



# Debates

WEEKLY HANSARD

Legislative Assembly for the ACT

**TENTH ASSEMBLY**

**30 MARCH 2021**

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**Tuesday, 30 March 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.

### **Resignation of member Statement by Speaker**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Pursuant to the resolution of the Assembly of 27 March 1992, as amended on 6 March 2008, which authorises me to receive written notice of resignation of a member, I wish to inform the Assembly that the Speaker received a written notice from Mr Coe, dated 12 March 2021. Pursuant to subsection 13(3) of the Australian Capital Territory (Self-Government) Act 1988, I present the following papers:

*Australian Capital Territory (Self-Government) Act 1988* (Cwlth), pursuant to subsection 13(3)—Resignation of office as Member—Mr Coe—Letter of resignation, dated 12 March 2021.

Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory—Casual Vacancy—Copy of letter to the Electoral Commissioner, ACT Electoral Commission, from the Speaker, dated 12 March 2021.

### **Announcement of member to fill casual vacancy**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** The Clerk has been notified by the Electoral Commissioner that, pursuant to sections 189 and 194 of the Electoral Act 1992, Mr James Milligan has been declared elected to the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Mr Coe. I present the following paper:

Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory—Casual Vacancy—Declaration of the poll—Letter from the Electoral Commissioner, ACT Electoral Commission, to the Clerk, ACT Legislative Assembly, dated 26 March 2021.

## Oath or affirmation of allegiance

**MADAM SPEAKER:** The provisions of the Oaths and Affirmations Act 1984 require the oath or affirmation of a new member to be made before the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the Australian Capital Territory or a judge of that court authorised by the Chief Justice. I present the following paper:

*Oaths and Affirmations Act 1984, pursuant to s 10A—Acting Chief Justice Burns—Letter to the Attorney-General from the Chief Justice, dated 16 March 2021.*

*Acting Chief Justice Burns attended accordingly—*

## Oath by member

*Mr Milligan was introduced and made and subscribed the oath required by law.*

*The Acting Chief Justice having retired—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** On behalf of all members, I bid Mr Milligan a warm welcome to the Assembly.

## Petitions

*The following petitions were lodged for presentation:*

### **Schools—language curriculum—petition 2-21**

*By Mrs Kikkert, from 61 residents:*

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

that:

- ACT Government policy requires that students in years 7 and 8 receive at least 150 minutes per week of instruction in one of eight priority languages;
- Hawker Primary School provides specialist instruction in French to students from kindergarten to year 6;
- French was taught to students in years 7 and 8 at Belconnen High School until a 2017 decision to discontinue it; and
- Belconnen High School students in years 7 and 8 now have no access to instruction in any priority language despite government policy.

Your petitioners, therefore, request the Assembly to call upon the ACT Government to:

- take all steps necessary to resume the teaching of French for students in years 7 and 8 at Belconnen High School; and
- if required, offer incentives and provide sufficient supports to attract and/or train a specialist teacher.

## **Planning—Kippax group centre—petition 8-21**

By **Mrs Kikkert**, from 781 residents:

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

This petition of certain residents of the Australian Capital Territory draws to the attention of the Assembly that:

the Kippax Group Centre needs to expand urgently to accommodate the needs of the growing West Belconnen community.

Your petitioners, therefore, request the Assembly to call upon the ACT Government to do everything within its powers to facilitate the existing owners of Kippax Fair to undertake the centre expansion as soon as possible in accordance with the approved Master Plan.

*Pursuant to standing order 99A, the petition, having more than 500 signatories, was referred to the Standing Committee on Planning, Transport and City Services.*

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

## **Ministerial responses**

The following responses to petitions have been lodged:

## **Sport—Thoroughbred Park funding—petition 24-20**

By **Mr Steel**, Special Minister of State, dated 17 February 2021, in response to a petition lodged by Ms Clay on 2 December 2020 concerning public funding of Thoroughbred Park.

*The response read as follows:*

Dear Mr Duncan

Thank you for your letter of 2 December 2020 regarding petition number 24-20, lodged by Ms Jo Clay MLA on behalf of Ms Ilnaz Roomiani and received by the Assembly on the same date, regarding ACT Government funding for the Thoroughbred racing industry. This letter is my response, pursuant to Standing Order 100.

The ACT Government notes the petitioners' concerns regarding funding for the local horse racing industry.

In July 2017, the ACT Government entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Canberra Racing Club and Canberra Harness Racing Club, under which the Government agreed to provide funding to the Racing Clubs of approximately \$7.5 million per annum until 30 June 2022.

In exchange for the ACT Government's support under the MoU, the Racing Clubs agreed to meet a range of expectations regarding industry management, including animal welfare obligations. Under the MoU, the Racing Clubs have made a commitment to adopt and participate in a retraining scheme and to cover costs associated with retraining and rehoming suitable horses following their retirement from racing.

The Racing Clubs also agreed to maintain strong adherence to the Australian Rules of Racing and Local Rules of Racing, which include a range of provisions aimed at ensuring retired racing horses' ongoing welfare.

The objective of the MOU is to provide a well-managed, well-regulated and sustainable industry that works to ensure the ongoing welfare of its horses.

In 2020, ACT Labor made an election commitment to renew the MoU with the Racing Clubs on its expiry for a further term of at least five years. The Government also committed to enter into future discussions with the Racing Clubs concerning industry funding in good faith and in recognition that costs may have risen for the Clubs to maintain the necessary health, welfare and promotion of Club activities. An MoU provides certainty for the sector and sets out the Government's expectations regarding industry management in exchange for government support, especially the ongoing welfare of racing horses and the workplace rights of those employed in the sector.

The ACT Government understands the petitioners' concerns and is committed to maintaining and improving animal welfare standards in the ACT, including in the horse racing industry. Through successive terms of Government, the ACT Labor and Greens partnership has introduced some of the most progressive animal welfare reforms in Australia. For example, the *Animal Welfare Act 1992* (the Act) recognises the sentience and intrinsic value of animals, and that they deserve to be treated with compassion that reflects their intrinsic value. The Act creates a positive duty to care for the physical and mental welfare of animals. It achieves its overarching objects through a robust regulatory framework that includes inspectors with significant powers to investigate animal welfare concerns, and, where concerns are clearly evidenced, refer such matters for prosecution. Significant penalties apply to animal welfare offences, including fines, bans on owning an animal and terms of imprisonment.

In 2019, as the Minister for City Services, I asked the ACT Government Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (AWAC) to conduct a review of the Animal Welfare Act Code of Practice relating to the welfare of horses, including racing horses. The AWAC expects to complete its review and report to me with recommendations for strengthening the Code of Practice in early 2021. I look forward to receiving the AWAC's advice.

My responsibility for the *Racing Act 1999* and the Animal Welfare Act allows me to closely monitor each portfolio, to ensure a balance that reflects the economic and social benefits of a financially viable racing industry and achieves best practice in the ongoing welfare of racing horses. I acknowledge the petitioners' concerns regarding the welfare of racing horses but also this Government's and the Racing Clubs' ongoing and demonstrated commitment to animal welfare in the horse racing industry.

**Waste—proposed Fyshwick facility—petition 13-20**

By **Mr Steel**, Minister for Transport and City Services, dated 18 February 2021, in response to a petition lodged by Ms Lee on 3 December 2020 concerning future proposals for waste processing facilities in Fyshwick.

*The response read as follows:*

Dear Mr Duncan

Thank you for your letter of 3 December 2020 regarding Petition 13-20, lodged by Ms Elizabeth Lee MLA, regarding the high-volume waste processing sites in Canberra's inner south. My response to the petition is detailed below.

The ACT Government's position on this matter is clear. The ACT Government does not support these proposals and does not support the processing of red bin waste in Fyshwick.

To support the tri-partisan commitment made ahead of the ACT Election, the Government introduced the *Planning and Development Amendment Bill 2021* which was passed by the Assembly on 11 February 2021. The Bill introduces the concept of a *prohibited waste facility development application* and provides that the planning and land authority must not accept a *prohibited waste facility development application*. This gives effect to banning the establishment of new waste facilities in Fyshwick and also prevents an increase in the amount of waste handled at an existing facility.

Through the *Waste to Energy Policy 2020-25*, the ACT Government has already put a moratorium on waste to energy in the ACT. This policy was a result of the Government consulting with the community and led to a ban on waste incineration.

The *ACT Waste Management Strategy 2011-2025* refers to the Hume Resource Recovery Estate and acknowledges that further development of the site, to co-locate resource recovery facilities would be beneficial. This is reiterated in the Parliamentary and Governing Agreement for the 10<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly whereby the Government will seek advice on the best way to facilitate the location of waste processing facilities in Hume.

The ACT Government remains an active and engaged stakeholder in waste facility proposals and will ensure that key waste-related impacts and issues are addressed.

The ACT Government is undertaking a policy review, looking at planning and waste policy, to determine what types of waste facilities may be able to be established and operate in Fyshwick in the future.

I trust this information is of assistance.

**Motion to take note of petitions**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Pursuant to standing order 98A, I propose the question:

That the petitions and responses so lodged be noted.

**Planning—Kippax group centre—petition 8-21**

**MRS KIKKERT** (Ginninderra) (10.09): Today I present a petition signed by 781 residents of the ACT asking this Assembly to acknowledge that the Kippax group centre needs to expand urgently. They are right. Kippax Fair Shopping Centre opened in 1977. This area of Belconnen has grown tremendously since then, and growth is accelerating. The first master plan for Kippax was drafted seven years ago. Following community engagement, the owners of Kippax Fair proposed an alternative design the following year. Community support for this proposal was strong, and it was formally endorsed by a community panel in 2017. These changes were then included in the next draft master plan and supported by a majority during consultations in 2018.

Twice in July last year, Minister Gentleman spoke in this chamber about the planned expansion of the Kippax Fair Shopping Centre. As a result, many residents of west Belconnen thought that development of the shopping centre was imminent. But that appears not to be the case. We have recently been told that the ACT government has shifted from a planned direct land sale to an open tender process, with expressions of interest not even opening until May.

