heard their thoughts about this variation to the Territory Plan and what they welcome and what they feel needs more work.

I commend the developer for working with community experts to ensure that the ecological values of this wetland are protected. Too often we have seen the community's knowledge ignored, leading to unsustainable, low-quality development. The work that has been done to date has been really positive. The work, however, is not finished. The next steps in this planning process are critical to ensure that what is implemented on the ground protects this special place now and into the future.

Firstly, the urban design of the interface areas needs to mitigate or eliminate risk related to visitors, light spill waste, predators and noise impacts. It should be of the best practice environmental standards. Secondly, I heard about the risks of this important place being over-loved by increased numbers of visitors and about the need for placement of considered boardwalks and sensitive, appropriate boundary fences. Finally, I heard about the lack of recreational facilities along the area to meet demands for dog walkers, exercise and play, and I am concerned that this will become a potentially significant management issue for the wetlands as more people visit the site.

Related to this issue is the question of connectivity to the Dairy Road site, with Kingston to the west. In next steps, the Greens are keen to ensure that the planning authority will consult with active travel bodies to determine a plan regarding the longer term road and cycleway connectivity into the future. The Greens are very supportive of active travel and keen to encourage as much of it as possible, but we understand the need to balance the needs of different users and the ecological sensitivity of the area. We are really confident that good design and good cycleways,

based on sound consultation, will head off any future problems. The Greens support this variation to the Territory Plan.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

ACT disability justice strategy—report

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Manager of Government Business, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Industrial Relations and Workplace Safety, Minister for Planning and Land Management and Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (3.37): Pursuant to standing order 211, I move:

That the Assembly take note of the following paper:

Disability Justice Strategy—Annual Progress Report 2020.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Appropriation Bill 2020-2021

[Cognate bill:

Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2020-2021]

Debate resumed from 9 February 2021, on motion by **Mr Barr**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Davis): I understand that it is the wish of the Assembly to debate this bill cognately with executive business order of the day No 4—Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2020-2021. That being the case, I remind members that in debating order of the day No 3, executive business, they may also address their remarks to executive business order of the day No 4.

MS LEE (Kurrajong—Leader of the Opposition) (3.40): Just over 100 days ago Canberrans entrusted this government with one last chance to make things right. Canberrans believed them when they promised to fix the health system. Canberrans believed them when they promised to freeze rates for a year and Canberrans believed them when they promised to make our schools safe from hazardous material.

Just 100 days in and all this government has to show is broken promise after broken promise, declining services and much of the same that we have seen over the last 20 years—record waiting times and a toxic culture of bullying in our hospitals; the presence of hazardous materials in our schools; skyrocketing rates impacting vulnerable Canberra families, including over 60,000 Canberra households stung this year, despite the Chief Minister’s promises; not enough support for our small and family businesses; lack of action on housing affordability; massive delays on major infrastructure projects and key public services; and a government happy to rack up over \$3 billion on the credit card before the pandemic. Canberrans deserve better, and it seems that this budget does not deliver that.

This budget embeds 20 years of under-resourcing the health system. This budget embeds the years of neglect of our tired and hazardous school infrastructure. And this budget embeds the same old thinking from this government of charging Canberrans more and delivering less.

My team and I will hold this government to account for the promises they made to the people of Canberra. As the alternative government, we will advocate for real and practical solutions to improve the lives of Canberrans because I, and we, want to make Canberra not just the capital in name but the capital in heart.

As a young Korean girl who migrated to Australia in 1986, I remember seeing the then Prime Minister, Bob Hawke, on TV and my parents telling me, “That’s Canberra, the place where important decisions for our country are made.” As a first-year uni student moving away from home for the first time in 1998, I remember starting a new life in Canberra and falling in love with this big country town, and I have been here ever since.

To me, Canberra is not just a city. To me, Canberra is not just a community. To me, Canberra is a place of hope, a place where a young migrant girl could realise her dreams. This is not just my story; it is the story of thousands of Canberrans. But Canberra is being held back and Canberrans are being held back. Canberrans no longer see this place as a city where they can achieve their dreams.

The Canberra of today is a city which has a real risk of becoming a two-tiered society, with some of our most vulnerable being left behind and forgotten. It is clear from the Treasurer’s budget this week that there is no appetite, no leadership and no vision to do anything about it. Whilst the rhetoric is repeated ad nauseam, action—or in some cases inaction—speaks louder than words. The record of outcomes—or lack of outcomes—in Canberra under this government speaks volumes.

This is no way to govern. This is not a government that has the best interests of its people at the centre. And this is not the Canberra that I want to see for the future. As the great Robert Menzies said about Canberra:

This is a matter of national importance, because more and more as people understand that this is the capital of the nation, a capital of which they may be proud, then more and more will they begin to realise instinctively that the nation is more important than any part of it and that the nation is symbolised by the capital of the nation in this place. In other words, this I think is doing a great deal to create a genuine national spirit...

A Canberra that holds the hopes and dreams for my daughter and her generation is one that should be befitting of this spirit—a place with a world-class health system where trainee doctors and nurses and medical health professionals from all over the world want to come and train here, where we are providing the pinnacle of health care to our citizens and leading the world in medical developments that put people at the centre, and where our medical professionals are respected and valued, not a health system with a record of bullying.

A place with a world-class education system where we nurture, mould and educate the next generation for a future that we know they can make brighter and better and a world-class higher education system which allows our young people to pursue higher studies or training in whatever they choose, whether it be research in cybersecurity or a trade in clean energy technology, not an education system where we cannot even guarantee no hazardous materials.

A place with a world-class public transport system, where those who need it most are able to get from A to B without the worries of time, cost and safety; a public transport system that brings together the newest technology to combine all modes of travel to provide the most efficient, clean and secure public transport network in the world and not a public transport system that leaves schoolchildren stranded at bus stops and interchanges.

A place with a world-class tourism sector where we can showcase to the world the city that is befitting of the title of nation's capital, our natural beauty and the history and culture of our proud Indigenous heritage, as well as being the mecca for new and exciting innovations in science, technology, business and the arts.

A place that is a world-class design capital that draws on the best in the world in preserving the best of our natural environment whilst investing in a strong infrastructure program to develop and create a city for the future and at each step never forgetting that we put people at the centre.

A place that is a world-class small business capital, a city where our smartest, most innovative businesspeople think, "That's where I want to do business," because we back them, we respect them, we value them and celebrate innovation and new ideas and not stifle them with red tape.

A place that is a world-class people capital, a city that invests in and values not only physical infrastructure and services but our greatest asset—our people; a city where everyone, no matter what their situation or circumstance in life, feels welcome and at home; a city where no-one is judged on the way they look or sound but is judged on their innate character and their ability to contribute to our community.

We are at risk of creating a city that is split into the haves and have-nots, where some people are able to afford to live here and others are not; where some people have access to all the benefits and the best this city has to offer, and others do not; where some people feel secure in their skin here and others do not.

Canberra is an extraordinary city and Canberrans are an extraordinary people. They deserve extraordinary leaders. Canberra must be the capital in name and the capital in heart. I put myself forward for election to the ACT Legislative Assembly, giving up my career in the law, because the hope, the aspirations and the dreams that I had are slipping away for so many Canberrans.

Mary of O'Connor and Lisa of Narrabundah are counting on me. Geoff of Hackett, Elizabeth of Griffith and Gay of Ainslie are counting on me. They are the very

forgotten Canberrans that I referred to in my inaugural speech who I will always remember. I will not let them down.

On this side of the chamber, we will not die wondering what if or what could have been. Every fibre of my being for the next four years will be devoted to fighting for those that are being left behind by this government. As an opposition, that is our role, our duty and our commitment. As the alternative government, my team and I will actively present fresh perspectives and new ideas on behalf of our community, in particular those who feel they have been abandoned by this government.

I take this opportunity to put this to the Chief Minister and the leader of the ACT Greens: levels of poverty, homelessness and the working poor have skyrocketed; after 20 years in office, obviously your approach is not working. Let us deal with this once and for all. Let us deal with this together. Let us see it for what it is—the good it is and the need it is. Let us make the poverty task force a tripartisan reality. It is something needed to ensure that the most vulnerable members of our community get the vital support and services they need.

The election is done; do not dismiss this as a poor, mere political stunt. Let us work together to make sure that almost 38,000 Canberrans, including 8,000 children, from low-income households have the respect and dignity of leaders who will take an evidence-based tripartisan approach to addressing the systemic and root causes of poverty across the territory and take action so that each and every Canberran has a right to a fulfilling life.

Removing hazardous materials from our schools should not be as difficult as this government has made it. How can we even begin to have the best education outcomes in the world when we cannot guarantee that our students will be safe from exposure to hazardous materials? This has gone on long enough. Will you support my call today for a commitment that, by the end of this semester, every school in Canberra will be a safe learning environment, to give our parents peace of mind, our teachers and school staff a safe place to work and our children the best possible start in life?

Surely this is something that we, as a society, should be able to provide for our next generation as a matter of course. Let us deal with this once and for all. Let us deal with this together. Let us see it for what it is—the good it is, the need it is. Let us make the eradication of hazardous materials from all Canberra schools a tripartisan reality.

As I stand here putting forward these initiatives, I will not stand in the way of good, evidence-based, well-planned and genuinely consulted initiatives brought by you that are in the best interests of our community. I note the health minister's commitment to getting hospital waiting times under control within nine months. My team and I stand ready to work with you to achieve this long overdue outcome for our city, for our people.

I note that this budget allows \$14 million for the PACER program, an initiative that I wholeheartedly support. It is something that Minister Gentleman talked about in question time. There is ample evidence that this program works and that Canberrans

who need this type of mental health support benefit enormously from it. My team and I welcome the funding and the expansion of this program for our city, for our people.

We have found much common ground in tackling climate change here in the ACT. I am very proud of the Canberra Liberals' strong commitment to preserving our environment. A Canberra Liberals government was the first state or territory government in Australia to sign up to the Kyoto protocol. As shadow minister for the environment, I was proud to support efforts to reduce our emissions and lead the way in innovative ways to generate renewables.

It is time to go beyond targets and to work with industry and our higher education institutions to embark on the next chapter of our journey on climate action. As a former lecturer at both the ANU and UC, I had the privilege to see and work with some of the world's best scientists and engineers right here in Canberra. We can be a genuine leader in developing world-leading solutions, led by science and technology. We have an enormous capacity right here in our great city. We have some of the brightest minds and the most passionate hearts to truly make a difference. Let us work together to reach a sensible and sustainable solution to reducing our emissions and developing clean energy technologies—solutions that will not penalise those who can least afford it—for our city, for our people.

The ongoing pandemic was a threat that no-one could have predicted. We stood alongside this government, and governments across Australia, in helping to protect our community. This budget commits \$20 million for the vaccine rollout. Whilst we are mindful that this is not a silver bullet, Canberrans pin a lot of hope on the successful rollout of the vaccine to get us back to a semblance of life pre-COVID. My team and I welcome the commitment of this government to this rollout.

The pandemic has shown the power of working together. I acknowledge the Chief Minister's willingness to work with the Canberra Liberals and with the federal Liberal government, in the best interests of Canberra, in responding to this pandemic. I ask the Chief Minister to continue to work with us in the same spirit. The pandemic goes above politics. We are all committed to protecting the lives and livelihoods of all Canberrans—for our city, for our people.

Mr Assistant Speaker, I stand here today not with criticisms and opposition for opposition's sake but with a willingness, a preparedness and a commitment to work with the government to fix problems—to make our city a better place for all Canberrans, a city where dreams can be realised. The only barrier to getting these things done is the partisanship and ego that this government is renowned for.

My message to Canberrans is this: if you believe in making Canberra more affordable so that everyone can get ahead, we are for you. If you believe in having world-class, nation-leading health, education and transport systems, we are for you. If you believe in taking local and practical action to protect our environment and reduce emissions, we are for you. If you believe in giving our small businesses a fair go to build, create, innovate and make dreams a reality, we are for you. If you believe in leaders who will invest in long-term infrastructure, befitting the national capital for our future generations, we are for you.

Just as Canberra has been the place of hope for me, I give this humble commitment. As a young Korean girl who saw Canberra as the place where important decisions are made, as a young uni student who had the privilege of every opportunity I could have asked for, and now as a mother and leader in the community, I will do everything I can to make sure that Canberra shines brightly as the place of hope for future generations, as a place where dreams are realised, as a capital not only in name but in heart.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong) (3.58): The Greens have in the past made the point that every budget now needs to be a climate budget. We know that declaring a climate emergency was not theoretical but is driving us to further urgent action. This budget has climate action as its headline and delivers climate responses—not just in the obvious ways but in the broadest interpretation. This is a significant and positive change. The Greens took the platform of “building a better normal” to the election, and, as you can see, with six MLAs here today, many people in Canberra chose that better normal. This budget is one of the first clear steps towards that.

The many people from Labor, the Greens and the various directorates who have worked on this budget should be proud that the ACT is once again modelling the way forward: evidence-driven spending, with budget decisions based as much as possible on facts and science as well as an ambition for equality, social justice and strong community.

As partners in this joint Labor-Greens government, and as a party with our own distinct identity, there is always a decision the Greens have to make about whether we are going to be glass half-full or glass half-empty about something as important as the territory budget. After the year we had in 2020, I am choosing today to take the former approach. I believe things are looking up, not just in Canberra but across the globe. There is a COVID-19 vaccine rollout on the horizon. And the horizon is visible, and blue, instead of being the brown smudge it was just over a year ago for so many Australians, at the end of our longest, hottest, most dangerous summer to date.

There is now a more sane, responsible government in the United States—one, incidentally, that, with its “Build Back Better” slogan, has framed the COVID recovery process in a very similar way to how the Greens envisage it with our “building a better normal” program. Many responsible, people-focused governments seem to be thinking along the same lines. Let us not go back to the way things were before. Let us use this unique opportunity to make something better than we have ever had, something that will equip us to deal with the challenges of rising temperatures and rising inequality that lie ahead. Let us recognise that when we spend our money well, we can achieve multiple benefits with the same dollars, including starting to tackle wicked problems. “Let’s keep moving,” the re-elected New Zealand government suggests, and that sounds about right, too.

This is the fourth consecutive term of the ACT Assembly to be governed by a written parliamentary agreement between Labor and the Greens. I am more convinced than ever about its power and success as a mechanism for both parties to articulate, and deliver on, a clear vision for the future of our territory. It provides both a compass to

guide our direction and a cudgel of accountability which either party can use to prod the other into line.

It even offers the Canberra Liberals and the public in general a useful way to get in on the accountability action. If, at the end of our four years, they are able to truthfully say, “Here is what you promised, and you did not deliver,” that would be a fair point. I do not think that will happen. With this budget, we have already hit the ground running. There are many items in this budget that are solely there due to the Greens’ improved representation in the Assembly and its translation into the Labor-Greens parliamentary and governing agreement.

As the Treasurer has spoken about, this is a very unusual budget in a number of ways. For a start, this is the budget that is usually presented in June, coming eight months later due to COVID. The federal budget was delayed last year as well. This means that we will be having two full ACT budgets this year—again, rather unusual.

This budget is thus also a highly retrospective budget. Being more than seven months into the financial year already, much of the financial reporting and direction in it is not surprising. This is a budget update since the August 2020 update which presented the majority of the COVID support, recovery and stimulus commitments. This budget enables the next stage of support and stimulus for our community, as well as enabling many key parliamentary and governing agreement items to get underway.

Let me talk a bit more about COVID and the role of this COVID-19 recovery budget. The fact is that, just as the pandemic has hit different countries in extremely different ways—ranging from Australia and New Zealand almost eliminating it to the United States and the United Kingdom buckling beneath rampant, uncontrolled community transmission—COVID has been very uneven in its impact on individuals, families, communities and businesses right here in Canberra.

Some people have done very well, perhaps riding things out largely unaffected or even profiting in some cases. Others are seriously struggling. This budget tries hard to iron out some of this disparity, because in many cases the COVID toll has taken pre-existing inequalities and only made them worse.