All this delay has consequences. Residents keep moving into west Belconnen, and each week the car parks and shopping options grow less sufficient. At the same time, tenants at the shopping centre face uncertainty, with one major tenant having recently announced their closure because they do not know what is coming.

Residents in the community are genuinely worried. Aware of how this government has handled past land sales, they are concerned that something not quite right is going down. Is the government more interested in maximising profits than in following its own master plan? Is the strategy to bring in a national player that will overshadow a long-established and locally owned shopping centre? Without transparency, no-one knows.

Residents are also concerned that this matter has dragged on for so long. They know that this government has repeatedly shown poor foresight when it comes to suburban planning. Victims of this poor planning number in the tens of thousands. Residents of Gungahlin know full well what it is like to be at this government's mercy when it comes to planning. Molonglo Valley residents are quickly coming to the same realisation. Residents of west McGregor who can look out their windows at unused bus stops definitely saw this coming.

People in west Belconnen know that we have a government in this territory that just does not seem to learn from its many failures. They are, therefore, justifiably worried that the expansion of the Kippax group centre will end up being one more of this government's notorious planning failures—or a land deal gone wrong. Nearly 800 of these residents have united their voices to call upon the ACT government to do everything within its powers to help the existing owners of Kippax Fair to undertake the centre expansion as soon as possible in accordance with the approved master plan. It is my pleasure to represent these residents, and I wholeheartedly commend this petition to the Assembly.

Madam Speaker, I note that I will be speaking on the petition regarding the teaching of French language at Belconnen High School at another time.

**MS CLAY** (Ginninderra) (10.13): I am pleased to see that there is a community voice and that a community petition has been brought forward. I thank Mrs Kikkert for that; it is good to see. This planning decision has caused a lot of angst in the community. It is a good example of Canberra's planning laws and individual planning decisions that have been causing so much concern for so many people.

There is a widespread impression in Canberra that community consultation is tokenistic. That has been rammed home with Kippax. It has come forward to me from individuals in the community and from looking at previous work in the Assembly—for example, the agreement to engage with development application processes in the ACT.

The meaning really came home in a recent Belconnen Community Council meeting a couple of weeks ago. It was an extremely fiery meeting that had the highest level of emotion of any community consultation I have ever attended. A lot of people in the community are quite concerned that the development not go ahead. There are a lot of people who are concerned that they are not going to get the facilities they need. It is a really complicated issue.

Part of the problem is that this has been going on for a decade and there have been some very confusing and not particularly well-run consultations. There is a lot of fear and anxiety about this whole project. I want to make it clear that it is important to do proper consultation from the beginning, that we get views in, that we actually listen to what we are being told, and that we put together proposals and plans that provide the facilities our residents need, respecting the green space that our residents need and getting good outcomes rather than this long, drawn-out process.

I thank Mrs Kikkert for her petition. I will be very much engaged in what happens with Kippax from here on, in trying to get the best outcomes we can at this stage of the game.

**MS BERRY** (Ginninderra—Deputy Chief Minister, Minister for Early Childhood Development, Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, Minister for Housing and Suburban Development, Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, Minister for Sport and Recreation and Minister for Women) (10.15): I, too, want to speak on the petition brought forward by Mrs Kikkert on the development of Kippax shopping centre. I have been involved in conversations with both the owners of Kippax and the Kippax retailers, as well as members of the west Belconnen community. Members will know that I grew up in west Belconnen and I am now raising my family there. I have been a regular at Kippax shopping centre all of my life.

The conversation about the Kippax shopping centre and its upgrades—as well as the growth in west Belconnen, including the Ginninderry development—has been a very considered process. It has taken into account the view that our shopping centres and retail outfits need to grow—because our west Belconnen community is growing and changing every day, particularly Ginninderry—but it also needs to take into account

the views of individuals who are concerned about the green space that will be taken over through this development and ensure that it meets the needs of everybody.

I agree that this expansion of Kippax will not please everybody all the time. That is why it has been important to have a considered process, a very careful conversation with the community and the developers about what that change will look like. It is going to be a significant change for west Belconnen and for our community out there. The conversation has been held; it is now time for the process of inviting expressions of interest to occur. Minister Gentleman and I have written to the owners of Kippax Fair to start that ball rolling—by May at the latest, but as soon as we practicably can—so that that work can continue.

It is not correct to suggest that there has not been considered and careful conversation about the redevelopment of Kippax. I have been involved in the process for many years now. It was required because of the views of some residents in Kippax—and in the whole west Belconnen community. They needed to be listened to and we needed to reach some kind of consensus with everybody on a development which is going to be challenging for the community, a development that we can all live with and that meets the needs of a growing west Belconnen community.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

## **Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse—progress report on implementation of recommendations**

### **Ministerial statement**

**MR BARR** (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism) (10.18): The ACT government released its second annual progress report against the royal commission's recommendations in December 2019. I am pleased to say that, since then, the ACT government has adapted to the radically changed circumstances brought about by the COVID-19 public health emergency and has continued to deliver important progress against the recommendations, as outlined in this third annual progress report.

Since 2019 we have fulfilled 29 additional commitments, taking the total number of recommendations delivered to 167. We are progressing work on 123 other recommendations, and we will continue to report on our progress to the Assembly and to the ACT community.

In the last year we have made progress against all four themes: making institutions child safe; an oversight system that responds to child safety; services for children and young people; and tailored support through specialist services. Ensuring children and young people's safety is a fundamental responsibility of society. We are proud to continue advancing this holistic and forward-thinking body of work to protect and support all children in the territory.

Last year we passed legislative amendments which completed the ACT's work on recommendations from the *Working with children checks* report and ensured

consistency between protections in the ACT and other jurisdictions. Our Working with Vulnerable People (Background Checking) Act 2011 requires people who work, volunteer or who have conduct with children and vulnerable people in regulated activities to have a background check and risk assessment to be registered under the Working with Vulnerable People Scheme.

In 2020 we amended that act to increase our ability to restrict people who pose an unacceptable risk to vulnerable people, establish a process for ensuring that kinship carers are not automatically excluded from working with children or NDIS activities, introduce screening of NDIS workers, and improve information sharing between organisations.

It is important to note that the ACT government is continuing to work with all governments around the nation to progress recommendations which require national coordination or are initiatives being led by the commonwealth government. Representatives of all ACT government directorates are collaborating with interstate counterparts to deliver nationally consistent implementation of the royal commission's recommendations as far as possible.

The ACT's Intermediary Program is fully established. The program provides intermediaries to support children and other vulnerable witnesses to communicate evidence to police. The ACT now has a cohort of 13 fully trained intermediaries available seven days a week, including outside standard business hours. Intermediaries have been available to police since 31 January and have engaged in criminal matters before the court since March last year. In the first six months of the program ACT Policing engaged intermediaries on 58 occasions in relation to sexual assault and violent offence investigations. The age of Canberrans benefiting from intermediary assistance has so far ranged from four years to 92 years.

As part of our consultations on introducing an oversight scheme for child safe standards, my directorate approached Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations in community, recreation and cultural sectors. We heard that bullying and racism are significant safety issues for children and young people and that failing to respond properly creates additional harm.

The ACT government is committed to building principles of self-determination into our child safe standards oversight scheme. We will work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to develop a common understanding of what child safe practice means in their communities, share ideas, and embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander concepts of safety into the scheme's design and operation.

In 2019 we decided that the ACT Human Rights Commission would be the most appropriate agency to oversee the ACT's child safe standards scheme. My directorate sought community views on the design of the scheme from November 2019 to February 2020. Overwhelmingly, Canberrans support oversight of child safe standards and feel that using the standards to protect and empower children and young people is important. We are now working on the details of the legislation and will consult further before introducing the scheme.

In 2020 the ACT government has increased the focus on trauma-informed practice and policy. Trauma-informed approaches help prevent abuse, increase help-seeking behaviours and make environments safe and supportive for victims and people at risk. Since last year's report, changes have been made in the education, health and justice systems. All ACT public schools have implemented trauma-informed approaches to student welfare. We have developed policy guidance material to promote the integration of trauma-informed care into policies, strategies and frameworks across the ACT public health system. In the justice space, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions has begun providing trauma training to its staff and has developed detailed victim engagement policies to support and empower Canberrans when they interact with the justice system.

The ACT joined the National Redress Scheme in 2018. The scheme is a way of acknowledging the long-lasting and severe effects of abuse through a person's lifetime. In the 2019-20 financial year the ACT government received 20 requests for information in response to applications made to the scheme operator, the commonwealth Department of Social Services, and we have responded to all of these. Seven of the requests for information related to redress applications where the ACT government was named as the responsible institution, and the other 13 named institutions that pre-date self-government. By November 2020 the government had received 45 referrals to support survivors' access to psychological counselling. Seventeen clients accessed, or were accessing, counselling through Victim Support ACT.

The government remains committed to working closely with all stakeholders to ensure that the outcomes of the royal commission are being achieved. It is fundamentally important that we address the damage that has been done and learn from the past so that no child is left unprotected. We will continue to address every recommendation from the royal commission. I look forward to reporting again on additional progress to implement the royal commission's recommendations later in 2021. I present the following papers:

Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse—ACT  
Government Progress Report responding to recommendations—

Ministerial statement, 30 March 2021.

Third Annual Progress Report, dated March 2021.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the ministerial statement.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

## **Status of women and girls in the ACT**

### **Ministerial statement**

**MS BERRY** (Ginninderra—Deputy Chief Minister, Minister for Early Childhood Development, Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, Minister for Housing and

Suburban Development, Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, Minister for Sport and Recreation and Minister for Women) (10.26): I acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land we are meeting on, the Ngunnawal people. I acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region.

As the Minister for Women and the Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, I welcome the opportunity to acknowledge International Women's Day, which occurred on 8 March, by providing a statement to the Assembly on the status of women and girls in the ACT. The feminist cause is about collectivism. It takes the whole community, and it means working together while also recognising and celebrating diversity.

Today I announced the establishment of a sexual assault prevention and response working group to coordinate the community, the service sector, union, and relevant stakeholders on responses to sexual assault in the ACT.

On Monday, 15 March, many of my Assembly colleagues and I stood beside thousands of women at Parliament House to March 4 Justice. The treatment of women in workplaces and across the country is unacceptable. We are demanding a future in which women are treated with dignity and respect. It is a momentous time, and it is time to put survivors at the centre of how we respond to sexual assault.

Last week I met with the Victims of Crime Commissioner, Heidi Yates; Associate Professor and Senior Specialist in Sexual Health and Forensic Medicine Vanita Parekh AM; CEO of the Women's Centre for Health Matters Marcia Williams; and CEO of the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre Chrystina Stanford to understand what needs to happen next with the Sexual Assault Reform Program. I heard the call for a different approach to change.

To quote the Victims of Crime Commissioner, Heidi Yates:

We cannot continue to hold up the criminal justice system as the ideal justice response for survivors, because that is a promise we simply cannot fulfil.

To make long-lasting change to cultures of behaviour, we need to bring everyone along on the journey for change. Our approach also needs to understand that the nature of sexual assault has changed over time, including with technology.

The working group will be inclusive and intersectional about the experiences of sexual violence across the community, including people with a disability, the LGBTIQ+ community, children and young people, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, and communities that are culturally and linguistically diverse. We know that there are many different experiences and that our response must provide more than just one pathway. This work also needs to have a gendered lens, as women make up 86.6 per cent of victims of sexual assault in the ACT.

On Sunday, 28 March, the Women's Centre for Health Matters released a survey regarding women's experiences in seeking help for sexual assault in the ACT.

I encourage women in the community to do the survey to help us better understand women's experiences and their views about services and support. This research and existing data on sexual assault and sexual violence in the ACT will be an important starting point. We know the system has gaps and this work will identify the gaps and recommend actions to government.

The ACT government takes this seriously, and work is already happening in this space. Last year ACT Labor committed to a gender equality in schools initiative to provide a whole-school approach to respectful relationships education. This work will build on the Positive Behaviour for Learning program. Listening to young people about how they want to learn about consent and respectful relationships is an important part of this initiative, especially given that the changes to the demographics seeking support are 14 to 25-year-olds, according to the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre.

I initiated an annual International Women's Day congress for ACT students to discuss gender equality in their schools, sports clubs, workplaces and communities, and to develop projects that they can implement in their schools. This year, students discussed period poverty and access to hygiene products at school, and the issue of consent education.

I have also begun work to ensure that staff in the Legislative Assembly are safe. The ACT Legislative Assembly Staffers Women's Network provides a place for all women staffers to share experiences and support each other. Last year I announced a women's caucus within the ACT government to tackle important issues facing women and girls across the territory, and invited my women colleagues across Labor and the ACT Greens to join this forum. Additional to this, the Speaker, Joy Burch, has coordinated a women's parliamentary group. A review of the Legislative Assembly (Ministerial Staff) Code of Conduct is also underway.

Sexual assault and sexual violence require a whole-of-government response, and I will be working closely with my colleagues in the Assembly to coordinate this. In particular, I will be working with Minister Mick Gentleman, Attorney-General Shane Rattenbury, Minister Rachel Stephen-Smith, Minister Tara Cheyne and Minister Emma Davidson, as well as Dr Marisa Paterson MLA, who is a passionate advocate in this space, with a particular interest in communicative definitions of consent. All political parties are invited to be part of this work and ensure that progress is made with a united front and not caught up in party politics. The first meeting of the working group will be held in coming weeks.

I know that this conversation is going to be triggering for some people. There are services available to support anyone who needs some help. The Domestic Violence Crisis Service ACT has a 24-hour crisis line; the phone number is 62 800 900. The Canberra Rape Crisis Centre is open from 7 am to 11 pm, seven days a week; the phone number is 6247 2525. Victim Support ACT at the ACT Human Rights Commission is open from 9 am to 5 pm, Monday to Friday; the phone number is 6205 2222. The Women's Legal Centre ACT is open from 9 am to 5 pm, Monday to Friday; the phone number is 6257 4377. 1800RESPECT is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, for those impacted by sexual or domestic violence. The Legal Aid ACT

helpline is open from 8:30 am to 4 pm, Monday to Friday; the phone number is 1300 654 314.

I will table a longer statement which provides a more substantial overview, but in this shorter statement I would like to reflect specifically on some of the achievements of 2020. Although this statement is about the status of women and girls, I would like to acknowledge that I am using these terms inclusively, referring to anybody who describes their gender as woman or female.

This year, for International Women's Day, I wanted to recognise the hard work of women who have been on the front line of this pandemic. I had a gathering in my office with women members of the United Workers Union whose work in cleaning, hospitality and other industries keeps this community going.

In 2020 women were particularly affected by the impacts of COVID-19, due to their economic insecurity, the greater role they play in undertaking unpaid household and caring responsibilities, and the feminisation of the frontline education and healthcare sectors. COVID-19 restrictions and isolation measures have also posed a significant risk for women and their children in the community who are victims of domestic and family violence.

In 2020 I officially launched Equity Together, the Second Action Plan 2020-22, under the ACT Women's Plan 2016-26, which recommitted the whole of the ACT government to working collaboratively with the community to support improved gender equality. After only one year of implementation, one of the 29 actions has already been fully delivered and an additional 27 actions are underway.

In Equity Together, we commit to action to support increased numbers of women in male-dominated industries, with a particular focus on the construction industry, setting a target of 10 per cent female participation in the construction industry, and aiming to increase that target from 2022. In support of this work, in 2020 the ACT government held a women in construction workshop, bringing together government, industry, unions, peak bodies, women's community groups and women in the industry.

We launched a charter of procurement values. All government procurement must now consider diversity, equality and inclusion impacts and opportunities. We made it a requirement that companies which tender with the ACT government on larger scale projects articulate how they intend to deliver diversity outcomes. You may have seen the CIT's great "Her Trade" campaign, encouraging women to "trade in the stereotypes and become a skilled tradeswoman".

The ACT government are doing a lot of work in this space, but we are not working alone. There is so much engagement and passion coming from industry, unions, the women's sector and the broader community to support the improved uptake and retention of women in the construction industry. This is a big job, and it is great to see so many people working together and pushing for improvements. This is a perfect example of what we mean by Equity Together.

Supporting women into leadership roles is another essential element of achieving gender equality. This is why the ACT government continues to have a target of 50 per cent female representation on all ACT government boards and committees, and I am proud to say that, as of January this year, we are almost at that target—49.2 per cent.

Public schools continued to support female students in 2020 by implementing programs to drive cultural change in schools and the broader community. For example, Positive Behaviour for Learning is a framework that schools use to get everyone on the same page to create safe and supportive learning environments for all students. Given that women were more impacted by remote learning requirements, effective support from schools was essential in supporting women in the ACT in 2020, as was making sure that the ACT's amazing public schoolteachers were safe at work.

Schools also regularly question and challenge stereotypical ideas about gender roles, while supporting students to enter non-traditional career pathways. This can be seen through the Girls in STEM grants, which support girls and young women to enter study and employment in the areas of science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

The safety of women and girls in their homes and in public continued to be a priority in 2020. For many women, the most significant concern is safety in their own homes, for themselves and their children. In 2020 the ACT government continued to work with family violence support services to prevent family violence and to ensure that victims were supported and protected.

This work included establishing a multi-agency family violence hub, which supports key stakeholders to liaise and share information so that they can develop proactive intervention strategies and reduce the risk of future offending; and partnering with the Domestic Violence Prevention Council's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander reference group to work towards fulfilling recommendations in the *We don't shoot our wounded* and the *Change our future. Share what you know* reports.

These are just a few of the many things that the ACT government and ACT community delivered in 2020 to continue supporting women and girls. There is a clear commitment across government and the community, but there is still a long road ahead to achieve real and lasting change and to gain equality for women and girls.

In closing, I would like to respectfully remember the 55 women who were killed due to violence against women in 2020 in Australia, and acknowledge the Counting Dead Women Australia researchers of Destroy the Joint for providing this figure and counting these deaths. Violence is never okay, and these deaths remind us of how pervasive gender violence is, and how crucial it is to challenge harmful gender norms.

These women remind us of the importance of working together, calling out gender discrimination when we see it, continuing to support all members of society, and striving for gender equality for all. As Aboriginal visual artist, activist and academic Lilla Watson said:

If you have come to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.

I present the following papers:

Women and girls in the ACT—

Annual statement on the status—2021.

Ministerial statement, 30 March 2021.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the ministerial statement.

## Visitors

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Members, before I call the next member, I draw to your attention the presence in the gallery of former member Mr Michael Moore. Welcome. It is good to see you cannot keep away, Mr Moore. Also, given the topic, I want to recognise the Victims of Crime Commissioner, Ms Heidi Yates. Thank you for being part of this as well.

## Status of women and girls in the ACT Ministerial statement

**MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (10.39):** There is no doubt that the past few months have been difficult for women, but also incredibly important. We have been shocked and traumatised by the events we have heard about happening just a few kilometres away at Parliament House. It has been a stark reminder that if these terrible things can take place in our highest institution, they can happen anywhere, and they do.

Every year for International Women’s Day it seems there are more and more events celebrating the progress of women. It is more like International Women’s Month now. I have always enjoyed going to all of these events and acknowledging and celebrating our progress, how much we have achieved. This year I felt a little different, I think along with many women. This year’s theme of “choose to challenge” could not have been more relevant for women in Australia.

At every event I attended, women were fired up; Canberra women were angry. They are frustrated and they will not be silenced by the patriarchy. It is an important conversation and I urge everyone to sit down and listen to what women have to say. Grandmothers, mothers and daughters are standing up and saying, “Enough is enough.” Enough is enough.