Accordingly, this budget offers residential tenancy relief for landlords to reduce rents for those who have lost their jobs or had their work hours reduced, full rent relief on government properties for affected community organisations, and commercial rates relief for landlords who give discounted rent to their tenants. It has waivers on outdoor dining and liquor licence fees, in recognition of the toll COVID has taken on cafes, restaurants and pubs. There is additional mental health support, including specifically to young people, who have been amongst the hardest hit by the pandemic. There is a \$3.5 million COVID-safe tourism marketing program to market Canberra as a COVID-safe destination for domestic travellers, and matched funding to tourism businesses who undertake new investments that will result in a positive return to the territory. There are a range of new local jobs to help boost the career prospects of our citizens, as well as benefiting our wider economy.

While these items are specifically COVID-related, in many ways one of the strengths of this budget, and something that is certainly part of our governing philosophy, is that it cannot be compartmentalised so neatly. We know that investment in local jobs will help our COVID recovery. The Greens' election commitments to "build a better normal" alone outlined the creation of 4,500 jobs—jobs that helped our climate; helped our environment and our wildlife; and also, importantly, helped our community recover from the economic impacts of the pandemic.

Our action on climate makes Canberra a healthier and better place to live—our schools cooler and more comfortable; our streetscapes cleaner, greener and shadier; our transport systems more efficient. This budget will ensure that there will be winners across the board, not just in this term of the Assembly and not just related to climate action or COVID but stretching much further into the future and offering side benefits that may not be clearly evident yet. In fact, we can look back and see how this process has worked before.

For example, it is now some years since the Greens first ran on a platform of creating healthier waterways, with the conversion of the Sullivans Creek catchment's concrete-bound stream-beds into the Lynham, Dickson and O'Connor wetlands. At the time, we did not fully envisage the extent to which those wetlands would one day be used as selling points in real estate advertising, or that the residents of Gungahlin and Woden would be clamouring for wetlands in their own creek catchments. This budget responds to that clamouring with further investment in healthy waterways.

It is similar with light rail, which is one of the most obvious and proud examples of Greens' policies becoming reality. This has gone from being something the Canberra Liberals vowed to expensively scuttle at stage 1 to a vastly popular feature of Canberra, our modern city. Stage 2 is already part of the positive advertising strategy for various development proposals across the city. And in this new term we are working towards stage 2 extending potentially as far as Mawson, and stage 3 stretching beyond Belconnen to Kippax.

The climate change initiatives in this budget, and hopefully in future budgets, build on the solid decade of climate action championed by the Greens in the balance of power. They will be seen in the same way as light rail and the wetlands in years from now, by everyone from the kids whose futures we are trying to protect to the small businesses who have carved out an innovative niche in the circular economy, the low-income families enjoying their more energy efficient homes and the real estate agents selling proximity to light rail stage 4 in Tuggeranong. There are wins all around. Some of them are unexpected, but we can see and plan for some of them now and make the investment in some of them now.

Last year showed Canberrans not only that we had to pull together as a community to deal with COVID and the fires but that, when it came to the crunch, we actually could. Going forward, we must take this lesson to heart, because we are going to need it again. The climate emergency is not going away.

The budget allocation of \$150 million for the sustainable household scheme, \$5 million for the building energy efficiency upgrade fund and \$50 million for a

vulnerable household energy support initiative will not only lower the territory's energy use but mean that many more Canberrans will be living in dwellings that stay at a comfortable temperature all year round without generating massive energy bills. The vulnerable household scheme is significant and reflects another of our priorities: to ensure that the transition to a green, zero-emissions city is fair and just.

The funding that supports the transition to zero-emission vehicles and the progress towards light rail stage 2 will not only contribute to lowering emissions but also help Canberra's air to stay cleaner, help our busiest streets to be quieter and help commuters to be more productive and less stressed. This investment in zero emission vehicles is another key commitment of ours. We have a vision for an EV revolution over the next decade, one that will help tackle our problem area of transport emissions, but also one that will help mitigate people's growing transport costs.

Budget support of \$100 million over five years for a Canberra big battery will deliver at least 250 MW of new, large-scale battery storage. This will help store renewable electricity and assist with stabilising the electricity grid. Those are some of the headline climate action items, but the detail is exciting, too.

This budget starts the process of phasing out fossil fuel gas use in the ACT, with an initial \$855,000 to undertake work on our sustainable energy policy actions and develop legislation to prevent new gas mains network connections to future stages of greenfield residential development in the ACT. Gas is simply another fossil fuel and we must phase it out, in line with our climate change imperatives.

Another key priority of the Greens in last year's election was "a home for all". This budget delivers real action to reduce homelessness and increase Canberra's stock of affordable housing. Federal government cuts to ACT Shelter are being reversed by the ACT government in this budget, with \$700,000 over four years to support systemic housing advocacy work. \$1.2 million will continue funding the Mackillop House and Winter Lodge services, established as an emergency response to COVID, as well as the Axial Housing service.

This is another example of a silver lining we have seen from COVID. There are a few. In many instances, the pandemic has shown us what is possible, that we can do better than we thought we could. The expansion of the Early Morning Centre and increased emergency support and accommodation funding to OneLink were also key election commitments and agreement items that are delivered in this budget.

As my colleague and Minister for Housing and Homelessness Services, Rebecca Vassarotti, has pointed out, unemployment, financial pressure and homelessness can strike suddenly. We have to fund the right support so that it is there when it is needed without delay. The Greens know that it is far better for a person's health and wellbeing, and for the budget bottom line, to provide fundamentals like food, showers, health care and clothing—and, of course, keep people from sleeping rough in the first place—rather than try to bring those people back to housing and health after a damaging period on the streets.

It is medically expensive to be without a home or to live in severely crowded dwellings. Chronic ear infections, respiratory infections, family violence and mental health issues are all more prevalent in overcrowded living situations. Homelessness or the risk of homelessness are also a potential risk factor for mental health issues, trauma, substance abuse and child maltreatment, amongst other things.

How much better is it—not just for the individuals who are struggling but for our community as a whole and for our overall budget bottom line—if those individuals can have continuity in shelter and support, rather than having to recover and regroup after going without. I am reminded of the old saying “A stitch in time saves nine.” It is true of climate action, health, education, housing, homelessness and more.

Repairing the land was a key election priority area for the Greens in last year’s election and we are pleased to see good progress in this year’s budget on both environment and heritage. As well as increased and reliable funding for the National Trust and for the overdue upgrade to the Heritage Council website, there is a funding allocation of \$4.5 million for invasive species management, for initiatives to maintain clean catchments and clean waterways, and to employ permanent Ngunnawal rangers and incorporate cultural land and water management practices.

There are a range of funding programs to support our community and improve social inclusion measures. This budget delivers on our commitment to reduce gambling harm and helps clubs to move away from heavy reliance on gaming revenue by creating alternative income streams. It provides for a review of water costs for clubs, creates a ministerial advisory council on the sustainability of clubs, and imposes bet limits and load-up limits.

There is significant investment in health, justice and education services specifically for Indigenous people. There is funding to establish the building energy efficiency upgrade fund for community club buildings and to deliver grants and no-interest loans for energy and water efficiency upgrades and rooftop solar and batteries.

There is \$100,000 of additional support for refugees and asylum seekers, with an extension of RASH—the refugee, asylum seeker and humanitarian program—to the end of 2020-21. This will meet the increased need for support resulting from the COVID pandemic.

There is support of \$159,000 for frontline CV and rape crisis services, including support for new parents experiencing domestic and family violence, via a continuation of the health justice partnerships program. There is \$1.4 million for a technology upgrade for the community sector, to provide them with information technology, equipment and services to help in their provision of services for people on low incomes. Importantly, we are investing \$825,000 to develop and implement the concessional loans framework, including the sustainable household scheme, which will guide all government concessional loan schemes.

This is a budget that recognises, as do the Greens, that an investment in the physical and mental wellbeing of individual Canberrans is an investment in the success of our city as a whole. Additional funds have been allocated to mental health services,

specifically \$14 million to continue and expand the successful PACER program, \$2.3 million to extend our COVID mental health support package, and over \$3 million to continue the vital Adolescent Mobile Outreach Service. In fulfilment of a Greens election commitment and the parliamentary and governing agreement, there is funding for a Palliative Care ACT respite hub pilot program.

In terms of small items with big impacts, there is a \$145,000 investment in health to establish a task force to look at how to insource work that is currently outsourced. This was another election commitment and has been an ongoing concern from a number of angles for a long time. We are glad to see that this task force will be established, and we look forward to hearing and seeing the outcomes once their work is completed.

My Greens colleagues and I remain ambitious and determined to contribute to this government. Every day, and in every budget, we will steer it, and impel it, towards improved action on climate change, on social justice and on the natural environment. We are making good progress. This government is doing far more than most to reduce emissions in our jurisdiction—and doing so in ways that have tangible broader benefits across the whole community. We are also leading in a way that sets a path for others to follow. We must keep upping our efforts at both mitigation and adaptation, especially in the face of the inaction and active sabotage we see from across the lake.

The federal government's plan for a gas-led recovery is, frankly, a sick joke, which the country will not be laughing about for very long if it is not stopped soon. In fact, Australia is fast becoming a pariah on the world stage, with its pitiful 2030 target of 26 per cent emissions reduction and the likelihood of not even achieving that. Current estimates put the actual likely outcome at around 22 per cent.

Here in the ACT, in contrast, we will keep doing our part. This budget is a good step in showing that we are serious, with \$307 million committed to direct emissions reduction strategies. I confidently predict that every Canberran will see the benefits while regions that cling to the technologies, energy sources, jobs and false assumptions of the past will get left behind. Theirs, sadly, will be the old normal. Ours will be better.

We look forward to further investments that continue our journey to a better normal in future budgets, but, given our fiscal position in this global context, we can be proud to be moving in this direction here, today, in this budget, in spite of the challenges we currently face.

On a different note, this will be the last budget that is not guided by the wellbeing framework. We look forward to playing a role in ensuring that the next budget shapes up to deliver in many areas that have not had enough attention in previous years and will be highlighted through the inclusion of wellbeing indicators.

Mr Assistant Speaker, the Greens will be supporting this budget. We look forward to the different estimates committees process being run this year, for the first time, and to the detail stage of the debate next month.

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

Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2020-2021

Debate resumed from 9 February 2021, on motion by **Mr Barr**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

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

Official Visitor for Disability Services—annual report

MS DAVIDSON (Murrumbidgee—Assistant Minister for Families and Community Services, Minister for Disability, Minister for Justice Health and Minister for Mental Health) (4.18): Pursuant to standing order 211, I move:

That the Assembly take note of the following paper:

Official Visitor Act—Pursuant to section 17—Annual Report 2019-20—Official Visitor (Disability Services).

Today I am pleased to table the Official Visitor for Disability Services annual report for 2019-20. The Official Visitors for Disability Services have a vital role in monitoring and investigating the welfare of individuals with a disability, as well as ensuring that people with a disability, and their loved ones, can raise concerns about the services they receive. The Official Visitor Scheme is part of a suite of important oversight and quality assurance mechanisms designed to provide rigorous scrutiny of and support to services, with the goal of ensuring the best possible outcomes for people with disability in the ACT.

The Official Visitors for Disability Services are the only means by which some people, who may not be able to make a complaint about poor service, receive regular visits from people dedicated to ensuring their individual wellbeing. The Official Visitor for Disability Services scheme is therefore the only scheme for some ACT residents living in a visitable place to protect their human rights and assure the quality of services.

During this extraordinary year, the visitors—Ms Mary Durkin, Ms Narelle Hargreaves and Mr Chris Redmond—have continued to fulfil their role as the eyes and ears for the government in monitoring, detecting and remedying problems in visitable places for people with disability. As the new Minister for Disability in the ACT, I am honoured to have oversight of the Official Visitors for Disability Services and look forward to a collaborative relationship over the coming years.

Despite the multiple challenges this year, including bushfire smoke, a damaging hailstorm and the COVID-19 pandemic, the Official Visitors for Disability Services made 278 visits, met with 573 people, and received and considered formal complaints from 77 entitled people in the ACT. I know that my predecessor, Suzanne Orr, would join me in thanking Ms Durkin, Ms Hargreaves and Mr Redmond for their care for and dedication to this most important role.

After seven years as an official visitor for disability, demonstrating extraordinary commitment to vulnerable Canberrans, Ms Hargreaves retired from the role in August last year, replaced in this role by Mr Rob Woolley. On behalf of the government, I take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank Ms Hargreaves for her significant contribution to the Official Visitor Scheme and her dedication to the people she served.

The examples within the report of some of the complaints managed throughout the year illustrate the wide-ranging and often complex issues addressed by the official visitors, from a resident being provided dietary advice by a chiropractor, to supporting guardians and entitled people to raise concerns with their service providers. A continuing thread is the visitors' readiness to increase their attention to and monitoring of people's health and wellbeing.

This year has seen the progression or continuation of a number of issues of concern raised by the official visitors in the previous report. In addition, the last year has seen many activities undertaken by the official visitors curtailed because of restrictions associated with the pandemic. The official visitors ceased regular face-to-face visits in March, only visiting homes when they received a serious complaint. Regardless, contact was maintained with homes by telephone and email during this period, checking on the welfare of residents and that appropriate COVID-safe practices had been put in place to ensure the safety of staff and residents. This work continues.

The official visitors continue to experience a substantial increase in workload, as the number of visitable places increased from 144 in the 2017-18 annual report to over 200 at present. I commend Ms Mary Durkin, Ms Narelle Hargreaves and Mr Chris Redmond for managing the workload over the previous year.

I also note that there remain people under 64 years old with disabilities who live in residential aged care. In my meeting with them on 16 December 2020, I asked the National Disability Insurance Agency to provide details to the official visitors to ensure that their homes are included in the register of visitable places. I am advised that the NDIA will be providing this information soon, and I look forward to the official visitors being able to support the human rights of younger people with disabilities in residential aged care.

In closing, I thank the official visitors for identifying systemic and serious issues of concern in the report. I look forward to meeting with them and working to progress resolutions and advocating on behalf of persons with disability in the ACT.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Drugs of Dependence (Personal Use) Amendment Bill 2021— Select Committee Membership

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Madam Speaker has been notified, in writing, of the nominations of Mr Cain, Mr Davis and Dr Paterson to be members of the Select Committee on the Drugs of Dependence (Personal Use) Amendment Bill 2021.

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

That the Members so nominated be appointed as members of the Drugs of Dependence (Personal Use) Bill—Select Committee.

Poverty task force

MS LEE (Kurrajong—Leader of the Opposition) (4.24): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) it has been 20 years since the Sharing the Benefits Final Report from the Carnell Government's Poverty Task Group;
- (b) after 20 years of ACT Labor, thousands of Canberrans are struggling with the cost of living and are consequently living in poverty;
- (c) according to the ACT Council of Social Service, in the wake of COVID-19, just over 38,000 people are living in poverty in the ACT;
- (d) the Anglicare Rental Affordability Snapshot for 2020 highlighted the lack of affordable housing for low income households in the ACT, with just 4 percent of properties being affordable for someone on minimum wage; and
- (e) data from CoreLogic shows the median weekly rent for houses in Canberra is \$657, up 3.6 percent since 2019, while median weekly unit rents are \$473;

(2) further notes that:

- (a) over the last five years, electricity and gas prices have risen by 25 percent and 31 percent respectively in Canberra, prices for medical and hospital services have increased 28 percent, and housing costs increased by 15 percent;
- (b) many Canberrans are suffering from significant transport disadvantage due to many suburban public transport services having been cut;
- (c) Canberrans regularly pay higher petrol prices than motorists in surrounding towns and most cities; and
- (d) the ACT has the lowest general practitioner bulk-billing rate in the country, with Canberrans being twice as likely as other Australians to put off seeing a doctor due to high fees; and

(3) calls on the Government to:

- (a) develop a comprehensive strategy to deal with the causes and symptoms of poverty in Canberra by establishing a Poverty Task Force; and
- (b) work with the Poverty Task Force to facilitate appropriate consultation with stakeholders, including community sector organisations, industry, and members of the public.