There is no age group that is immune to gender violence and gender discrimination, harassment and assault. It can happen anywhere, any time and to anyone. It is up to all of us, male and female, non-binary—everyone in our community—to stand up and call out bad behaviour. Change will not happen overnight. Let me tell you, in my

40 years of working I have said over and over again that change will not happen overnight. We must all be active participants in the fight for a fairer and better society.

What the minister has outlined this morning in her statement indicates progress towards a better and more equitable society, but there is still a long way to go. There are still a number of areas for improvement. I acknowledge the support for an increased number of women in traditionally male-dominated occupations such as construction. It is an excellent initiative. The leadership and female representation on boards is another excellent result. I think the minister outlined 49.2 per cent, which is a great result. I also acknowledge that we are listening to young people about how they would like to be taught about consent. But when I looked at the ACT Education Directorate website on resources for teachers, in the Respectful Relationships Education program for ACT government schools there is currently no mention of consent.

I would remind the minister that in the area of housing there is still a long way to go, including the gendered nature of the need for housing, high-needs housing—where people are waiting more than two years—and especially older women; what we have talked about as the approaching tsunami of older women’s homelessness. When I worked in the homelessness sector, from 2010 to 2013, we talked about the approaching tsunami of older women’s homelessness then, and we still have not adequately addressed the issue.

I remind the minister that, in relation to her own portfolio, the formal report of the review into the implementation of the Family Violence Act 2016 was deliberately delayed and hidden for a year because it was politically inconvenient for this government to release it, but I will talk more on that later when I speak to Ms Lee’s motion. The minister would do well to remember that it was this Labor-Greens government that voted against a poverty task force just a month ago, despite the harrowing fact that 38,000 Canberrans, including 8,000 children, live in poverty in the ACT; and there is the gendered nature of poverty in the ACT.

I was also interested to hear the minister talk about the Speaker convening a women’s parliamentary group. To my knowledge, that was a single morning tea. It was an invitation to a morning tea in honour of the largest female representation of elected members in any parliament in Australia. It was not quite a women’s parliamentary group.

I would like to remind women that, as we spoke about during estimates and annual reports hearings, we have a target of 40 per cent of women feeling safe in their own neighbourhood at night. That language has changed. My understanding is that that language is different to the national survey and that has helped towards improving the number of women feeling safe in their neighbourhoods alone at night. But let us not forget that that means that 60 per cent of women do not feel safe: 60 per cent do not feel safe in their own neighbourhood alone at night.

We talked about schools. They are often the places where societal norms are questioned and challenged; and that is absolutely true. Nevertheless, last year I heard that one of my granddaughters had a letter sent home from the principal talking about

appropriate clothing to wear on mufti day at school—for the girls, appropriate clothing to wear on mufti day at school—because it was distracting for the boys if certain types of clothing were worn. I am proud to say that my granddaughter wrote back, pointing out that it may be better to teach the boys not to be distracted rather than body shaming the girls about what they may or may not wear.

There is a lot to celebrate, and I acknowledge the minister's genuine interest in and dedication to improving the lives of women in the ACT, but there are many things that we can do better. We are doing a lot of talking, but we must action what we are talking about, not hide reports that might reflect badly on the government. For example, we need to use that feedback and the data to make very real improvements that will benefit women in the ACT so that in another 10, 20, 30 or 40 years we do not look back and lament, yet again, how far we still have to go to ensure the safety of women at home, at work and in our streets.

**MR RATTENBURY** (Kurrajong—Attorney-General, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Gaming and Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction) (10.47): I would like to acknowledge the update that Minister Berry has provided to the chamber this morning. I particularly wanted to rise, briefly, in my capacity as the Attorney-General and on behalf of the Greens, to focus on the announcement of the roundtable that Minister Berry spoke about to look at matters of sexual assault in our community. This is obviously a welcome announcement and one that we will look forward to working with Minister Berry on in order to progress important reforms in this area. The experience of victim survivors is vital in identifying the right reforms, which is why I think working with stakeholders and their representatives and bringing forward the voices of people who have had these experiences is very important.

There is a real opportunity to think carefully about how we progress reform in the ACT. I think so often the focus is on legal reform. As Minister Berry touched on in her remarks, this cannot solely be the response. In my capacity, I am very aware that there will need to be some responses in that space. We will work diligently and in a timely manner with stakeholders to listen to as many voices as we can. But to be very clear, that is not the only response that we need to make; there will be a range of service responses and other considerations that need to be taken into account.

I am also mindful that so often the legal responses focus on matters after somebody has been assaulted. There is an opportunity, through the work that Minister Berry has identified, to think about how we operate more in the preventative space. I think there are some legal responses in that space as well but, again, a lot of the preventative work is more about culture and redefining the standards. As Ms Lawder has just remarked, it is incumbent upon all of us in the community to play a part in that, and particularly for men to take responsibility and challenge their fellow men on some of the cultural behaviours that we see in our community. That is something that needs to happen consistently. It happens in all sorts of fora and all sorts of places. If jokes are made or there are derogatory comments, it is really about having the courage to challenge people to recalibrate, to think differently and to take a different approach.

The working group that Minister Berry has identified I think provides a real opportunity to have a genuinely collaborative relationship between the community,

stakeholders and members of this place. Certainly, since committing to sexual assault law reform in the parliamentary and governing agreement, my office and I have had a number of conversations with stakeholders to work out the issues that are at the forefront of people's minds and what role a group like this can play to help us arrive at the right reforms. As I have touched on, law reform is only one part of a significant cultural shift that needs to happen to ensure that women are safe wherever they are—in our city, in their homes, at work and in the various other places that they live their lives.

Last year, during the election campaign, the ACT Greens proposed a significant program of reforms to build a better normal for women in Canberra. They ranged from closing the income gap to safety upgrades at transport hubs. Strengthening responses to domestic, family and sexual violence was a major focus, and we were sure to include that in the parliamentary and governing agreement, because this is work that we have known for some time needs to be done. It is part of, I guess, continuing reforms. In the ACT in recent years we have seen a range of responses, but as more and more issues come to light and as more people speak up about their experiences, it shows us new areas or different ways that we need to think about responding. We have said that we can draw on the past success of the Sexual Assault Reform Program, but we should also explore new models.

I look forward to working with Minister Berry and my other colleagues to bring together those community voices so that we can implement the best possible reforms to sexual assault processes. We need to protect people from sexual abuse and ensure that those who commit sexual offences are appropriately held to account. A strong criminal and justice response to sexual offending is important, not just for victims and survivors but also for the entire community. Improving the justice system, as I have said, is one part of the culture change that is needed to better support people who are sexually assaulted and prevent perpetrators from committing these crimes.

There is a strong momentum for change, both here in the ACT and, as has been highlighted, through the national discussion. We saw many thousands of women gathering on the lawns of Parliament House here in Canberra and in public spaces right across the country to demand change in a range of ways. Of course, we have been strengthened in that resolve by the bravery of a number of women who have spoken very publicly about their experiences. I think it challenges us all as a community to do better.

We know that there is not one single reform that is needed in this space. I very much look forward to the roundtable, when the Minister Berry convenes it, and to working with her, my ministerial colleagues and others in the Assembly to make sure that we have an ongoing, iterative program of reform in the ACT and that, as we learn more and put reforms in place, we are providing the best possible response. I thank the minister for her statement this morning and the opportunity to speak on behalf of my colleagues on these very important matters.

**DR PATERSON** (Murrumbidgee) (10.53): Thank you, Minister, for your statement. Since the Assembly last sat, in February, a mere six weeks ago, a seismic shift has occurred in Australia. When Brittany Higgins disclosed on national television that she

was allegedly raped at Parliament House, the nation went into freefall. Allegation after allegation of rape, sexual harassment and unprofessional behaviour, to say the least, exposed an entrenched culture of misogyny in Parliament House. Further to this, Chanel Contos started an online petition in New South Wales that went viral, with hundreds of young people, schoolchildren, disclosing sexual assault stemming from a sexist culture entrenched in Sydney's elite private schools.

News reports daily feature disclosures of sexual assault and harassment in our parliaments, institutions and workplaces. The media, in particular female journalists in this country, should be commended for their reporting of these stories, relentlessly pursuing the truth and holding those in powerful leadership positions accountable. Two weeks ago, tens of thousands of women and men marched for justice at Parliament House here in Canberra and around the country, crying, "Enough is enough." The voices of women marginalised, women powerless, including the voice of a woman from the grave, were held up, were heard and were believed.

As a nation, we cannot wait while the men of the federal Liberal Party go on behaviour and empathy courses or instate extra ministers for women. We cannot wait while women are being abused and assaulted every single day in their homes, in their workplaces and in their communities. As the minister said, 86 per cent of victims of sexual assault in the ACT are women. Sexual assaults can occur in two contexts: firstly, where the perpetrator is not known to the victim, and, secondly, at the hands of men who are known to the victim, who are trusted and respected.

Either way, these perpetrators saw themselves in a position of power over us, where consent did not matter, where we were not equal. And you know what? Women are not equal to men in this country. Australia ranked 44th on the global gender gap index in 2020, calculated by the World Economic Forum. We are behind the Nordic countries, New Zealand, Mexico, the Philippines and Serbia. We are just one ahead of Zimbabwe and the United States.

Four sub-indexes are used to determine the overall gender gap score. Australia does very well on gender parity in educational attainment. However, once we leave the education system, everything goes downhill. On the other three indexes—economic participation and opportunity, health and political empowerment—Australia is well down the list. In 2006 Australia was 15th on the gap. In 15 years, we have gone significantly backwards. The fact that we have gone backwards on these global scales and the fact that rates of family violence, sexual assault and harassment have all increased is no coincidence.