In December 2000, the Poverty Task Group, under a Liberal government led by Kate Carnell, published its final report after working for two years to try to understand the

causes of and the reasons for the extent and nature of poverty and disadvantage in the ACT. It was also tasked with providing guidance about appropriate government and community frameworks, especially in the context of cost implications. The December 2000 publication was described as the final report of the task force, outlining recommendations for responding to poverty in the ACT.

The task group was chaired initially by Anglican Bishop Richard Randerson and then Catholic Bishop Pat Power and, over the period of its work, had about 40 members from federal and territory governments and the community sector. The task group delivered a number of recommendations around identified areas of concern, such as personal safety and wellbeing, better access to services and a wider understanding of service providers, access to financial resources, and affordable and appropriate housing, just to name a few.

No doubt there was an expectation that their collective efforts over that period to investigate, assess and consider the issues would or could lead to a better understanding and perhaps a more targeted approach to reducing the incidence of poverty in a city that is widely regarded as fairly affluent, educated and comfortable.

Two decades later, little seems to have changed. Yes, Canberra does continue to seemingly have the highest average indicators for income, education and employment. In fact, our unemployment rate has been and remains the envy of the rest of the country, largely due to the high percentage of public servants, and we have managed to avoid many of the COVID lockdowns and transmissions. But behind these statistics, there are some uglier facts.

Almost 38,000 people are categorised as living in poverty. We have rough sleepers on a regular basis, some within metres of the Legislative Assembly. Over 25,000 people in low-income households are experiencing food stress. About 9,500 low-income rental households are facing rental stress, and about 8,000 children live in low-income households and so routinely go without many essentials in schooling, food and social activities.

The ACT Council of Social Service, or ACTCOSS, publishes a cost-of-living report that tracks changes in the cost of living for low-income households in the Australian Capital Territory over the previous 12 months and five years. A fact sheet they published last October identified groups in the ACT that face an elevated risk of experiencing poverty. They include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds, people with a disability, people over 65, and women.

They have also identified other categories that are more at risk of poverty than others: if you are unemployed, if you are on income support, if you rent your home, if you are a single parent—especially if you are a female single parent—and, of course, if you are in low-paid work or part-time work. This is where the poverty cycle entrapment hits families even harder, especially single parent families. If you want to earn enough income to look after your family, you need full-time work. If you work full time then you need child care. And, yes, just as we have the highest paid workers, the highest

educated people and the highest rentals, we also have the most expensive out-of-pocket childcare costs.

We know some of the triggers for this poverty cycle and we have the statistics and evidence from many community groups as to the depth and range of some of the problems. What we need, however, is a coordinated, policy-based approach to getting the full picture to confirm what the community groups are already telling us, to exhaust the search in finding the root causes of poverty, particularly those that are unseen or hidden, and to finding solutions.

We have a lack of affordable housing, with median rental for houses at \$657 and units at \$473. The Anglicare rental affordability snapshot has for some years made assessments of the housing market for people on low incomes. They suggest that for most people on low incomes rent should not exceed 30 per cent of a household budget, to avoid financial stress. This is an internationally accepted benchmark drawn from years of study into the cost of living and how it affects people. This is the benchmark that Anglicare Australia uses. The Anglicare rental affordability snapshot for 2020 identified only four per cent of properties being affordable for someone on the minimum wage.

The rental affordability index, or the RAI, produced by National Shelter, Bendigo Bank, the Brotherhood of St Laurence, and SGS Economic and Planning, painted the same picture. The RAI found that Canberra pensioners and single people on JobSeeker payments were the hardest hit groups when it came to meeting rental payments.

ACTCOSS data tells us that, over the past five years, the Canberra CPI for rent has increased by 7.1 per cent, well above the increase in the national CPI for rent of 3.7 per cent. Real estate industry data shows that, over the past five years, rents for houses and units in Canberra have increased by 28 per cent and 22 per cent respectively, the second highest increase across Australian capital cities during this time. Over the past year, the ACT has consistently had the highest median house rent price and the second highest median unit rent price. Over the year from June 2019 to June 2020, the ACT was the only state or territory where rental affordability declined.

Anglicare's rental affordability snapshot, in April 2020, found that on a random weekend survey there were no affordable rentals for a person on a disability support pension; there were no affordable rentals for a couple with one low-income worker and one stay-at-home parent; there were no affordable rentals for a person on a parental payment. Even with the COVID-19 supplement, only 2.5 per cent more rentals became affordable.

All this information is known and available. Similar information was recognised, if not as well documented, 20 years ago. What has changed in the intervening two decades? In reality, it seems not much, except that poverty and disadvantage have become more widespread. We have a Labor-Greens coalition that talks the talk, but when it comes to doing something: "No, not us." We saw that in action in their response to your motion yesterday, Mr Deputy Speaker.

We can see the posters about affordable housing and housing for all on the office doors. We can read their pledges in the parliamentary agreement, but in truth they really are just meaningless platitudes and feel-good statements without action by those in a position to deliver it.

I was encouraged to read in a recent *Canberra Times* article on Greens MLA and environment minister Ms Vassarotti that she pledged to abolish homelessness by 2025. This is a laudable objective, and in her new role as Minister for Homelessness and Housing Services I wish her well. If that truly is a goal she wants to achieve in her time here, surely—surely—she must agree that a poverty task force that can investigate current causes of poverty and can access the best of social, financial and economic indicators is a sensible option. After all, she is familiar with the transformational impact of a poverty task force.

In Ms Vassarotti's inaugural speech last December, she referred to a special opportunity to get involved in the very first poverty inquiry, the same inquiry I refer to in my motion. Ms Vassarotti called her involvement in this task force "transformational". She went on to say that she was "immensely grateful" that she was able "to contribute to a project that changed the face of our city's understanding of poverty and disadvantage and whose legacy, I believe, can still be seen today".

Ms Vassarotti now has a special opportunity to be involved in another transformational experience—this time as an MLA and as a minister. I urge her and her Greens colleagues to support this motion, to inspire the next generation of leaders to have their opportunity for a transformational experience, to play their part in changing the face of our city's understanding of poverty and disadvantage and to leave their mark to be seen in another 20 years.

It has been 20 years since the first Poverty Task Group first deliberated on this issue—20 years. Circumstances have changed, but the fundamental issues remain. Idle promises, bandaid solutions and turning a blind eye are not the correct approach.

I take this opportunity to thank Mr Coe for his leadership, vision and passion for this initiative. His tireless advocacy to make Canberra more affordable for those who need it most is well known. I, as the new Leader of the Canberra Liberals, am happy to carry on this work. Thank you, Alistair. Your work ethic and dedication to serving our community is second to none and your work on this very important issue will not be in vain.

If this Assembly is to stand up for all Canberrans and if we want to make our great city accessible, sustainable and inclusive for everyone, we must address this silent and, frankly, shameful issue of poverty and disadvantage right on our doorstep. A poverty task force can bring all the best minds, the best evidence, the best hearts and the right backing and credibility to address the underlying causes and the range and depth of reasons and find solutions. I commend my motion to the Assembly.

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism) (4.35): I thank

Ms Lee, for raising this issue. The substantive issue before the Assembly is action, and active support to address poverty. Mr Assistant Speaker, if you want to lift people out of poverty, you need to create suitable and secure job opportunities and you need to lift their incomes. Households that have a job are much less likely to be living in poverty. Equally, households that receive adequate social security payments are also much less likely to fall into poverty.

One of the simplest and most effective ways of keeping hundreds of thousands of Australians, and tens of thousands of Canberrans above the poverty line is for the federal government to permanently raise the rate of JobSeeker and not plunge it back to pre-COVID Newstart rates.

The ANU Centre for Social Research and Methods has conducted significant analysis on this question and examined the impacts of poverty and housing stress under current and alternative economic and policy scenarios. The key findings of this ANU research from last year are that the federal government's response to increased social security payments—surprise, surprise—reduced poverty and housing stress. Raise people's incomes and you reduce poverty and housing stress.

How much has this reduced poverty and housing stress? The poverty gap has been lowered by 39 per cent, and the number of people living in poverty has been lowered by a third. That was when the COVID supplement to JobSeeker was at its maximum rate. As it has been tapered down, more people have returned to poverty.

When they looked into all of the recipients of social security benefits, they found the increase in social security payments had the greatest impact in lifting people out of poverty for those who are on Newstart or who were Youth Allowance recipients. They were estimated to have received the largest reduction in poverty. Their poverty rate dropped from around 67 per cent. So two-thirds of people in Canberra who were on Newstart or on Youth Allowance were living in poverty. With the increase in those allowances, that poverty rate dropped from 67 per cent to seven per cent.

The Prime Minister, if you believe today's *Australian* newspaper, is currently considering what the permanent rate of those social security benefits will be. As I have said before, and I will say again here today, I urge the federal government to raise the rate. I invite all members in this place to join in that call to demonstrate an actual, practical commitment and an understanding across all parties in this place that those low levels of social security payments are the major cause of poverty for unemployed people and people on Youth Allowance, not just in this city but in this country.

As has just been raised, we look to those who are on the minimum wage. Those people have been at the forefront of seven years of economic policy objective from the federal government to suppress wage growth. It was a stated policy goal of finance minister Cormann that wage growth would be suppressed. Well, they certainly achieved that—wage growth in Australia is anaemic. The Reserve Bank is putting interest rates at 0.01 per cent in order to try and drive some strength in the labour market, to see some uplift in wage pressure in the economy.

You have monetary policy from the Reserve Bank having to go full tilt, as hard as it has ever gone in the history of this country, against the fiscal policy settings of the commonwealth government. You have the head of the Reserve Bank and the commonwealth Treasurer with diametrically opposed economic policies, so it is no wonder that we have not seen real wage growth in this country for some time.

This is the issue—incomes. We have got to get incomes rising, more people in jobs, the minimum wage lifted, and wage growth in this country. That will get people out of poverty. And for those who cannot find work even in a recovering economy we simply must raise the rate.

From the ACT government's perspective just looking at the data, in terms of who we assist through our concessions program—the details are in the budget papers for those who would like to delve into them—15,000 households are assisted through the pensioner concession schemes, and about 31,000 households are assisted through both utility rebates and other ACT government concessions that were increased by hundreds of dollars during the pandemic.

Those increases,, combined with the increases in social security payments have had the single biggest lifting of people out of poverty in the last five decades. It is those two measures combined—income assistance from the commonwealth, and more of it, and a greater level of concessions from the territory government.

This builds on the ACT government's work, and I draw the Leader of the Opposition's attention to the 2012 targeted assistance strategy and the 2015 ACT government concessions review. In the last eight years—or nine now, as we are into 2021—we have undertaken two further reviews, and the government will consider further policy initiatives in coming budgets.

As I indicated on budget day, we will be continuing COVID income supports and concessions through calendar year 2021 and will make further decisions in relation to concessions for those in receipt of commonwealth statutory income support payments—so around 31,000 households, the 39,000 people that Ms Lee refers to—in our August budget.

I would like to see our efforts supported by a decision nationally to permanently raise the rate. I would also like to see a commitment from the federal government to align their fiscal policy with the bold but absolutely spot-on objectives of the Reserve Bank Governor—to focus on job creation and a return to full employment as the absolute, number one objective of economic policy in this country. It is our number one policy objective. As Ms Lee indicated, we have the lowest unemployment rate in Australia, but I want to get that rate back down to where it was pre-COVID—so it will have a two in front of it, not a three. And I want to see more than 250,000 jobs in the territory economy by 2025.

They are the economic policy objectives we will be pursuing, and we will do so by implementing the policies that we took to the 2020 election. The government will not be supporting Ms Lee's motion today.

MS DAVIDSON (Murrumbidgee—Assistant Minister for Families and Community Services, Minister for Disability, Minister for Justice Health and Minister for Mental Health) (4.45): I thank Ms Lee for the opportunity to speak on this government's commitment to addressing the drivers and impacts of poverty in Canberra. As the Assistant Minister for Families and Community Services, I take seriously my obligation to continue to act on poverty in our community. That does not mean putting aside decades of progress and understanding of poverty and the policy responses needed to address it, as Ms Lee is asking us to do.

The parliamentary and governing agreement makes many commitments that will help to address poverty in Canberra, including a plan to review and increase funding for the community sector to account for increased population, demand, complexity of community needs and costs of service delivery. Our initiatives reflect extensive consultation with community sector organisations delivering essential services to people experiencing poverty in our community. Those services see the impacts of poverty every day and understand its root causes.

Consultation has shaped our commitments in the parliamentary and governing agreement to increase emergency accommodation funding through OneLink; expand specialist homelessness service capacity; support the establishment of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-controlled community housing provider; deliver universal access to early learning for three-year-olds; ensure that ACT legislation can identify and effectively respond to modern-day slavery; amend the Residential Tenancies Act to end no-cause evictions; expand the number of properties that can access assistance under the affordable community housing land tax exemption pilot; and improve the extended care system for 18 to 21-year-olds in the out of home care system. I understand there are announcements to come about expanding bus services in the ACT, which will help deliver a more sustainable, less congested, more accessible Canberra.

These policies reflect the ACT government's progress towards a nuanced understanding of the intersecting causes of poverty in the ACT, including the relationships between poverty and health, gender, violence, and issues affecting First Nations community members.

In opposing Ms Lee's motion I seek to recognise the need to put into action the priorities we have already consulted on. The 1999 ACT Poverty Task Group was set up at a time when the extent of poverty in the ACT was not recognised or understood. Since then we have built stronger connections to services and organisations that serve the Canberra community. We also have access to incredibly robust, longitudinal data on poverty in the ACT.

If you would like an in-depth analysis of this data, please feel free to pop in to my office, where I can take you through the past 42 years of housing costs and labour force data, with a gendered lens. I have maps showing that the greatest concentrations of households living in poverty in the ACT are in Tuggeranong and west Belconnen, as well as some suburbs in the inner north, Woden and Weston Creek, and Gungahlin.

Since 1978, part-time jobs have replaced full-time jobs for women, and the 2016 census showed that at least seven per cent of ACT women in the labour force were not able to find enough hours of paid work to meet their needs. Women are more likely than men to be underemployed in industries with lower hourly pay rates and a greater proportion of part-time workers.

There was a significant shift towards underemployment and part-time work for women as a result of the 1990s recession, and underemployment has not been higher than unemployment for women in the ACT since September 1991. The same thing happened to ACT men's underemployment compared to unemployment in November 2019, reflecting a permanent shift in the nature of paid work across Australia.

These changes to paid work have a long-term impact on poverty for older Canberrans, through the effect on superannuation. So 10 per cent of nothing is—let me do the maths here—nothing into nothing, carry the nothing. You can see how older people who are paying private market rent, especially women, are at increasing risk of homelessness.

In the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic in the ACT, underemployment as a proportion of the labour force increased from 5.4 per cent in March to 8.4 per cent in April for men and from 5.6 per cent to 9.5 per cent for women. But unemployment rates for ACT men and women barely changed over the same period. This is because the jobs most impacted by the economic effects of COVID-19 were in hospitality, retail, tourism and the arts, where there are high proportions of workers on low hourly pay rates, working casually or part time. These industries also employ high proportions of young people, which is why young people experienced the highest rates of job loss or hours cut.

But job creation programs implemented by the ACT government to mitigate these labour force effects are working. Over the course of 2020, underutilisation rates for women in the ACT labour force dropped compared to 2019, and underemployment stabilised back to levels similar to 2019. Unemployment rates for ACT men returned to levels similar to 2019, while underemployment reduced after having risen so significantly in April 2020.

As you can see, our access to and understanding of the context of data on poverty in the ACT is much more sophisticated than it was in 1999. I have not even started on housing affordability data, but only because I am told there are time limits for these speeches.