In all my work with constituents over the last month, the message that is coming very strongly from the ground is that the ground has shifted. The views from men and women have been unanimous: enough is enough. I am proud to be part of this Assembly that is over 50 per cent female and has established a women's caucus. I am proud to be part of the ACT government that will work to reform the process of support for victims of sexual assault. I am proud that we have an ACT Minister for Women, Yvette Berry, who has a voice and is using it. As Grace Tame said, we cannot fix a problem we do not discuss. Despite how hard the conversations over the past weeks have been, I strongly encourage the community to keep talking about this:

keep talking about our culture, our values; keep talking about our expectations of behaviour; keep talking about consent.

I want to commend every person in our community who has created a safe space, a safe conversation, a safe interaction for someone to disclose their story or their pain. You are a major part of the solution. To survivors of sexual assault in the ACT, I will be a strong advocate for you. You do not have to carry the weight of the secrets, the burden, alone. And to the community more broadly: be brave. Support each other in these hard conversations. If we can talk about sexual assault the way we do about other crimes, openly and with respect for victims, we will move mountains. Perpetrators of this violence thrive in the silence. That is why it is the responsibility of all of us to end this silence.

**MS LEE** (Kurrajong—Leader of the Opposition) (10.59): Anger, sadness, resignation, exasperation—a palpable desperation that something needs to change, that something must change. The responses to everything that has happened over the last few months clearly demonstrate that we are at a pivotal juncture in our society. When I say “responses”, I do not refer to the political, the legal or the PR responses. This is, of course, not to say that I do not support or that I do not agree with the list of initiatives that the Minister for Women has just read out in her statement. I am talking about the raw, the emotional, the human responses we have seen and heard from around the country from women, girls, men, boys, parents, grandparents, our elders and our youth.

This month we “celebrated” International Women’s Day, and I say celebrated in quotations because, as Ms Lawder pointed out, this year it was a little different. It was stained with a darkness that engulfed and consumed what should have been an opportunity to celebrate, to encourage, to support and to highlight the achievements of so many amazing women in our community. I had the opportunity to attend various events, many of them organised by Canberra’s multicultural communities, and it was not lost on me that, whilst we were marking this International Women’s Day with the theme of “choose to challenge”, many women in our community do not have a choice.

For many women in our community, women from multicultural communities, our First Nations women, women from the LGBTIQ+ community and women living with disabilities, it is not a choice to challenge—to challenge the status quo, to challenge the patriarchy, to challenge the systemic inequalities that exist for them. I know, because she is my mother; I know, because she was me. When women who are marginalised are too busy feeling grateful to be included, even in a token way, in this foreign and out of reach world of Australian politics and public discourse, they do not have the luxury of choosing to do anything.

As an elected representative, I have been afforded the privilege of having a platform, a voice, and I have always said that my duty is to represent and advocate for those who may not be in a position to do it for themselves, and that duty is more important than ever. This also highlights and entrenches the importance of diversity in our leaders, anyone who is in a privileged position of making decisions on behalf of and for our community.

It was extremely disappointing that, when the Minister for Women established and announced her women's caucus, the women of the Canberra Liberals were excluded. The women in my party room form a majority, not for the first but for the second term in a row. The women in my party room are part of a party room that have elected a female leadership team, a first for ACT politics. The women in my party room come from diverse backgrounds and bring diverse life experiences. It is disappointing that the minister's women's caucus will not have a single member who can bring lived experiences of being a woman of colour in our community. Whilst this is the reality, I accept the minister's words that, whilst the caucus is for Labor and Greens women MLAs only, she will also value and seek the views of the Canberra Liberals women MLAs. I am sure that this is a genuine goal.

I welcome the minister's statement and the establishment of the sexual assault prevention and response working group, which will bring together the community, the service sector, unions and relevant stakeholders on responses to sexual assault in the ACT. More coordination among these stakeholders across the ACT is a good thing because the poison of endemic sexual harassment and assault is not an evil to be responded to in silos by separate government and community functions. I also thank the minister for her leadership and swift government response to what we know transcends politics, workplaces and different communities.

We at the ACT Legislative Assembly stand proud, as we have achieved a female majority parliament now two terms in a row. This in itself, of course, does not mean our parliament is protected from this scourge. In fact, it must work as a constant reminder that we can never be complacent in any workplace. Even as a small parliament, we have led the nation in so many ways and I am certain that we can do that now, today. I am reminded of an Aboriginal saying that I have heard a few times this International Women's Day, the latest by Minister Tara Cheyne, and it is very apt for me to repeat it today. The saying goes, "Traveller, there are no paths. Paths are made by walking, and walk we will."

Question resolved in the affirmative.

## **COVID-19 pandemic response—update**

### **Ministerial statement**

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH** (Kurrajong—Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Families and Community Services and Minister for Health) (11.05): On 12 March 2020, just over one year ago, the ACT recorded its first case of COVID-19. Four days later, on 16 March, I declared a public health emergency to ensure that the government was able to respond and protect our community from a pandemic that continues to infect almost half a million people a day around the world.

Today I rise to provide the second update of 2021 to the Legislative Assembly on the COVID-19 situation in the ACT and the plans, preparations and actions the government continues to take to protect the health and wellbeing of Canberrans. Since my last update on 9 February, the COVID-19 situation locally and nationally has

continued to change. We have experienced new travel restrictions, as well as reaching a significant milestone in our pandemic response with the commencement of the COVID-19 vaccination program.

I am pleased to report that the ACT remains in a strong position in our response to COVID-19. The cooperation of the Canberra community in following the public health directions and advice is a critical reason for this success. As we move ahead with our recovery and the new COVID normal, I also wish to acknowledge the continued hard work of the frontline staff at our hospitals, testing and vaccination centres and public health teams in helping to keep the community safe.

Indeed, this has recently been formally acknowledged in recognising as Canberra Citizen of the Year all Canberra citizens who have been involved in enacting the public health response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The shared resilience of our community despite a difficult year of dealing with this pandemic is something every Canberran should also be proud of.

I appreciate the community's patience as we now see the COVID-19 vaccination program progressing and more and more ACT residents able to book their vaccination appointment. This is a challenging and complex program to manage; however, in conjunction with the commonwealth government, we are moving ahead with this to protect our community.

Australia is in a fortunate position, with our efforts having been largely successful to date in suppressing COVID-19. In contrast, across many areas of the world COVID-19 is still having a terrible impact on lives and communities. Health systems are under enormous strain, due to increased hospitalisations, while deaths are sadly still occurring across many regions where case numbers are high.

Many countries are entering into new states of lockdown to try and slow the rate of infection. The number of new COVID-19 cases reported globally continues to rise. As of 28 March 2021, there have been more than 126 million confirmed cases, including more than 2.76 million deaths reported to the World Health Organisation.

As members would be aware, the unfolding COVID-19 situation in our nearest pacific neighbour, Papua New Guinea, is of particular concern. The Queensland and Australian governments are rapidly responding to both protect Torres Strait Islander communities and support the Papua New Guinean government's response, including through the provision of 8,000 AstraZeneca vaccines from Australia's stock and deployment of the Australian Medical Assistance Teams, or AUSMAT, multidisciplinary health teams to provide assistance. We send our sincere well wishes to the people of Papua New Guinea during this extremely difficult time.

Since my last update to the Assembly, New Zealand has experienced a cluster of new COVID-19 cases which were confirmed to be a UK variant of concern. This cluster saw New Zealand's Prime Minister announce a period of seven days lockdown in Auckland and restrictions on public gatherings across the rest of the country. The Australian Chief Medical Officer recommended the temporary suspension of the

green zone travel arrangements for anyone who had been in Auckland in the previous 14 days.

These travel restrictions were adopted by the ACT, as well as requiring any traveller already in the ACT who had previously been in Auckland on or after 20 February to get tested for COVID-19 and isolate until they received a negative result, or quarantine for 14 days if they had been in a location of interest identified by the New Zealand government. Working closely with the airlines, ACT Health contacted 32 people with residential addresses in the ACT believed to have arrived from Auckland since that date. Thirteen of these people confirmed that they were in the ACT and all returned a negative COVID-19 test.

On the advice of the Australian Chief Medical Officer, the New Zealand green zone flight arrangements were subsequently reinstated from 11.59 pm on 11 March, allowing people to travel from New Zealand to Australia without having to quarantine for 14 days. We know that New Zealand has been pretty successful in suppressing COVID-19, but this situation is another example of how quickly the COVID-19 situation can change.

In Australia, many jurisdictions are operating under eased public health restrictions as we continue to move into the phase of COVID normal. I urge Canberrans to keep practising the COVID-safe behaviours. Remember that you are required to use the Check In CBR app when out and about, and continue to follow the public health advice to help keep the ACT in a strong position. While the situation is optimistic, we must continue to be cautious as we expect to continue to see new clusters and outbreaks despite our best efforts, as we are currently witnessing in Queensland.

As members would be aware, greater Brisbane was placed under a snap three-day lockdown from 5 pm yesterday, 29 March 2021 in response to a new COVID-19 outbreak. A 26-year-old man tested positive for COVID-19 on 25 March and has been linked to a previous cluster announced on 12 March. A close contact of this case also recorded a positive COVID-19 test result on 27 March 2021. In response to these new cases, a public health direction came into effect in the ACT from midday on 28 March requiring anyone entering or already in the ACT who had been in greater Brisbane on or after 11 March to complete an online declaration form.

In completing the online declaration, people were required to identify whether they had attended any of the close or casual contact exposure locations identified by the Queensland government. People who have been in a close contact exposure location need to quarantine for 14 days, get tested and call ACT Health. People who have been in a casual exposure location need to get tested, isolate and call ACT Health.

Following the Queensland government's announcement on 29 March 2021 of four additional cases and a snap lockdown, the ACT's restrictions were strengthened by listing greater Brisbane as a COVID-19 affected area from 6p m Australian eastern daylight time yesterday, 29 March. At this time, these travel restrictions will remain in place until at least 6 pm on 1 April 2021 while greater Brisbane is in lockdown and Queensland Health continues to manage this latest outbreak of COVID-19.

Anyone who is currently in the ACT and has been in greater Brisbane on or after 15 March must enter quarantine until at least 6 pm ACT time 1 April, or until 14 days have passed since they were last in Brisbane, get tested for COVID-19 and complete an online declaration form. ACT residents wishing to return home from greater Brisbane are required to complete an online declaration within 24 hours before travelling, get tested and quarantine upon their return until at least 6 pm on 1 April.

Non-ACT residents wishing to travel to the ACT from greater Brisbane are not permitted to do so at this time unless they have an approved exemption from ACT Health. For clarity, those who are simply transiting through the ACT to get to a home location in New South Wales can do so under these arrangements.

Anyone who is currently in the ACT and was in greater Brisbane between 11 and 14 March 2021 is required to get tested and isolate until they receive a negative test result. This does not include people who have transited through Brisbane Airport but have not actually spent time in the greater Brisbane area during the relevant time. We are closely monitoring the situation in Queensland and the Chief Health Officer will continue to provide the government with the latest public health advice as more information becomes available.

On 12 February Victoria entered a five-day lockdown in response to the outbreak linked to the Holiday Inn Melbourne Airport cluster. The ACT responded quickly to the situation and implemented a public health direction restricting travel to the ACT from Victoria from 11.59 pm on 12 February. ACT residents who needed to return home during the lockdown period were required to notify ACT Health of their travel and enter self-quarantine immediately upon their arrival in the ACT. Non-ACT residents intending to travel to the ACT after the 11.59 pm deadline were not permitted to do so without an exemption. If travel was required for extraordinary circumstances, they were required to seek an exemption from ACT Health prior to their travel.

ACT Health closely monitored the situation in Victoria over the five-day period, with exposure sites updated daily in response to advice received by the Victorian government. By the end of the lockdown, Victoria had recorded zero new locally acquired cases outside of quarantine. As a result, travel restrictions were eased, with effect from 17 February 2021, to permit travel to the ACT unless individuals had been in a tier 1 exposure site.

Locally, I am pleased to report that the ACT continues to do an excellent job in suppressing COVID-19 and there continues to be no evidence of community transmission in the territory. As I mentioned, the cooperation of the community continues to be critical to our continued success. Since my last update to the Assembly, the ACT has recorded five positive cases of COVID-19 in hotel quarantine in individuals who arrived on the government-facilitated flight from Singapore on 1 March 2021. I am pleased to report that these cases have all now recovered. That means a total of 120 cases have recovered from COVID-19 in the ACT. Sadly, of course, there were three deaths early in the pandemic, with the total number of cases in the ACT at 123.

Testing remains an important part of our pandemic response as a community, and I am pleased to report that testing numbers in the ACT continue to be strong, recently surpassing 184,000 negative tests. We continue to encourage anyone experiencing any COVID-19 symptoms, no matter how mild, to present for testing at one of the many sites located across the ACT. It is vital that testing numbers remain high as we enjoy eased restrictions across our community. We also acknowledge that sometimes there are longer waits when we see a surge in demand for testing, as we have over the last couple of days, and we thank people for their patience when that is the case.

The ACT is continuing to support efforts to repatriate Australian citizens and permanent residents from overseas. In my last update to the Assembly, I informed members of the flight that landed in Canberra from Chennai, India, on 8 February 2021. I am pleased to report that all the individuals who were quarantining were well supported throughout their quarantine period and were released on 23 February after they received their exit tests. One person returned a weak positive test result, which was determined to be a low positive historical case after further testing was conducted. As this person presented no risk to the community, they were also released from quarantine and this was not recorded as an official ACT positive case.

More recently, the ACT received our fifth government-facilitated flight from Singapore, on 1 March 2021. ACT Health, ACT Policing and Australian Defence Force personnel supported 146 passengers and two family members with formal approval to join their loved ones to enter hotel quarantine. A total of five positive cases of COVID-19 were recorded in quarantining guests from this flight. These cases were investigated by ACT Health and it was determined that they most likely contracted the virus during their transit, as the Australian government requires all travellers to return a negative COVID-19 test before flying to Australia.

The individuals were moved into the medi-wing within the hotel to further minimise the risk of virus transmission to other quarantining guests, and they continued to be monitored and supported during their quarantining period. I am pleased to report that, despite these active cases, this operation ran smoothly and 138 quarantining travellers and the two family members were released on 16 March 2021 after all returning a negative result on their exit tests.

The five positive cases and three close contacts remained in hotel quarantine after 15 March, with the length of their extended quarantine period considered in line with national guidelines. The three close contacts of the positive cases returned negative COVID-19 test results on 21 March and were released from hotel quarantine the following day, on 22 March. As I have already noted, all five positive cases from this flight have now recovered and have also been released from hotel quarantine.

To date, the ACT has supported the repatriation of 936 Australian citizens and permanent residents seeking to return home. Our enhanced Safeguarding Canberrans surveillance program minimises the risk of these flights to our community and our hotel quarantine workers with the introduction of daily saliva tests when staff are working, daily symptom checks and weekly PCR testing of our entire hotel quarantine workforce.

The ACT has a robust hotel quarantine system, with processes and procedures constantly reviewed and updated, based on lessons from each government facilitated flight and the recommendations provided by Australian Health Protection Principle Committee. We will continue to support national repatriation efforts, and ACT Health is working closely with the Australian government to identify further government-facilitated flights where the ACT can accommodate these flights.

As members would be aware, the ACT reached an important milestone in our response to COVID-19 with our vaccination program commencing on 22 February. The rollout of safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines is being guided by the Australian COVID-19 vaccination policy, which sets out the roles and responsibilities of the commonwealth and ACT governments in relation to the implementation of a COVID-19 vaccination program. We have been working and will continue to work closely with the commonwealth government to ensure that Canberrans are well informed about the vaccination program.

The first people to receive the vaccine are those who need it most—initially people with a higher risk of developing severe COVID-19 symptoms and those who are at greater risk of exposure, infection or transmitting the virus. Funding for the rollout of the vaccinations to Canberrans and our neighbours in the surrounding region was presented in the 2020-21 ACT budget, with our government contributing \$19 million, plus \$4.5 million in capital funding.

The government established the ACT's vaccination hub at the Garran surge centre and administered the first phase of vaccinations to quarantine and border workers and frontline health workers. Two of the first recipients of the Pfizer vaccine in the ACT were Maddy, a Canberra Health Services COVID-19 testing nurse, and Dr Sanjaya Senanayake, an infectious diseases senior specialist at the ANU and sometime national media talent. Maddy and Sanjaya were the first of many frontline workers to receive the vaccine, and I would like to acknowledge the incredible efforts of all our health staff who have facilitated the delivery of more than 9,700 vaccine doses as part of our vaccination program to date.

Staff and residents in disability and aged residential care were also included in phase 1a of the national rollout, with the commonwealth government responsible for providing vaccinations to these priority groups. As members would be aware, phase 1b of the national program commenced on 22 March, with general practitioners beginning to administer the AstraZeneca vaccine to people aged 70 and over, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people over 55, people with a specified underlying medical condition, and frontline and critical workers not covered in phase 1a.

The commonwealth government has established a national system that can direct community members to participating general practices via the COVID-19 vaccine eligibility checker at [healthdirect.gov.au](https://healthdirect.gov.au). I urge all members in this place to encourage the community to visit this site but also encourage their constituents to be patient. There are around 100,000 people in the ACT who are eligible for phase 1b, which will take time to work through.

Currently, Australia is in a more favourable position than many countries with our control of the virus, and there are global supply constraints that being are experienced by many countries. The local manufacturing of vaccine stocks will ensure that all members of the community will be able to receive a vaccination through the course of this year, but the process will take time. The ACT's priority continues to be the delivery of a safe, efficient and targeted vaccination program. To date, we have seen a high uptake of vaccinations and I look forward to more Canberrans receiving their vaccinations.

We all know that COVID-19 had a major impact on our community and our health system in 2020. Progress is continuing, following the ACT government's significant investment in public health services that were affected by COVID-19 restrictions and the suspension of many category 2 and 3 elective surgeries. At 30 June 2020 the territory had 1,505 patients overdue and awaiting surgery. By 29 March 2021 I am advised that only 151 of those patients remained on this list.

I am pleased to confirm that the ACT hospital system is on track to undertake a record number of elective surgeries in 2020-21. Through our partnerships with private hospitals, we have delivered more than 1,000 additional endoscopies, exceeding the government's commitment to deliver up to 679 additional procedures this financial year. In addition, the recovery plan has so far offered more than 1,720 long-wait dental clients an appointment through the program, delivering those appointments to those most in need, including children and vulnerable community groups. I would like to thank those who are continuing to work together in delivering this important initiative to fast-track the recovery of the public health system.

In line with the ACT's positive situation, the Chief Health Officer enacted a new set of COVID-normal restrictions from 9 am on 20 February 2021. The ACT's cautious approach to the easing of restrictions throughout the pandemic has enabled us to remain in a strong position while also helping ACT businesses and the community to continue to move forward.

As part of this latest easing of restrictions, the use of the Check In CBR app became mandatory for restricted business and venues from 6 March 2021. This is an important step in our efforts to keep businesses and venues open with increased capacity, while ensuring that ACT Health can quickly and accurately conduct contact tracing, should there be a new case of COVID-19 reported in the ACT.

There have been instances reported interstate where it has been difficult to access critical contact tracing information from businesses and venues where they are not using a mandated check-in app. This can delay a critical public health response and potentially impact business operations, should restrictions need to be reintroduced. A new business profile function within the app has been developed so that businesses can check in patrons if they are unable to do so themselves. This function will guarantee that all patrons can check in, particularly those who may not have a smart device, and supports businesses and patrons to fulfil their requirements under the public health direction.

For many Canberrans, using the Check In CBR app is not a new practice. As at 28 March 2021, more than 9,000 venues are registered with the Check in CBR app; the app has been downloaded more than 500,000 times since its launch; and there have been more than 7.1 million check-ins using the app. The use of the app has quickly become standard behaviour in our response to COVID-19, and I would like to thank Canberra businesses and the community for their support.