Reports from ACT community organisations such as ACT Shelter, the Women's Centre for Health Matters, and the ACT Council of Social Service highlight the causes of poverty and recommend solutions. Instead of requiring these organisations to contribute more time and energy on further reports, I implore Ms Lee and her colleagues to familiarise themselves with the evidence and read and re-read existing reports. These reports can guide and help us to get on with what needs to be done. Ignoring this existing wealth of knowledge would be careless for an Assembly that takes the elimination of poverty seriously.

Finally, I want to affirm that this government is committed to calling for fair and equitable economic policies from Ms Lee's federal Liberal colleagues. The big levers of poverty in Canberra are controlled by the Morrison government. Inadequate policies on JobSeeker and other welfare payments, capital gains tax discounts, negative gearing, inadequate funding for primary health care through the Medicare Benefits Scheme, and inadequate funding for the specialist homelessness sector are all in the federal government's control and have significant impacts on the extent of poverty and social inclusion in Canberra.

I am proud to be part of a government that established the Jobs for Canberrans program and the Canberra Relief Network to support many Canberrans through the COVID-19 pandemic. Beneficiaries included families who would otherwise have experienced food insecurity and people without permanent residency visas who are ineligible for federal government support. This government delivered for our community, doing what we could to supplement inadequate commonwealth solutions, and we will continue to advocate against the Morrison government's plan to end the JobSeeker supplement.

I implore everyone in this Assembly to do the same—call on the Morrison government to revoke its decision to throw almost 20,000 more Canberrans into poverty and permanently raise the rate. This should be a priority for Ms Lee and her colleagues. I assure this Assembly that the ACT government will act on what we already know and will continue to provide support services to assist Canberrans in need.

MS VASSAROTTI (Kurrajong—Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, Minister for Homelessness and Housing Services and Minister for Sustainable Building and Construction) (4.53): I thank Ms Lee for the opportunity to discuss the Poverty Task Group project. This is an issue that I have a passion for, having worked in the area for many decades, and also an issue that, as Ms Lee notes, I have some unique knowledge about and insight into, having been seconded to work as a project leader that supported the task group and led the development of project reports at the ACT Council of Social Service in 1999 and 2000.

As my colleagues have noted, the previous Poverty Task Group project ran nearly two decades ago and was established at a very different time for the ACT. Canberra had only been self-governing for 10 years, so there was a significant need to understand the extent and nature of poverty in our community and establish recommendations for action. It was a time when people rarely realised or understood that poverty was an issue in the ACT. It was not something that was spoken about. There was little data or research on what the extent or the impact of the issue was for Canberra. There was little recognition of the work of frontline workers that were working in this area.

With self-government, the ACT could now make recommendations and decisions on things like concessions, health and education. There was extensive policy work and research to do to understand what the issues were and what levers the ACT government could use to ensure that people on lower incomes were able to be supported to be part of the Canberra community.

At the time, these reports were immensely useful. For the first time they defined what poverty and disadvantage was, particularly in the context of an affluent community. They gave policymakers and the community an understanding of the number of people experiencing poverty—at the time around one in 12 people in the ACT. They found that the characteristics of Canberrans who experienced poverty differed from those of poorer Australians more generally.

The qualitative findings also challenged Canberra's public discourse, which often assumed that everyone in Canberra was living a privileged life, free from poverty or financial stress. Our picture of life in Canberra changed. A rather profound finding of the research was that the experience of poverty was in many ways more challenging due to its location in an affluent community. We heard, through consultations, people talking about struggling to pay for school uniforms while other families were discussing overseas travel.

A lasting legacy of this process was the development of a shared understanding that poverty is experienced in our community and we all have a role to reduce it. We see this legacy continue, even in the discussion today as all parties in the Assembly recognise that poverty is an issue and share a desire to respond to it.

As the Minister for Homelessness and Housing Services, I particularly know that poverty is an issue for many in our community. It impacts the people who access housing and homelessness services, and I am acutely aware of the relationship between housing and poverty in this city. Though I thank Ms Lee for giving the Assembly the opportunity to discuss the issue of poverty in Canberra, my agenda is to act on the issue and not to take a step back and repeat the task group work.

While the issue of poverty and disadvantage is still a significant issue in this city, much has changed in the intervening two decades that means we need new approaches to examine and deal with this issue. Unlike when the Poverty Task Group work was underway, we now have a strong understanding of the scope and the scale of the problem, with significant qualitative and quantitative data about poverty in the ACT that is available. Much of this has been drawn on in the discussion today and is generated by respected and hardworking peak organisations that are doing important ongoing work to demonstrate these issues.

Organisations such as the ACT and Australian Council of Social Service, Anglicare and Shelter provide regular analysis of key issues, including cost-of-living issues, rental stress and housing affordability. This work demonstrates the importance of these key civil society organisations to our community and in providing government with independent and tailored research and analysis on where we need to focus our attention and effort. I thank these organisations for their work, and we will continue to support them as they make this vital contribution. I was really pleased to, as part of the budget, increase ACT Shelter's funding and reinstate funding that had been lost from the federal government.

While I am only newly in place within the ACT government, our earliest priorities have demonstrated our commitment to respond to what we know about poverty and

disadvantage. As I reflected last year, when we marked the 20-year anniversary of the task group's work, a key change from now to then is the issue of homelessness. Rather than doing additional analysis, we need urgent action.

Given this, I was really pleased that I was able to announce several more initiatives addressing poverty in our community in the budget, including \$300,000 to support the Early Morning Centre to provide a seven-day service through 2020-21 and 2021-22; expanding specialist homelessness services capacity by an extra \$1.2 million over 2020-21 and 2021-22; \$450,000 over 2020-21 and 2021-22 to increase emergency accommodation provided through OneLink, including through additional resourcing to increase the capacity of the specialist homelessness sector; and \$1.6 million over four years for two staff in the Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Affairs to facilitate an integrated approach to strengthen the outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families across housing, child protection and other supports—an announcement of my colleague.

These funding priorities were developed through extensive consultation with the community services sector, working with people experiencing poverty and housing stress, and in response to the specialist sector's ability to adapt and respond to the COVID-19 crisis.

Over this term of government I intend to continue to be guided by the policymakers and the on-ground experts who have built extensive knowledge of the extent and nature of poverty in the ACT and the solutions needed to address it. That is why I stand here in the Assembly: to progress what we as a community have learnt in the decades since the Poverty Task Group. My priority is now implementation.

Since first working on those poverty reports over two decades ago, I have held many roles in the sector. I have seen the strength of peak bodies and policymakers to now consistently offer informed, nuanced recommendations to address poverty in the ACT. So I bring with me a commitment to listen to these solutions and not to burden the sector with repeated consultation and information gathering.

We have consulted on the causes of poverty and the priorities to address it in our community. I will work to ensure that the resources and the priorities that the ACT government puts in place will respond. I will also fiercely advocate for action in areas that sit in other realms.

As spoken about by the Chief Minister and Minister Davidson, we cannot ignore the impact of inadequate income support provided by the federal government to those who are unable to secure work. With the exception of the lifesaving COVID supplement during the last year, the real rate of JobSeeker has not changed since the completion of the Poverty Task Force two decades ago. This is something that has to change.

What I ask of this Assembly is to engage with the clear evidence base we have regarding poverty in the ACT and look at what we can do collectively to address poverty and make a positive difference to the lives of people in the Canberra community.

MS LEE (Kurrajong—Leader of the Opposition) (5.02), in reply: In closing, I should say that I am disappointed. That is true, but it goes beyond that. It is a very sad day in this place, regarding the people who hold positions of decision-making, the people who hold the power to actually do something about an issue that is of concern to so many in the community—we are talking about over 38,000 Canberrans living in poverty, including 8,000 children, and we have government ministers, all three, saying that they know exactly what the causes are; they know exactly what the reasons are. If that is the case, why are we in this situation right now?

If they know exactly what the levers are, if they know exactly what the causes are, why are we here, still debating? Why do we still have 8,000 Canberra children going without essentials in schooling, social services and food? Why do we have 25,000 Canberrans facing rental stress? This just highlights, again, the government's attitude that they know best.

They are good at talking the talk. We know this. They have had 20 years. It is not good enough for ministers of this government to come into this chamber and say, "It's nothing to do with us; it is all the feds' fault." If they do not control any of the levers that will lift 38,000 Canberrans out of poverty then what are they doing there? The Chief Minister talks about all the stats, everything, all the reports, and says that we know it all. What is the outcome that has been achieved with all that knowledge? Minister Davidson talks about all the great work, apparently, that the ACT government has done. Do not forget: this is an ACT government that she has been part of for four months.

We are talking about hidden disadvantage. We are talking about the silent disadvantage and we are talking about the unseen disadvantage. If the government knows it all, why does it still exist? You cannot blame the factors that belong in the federal sphere if the ACT is the only jurisdiction that broke the trend, where rental affordability decreased. You cannot come into this place and take credit for all of the good things but then say, "No, we don't actually control the levers."

Ms Vassarotti says that we are not going to waste the time of the community sector in doing more consultations. Let us not forget that ACTCOSS, one of the groups that she referred to specifically, supported this call for a poverty task force. I hope that Minister Vassarotti realises that in voting against this motion she is denying a young female the opportunity for a transformational experience, to make a difference and to contribute to doing work to stamp out poverty and disadvantage in this city. I hope she can live with that.

Minister Davidson mentioned that apparently I said we need to throw out everything that we have learnt in the last 20 years. Do not put words in my mouth. That is not what I said at all. In fact, the reason why it would be good timing now to have another commission is that we can build on what we have learnt, what we know and what we have gathered in the last 20 years.

Do not come into this place thinking you know it all and say that there is nothing you can do. That is utter rubbish. It is the Canberra families—the 38,000 Canberrans,

including 8,000 children—who are going to pay the price for this government’s arrogance.

Question put:

That the motion be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 8

Noes 15

Mr Cain
Ms Castley
Mr Coe
Mr Hanson
Mrs Jones
Ms Lawder
Ms Lee
Mr Parton

Mr Barr
Ms Berry
Mr Braddock
Ms Burch
Ms Cheyne
Ms Clay
Ms Davidson
Mr Davis

Mr Gentleman
Ms Orr
Dr Paterson
Mr Pettersson
Mr Rattenbury
Mr Steel
Ms Vassarotti

Question resolved in the negative.

Molonglo Valley—community council

DR PATERSON (Murrumbidgee) (5.12): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that the:

- (a) ACT Government provides financial and in-kind support to seven community councils across the ACT;
- (b) ACT’s newest greenfield development, gazetted in 2010—the Molonglo Valley area—is currently represented through the Weston Creek Community Council;
- (c) Molonglo Valley area has a population of around 8 500 and is expected to grow to 10 000 by the end of 2021, and to 55 000 in coming decades;
- (d) area has diverse needs as it continues to develop; and
- (e) Molonglo Valley Community Forum is a community group, recently established to preserve and improve the social, cultural, economic and environmental wellbeing of the Molonglo Valley and its community. Its first public meeting is expected to be held in March 2021; and

(2) calls on the Government to support the establishment of a Molonglo Valley Community Council to:

- (a) engage with and advocate to the ACT Government on a broad range of issues and reflect the needs of the local community; and
- (b) ensure the group’s membership is reflective and inclusive of the area’s broad population and demography by exploring innovative community engagement methods.

Colleagues and members of the ACT's Tenth Legislative Assembly, I have moved that this Assembly calls on the ACT government to support the establishment of a Molonglo Valley community council. As the ACT's newest greenfield development, gazetted in 2010, the Molonglo Valley area has diverse needs as it continues to grow and develop. The Molonglo Valley currently has a population approaching 10,000 people, with projections to expand to 50,000 people over the coming decades. As the neighbourhoods start to settle, as residents move in, what is striking is the youthfulness and ethnic diversity of these suburbs.

Although the previous 2016 census would not be entirely accurate in the picture it creates today, it definitely provides an insight. What we see from 2016 is a population of Molonglo Valley that is, on average, between 25 and 44 years old. Most have an above year 12 level of education and work full time; many residents have young children, and a significant proportion of the population was born overseas.

I do not currently live in Molonglo Valley, but I did for a very pivotal time in my life, from 2017 to 2018. I was establishing a new chapter in my life for myself and my children, and Molonglo Valley provided a location of healing and growth for me personally. The townhouse I was renting was a stone's throw away from the Stromlo Forest Park, providing every bit of the bush capital and city living experience that you could dream of. The sense of community was new and developing. Personally, the feeling that really struck me from living in Molonglo was the sense of excitement for the future of the area and the will of the residents to develop connections and a sense of community.

The ACT government's Suburban Land Agency has led the Mingle program over the last few years in Wright and Coombs. Mingle is a community development program designed to identify community needs and build connected and sustainable communities within the new estates in the ACT. The Mingle program is finishing up in those suburbs and will begin work in Whitlam.

As the population of Molonglo has grown and issues have arisen, residents have increasingly engaged informally through the Weston Creek Community Council, informal community groups and Facebook pages. In recent months, members of the Molonglo Valley community have established their own Molonglo Valley Community Forum. This group has been formed to advocate for the interests and needs of the local community. The group's stated purpose is to preserve and improve the social, cultural, economic and environmental wellbeing of the Molonglo Valley and its community.

Members of this group more recently sought guidance from the ACT government on becoming formally recognised as a community council for the Molonglo Valley. Eligibility to become a community council requires that the organisation is an incorporated body under the Associations Incorporation Act 1991. The ACT community councils incorporated under this act are established as non-political not-for-profit organisations, representing a broad range of interests and needs of the local communities in which they engage.

There are currently seven community councils operating in the ACT, including Weston Creek, Woden Valley, Tuggeranong, Belconnen, Gungahlin, inner south, and north Canberra. The ACT government provides financial and in-kind support to the existing seven community councils across the ACT.

I have moved this motion in recognition of the fact that residents of the Molonglo Valley face issues that are unique, and it is important that there is a forum to bring people together. Further, it is important that the group is incorporated to cement the community development work that has occurred to date and promote avenues for residents to connect, receive information, discuss relevant issues and advocate to the ACT government.

Following recognition as a community council, the group will be eligible for future community council funding under the annual deed of grant process. Through this motion I suggest that it be included in the remit of the proposed Molonglo Valley community council that it is a requirement to engage with the community and advocate to the ACT government on local issues relevant to the livelihood, livability and wellbeing of residents and the community.

Given the unique demographic attributes of the newly established suburbs, it is imperative that the Molonglo Valley community council is reflective and inclusive of the diversity of this community. This will require thinking outside the box and exploring innovative community engagement methods to establish a council that engages younger stakeholders and those from non-English-speaking backgrounds, as an example. This proposed Molonglo Valley community council provides an exciting opportunity to build partnerships between residents and the ACT government to achieve the best outcomes for the community.

Members of the Assembly, I have moved that this Assembly calls on the ACT government to support the establishment of a Molonglo Valley community council to engage with and advocate to the ACT government on a broad range of issues and reflect the needs of the local community, and ensure that the group's membership is reflective and inclusive of the area's broad population and demography by exploring innovative community engagement methods.

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism) (5.18): I thank Dr Paterson for bringing forward this motion today and for her advocacy, as a representative elected by the entire community, together with the other members from Murrumbidgee, on behalf of Molonglo Valley residents.

As we have heard, the Molonglo Valley is a rapidly developing area of our city, one that has a very different demographic profile to Weston Creek. Following Dr Paterson's advocacy as an elected representative, I have asked my directorate to work with representatives of the Molonglo Valley Community Forum on the steps required to be recognised as a community council.

From here, the Molonglo Valley Community Forum can become incorporated. It then needs to put governance arrangements in place—a formal constitution and a committee. It will then be able to seek recognition as a community council for the Molonglo region. The government would be very supportive of that occurring, and the new community council would then be eligible for funding through the annual deed of grant process.

I do acknowledge a very good point that Dr Paterson raised. To ensure that the new community council attracts regular engagement from a representative range of community voices, I have asked my directorate to work with the new council to support the establishment of some innovative community engagement models that would bring more voices to the table. I would hope that, with successful trial implementation of those models and new ways of engagement for the Molonglo Valley community council, that might spread throughout the rest of the city's community councils.

Having said that, I commend Dr Paterson for her advocacy on behalf of her Molonglo Valley constituents. I look forward to the establishment of the Molonglo Valley community council and to being able to sign off on the deed of grant for funding for the council as soon as those governance arrangements—that is, the constitution and a committee—are in place.

MRS JONES (Murrumbidgee) (5.20): I thank Dr Paterson for bringing this important motion to the chamber today. It is absolutely time to have a dedicated community council for the Molonglo Valley. I first moved to the creek in 2009, when my family decided we needed a bigger backyard and play space for our children. Even when I arrived, the new Molonglo Valley was just rolling grass hills, and it has been amazing to watch a new community become established over the years. It used to be considered to be the back way to Belconnen. One of my elderly neighbours told me that it was the best way to go if you had had a few to drink, because you would never get caught.

At the 2016 election there were two suburbs partly inhabited. In the term leading up to the election last year we had lots of work to do to properly communicate with the great residents across Coombs, Wright and Denman Prospect. These communities are vibrant and are developing their community spirit. I have taken time to survey residents, to engage in in-depth, one-on-one conversations, and I have made many friends in the area. The area is so very different from our neighbouring area of Weston Creek, which was developed in the 1960s, 1970s and beyond, and which is home to many of the original residents of the creek who are deeply attached to our village atmosphere.

There are many concerns to be addressed in Weston Creek, and via the local members and the community council there is much to ask government to do. However, the needs of the newer area are quite different. As Dr Paterson said, it is a youthful, multicultural, diverse area—not just because people in the valley seem to be younger and living a somewhat different lifestyle, but also because of the long list of failures for which the government must take responsibility in the development of the area, where it has fallen short in so many ways.

Nonetheless, locals have reached out in Facebook groups and community groups like the Molonglo Valley Community Forum, and there is work to do, because there is much that has not yet been resolved by the government over all the time that I have been here.

I would like to make note particularly of the debacle that is the Coombs shops development, resulting in a long-term, almost totally empty shopping centre. I believe there are solutions to this, but I do not think enough work has been done. There is a dysfunctional government housing area close to the shops, where people are being victimised and are living in fear—an issue that I have raised directly with Ms Berry. There is an unhelpful bus route that is not going along quite the right roads. There are some pretty high petty crime rates. Residents regularly discuss items being stolen from their front doors, gardens and paths. The dogged determination by this government to build additional housing on the Coombs peninsula has left that community without access to a local natural green space and a place to unwind. For all that that suburb needs, there is much work to do.

In the suburb of Denman Prospect there are many emerging needs as well. Whilst this suburb is doing better, it is still missing, like the others, a major shopping centre, police, fire and ambulance, and proper infrastructure of an acceptable standard that is comparable to that of other group centres.

I have outlined just some examples, after really listening to what residents have had to say, of the things that the community council will no doubt be involved in trying to resolve. I reiterate that it is good for residents to have their own community council, but this should not be the government's excuse for ignoring well-known and existing problems that have been ongoing in the area.

The Canberra Liberals will continue to support all residents of the Molonglo Valley and be their voice in this chamber. We will continue to hold the government to account for their inaction, and we welcome any opportunity to work with the government to achieve real and equitable results for this community.

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee—Minister for Skills, Minister for Transport and City Services and Special Minister of State) (5.24): I thank and congratulate Dr Paterson for putting this motion before us; it is her first motion in the Assembly. I would also like to congratulate her on her role advocating for the Molonglo community.

From 27 residents and 11 households in Molonglo at the 2011 census, we are expecting there to be 15,000 people living in the Molonglo community by 2022, and 55,000 in the future. While some regions—like Woden, Gungahlin and the north of Canberra—are expected to see strong growth over the coming years, the anticipated growth in the Molonglo Valley will dwarf them all, with an expected 156 per cent increase in population likely to take place to 2022. So I am very thankful that Dr Paterson is thinking ahead with her motion outlining the importance of establishing a representative community council for the Molonglo Valley.

As a growing region, there are a significant number of new infrastructure projects that are already underway in the Molonglo region, but there will be more in the future. Having a representative stakeholder voice of the community will be a really important part of providing feedback on those projects, which will include significant consultation. That is not limited to the estate development plans for new and emerging suburbs in the Molonglo area—and the parks and playgrounds and so forth—but also includes feedback on major infrastructure projects. The finalisation of the design of the new bridge is well underway. That bridge will take John Gorton Drive across the Molonglo River. It will include an extension of John Gorton Drive as well, which will provide new access points into the new Molonglo commercial centre. Planning and design is well underway for the Molonglo commercial centre and the parliamentary and governing agreement also stipulates that this will be a fully electric commercial centre, with no connections to the gas mains network.

These are major projects that are occurring in Molonglo, and the Molonglo community should have a voice directly into those. The government will also deliver a new walk-in health centre to the Molonglo Valley between 2021 and 2022. The popularity of the centre in Weston Creek is already apparent, and having community input on future health services from a new Molonglo community council will be important to ensure that we are delivering the services that the community needs, which may be different to other areas of Canberra. A new public primary school in Molonglo has recently been finalised, with a collocated high school to open from 2023, and future schools are planned for the area. It will be important to have a community voice in those, as well. A new emergency services station is on track to be built in the Molonglo Valley, which, of course, will house ACT Ambulance Services as well as ACT Fire & Rescue crews and will help us to improve response times in the region.

I have recently taken on responsibility for Stromlo Forest Park, which is a real jewel in the heart of the Molonglo Valley. We have been having some early discussions about the future of that and how we can meet the needs of our cyclist community and the broader community. We are keen to have those discussions with the new Molonglo community council as well. In the chamber today, we have been discussing public transport in the new and emerging suburbs of the Molonglo Valley to make sure that they have access as soon as possible, particularly in areas like Whitlam and future suburbs north of the Molonglo River. We are keen to work with them to analyse the data on how transport is being used, and work with them to plan for future transport services. Of course, that includes light rail, with the bridge design taking that into account as well.

A new library and community centre will be provided for the residents of the Molonglo Valley—a commitment that we provided at the election. We know how important the benefits of libraries are to building community, with lifelong learning programs, supporting literacy in the community, providing support for different age groups including the elderly, offering opportunities and access to technology, promoting the diversity of our community and also providing meeting spaces for the community. The government is committed to engaging in a co-design process on the design and location of the library and community centre, which will be a really deep

engagement with the community that we hope will lead to a really great outcome in Molonglo.

I think it is plain to see that there are going to be many important opportunities for a new Molonglo Valley community council to have its say on important infrastructure projects and services for the region over the coming years. The ACT government will continue to invest in and build more infrastructure for our growing city, particularly in our greenfields suburbs that need that infrastructure established for the first time. So it is more important than ever that we have a representative group to speak to the residents of our fastest growing region. I would like to acknowledge the role of the members of the Weston Creek Community Council, who have played an important role during the first years of the Molonglo Valley's existence in advocating on behalf of both the Molonglo Valley and Weston Creek, and I commend Dr Paterson's motion to the Assembly.

MS DAVIDSON (Murrumbidgee—Assistant Minister for Families and Community Services, Minister for Disability, Minister for Justice Health and Minister for Mental Health) (5.30): I thank Dr Paterson for the opportunity to discuss the need for a funded community council in Molonglo Valley. It would be easy to look at the Molonglo Valley's newly built homes and playgrounds and think that the issues for residents in these suburbs are primarily those of middle-class new homeowners. In contrast, 2016 census data shows that the Molonglo Valley community is diverse and includes many households managing difficult circumstances. Residents include people who are renting and people living in public housing.

Compared to other areas of Canberra, Wright and Coombs residents include a very high proportion of young people aged 15 to 24, who are mostly still studying or in their early careers, with low personal incomes and are therefore reliant on the income of their parents or partners for their household's middle-income status. There are also high proportions of women aged 65 years or older in middle-income households who are reliant on the income of their partners for their middle-income status, as many women in this age group are no longer in full-time paid work and have low or no superannuation of their own. Should these women experience domestic or family violence or elder abuse, or should the higher earners in their households lose their income, they may be at risk of homelessness. There are high proportions of single parent households in the Molonglo Valley and high proportions of women living in Coombs, in particular, who work part-time in low-paid industries such as community services, retail and hospitality. These households would all be greatly affected by the economic impacts of COVID-19, including job losses.

What all of this means is that there are many households in the Molonglo Valley facing economic stress, for whom access to community services and strong community council advocacy is essential to ensure housing affordability, food security, access to education and community connection and social inclusion. The work of organisations such as Woden Community Services and the Molonglo Valley Mingle are vitally important for this growing and diverse community, and yet there is no functional community centre in the Molonglo Valley. For this reason I have written to Minister Steel to advocate for ongoing access to a work space for community services organisations in the Molonglo Valley. While I am awaiting his

response, I am confident we can work collaboratively with his office to help identify suitable facilities. I also support funding a Molonglo Valley community council that can advocate for the needs of residents in the area, and I thank the Chief Minister for his work to progress this. I thank Dr Paterson and I support this motion.

MR HANSON (Murrumbidgee) (5.32): I will be brief. I also thank Dr Paterson for bringing on this motion today. It is one that it is obvious we all agree with. All the members from Murrumbidgee having been out on the ground, we have heard of the many complex issues facing Molonglo. There is no question that the time has arrived when residents deserve their own community council, and it is good that we all agree with that. I welcome the statement from the Chief Minister that that will be progressed.

There is a lot of work to be done. I commend the members of the forum who have been working already to progress many of these issues, as well as the members of the Weston Creek Community Council, who have been working hard. I acknowledge Monique, who has come in here today to join us. She and her colleagues have been advocating to get us to this point. Well done. There is lots to be done and I look forward to working with the members of the new community council when it is established—hopefully sooner rather than later.

DR PATERSON (Murrumbidgee) (5.33), in reply: In closing, I would like to thank the members of the Assembly for their support of this motion. It is clear support for the residents of the Molonglo Valley. I would like to thank the Chief Minister for the support to progress this motion over the coming weeks and months. I would also like to acknowledge the Weston Creek Community Council for its decades-long support and advocacy for Molonglo residents to this point. In closing, I would like to say that I look forward to working with the Molonglo Valley community council in the future. Thank you.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Standing orders—suspension

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

That so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the adjournment debate being extended by 15 minutes.

Adjournment

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

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Valedictory

MR COE (Yerrabi) (5.35): I rise today for the last time as a member of this place. In many ways, the past 12 years have flown by. It is interesting that there are many things that you recall with absolute clarity. Meanwhile, there are many other things

that fade away. Our minds are pretty good at triaging the parts of our history, our careers and our stories that are really significant. More often than not, it is the people, the personal conversations, the connections we establish and the verbal and non-verbal exchanges that are far more memorable than the debates, the details and the disagreements.

Over the years there have been many issues that I have litigated. I am sure members would be very relieved to know that you are not going to hear another speech from me on light rail or housing affordability. But, in all seriousness, I do hope that you can all work on making Canberra a more affordable place, particularly with regard to the cost of housing, so that the relentless pressure that so many families are feeling can be relieved.

Of course, there has been no shortage of frustrations coming from a dozen years on the wrong side of the chamber. In many ways, the motivation, commitment and dedication of every opposition member, current and past, is quite extraordinary. Opposition is tough, and it is a credit to all that, despite the inevitability of almost every single vote in this place, each MLA maintains the fight and the conviction.

For quite a few years, as I am sure some of you would recall, I certainly maxed out the adjournment debate. I am pleased to have included in the annals of this city many, many achievements and even more names.

I thank all the staff of the Assembly, both those we see regularly and those who work behind the scenes. I particularly want to acknowledge the wonderful teams in Hansard and the library for all that you do. We take the provision and accuracy of our transcripts for granted. These services are always there when we need them. I particularly thank the librarians for their patience with the many reports and documents that I have requested—many I have yet to return. They will surely emerge as I pack up my office.

There have also been many journalists based here at the Assembly and elsewhere who have helped along the way with our communication. Of course, the last thing that a journalist wants is to be named in the Assembly by a Liberal. I am sure that would be a very career-limiting move at certain news outlets. But some have gone above and beyond to report the news, to build relationships and to build trust. I thank them.

To be elected by fellow citizens is very special. The personal satisfaction of election night in 2008 was a wonderful experience. I was written off in that campaign when I was preselected 49 days out from the election. We worked hard and went at a good pace. I am grateful for the many people that supported me in that campaign, many of whom have continued to be volunteers, staff, confidantes, friends and supporters throughout my dozen years here.

In 2008 I vividly recall my car breaking down in the late afternoon on election night. I was pulled over on Castieau Street in Higgins, listening to the electronic pre-poll votes come in. Fittingly, 12 years on, in the late afternoon on election night, in October 2020, my car broke down again. Perhaps I was being sent a message.

There were many difficult decisions that were taken over the years—perhaps none more so than decisions regarding leadership. But there was also the move from Ginninderra to Yerrabi in 2016. To lose 70 per cent of the electorate that you had worked on for over eight years was tough. However, it was the right decision. I am grateful to the Yerrabi electors for their support.

To all my colleagues on both sides, current and former, thank you for your friendship and support. To the wonderful Liberal staff who have served with dedication, distinction, commitment, loyalty and friendship, I thank you all very much.

I am a proud Liberal. To be a Liberal in this city is tough. Based on what you hear and see in the media, from activists or from many institutions, it would surprise many that there are still around 100,000 people that vote Liberal in this city. More than one in three households still vote Liberal. That is a significant number. They are swimming against the tide. It can take courage to be a Liberal in Canberra. I take my hat off to all those people that stick to their convictions.

I particularly want to thank my wife, Yasmin, for the extraordinary patience and love that she has shown me. I have been very blessed to be supported by her along this journey. I also look forward to recalling these days with my beautiful kids, Angus and Annabel, who really have no idea what I do. When they are asked what my job is, apparently they say it is either “to stand outside Casey shops” or “to cook barbecues”. I hope I did both with distinction.

I am also grateful to my parents-in-law, Gerry and Karen; my parents, Bruce and Barbara; and my brothers, Phil and James. Mum and Dad, who are here with us today, ride the wave of politics pretty hard. I am sure that they will be very relieved to not have to do any more letterboxing.

My request and advice to you all is to not take for granted the support that you receive from your family.

In my first speech I made mention of the importance of faith. Twelve years on, I am more confident and more vigilant about the importance of protecting and welcoming the input of people of faith into our public discussions.

I am proud of the constituent issues that I worked towards. I am proud of the policies I put forward, including our comprehensive planning policy and the rapid bus plan in 2016, which was largely adopted by the government. I am proud of the scrutiny and research I applied, including uncovering the land deals and numerous pieces of legislation to improve transparency. I am proud of the groups that we championed, particularly the small business, faith and multicultural communities. I would particularly like to thank the Indian, Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Filipino, Chinese and African communities for the warmth and generosity they have shown me. I am also proud of some of the mundane day-to-day things, some of the technical things—like our question time database, the FOIs, the questions, the correspondence and all the other things.

But what I am most proud about is the wonderful team that I have had the pleasure and privilege of being part of. Whilst there is no shortage of gutless armchair critics who anonymously put nasty comments about politicians on Twitter or Facebook, every MLA that I have served with was motivated by the most honourable of reasons.

I have one final observation. I think many people on the right of politics can understand why some people are left wing. We disagree, but we understand. Unfortunately, I think there are many on the left who do not understand or comprehend why someone could be on the right wing. All these views are valid and deserve to be respectfully heard and considered.

Canberra is a good place and it has been an honour to serve in the ACT Assembly. I thank the voters of Ginninderra and Yerrabi, and the Liberal Party, for allowing me to represent you. I know that now is the right time to move on from this place. I have a fear that if I were to stay it would turn into a job rather than a calling. Best wishes.

Mr Alistair Coe—tribute

MS LEE (Kurrajong—Leader of the Opposition) (5.45): How, in one speech, can I possibly do justice to Alistair the politician, the mentor, the friend to so many in this chamber and throughout Canberra?