Similar check-in requirements are now in place in all other jurisdictions and ACT Health's Digital Solutions Division has done an amazing job in supporting the Northern Territory, Tasmania and most recently Queensland in developing their check-in apps, based on ours here in Canberra.

Our economy continues to recover strongly, with the lowest unemployment in Australia. However, we recognise that COVID-19 continues to present challenges, and the end of JobKeeper may be of particular concern for some businesses. In recognition of these ongoing challenges that COVID-19 presents to our economy, the Minister for Business and Better Regulation yesterday announced an extension of the Canberra Business Advice and Support Service for another 12 months, giving local businesses up to four hours of free expert advice tailored to their business via the Canberra Business Enterprise Centre.

This is in addition to a range of other financial supports that include, among other things, \$1,000 electricity bill rebates for cafes, restaurants and takeaway businesses; and the ability to apply for rebates of water and sewerage fixed charges on Icon Water bills for the 2020-21 financial year for hotels, motels, serviced apartments and function and event venues. I echo Minister Cheyne's message for local businesses to reach out if they need support and to make sure that they are taking advantage of all the supports that are available.

As the COVID-19 situation continues to evolve, both here in Australia and across the world, the ACT government needs to be able to respond by implementing and enforcing public health directions to protect Canberrans. The Chief Health Officer regularly provides the government with advice on the status of the COVID-19 emergency and the ACT's public health situation.

Upon receiving the Chief Health Officer's report for February and considering the detailed advice, on 17 February 2021 I extended the ACT's public health emergency declaration for a further 90 days. This extension will see the public health emergency continue in the ACT through to 18 May 2021. I take this opportunity to table the two most recent reports:

Status of the public health emergency due to COVID-19—

Chief Health Officer Report 11, dated 15 February 2021.

Chief Health Officer Report 12, dated 15 March 2021.

The public health emergency declaration enables the Chief Health Officer to continue to take the necessary actions to reduce threats to public health, including issuing

public health directions that aim to limit the spread of COVID-19 in our community. These directions include the requirement for returned travellers to undertake hotel quarantine and for confirmed cases of COVID-19 to self-isolate.

While the situation in Australia has stabilised, the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee advises that it is likely that we will continue to see COVID-19 outbreaks until vaccines have been rolled out to a large proportion of the community, which will take some months to achieve. We are doing well, and should be proud of our efforts, but we must remain vigilant and maintain our COVID-safe behaviours so that we can enjoy living in a new, COVID-normal Canberra. I sincerely thank the residents of the ACT for their cooperation, patience and resilience.

I present the following paper:

COVID-19—Update on Government response—Ministerial statement, 30 March 2021.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the ministerial statement.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

## **Rotary Club—100th anniversary Ministerial statement**

**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) (11.28): I rise today to update the Assembly on the centenary of Rotary in Australia and the great work Rotarians in the ACT are doing to support our emergency services personnel. With that, I recognise Michael Moore, a long-serving Rotarian, here in the gallery, and also Jeremy Hanson, a Rotarian, in the chamber as well.

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the first Rotary clubs in Australia and New Zealand, in Melbourne, Sydney, Auckland and Wellington. Here in the ACT we have 11 Rotary clubs, all part of Rotary District 9705. District 9705 incorporates Rotary clubs from right across the south-east of New South Wales and the ACT.

All our Rotary Clubs here in the ACT are involved in helping out the ACT community. More broadly across the district, clubs from District 9705 have been very active in helping with the bushfire recovery and the efforts following the 2019-20 Black Summer fires. District 9705 has formed a bushfire recovery committee to assist Rotary clubs in the district to coordinate responses to bushfire recovery in the ACT and across south-eastern New South Wales.

The Rotary clubs of the ACT have just opened nominations for the 2021 ACT Rotary emergency community service awards. These awards recognise our emergency

service personnel who have gone above and beyond the call of duty and epitomise the Rotary motto of “Service Above Self”. These awards are nominated by the ACT community and reflect the viewpoint of our local community and what they view as outstanding service from our emergency services personnel. The awards take into account a person’s commitment to the community, not only in their role but also in how actively they contribute to their community in their own time. Members from all ESA’s operational services, as well as enabling services, are eligible to be nominated for the awards. This year will be the third time the Rotary clubs of the ACT have hosted the Canberra-focused event to celebrate our emergency services personnel. Winners from the ACT Rotary awards are invited to attend the national Australian emergency awards.

I am pleased to inform the Assembly that one of our very own ACT ambulance intensive care paramedics, Susith Adikari, was recognised as the winner in the paid capacity category at last year’s national awards. Susith is an intensive care paramedic and has dedicated 13 years to emergency services for both domestic and international causes, most notably the British Columbia bushfires in Canada in 2017 and the recent 2020 Black Summer fires. Along with his duty as a primary responder with the ACT Ambulance Service, Susith is passionate about disseminating the wealth of knowledge and experience that he has acquired over the years to help develop the next crop of graduate paramedics here in the ACT.

At the local ACT awards last year, Ian Morey was recognised as the winner in the volunteer capacity. Ian is a veteran firefighter with the Rivers Volunteer Bushfire Brigade and has served the community over the past two decades, in addition to his day job with the Australian public service. With nominations open for this year’s awards, I look forward to seeing the range of talented personnel in our emergency services who will be recognised for their outstanding achievements and service to the community.

Once again, I congratulate Rotary on its centenary in Australia and New Zealand and ask members to take note of the great work Rotary clubs are doing to support emergency services in the ACT. I present a copy of the statement:

100 Years of Rotary—Ministerial Statement, 30 March 2021.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

**MR HANSON** (Murrumbidgee) (11.32): I thank you, Minister, for bringing this before the Assembly today. I acknowledge our district governor, Michael Moore, returning in a different role here today. Welcome back.

At the beginning of the 20th century, Rotary, the world’s first service club, was formed. This year Rotary celebrates 100 years of service. When first envisaged, Rotary was a novel but simple idea: professionals with diverse backgrounds could get together, regularly exchange ideas and form meaningful, lifelong friendships.

Over time, Rotary's reach and vision gradually extended to an organisation with global humanitarian service. Rotary's motto, "Service Above Self," exemplifies the humanitarian spirit of the organisation's members. In 1915, writing in *Rotary* magazine, Rotary's founder, Paul Harris, remarked:

What Rotary will be one hundred years hence, none living can imagine.

Since its humble beginnings in Chicago in 1905, Rotary International has grown to over 33,000 clubs in more than 200 countries and geographical areas. Its members form a global network of business and professional men and women who volunteer their time and talents to serve their communities and the world. There are now over a million members of Rotary: 387,000 in Asia, 337,000 in North America, 295,000 in Europe, 90,000 in South America, 43,000 in the British Isles, and 34,000 in Australia and the Pacific. This represents an amazing contribution by men and women giving back to their communities and to communities around the globe.

Worldwide, Rotary provides its humanitarian service under six broad goals: promoting peace; clean water, sanitation and hygiene; saving mothers and babies; supporting education; growing local economies; and fighting disease. One way these goals are achieved is through the Rotary Foundation. Since it was founded, more than 100 years ago, the foundation has spent more than \$4 billion on life-changing, sustainable projects around the world. Rotary is able to make such significant financial contributions partly because local Rotarians carry most of the administrative burdens and therefore overhead costs can be kept very low.

Our own local Rotary District 9705 encompasses passionate men and women from around 50 Rotary clubs, spanning towns and cities within southern New South Wales and the ACT, from the South Coast, the Great Dividing Range and the Western Plains. Within the district there are 11 clubs in the ACT.

The 2021 Rotary District 9705 Conference in Bathurst was held over 20 and 21 March at the Bathurst Memorial Entertainment Centre. This year's district governor, Michael Moore, a previous member of this place, chaired the conference, under the Rotary International theme for 2021: "Rotary opens opportunities". I wish Michael great success this year as district governor.

One of the clubs in my electorate, and Mrs Jones's electorate as well, is the Rotary Club of Canberra-Weston Creek. The Rotary Club of Canberra-Weston Creek was established on 17 May 1980. The club meets every Monday from 6 pm to 6.30 at the Canberra Irish Club in Parkinson Street, Weston. I am honoured to have been a member of the club since 2008.

I have seen firsthand the extraordinary dedication of its members towards service in our local community. I pay particular respect to my friends from Weston Creek but do so knowing that all over Canberra and our district are equally dedicated Rotarians serving their own communities. One of the great strengths of Rotary is how each individual club, like my own club in Weston Creek, can contribute a small amount towards great global goals. While the world is being devastated by the COVID-19

virus, we need to remember that other viruses have spread and continue to spread death and fear around the world.

In 1978 Rotary was a pioneer in the fight against polio. It started with a very ambitious goal to reach a polio-free world. Polio is caused by poliovirus, a serious disease that can lead to long-term disability, paralysis and death. Most people recover completely but a small number experience muscle and nerve damage that results in lifelong disability.

In Australia there were major polio epidemics in the late 1930s, 1940s and 1950s. The last epidemic was in 1956. During the height of the polio epidemic, in parts of Australia state borders, schools, pools and theatres closed. Travel restrictions and quarantine measures were introduced. Sounds familiar! Polio vaccines were introduced in Australia in 1956 and were followed by mass immunisation programs, and Australia has been officially polio free since 2000. It is estimated that a minimum of 20,000 to 40,000 people had paralytic polio in Australia between the 1930s and 1960s. The number of people infected with the virus was between two million and four million Australians.

As a part of the decades-long, ongoing fight to eradicate polio from the world, last year the Rotary Club of Canberra-Weston Creek had a fundraiser with the “World’s Greatest Meal to End Polio” and they raised approximately \$US500, which has contributed to part of the \$3,720,000 raised worldwide—which is enough for 18,600,000 vaccines.