Alistair was elected to the Assembly in 2008 and re-elected three more times. When you access that famous and reliable resource Wikipedia, you can see how important a place politics has had in Alistair's life—but so too Canberra. He was born at the Royal Canberra Hospital, grew up in Wanniasa and Nicholls, and attended ACT schools in both Tuggeranong and Belconnen.

He obviously took an active interest in politics at a young age, joining the Liberal Party at 16 as a year 11 student at Radford. He continued that involvement when he went to ANU and became a member of the ANU Liberal Club, and the ACT Young Liberals, and he has the rare distinction of being made a life member of both those associations. His political interests were not limited to Australia, however; he was deputy chairman of the International Young Democrat Union in 2011.

His capacity for work is legendary amongst Liberals, and I am sure also in the Labor and Greens circles. His ability to innately understand and unlock the most complex of issues and his forensic prosecution of issues is unequalled in this place, and I suspect there will be a number of ACT officials giving a quiet sigh of relief after his final estimates appearance in the coming weeks. We also know of Alistair's insistence on doing his own letterboxing in the middle of the night, running. We also know his capacity to read complex planning laws. At one stage he had a tower of paper in his office that was the territory planning laws and he very possibly read every single page. He certainly knew them back to front.

Alistair made his inaugural speech on 9 December 2008. He said in that speech that the Liberal Party was “a party of initiative and enterprise, and I will seek to bring those attributes to my work here”. To quote more from that inaugural speech:

One of the most important reasons I decided to seek election was because of my frustration with the current government—a government that has neglected the provision and upkeep of basic services such as public safety, roads and hospitals—and, of course, their poor financial management. Instead, this government has spent valuable taxpayer resources on satisfying their delusions of grandeur and has sought to turn Canberra into the nation's leading social laboratory.

That was in 2008 and it seems perhaps little has changed, according to Alistair.

Alistair came into this place as a young, single, passionate and committed Liberal, keen to make a difference. He leaves this place still young, still passionate, still a committed Liberal, but now as a husband and father with the additional mantle of senior statesman and mentor to so many within the Liberal Party.

Those who know Alistair well also know his capacity for the dry comment and self-deprecation. His sense of humour is almost stealth-like. There are many stories that might be told about Alistair's contribution to and time in this place, and mere words seem to be inadequate. I will, however, place on the record one outstanding ability that Alistair himself talked about: his ability to recognise people, places and events, and milestones in his electorate.

As the Chief Minister and I observed only yesterday, Alistair was able to pack more words into a five-minute adjournment than anyone else. At times we would reflect on whether there were any more names in the phone book that had not made it into Hansard through one of Alistair's adjournment speeches. His Christmas card list was almost as long. On many a Christmas Eve or the day before, I am told by those who have been here longer than me, Alistair would be seen furiously handwriting Christmas messages to almost everyone in his electorate.

One story that perhaps might one day be further explained is the apparently memorable trip that he and fellow committee members Mary Porter and Caroline Le Couteur made to Brisbane, when they took in some of Brisbane's nightlife—all in the name of committee busines, I am told and assured. Such travel is no longer available; is there a connection to what happened on that trip? But, as we all know, what happens on a committee trip stays on a committee trip. I am told that perhaps the seeds of an idea of a Coe, Le Couteur and Porter consultancy may be on the cards.

We all know that behind every successful person there is an even harder working partner, and Yasmin is certainly that. She has also been a huge support and a friend to all of the Liberal MLAs, and her exquisite hampers have often been the go-to gift for special occasions. Yasmin's and Alistair's two beautiful children, Angus and Annabel, are a source of enormous joy in Alistair's life, and I am sure that he is looking forward to spending more time with them. I acknowledge Yasmin and also his parents, Bruce and Barbara, who are joining us here today, great friends of the Liberal Party.

Alistair, on behalf of the Canberra Liberals, the MLAs, the party members and the supporters, thank you. I cannot begin to understand the personal toll the last four years, especially as leader, have placed on you and your family. I suspect that I am going to

find out. I am only starting to grasp how difficult the job of opposition leader is, but I have in my toolkit the many examples of your skills in dealing with complex, difficult and sometimes challenging situations, how much respect you showed every single member of the party room and how you allowed and encouraged every one of us to voice our opinions without judgement.

I wish you and your family every success in your future pathways. We all know that, just as cream rises to the top, so too will you in whatever you choose to do. I finish with a quote from JRR Tolkien, who said:

Still round the corner there may wait
A new road or a secret gate.

I trust you enjoy that new road and that secret gate. You will not be forgotten and your legacy in this place will live on.

Summernats Sunday School

MS CASTLEY (Yerrabi) (5.52): I am delighted to be on my feet today to acknowledge and praise the success of the recent “Sunday School” event, which had nothing to do with learning, or very little, but everything to do with community fun and engines. We have all heard of the Summernats, but perhaps not Sunday School, which was born from the closure of this year’s Summernats.

COVID killed off Summernats in Canberra this year, so Andrew Dale, who owns the iconic food van in Gungahlin The ‘G’ Spot, which has been drawing really big crowds since opening 20 years ago, decided to put on a Clayton’s Summernats cruise, which was a massive success.

The police were contacted and involved. It was a COVID-safe event. Participants all had to have our lights on to make sure that we were identifying with the event and being careful and safe. Strict rules were adhered to. It was terrific to see all of Canberra’s car enthusiasts, including yours truly, coming out as a community even though Summernats was not on.

Because it was such a success, stickers were made up and it was promoted as an event, and it has now kicked off the monthly Sunday School gig. Last Sunday we gathered at Gungahlin oval and had a great time. Over \$3,000 was raised and donated to a local charity, and now Sunday School is looking for a more suitable venue. Here’s to many more Sunday School cruises.

Ms Indra Esguerra—tribute

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong) (5.54): I rise today to give a special thankyou and to pay tribute to a long-term staff member and well-known force of nature in the ACT Greens, Indra Esguerra. After 16 years working for the Greens in this building, Indra is leaving my staff and the Assembly for less green pastures—that is, a more normal life beyond the realm of Green politics and the Legislative Assembly. Knowing Indra,

though, while she might be leaving the Assembly, her contributions to the community and to activism will no doubt continue. That activist's spirit is in her DNA.

This break from the Assembly is truly deserved, because Indra's contribution to the Greens in the personal sense has been heroic and selfless. Her contribution to the Greens' policies and campaigns and to our ongoing quest to improve social justice and protect the environment has been immeasurable.

This has been a parliamentary career filled with achievements, and I hope Indra looks back upon it with pride. Indra has been a Greens party stalwart, an adviser, a campaign manager, an election candidate and a chief of staff. Formerly, she has worked for me, Deb Foskey and Caroline Le Couteur. But I think all Greens MLAs in the last 15 years will confess that Indra has been a great boon to them as well.

She has been the spearhead for many of the Greens' successes. She has passionately advanced issues such as triple bottom line reporting, planning reform, the circular economy, natural ecosystems and animal welfare. I have never heard someone so fervently and so often explain the word "eat". It is fair to say that Indra has actually had a hand in pretty much everything the ACT Greens have achieved in the last 15 years. If you turn to the index in the big book of Greens achievements, there are pages and pages under the heading "Indra".

With all this time and effort comes a vast wealth of knowledge and experience. It is said around our office that Indra knows everything. It is amazing how often the answer to a question in the Greens office is a short pause, followed by the familiar refrain, "You'd better go and ask Indra". And if Indra does not know the answer, rest assured she will have something on the issue stored in a box or in a pile of papers that she has kept because you never know when you might need that.

It can be taxing being an oracle, but Indra mostly relishes it. Nothing pleases her more than getting to thump the table and wave her finger and say, "I've been banging on about this issue since 2005 and now the government is finally doing something about it." For the record, I did sanitise that last quote to remove the particularly emphatic language that would usually adorn such a statement. She is a passionate and enthusiastic advocate.

New starters in the Greens can sometimes be startled to meet this whirlwind of energy and conviction. Like Canberra, she is confident, bold and ready, but surprise in new staff is short-lived as they realise she simply really does give a damn. It is always comforting to know that she is on our side.

I want to emphasise the constant and ongoing sacrifices Indra has made for the Greens. She puts her heart and soul into her work, into the party and into the cause of environmental and social justice. I asked some of my colleagues—MLAs and staff—for words that come to mind when they think of Indra. Unsurprisingly, it was words like "dedicated, committed, irreplaceable and passionate". They also obviously appreciate her unyielding determination to achieve good outcomes, as they used words like "indomitable, determined, tenacious, a hardened veteran and a magician".

If you asked Indra about this, she would just scoff and would say she is here to get stuff done, and that is another sanitised quote.

We are going to miss our excellent colleague and friend. I think everyone who has been part of this Assembly in the last 16 years will also miss her. Indra, on behalf of all of my Greens colleagues, we will miss your knowledge, your passion, your good companionship and your tireless dedication. Congratulations. Thank you, and best wishes for the exciting future ahead of you.

I also take this opportunity to offer my acknowledgement to Mr Coe of his speech today, and I also wish him the best in his future.

Health Care Consumers Association

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Families and Community Services and Minister for Health) (5.58): I want to start by acknowledging the enormous contributions that both Mr Coe and Indra Esguerra have made to this place and to the ACT community in their different roles and in their various ways. They will both be missed.

I rise today to acknowledge the critical role that healthcare consumers play in developing a patient-centred health system. We are very lucky in the ACT to have a health promotion organisation dedicated to delivering better health outcomes through consumer empowerment and which enables consumers to be in control of their own health—the Health Care Consumers Association, or HCCA.

As a government, we are committed to working with all of our partners in health care—staff, patients, their carers and families, non-government organisations, primary care providers, and the wider community. But we know that any organisation is only as good as those who involve themselves and dedicate their time and effort to forward the organisation’s aims. I would like to take a moment to recognise a few of those people today.

John Scott is a strong consumer advocate for people using renal services. John is the consumer co-chair of the Renal Advisory Network and has been involved in the network for more than a decade. John has a strong focus on governance in the health system, with a particular interest in digital health, something that is critical now more than ever. During his time he has contributed significantly to the work of HCCA, particularly with regard to electronic medical records. He is committed to the value of pursuing a shared vision, and his contribution to the Renal Advisory Network demonstrates that. I have been told that John and his wife, Joan, are relocating to Perth. I know that everyone who has worked with John has highly valued his contribution. Thank you for your contribution to the ACT health system, John.

I would also like to acknowledge Russell McGowan, who has been a member of the Health Care Consumers Association for 25 years and was president from 1998 to 2008. Russell is a bone marrow transplant survivor who has been active in the healthcare consumer movement since the early 90s. He has made a significant

contribution to advance consumer participation in health care. Indeed, I first met Russell when I worked for the Consumers Health Forum in 2001—20 years ago.

He has had a long history working on the oncology users group at the Canberra Hospital, and at the Australian Council on Healthcare Standards; and on the board of the Consumers Health Forum, the Australian Council on Healthcare Standards and the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care, to name a few. Importantly, over his time he has mentored many consumer advocates, including Darlene Cox, the current Executive Director of HCCA. Recently, I understand, he has been testing out our public health system. I am advised that consumer advocates call this “field research”. I wish Russell well in his recovery.

Lastly, I was saddened to hear of the recent death of Roger Killeen. Roger was a long-time and active member of the HCCA, joining in 2002. He was a very experienced consumer representative and represented consumer interests on a variety of committees at a local and national level. This included significant work on diabetes services, point of care testing and our much-loved walk-in centres.

Roger lived with type 1 diabetes for more than 50 years and was very focused on improving outcomes and the experience of care for people living with this disease. Roger was a previous president of Diabetes ACT and was awarded life membership in 2017. Roger felt that his 40 years in the Air Force prepared him well to be an effective consumer representative.

I know his colleagues at HCCA will miss Roger. His contributions to HCCA over the years were greatly appreciated by many members. They remarked on his constantly calm manner. They have described him as an enthusiastic contributor, a stalwart and, like many in the consumer movement, a deeply passionate man. My condolences go to his wife, Koralline, and his family.

In closing, my thanks go to all who continue to participate, to advocate and to share their expertise and knowledge to help us build a better health system. Consumers, carers, families and experts in bringing lived experience to the table to improve outcomes—thank you, one and all.

UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (6.02): I would like to talk about the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. On 22 January this year, the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons came into force, making nuclear weapons illegal under international law. The treaty prohibits all aspects of the development, testing, production, use and threat of nuclear weapons. It currently has 86 signatories and 52 ratifying state parties. Unfortunately, Australia is not one of them.

The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, also known as ICAN, was founded in Australia. ICAN promotes the treaty. In 2017 ICAN was awarded the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize for its work in drawing attention to the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons, and for its groundbreaking efforts to achieve a treaty-based prohibition of such weapons.

The Australian Greens' founding principles of peace and non-violence, social justice and grassroots democracy are all present in the work of ICAN. On 23 January, the ACT Greens, including me and many of my colleagues here, joined with ambassadors, activists, elected representatives and members of the community to celebrate the fact that the international treaty to ban nuclear weapons has come into force. It was a day of celebration. But, as Shane Rattenbury noted, it was also a day of mourning for those who have been impacted by nuclear weapons. First nations peoples in particular have been subject to horrifying health impacts and the decimation of country due to nuclear testing.

As some of you may remember, in September 2018 the Legislative Assembly passed a motion moved by the Deputy Chief Minister, Yvette Berry, calling on all members of the Assembly to sign the ICAN parliamentary pledge in support of the treaty. I am proud to say that all current Greens members of this Assembly have done so. In total, 13 members of the current Legislative Assembly have signed. I would like to put their names on the record, and I will read them as they are listed on the charter: Andrew Barr, Yvette Berry, Andrew Braddock, Tara Cheyne, Jo Clay, Emma Davidson, Johnathan Davis, Suzanne Orr, Michael Pettersson, Shane Rattenbury, Chris Steel, Rachel Stephen-Smith, and Rebecca Vassarotti. I expect that more members would like to sign the pledge, and I would encourage them to do so. It is not too late, and you can do it online.

The motion of 2018 also called on members of this Assembly to urge the Australian government to sign and ratify the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Sadly, Australia has not yet done so. There is more work for us to do to encourage our federal government to embrace peace, not fear, and to do our part to make this world a safer place. I repeat the call for members in this chamber to work with their federal counterparts to ensure that Australia does sign up to and ratify this important treaty.

Women in the arts

MS ORR (Yerrabi) (6.05): This speech references Aboriginal people who are deceased.

I expect that by now all of us in this place will have noticed the new statue at Constitution Place. It has raised many important public discussions. Today I would like to speak about one of those: the representation of women in art.

At this point it is fair to say that, despite our city's comparatively short life, Canberra has a rich tradition of investing in diverse and thought-provoking public art. We see diversity of style in the modern brutalist architecture which characterises many of our buildings; the contemporary abstract sculptures, such as the notable moth descending on Tuggeranong on Drakeford Drive, the playful owl on Belconnen Way, the noble bronze figures of John Curtin and Ben Chifley, which reflect this city's beautiful, rich political history and, perhaps the most iconic of all, Patricia Piccinini's notorious and delightful *Skywhale* and now *Skywhalepapa*.

However, while this is a fine collection, there remains a gap—a gap of roughly the size of 51 per cent of Australia’s population. There are 30 gendered sculptures listed on Arts ACT’s website. Eleven of them are female, while there are 16 male sculptures. Of those 11, only one represents a historical figure, while the other 10 depict various abstract concepts. These are shopping, being a sister, dreaming in the nude, separation, being a mythical serpent queen, civic pride, whimsy, naivety, driving, stepping out of the house, and celebrating play. The 16 men include 10 historical figures. That is a 10 to one gender imbalance. As the saying goes, you cannot be what you cannot see.

Along with leaving women out of our political heritage and implying that we are not worth commemorating, this imbalance reveals that when women have been depicted in our public art, we are mostly detached from our individuality and instead deployed to express notions of feminine public life in this city. There is nothing inherently wrong with depicting abstract concepts, but it becomes a problem when it means that men get to share in our concrete history while women are left out.

I appreciate that the statue on Constitution Place was an initiative of the National Capital Authority and not of the ACT government. I also appreciate that since self-government we have never let the federal government stop us from living our progressive values. With this in mind, I would like to use my platform of being able to talk in this place to acknowledge a few women who have been integral to our political history by advancing women’s political representation, and without whose advocacy and activism our democracy would most certainly have unfolded quite differently.

Henrietta Dugdale and Annie Lowe were the co-founders of the first female suffrage society in Australia. Catherine Helen Spence was the first female political candidate in Australia, standing in 1887 for the Federal Convention in Adelaide. Edith Cowan was the first woman to successfully be elected to an Australian parliament.

Rose Scott was a women’s rights activist who advocated for women’s suffrage and founded the Women’s Political Education League, which successfully campaigned to have the age of consent raised to 16. Mary Moore-Bentley, Nellie Martel, Vida Goldstein and Selina Anderson were the first four women to stand in the 1903 federal election, the first election where women were eligible to stand. Eva Seery and Henrietta Greville were the first two female candidates to stand for Australian parliament and to be endorsed by a major party—the Labor Party naturally.

Enid Lyons was the first woman elected to the federal parliament House of Representatives, in 1943. Dorothy Tangney was the first woman elected to the federal parliament Senate, in 1943 as well.

Outside of this were also Mum Shirl, a prominent Wiradjuri woman, social worker and humanitarian activist, committed to justice and the welfare of Aboriginal Australians; Sue Wills, an Australian activist prominent in the women’s liberation movement and the press for LGBTI rights; and Gladys Elphick MBE, a Kaurna woman and Ngadjuri woman of South Australia, best known as the founding president of the Council of Aboriginal Women of South Australia.

The list could go on and on, because there is no shortage of wonderful women who have contributed so much to our equality. I believe that each of these great women is worth commemorating and, while I may not have the skills to immortalise them in sculpture myself, I am glad that I can share their contribution on our public record.

Mr Alistair Coe—tribute

MR HANSON (Murrumbidgee) (6.10): I rise to make a few personal comments about Alistair, as a fellow traveller of the class of 2008. There is one fewer of us standing now. I thought Elizabeth Lee spoke very well about your service on behalf of the MLAs. But, personally, as someone who has worked with you for 12 years—it is a big part of our careers; it is a long time—I would like to thank you for your service to the Assembly, to your constituents and to the Liberal Party, and I would like to thank you for your friendship over that time. We have mostly been allies, occasionally adversaries inside the party, but I think that you and I personally have always maintained that friendship, which I value. We, as a party, will miss you. I will miss you personally. I wish you and Yasmin all the very best in the future.

Green spaces

MS DAVIDSON (Murrumbidgee) (6.11): May I just say, Ms Orr, that that was quite a lovely speech. I look forward to talking to you more about the women's artwork initiative in appendix 5 of the parliamentary and governing agreement.

This past year has given many of us cause to think deeply about our connections to community and what we value most about where we live. When we spend so much more time at home or in our local neighbourhoods, and with reduced opportunities to gather together as a group, it becomes more important than ever that we have enjoyable spaces in our local neighbourhoods and places where we can meet with neighbours, family and friends. And while we are facing up to hard realisations about the fragility of our own existence, there is something reaffirming and nurturing about spending time in our natural environment and appreciating our beautiful bush capital.

This is what happened to residents in the Weston area over 2020 as they formed the Save Coolo Park group to protect their local green space from becoming a car park. Having access to grass and trees helps to mitigate the heat island effect of urban living and is a far more pleasant walk to the shops for the people in the surrounding suburbs than being surrounded by bitumen and cars. It is unsurprising, then, that former Murrumbidgee MLA Caroline Le Couteur's petition calling on the ACT government to preserve the parkland and not build a temporary car park on the site received 1,112 signatures in June 2020. This is many more people than live in the immediate area and demonstrates that the green space is valued by people who visit the Cooleman Court area as well as by those who live there. I am sure Mr Cubey the wombat, last seen ambling down the path connecting Cooleman Park to Stirling, also values his suburban parkland home.

As a result of the efforts of the Save Coolo Park group, and with advice and support from the Weston Creek Community Council, including identifying alternative car

parking spaces, local residents have successfully achieved the result they most wanted—to keep their park for people, not cars. I support their aims to see Cooleman Park permanently rezoned as parkland and become more functional as a neighbourhood park, with more trees and picnic tables. With the busy shopping area nearby, this park is in an ideal location for local workers and visitors to the area to eat lunch or meet with friends, especially at this time of year when the green grass and shady trees provide respite from concrete and hard surfaces reflecting summer heat.

This is a wonderful result for democracy and for community activism. I commend the members of the group for their peaceful but determined efforts to protect a place they love, and I thank Chris Steel for listening and responding to them. I hope that this is encouraging to others who are working to protect their local environment. Saving planet Earth begins in our own back yard.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 6.14 pm until Tuesday, 30 March at 10.00 am.

- (1A) The Legislation Act, division 19.3.3 (Appointments—Assembly consultation) does not apply to the appointment of a person who is a member of an appropriate council in another jurisdiction.

5

Proposed new part 5B

Page 9, line 8—

insert

Part 5B

Crimes Act 1900

8D **Trial for murder—provocation**
New section 13 (2) (b) (iii)

insert

(iii) as to have formed an intent to cause serious harm to the deceased;

8E **New section 13 (7)**

insert

(7) In this section:

serious harm—see the Criminal Code, dictionary.

Answers to questions

Budget—capital works (Question No 2)

Ms Lee asked the Chief Minister, upon notice, on 4 December 2020 (*redirected to the Treasurer*):

In relation to the 19 initiatives listed on pages 26-27 of the Pre-election Budget Update on design work and feasibility, of which 12 have received funding for feasibility studies and seven have received funding for design work, (a) what is the cost of each of the 12 projects that received funding for a feasibility study, (b) what is the cost of each of the seven projects that received funding for design work, (c) what is the scope of each of these studies, (d) who undertook this work, (e) how were they contracted, (f) what is the timeframe for completion, (g) how many have been started, (h) how many have been completed and (i) when will a decision be made as to whether they proceed to implementation.

Mr Barr: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

The answer to the Member's question is provided at **Attachment A**

(A copy of the attachment is available at the Chamber Support Office).

Planning—Holt (Question No 15)

Mrs Kikkert asked the Minister for Planning and Land Management, upon notice, on 4 December 2020:

- (1) Noting that the detached housing blocks on the eastern side of Lionel Rose Street, Holt, are compact blocks, only 12.5 metres wide, resulting in minimum side boundary setbacks of nil and a minimum rear boundary setback of 3m, according to Table 7 of the ACT Government's Single Dwelling Housing Development Code and that Rule 37A of this code, however, requires that 'a daytime living area is provided with a minimum 4m² of transparent vertical glazing that is oriented between 45° east of north and 45° west of north'. For a structure built on one of these blocks, the only wall that could allow for the required solar access would be the north-facing side wall. In reality, this is impossible because the north-facing side walls on all but corner blocks are contiguous with the south-facing side walls of neighbouring structures and therefore have no solar access, on what grounds did the ACT Government give approval to a housing development mainly comprised of compact blocks that cannot physically comply with Rule 37A of the Single Dwelling Housing Development Code.
- (2) In relation to detached houses already built on the eastern side of Lionel Rose Street, Holt, was a blanket exemption to Rule 37A given to these structures, or was each required to seek an individual exemption.
- (3) If each structure was required to seek an individual exemption, what was the process of seeking an exemption in each case, and how was the assessment carried out.

- (4) Why has the ACT Government begun enforcing compliance with this rule for owners of as-yet undeveloped blocks, in light of the fact that many houses that do not comply with Rule 37A have already been built on these blocks.
- (5) Can the Minister provide a clear description of how a dwelling built on a non-corner compact block on the eastern side of Lionel Rose Street, Holt, can structurally comply with the minimum rear boundary setback of three metres and Rule 37A regarding solar access.

Mr Gentleman: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

- (1) The Holt Estate Development Plan was given development approval on 4 April 2016 prior to the introduction of Rule 37A into the Single Dwelling Housing Development Code on 7 September 2016.
- (2) No. The planning and land authority (the authority) does not have general legislative powers to issue exemptions from planning requirements.
- (3) The planning and land authority (the authority) does not have general legislative powers to issue exemptions from planning requirements. The exemptions from the requirement to obtain development approval are set out in Schedule 1 of the *Planning and Development Regulation 2008*. For residential development, a lessee needs to comply with all provisions of the Single Dwelling Housing Development Code, including rule 37A, in order to be exempt from requiring development approval.

The authority can issue an *exemption declaration* in limited circumstances, as set out in section 1.100A and 1.100AB of Schedule 1 of the Regulation. However, this does not include non-compliance with Rule 37A.

Where a development does not comply with Rule 37A, and is therefore not exempt development, a development application is required and will be assessed against Criterion 37A.

- (4) The sites were selected at random as a part of a proactive audit program. Properties that had already been issued with a Certificate of Occupancy and Use (COU) were not audited.
- (5) The Single Dwelling Housing Development Code allows a 0 metre setback on the northern boundary. However, this does not mandate a 0 metre setback and a dwelling could be designed to be set back further to help achieve compliance with Rule 37A.

It may not be possible to meet the requirements of Rule 37A in every instance. In this case, there is an ability to lodge a Development Application (DA) to be assessed on its merits against Criterion 37A.

Planning—transmission lines (Question No 16)

Mrs Kikkert asked the Minister for Planning and Land Management, upon notice, on 4 December 2020:

- (1) Noting that certain residents in Lionel Rose Street, Holt, purchased blocks and built homes without any knowledge of the 330kV transmission lines that would be erected

directly behind their properties because the ACT Government failed to include the development application for this major infrastructure project on the official lease conveyancing reports. Leaseholders have been informed that at least some of their residential fences must now be earthed to avoid the risk of induced voltage. Also noting that in question on Notice No 2915 (Ninth Assembly) I asked, ‘Who will pay for rectification work to residents’ fences that require earthing’ and in response, I was told that ‘the ACT Government is engaging with the utility around responsibilities’. Further noting that on 14 September 2020, residents were informed via an email from the utility that ‘in principle, the earthing of fences in these circumstances is the responsibility of the property owner, however given the history of this matter we have been in consultation with the ACT government in an attempt to assist landowners. We will follow up this matter in coming weeks and will provide an update’. The 330kV transmission lines have been live since at least 4 November 2020, according to the utility and an audit identified certain lengths of fence located on residential blocks in Lionel Rose Street that needed to be earthed, have all these lengths of fence been earthed now; if so, on which date/s were they earthed; if not, why not.

- (2) Why is it the responsibility of property owners to earth fences on their properties that were safe from induced voltage before the construction of high-voltage transmission lines directly behind their houses.
- (3) Who has paid or will pay for the earthing of these fences, and how much was/is the total cost, and if shared, how much did/will each party pay.

Mr Gentleman: The answer to the member’s question is as follows:

- (1) The information that some Lionel Rose Street, Holt, residential fences need to be earthed is not correct. Whilst an initial generic audit by Transgrid based on general criteria that was conducted in late 2019 indicated that some fences may have required earthing, a subsequent site-specific Stockdill project assessment showed that residential fence earthing would not be needed. This position has been supported by recent independent on-site testing showing compliance with Australian Standards. TransGrid has additionally advised that the 330kV transmission line is safe.
- (2) TransGrid had advised that if fence earthing was in fact required, TransGrid would undertake this work prior to line energisation. Standard utility communication regarding fencing risks is typically tailored to people building residences near existing transmission lines, not new lines.
- (3) Not applicable.

Community Services Directorate—contracts (Question No 56)

Mrs Kikkert asked the Assistant Minister for Families and Community Services, upon notice, on 4 December 2020:

- (1) Did the Community Services Directorate (CSD) in 2018–19, let 94 contracts worth almost \$190 million be exempt from tender; if so, for each of these contracts, can the Minister provide (a) name of contractor, (b) service contracted for, (c) dollar value of contract, (d) expiration date of contract, (e) length of time that this contract has been held by the same contractor and (f) for any contract valued between \$25,001 and \$200,000, the dollar value of each written quote obtained from competitive contractor.

- (2) Did the CSD in 2018–19 let 71 contracts with values above \$200,000 without open tender; if so, for each of these contracts, can the Minister provide (a) name of contractor, (b) service contracted for, (c) dollar value of contract, (d) expiration date of contract, (e) length of time that this contract has been held by the same contractor and (f) reason why the CSD overrode current procurement policy guidelines (and legislation) in awarding this contract.

Ms Davidson: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

- (1) In 2018–19, CSD exercised procurement activities in accordance with the ACT Government tender thresholds and complied with procurement policies and procedures as stated in the *Government Procurement Act 2001* (the Act) and the *Government Procurement Regulation 2007* (the Regulation).

Fifty-four of the 'Single Select' contracts relate to programs where existing contracts were extended for an additional term in accordance with Procurement Guidelines and approved by the ACT Government Procurement Board (GPB).

(a)-(e) Details provided in Attachment A.

(f) This information is commercial-in-confidence.

- (2) (a)-(e) Details provided in Attachment B.

(f) CSD has acted in accordance with procurement policy and legislation in determining the most appropriate procurement methodology for each process.

(Copies of the attachments are available at the Chamber Support Office).

Community Services Directorate—Senior Practitioner (Question No 65)

Mrs Kikkert asked the Minister for Disability, upon notice, on 4 December 2020:

- (1) What are the complete powers, roles and responsibilities of the Senior Practitioner.
- (2) What data does the Senior Practitioner collect in relation to people living with disability in the ACT.
- (3) What data does the Senior Practitioner collect in relation to restrictive practices.
- (4) How many full-time equivalent staff are currently employed in the Office of the Senior Practitioner.
- (5) How many staff are currently employed, what are their work classifications and what type of employment are they engaged in, ie full-time, part-time, casual etc.
- (6) What is the total number of complaints received by the Senior Practitioner for each year since appointment to the date this question on notice was published.

Ms Davidson: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

- (1) The powers, roles and responsibilities of the Senior Practitioner are described in the *Senior Practitioner Act 2018* (the Act).

The Senior Practitioner is responsible for the implementation of the intent and objects of this Act, specifically to provide a framework for reducing and eliminating the use of restrictive practices by providers.

The functions of the Senior Practitioner are set out in section 26 of the Act and includes broad oversight and regulation of the use of restrictive practices in accordance with the Act, education and dissemination of information related to restrictive practices and the rights of people subject to restrictive practices, give advice to people who may be subject to restrictive practices and to carry out research related to restrictive practices.

The Senior Practitioner must make Guidelines (Section 12 and 21) regarding positive behaviour support plans and panels; may also make Guidelines for the Act (Section 27), respond to complaints, carry out investigations and give Directions to providers (Part 5), and share information with key entities (Part 6). Part 8 of the Act provisions regarding possible offences should restrictive practices be used other than in accordance with the Act.

- (2) The Office of the Senior Practitioner receives the names, date of birth, gender, address and service provider details for people living with a disability in the ACT who have had a restrictive practice use reported to the Office. The Senior Practitioner may also request additional information under section 22 of the Act in relation to registration of positive behaviour support panels.
- (3) The Office of the Senior Practitioner collects data on restrictive practices as described in Section 10 of the Act:
 - the name of the person on whom the restrictive practice was used;
 - whether the person was a child when the restrictive practice was used;
 - the kind of restrictive practice used;
 - for how long the restrictive practice was used;
 - the reason why the restrictive practice was used;
 - what prior attempt (if any) was made to avoid the use of the restrictive practice;
 - the effect of the restrictive practice on the person's behaviour;
 - the name of the person who authorised the use of the restrictive practice (if relevant);
 - the name of the person who used the restrictive practice.
- (4) The number of full-time equivalent (FTE) permanent and temporary staff who work in the Office of the Senior Practitioner is 4.4.
- (5) The current staff complement comprises:
 - Executive Level, Executive Branch Manager – 1 FTE.
 - Senior Officer A, Senior Director – 1 FTE.
 - Senior Officer B, Director, part time – 0.4 FTE.
 - Senior Officer C, Assistant Director – 1 FTE.
 - Administrative Services Officer 6 – 1 FTE.

- (6) There have been 23 complaints in total as at 4 December 2020. On all occasions the complaints were referred back to the Provider, who investigated. The Senior Practitioner has not, to date, instigated an own motion investigation.
- 2018: 3 complaints
 - 2019: 18 complaints
 - 2020: 2 complaints

**Government—Discrimination, Health Services, Disability and Community Services Commissioner
(Question No 69)**

Mrs Kikkert asked the Minister for Disability, upon notice, on 4 December 2020
(*redirected to the Minister for Human Rights*):

- (1) What are the complete powers, roles and responsibilities of the Discrimination, Health Services, Disability and Community Services Commissioner.
- (2) What data does the Commissioner collect in relation to people living with disability in the ACT.
- (3) Does the Commissioner engage any staff to assist in carrying out their role; if so, how many (a) full-time equivalent staff are currently employed and (b) staff are currently employed, what are their work classifications and what type of employment are they engaged in, ie full-time, part-time, casual etc.
- (4) What is the total number of complaints received by the Commissioner for each year the past four years to the date this question on notice was published.

Ms Cheyne: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

- (1) The DHSDCS has a range of roles and responsibilities outlined in the legislation which includes handling individual complaints, undertaking systemic investigations, participating in policy and legislative reform processes, undertaking community education and training across the areas of legislative responsibility. The DHSDCSC handles (or will handle) complaints about
 - Discrimination
 - Health services including individual registered practitioners
 - Services for children and young people
 - Services for older people
 - Retirement villages
 - Disability services
 - Vulnerable people (abuse, neglect & exploitation of older people and people with a disability)
 - Veterinary Services
 - Victims of Crime Charter of Rights (1/21)
 - Occupancy (2/2021)
 - Sexuality and gender identity conversion practices (4/2021)

The powers roles and responsibilities of the Discrimination, Health Services, Disability and Community Services Commissioner (DHSDCS Commissioner) are provided for in the *Human Rights Commission Act 2005* at

- Division 3.4, Section 21, Disability and Community Services commissioner's functions
 - Division 3.5, Section 23, Discrimination Commissioners functions
 - Division 3.6, Section 25, Health Services commissioners functions
 - Part 4 of the HRC Act which provides the complaint handling functions
 - Part 5 of the HRC Act regarding Health codes, health profession boards and veterinary practitioners and the relationship between the commission, the health profession boards and the veterinary practitioners board
 - Part 6 of the HRC Act, Miscellaneous
- (2) The DHSDCS Commissioner collects data regarding people with a disability in the ACT who make a complaint to the Commission, including the nature of the person's disability, noting that provision of this information is voluntary.
- (3) The Commissioner currently has 11 staff (10.2 FTE) who assist in carrying out the role and responsibilities of the commissioner who are public servants employed by the Human Rights Commission not directly engaged by the DHSDCSC. The staff profile is
- 1 x FT SOG B, 5 x FT SOG C, 3 x PT SOG C, 1 x FT APS 6, 1 x FT APS 5

(4)

Complaints received	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	1 July-30/11/2020
Total	507	633	683	829	350

Government—disability employment strategy (Question No 74)

Mrs Kikkert asked the Minister for Disability, upon notice, on 4 December 2020 (*redirected to the Chief Minister*):

- (1) Is there currently an ACT disability employment strategy.
- (2) How does the ACT Government support disability employment in the ACT private sector.
- (3) What has been the total number of employees and the percentage of disability employment in the ACT public service, for each financial year for the past four years to the date this question on notice was published.
- (4) Are there any plans to increase the percentage of disability employment in the ACT public service; if so, what measures does the ACT Government intend to take.

Mr Barr: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

- (1) The ACTPS People with Disability Employment Framework is available on the ACTPS Employment Portal.

- (2) The ACT Government in partnership with the ACT Inclusion Council and the Canberra Business Chamber created the Inclusion in Employment Project to expand employment opportunities for people with disability in Canberra’s private sector. Twenty-four people with disability were employed as a direct result of the project.

The ACT Government further supports disability employment in the ACT private sector through subsidised Australian apprenticeships. In addition to the base training subsidy, the ACT Australian Apprenticeships program provides a \$500 loading to further support each eligible Australian apprentice with disability. Should an Australian apprentice with disability require specialised equipment, an interpreter, a mentor or a tutor, assistance with transport, or other learning or wellbeing support, then additional support funding is also available.

In response to the COVID-19 health emergency, the ACT Government is also making available fee-free, work-related training to support the employment of jobseekers and young school-leavers (aged 17 to 24 years)—including people with disability.

- (3)

Financial Year	Headcount	Percentage of ACTPS
2016-17	458	2.2%
2017-18	521	2.4%
2018-19	565	2.5%
2019-20	622	2.7%

- (4) The ACTPS is currently reviewing the ACT People with Disability Employment Framework, including employment targets for people with disability.

Education—students with a disability (Question No 75)

Mrs Kikkert asked the Minister for Disability, upon notice, on 4 December 2020 (*redirected to the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs*):

- (1) Is there currently an ACT disability education strategy.
- (2) How does the ACT Government support disability education, in relation to both public and private education.
- (3) How many students in the ACT public education system are identified as living with a disability, to the date this question on notice was published.
- (4) Of those students identified in part (3), how many are in (a) primary school, (b) high school and (c) college and what is the percentage of students relating to each.
- (5) What kind of training, education and development is given to teachers to support students living with disability and how regular is the training provided.
- (6) Can teachers request additional training and support if they feel there is a need.
- (7) What specialists are employed to support students living with disability and what is the nature of the support that they provide.

- (8) How many specialists are employed across the ACT.
- (9) Are there any other workers that are employed by the ACT Government to support students with disability; if so, what is the nature of their training and work.
- (10) Which ten ACT government schools have the highest percentage of students living with disability enrolled and what is the percentage for each school.
- (11) What concerns have been identified by the ACT Government in relation to disability education, and what measures will the Government take to improve and/or resolve these concerns.

Ms Berry: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

1. The Future of Education Strategy (the FoE) is relevant for all students, including those with disability.

The *Disability Standards for Education 2005* developed under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* clarify and elaborate the legal obligations specifying how education and training are to be made accessible to students with disability. The ACT Students with Disability Meeting their Educational Needs Policy confirms the Directorate's commitment to supporting students with disability and complies with the requirements of the *Disability Discrimination Act 1991* and the *Disability Standards for Education 2005*.

2. ACT public schools are committed to meeting the needs of students with disability. In partnership with the student, parents, carers and other professionals, schools make reasonable adjustments for students with disability at the time of their enrolment and during the course of their education, supporting them to access and participate in the school curriculum, programs and activities on the same basis as their peers.

Disability education in public schools is supported in a range of ways, including:

- additional resource allocation to schools to support students with disability;
- provision of supports and adjustments depending on the needs of the student, this can include modifications to school environment, adjustments to the curriculum and support for teachers to develop specific skills;
- a diverse workforce that includes teachers, school leaders, learning support assistants, social workers and allied health professionals with expertise in developing supports for physical, sensory, communication and social skill needs of students with disability;
- workforce capability development through ongoing professional learning opportunities for teachers and other school staff; and
- collaborating with key stakeholders, including students, their families and external support services to better understand the needs of students and how to design a responsive and successful individualised educational program.

The ACT Education Directorate connects closely with the non-government school sector through developing networks, professional learning opportunities and sharing resources and supports.

3. For questions relating to student populations the Directorate uses the annual Census of ACT public schools conducted in August each year as the most accurate source. At

August 2020 census, there were 2,647 students with disability representing 5.3% of the student population.

4. At August 2020, there were:
 - 1563 students with disability in Primary School (years K-6) representing 5.7% of the student population
 - 770 students with disability in High School (years 7-10) representing 6.5% of the student population
 - 314 students with disability in College (years 11-12) representing 4.9% of the student population
5. ACT public school leaders and teachers are provided access to a range of resources, training and professional learning opportunities to support students with disability and foster inclusive school communities, such as: pedagogy including differentiation, responding to need and universal design for learning; developing individual learning plans, transition plans, manual handling and mealtime assistance planning; whole school frameworks and holistic approaches to behaviour supports and interventions to support positive interactions such as Positive Behaviour for Learning, Team Teach, Positive Behaviour Support Planning, Reducing and Eliminating Restrictive Practice, Essential Skills for Classroom Teachers, Social and Emotional Learning strategies; Trauma Informed Practice and Everyone Everyday creating inclusive school environments.

All ACT public schools have a Disability Education Coordination Officer (DECO) responsible for supporting students with disability and or diverse learning needs in the school and their teachers. The DECO is the liaison point for school staff, families and support services. They are supported through a network managed by the Education Support Office to coordinate professional discussions, learning and training programs and a community of practice.

There are also various training opportunities provided by external community organisations that teachers are supported to access.

6. Yes, teachers can request additional training and support if they feel there is a need. Teachers can talk to their school's Disability Education Coordination Officers (DECO), school psychologists, Network Student Engagement Teams and the Education Support Office to find out about the range of resources and support available to grow their capability.
7. There are a range of specialists employed to support all students, including students with disability, in ACT public schools such as teachers, school leaders, learning support assistants, youth workers, wellbeing support workers, psychologists, school youth health nurses and other allied health professionals including occupational therapists, speech pathologists and hearing and vision specialists.

These professionals provide various types of support and make reasonable adjustments to ensure all students can access and participate in learning. They also collaborate with school staff and provide professional learning to embed whole of school systems and to ensure quality teaching through coaching and mentoring to build capacity to develop classroom teacher pedagogy.

8. The number of specialist staff that support students in schools changes on a regular basis depending on the needs of the student population.

9. There are many other staff working within ACT Government services specifically for people with disability and services for people without disability that could at any point support students with disability. For example, bus drivers with disability awareness training; community liaison coordinators connecting families to services; clinical psychiatrists working in our hospitals; child protection workers supporting children, young people and/or parents with disability and Access Canberra staff facilitating complaints and feedback.
10. The four specialist public schools, Black Mountain School, Malkara School, The Woden School and Cranleigh School have our highest percentage of students with disability given all students attending these schools must meet the ACT Student Disability Education Criteria.

The ACT Government does not currently publicly release the number of students with disability attending each school.

11. In recent years the ACT Government has strengthened its commitment to supporting students with disability. The Future of Education Strategy has at its core an acknowledgement of inclusion within our schools and the need to place students at the centre of their learning.

The ACT Government continues to make significant investment to increase access to specialist supports within our schools and to grow capability of the workforce to better support students with disability and or diverse learning needs.

Government—carers strategy (Question No 76)

Mrs Kikkert asked the Minister for Disability, upon notice, on 4 December 2020:

- (1) How many people and what percentage of people are identified in the ACT as a carer for someone living with disability.
- (2) How does the ACT Government support carers for people living with disability.
- (3) In what ways will the ACT Government seek to develop and improve the ACT Carer's Strategy.
- (4) How many complaints has the ACT Government received in relation to carers for people living with disability.
- (5) What concerns have been identified by the ACT Government in relation to carers for people living with disability, and what measures will the Government take to improve and/or resolve these concerns.

Ms Davidson: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

- (1) According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics publication *Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings*, released on 24 October 2019, there were approximately 50,200 people in the ACT who were identified as a carer for someone with disability representing an estimated 12.2 per cent of the total ACT population.

- (2) The ACT Government is committed to recognising and supporting carers and responding to their needs, rights, choices and opportunities to fully participate in all areas of life. This is demonstrated through the Government's funding of Carers ACT as a peak disability organisation to provide individual and systemic advocacy.

In 2017, the Government partnered with Carers ACT to develop the ACT Carers Strategy 2018-2028, a carer-led framework to support and recognise the contribution of all carers in the ACT. The strategy acknowledges the difference carers make by providing support and assistance for people who live with disability, physical or mental health conditions or are frail aged.

Canberra Health Services has developed an action plan to assist in implementing the ACT Carers Strategy 2018-28. These actions have been developed in consultation with consumer and carer representatives and include a focus on: improving education and support for carers; identifying carers who may benefit from and promoting access to respite care; providing access to the hospital school for young carers; undertaking focus groups to identify and address barriers to involving carers in health plans and discharge processes, and reviewing the "Hospital in the Home" initiative to consider carers' needs and role as part of the care team. Canberra Health Services is also currently undertaking a comprehensive Disability Needs Assessment to help inform development of a Disability Action and Inclusion Plan, which will include actions relevant to supporting carers.

The ACT Government remains committed to supporting people with disability, their families and carers, and the disability sector through the COVID-19 health emergency. In May 2020, the Government released the *ACT COVID-19 Disability Strategy*, which acknowledges that the rapid rate of change and disruption to routines due to COVID-19 can be distressing for many people with disability and their families and carers.

Phase 1 of funding under the *ACT COVID-19 Disability Strategy* provided an additional \$450,000 for a range of responses, including targeted communication delivered by several disability support organisations, and making Personal Protective Equipment accessible and available to people with disability and their carers. Phase 2 funding will provide a further \$400,000 for additional responses, including individual grants to reduce home-based pressures on people with disability and their family carers.

Phase 2 funding under the *ACT COVID-19 Disability Strategy*, respite effect grants, administered by community organisations, will support people with disability, their families and their carers experiencing hardship due to extended periods of reduced social and community engagement.

The ACT Health Directorate funds two services to support carers for people living with disability via the Community Assistance and Support Program (CASP) and the Flexible Family Support (FFS) program. The services are delivered by Carers ACT and Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT).

Carers ACT receive funding across both programs to deliver care coordination, carer counselling and advocacy, domestic assistance, home support and social support. CIT receives funding under CASP for delivering counselling, information and advocacy for carers and families of people with disability.

For people with a mental illness, including people with psychiatric disability, the ACT Health Directorate also funds Carers ACT to deliver support, counselling, education, advocacy and referral services.

In 2020, the ACT Health Directorate published *COVID-19 an ACT Operational Plan for People with Disability* which provided guidance to support carers for people living with disability during the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2021, the ACT Health Directorate will commence work on an ACT Disability Health Strategy.

- (3) In the 10th Legislative Assembly Parliamentary Agreement, both the Greens and Labor committed to progress the *ACT Carers Strategy 2018-2028*. The ACT Government will continue to build on partnerships with Carers ACT and the Carers Strategy Governance Group to progress actions under the Strategy. As the first three-year Action Plan under the Strategy ends in 2021, the Government will work closely with the Governance Group and lead agencies to review the successes of the first three years, and build on these to improve the governance, implementation and evaluation of actions throughout the rest of the Strategy.
- (4) In the last 12 months, the Community Services Directorate has not received any complaints about carers of people living with disability.

The NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission commenced operating in the ACT on 1 July 2019. One of its core functions is to receive and investigate complaints about quality and safety within the scheme. The data for the number of complaints received by the Commission is not currently available to the ACT Government in detail. The Commission reports on the number of complaints it manages through the NDIS Commission Activity Reports.

The ACT Human Rights Commission has been able to receive complaints about alleged abuse, neglect or exploitation of older people or adults with a disability since May 2020. We have received five complaints in relation to carers of people with a disability between May and 30 November 2020.

- (5) In 2017, the Carers Voice Panel came together to identify issues that carers experience when interacting with Government and community service providers. These issues were outlined in the Carers Voice Panel Report that informed the development of the Strategy and the Action Plan. Carers made it clear they need recognition from medical and other professionals of the knowledge they have about the people they care for. The Strategy responds to this concern through several actions, including an action to conduct a carer impact assessment for the 'Hospital in the Home' initiative, considering carers' needs and their role as part of the care team. Other actions seek to acknowledge carers on health plans, including their role and support needs and consider carers' needs during hospital discharge processes.
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