Eradication of polio is just one of Rotary’s longstanding and significant efforts. Along with their international partners, Rotary have helped immunise more than 2.5 billion children against polio. Rotary has reduced polio cases by 99.9 per cent worldwide. Today only two countries remain polio endemic, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Rotary is a non-political, non-religious humanitarian organisation that brings the highest and most noble ideas of service to all peoples around the globe. I support this Assembly’s acknowledgement of the achievements and service by Rotary and Rotarians over the past century. I thank Michael Moore and all our local district Rotarians for their continued service to Canberra, the Rotary district and people around the world.

**MR RATTENBURY** (Kurrajong) (11.39): I thank the minister for his statement today and for his detail on the work Rotarians are doing here in the ACT, particularly to support emergency services personnel. I also extend warm congratulations on behalf of the ACT Greens MLAs to Rotary on this very significant anniversary. As Mr Hanson has outlined in his remarks, Rotary International, from its very early days, has had tremendous reach across the globe. By the time it formally launched in Australia, on 21 April 1921, the organisation already had 80,000 members in the United States, Canada and Britain. Now it has more than 1.2 million worldwide, grouped in 35,000 different clubs.

I am struck by the words of Paul Harris, Rotary’s founder, who originally envisaged a friendship group for professionals but who soon saw, along with other early members,

that friendship can often mean more and grow deeper in the context of practical and selfless action. He said:

Whatever Rotary may mean to us, to the world it will be known by the results it achieves.

In fact, when I read Rotary's vision statement I felt that it was a message that deserves to be taken on far more widely in our world, which can be overly consumerist and self-absorbed. The vision statement reads:

Together, we see a world where people unite and take action to create lasting change—across the globe, in our communities and in ourselves.

And it certainly has achieved results all over the world.

We have just heard about the efforts to end polio but also about providing clean water, supporting maternal and child health in disadvantaged communities, developing regenerative agriculture, installing solar infrastructure, funding disaster relief and replanting native forests, as well as much more. Its partnerships with local organisations and its focus on manageable-sized, practical projects is a proven and inspirational model.

Rotary's strong focus on youth is impressive too: exchange programs, leadership programs and youth clubs which, like their parent organisation, focus on creating practical results through specific projects.

Here in Canberra the Rotary contribution that stands out the most for me, however, is the Peace Bell in Nara Peace Park. It was only launched three years ago, yet it has already become a natural and important community focus not only for celebration but also for mourning and remembrance. Just this month members of the Japanese community and their friends gathered at the Peace Bell to mark the 10th anniversary of the earthquake and tsunami that devastated northern Japan in 2011. In January the bell was rung to mark the coming into force of the United Nations Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and in March 2019 it was the site of a very sombre vigil, following the massacre of 51 peaceful worshippers in Christchurch.

Having attended a number of these occasions, I thank Rotary very sincerely for Canberra's Peace Bell, the 23rd such bell around the world. The first was rung in 1947, marking the second anniversary of the atomic bombing of Japan. There are now peace bells in cities and towns as diverse and far flung as Mexico City, Ulaanbaatar, Vienna, Ottawa, Cowra, Madrid, New York, Tashkent and now the 24th peace bell in the Israeli town of Lod.

Once again, I congratulate everyone involved in the Rotary movement—I also note the presence of Michael Moore here in the chamber today—locally and nationally, as well as internationally. It is great work and great principles. I thank them for their contribution to our community.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

## **Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee Scrutiny report 2**

**MR HANSON** (Murrumbidgee) (11.44): I present the following report:

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee (Legislative Scrutiny Role)—Scrutiny Report 2, dated Wednesday, 24 March 2021, together with a copy of the extracts of the relevant minutes of proceedings.

I seek leave to make a brief statement.

Leave granted.

**MR HANSON:** Scrutiny report No 2 contains the committee's comments on four bills, 15 pieces of subordinate legislation, four government responses and proposed amendments to the Crimes Legislation Amendment Bill 2020. The report was circulated to members when the Assembly was not sitting. I thank the other members of the committee, our legal advisers and the secretary and I commend the report to the Assembly.

## **Administration and Procedure—Standing Committee Report 3**

**MS BURCH** (Brindabella) (11.44): I present the following report and papers:

Administration and Procedure—Standing Committee—Report 3—*Review of Members' Code of Conduct and the Declaration of Members Interests Form*, dated Monday, 29 March 2021, together with a copy of the extracts of the relevant minutes of proceedings.

Declaration of Members Private Interests—

Revised form.

Revised amendments form.

Motion (by **Ms Orr**, by leave) agreed to:

That the report be adopted.

## **Administration and Procedure—Standing Committee Report 4**

**MS BURCH** (Brindabella) (11.45): I present the following report:

Administration and Procedure—Standing Committee—Report 4—*Review of standing orders for the Tenth Assembly*, dated Monday, 29 March 2021, together with a copy of the extracts of the relevant minutes of proceedings.

**MS ORR** (Yerrabi) (11.45), by leave: I move:

That the report be adopted.

The administration and procedure committee has done a very small review of the standing orders to make sure that we can continue to function as we go along, noting that we will have coming up a much larger and comprehensive review of substantive issues around the standing orders. All members have brought forward some things that can be considered in that review, and I look forward to having a discussion in a collaborative and productive way, which I am sure we will all be able to achieve. In the meantime, this one will keep this place running so that we can do what it is we do.

**MR HANSON** (Murrumbidgee) (11.46): This is a report that the opposition supports. As Ms Orr has outlined, they are routine changes to make sure that this place continues to function and incorporate many of the changes we have adopted through the COVID response—changing the form of this place so that we have a different sitting pattern, with private members' business every day, no MPIs and so on. Other changes have been incorporated, based on advice from the Clerk.

There are a couple of issues that each of the parties is pursuing, and I want to highlight a couple that we have agreed to a kick down the road for a more substantive review. They are important and we will certainly litigate them then. I have agreed not to do that at this point, which I am sure delights Madam Speaker and Ms Orr.

One issue is that, with 25 members in this place, the time allotted for the adjournment debate is sometimes not sufficient and we have looked at ways around that. One idea is that of member statements, which would essentially mimic adjournment debates but happen prior to lunch. However that happens, we need to have a form to make sure that there is sufficient time for people to have adjournment debates. They are important, particularly now that we have got rid of MPIs and we need to make sure that we have that space where we can discuss issues that are important to our community.

At this stage, the workaround is that if we get to the end of the day and we have run out of time we will seek leave for an extension of time. I am advised that whoever will be sitting in the chair will be gracious and allow more time for the adjournment. We will monitor that one and if the enthusiasm for adjournment debate continues, I think there is a willingness to accommodate that.

The other matter is question time, which is done differently in different parliaments. There are two substantive issues here and the first goes to the principle of question time. Its purpose is to scrutinise the government, but too often we see dorothy dixers from both Labor and Greens backbenchers—all members of the government. I know that this is a matter of philosophical dispute, but at the end of the day it is Greens members asking Greens government ministers dorothy dixers or providing their questions in advance to their coalition partners in the Labor Party. That is hardly scrutiny.

If ministers want to make statements and spruik the good work they are doing, there is ample opportunity for that in ministerial statements. We just spent the last nearly two hours dealing with ministerial statements. There are many opportunities for that, and I would like question time to have a greater emphasis on the scrutiny of government

and its business. I note that we are almost at a record low in terms of sitting days. There are reasons for that, but if we are in a position where we have fewer sitting days and we are going to spend question time with a whole bunch of dorothy dixers then there is insufficient scrutiny of government through that process.

I also believe that, as happens in other parliaments, should the opposition choose that a member—the shadow minister for health perhaps—wants to ask a whole bunch of questions, they should be entitled to ask them on behalf of the opposition. We should not have to all ask a question each on an area that is not part of our expertise. Again, that degrades the quality of the questioning and the scrutiny of government.

I highlight those issues; they are important. We will bring them forward at a later date, hopefully with some support from our government colleagues who do not mind the scrutiny. Hopefully, they will be prepared to expose themselves to scrutiny rather than just have endless dorothy dixers from their Labor and Greens backbenchers.

**MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi) (11.51):** The Greens will be supporting these changes to the standing orders, but I highlight to the Assembly two areas that we anticipate will require further examination in the extensive review of the standing orders that will happen later in this term. Firstly, question time. Although we might not be in 100 per cent alignment with what Mr Hanson has just said about the quality of the Greens' questions to ministers—we hold that we are asking substantive, constructive questions in this space and will continue to do so—we do need to examine whether question time is working to its maximum effectiveness as an accountability mechanism.

There have been discussions between the parties about how we weigh expert accountability questioning versus democratic equality, with each member in this house having the opportunity to pose a question. That in itself indicates that it requires more considered debate. Hence, we are keen to see that discussed as part of the standing orders review.

I also wish to highlight one part of question time where the practice has not achieved the intent—second supplementaries have rarely yielded new or unique aspects to questions. Some may suggest that questioners need to jump up faster. To this end, I will endeavour to propel my spreading and ageing frame upwards as soon as a minister has finished speaking, to grab that elusive goal—the second supplementary. I only hope that you, Madam Speaker, in your ineffable wisdom, share my faith that the incentive of new, insightful accountability from a second supplementary is not just a figment of standing order possibility but is something achieved in actual practice to reward those MLAs who jump with vim and vigour. I look forward to seeing how this afternoon's question time goes, but I highlight that this is an area ripe for reform.

Secondly, in moving matters of public importance, I am keen to bring an enhanced level of input from the residents of Canberra. The question has been put why this needs to be done when there are 25 representatives who are all paid to do exactly that, to which I respond with the example of petitions as an area where the performance of members has not met the community expectation. Any resident can submit a petition here to the Assembly. We have a very nice process for petitions—more than one signature and you get a government response. More than 500 signatures and it is

forwarded to a committee to decide whether they wish to inquire into the matter raised. Of all the petitions submitted to committees, committees have only twice decided that they wish to inquire. The residents of Canberra are petitioning, but are we in this Assembly actually listening? The government is responding, but the Assembly is not. I highlight this as another area that I am keen to explore as part of the review. As I said, the Greens will support these amendments to the standing orders.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

## **Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee Report 1**

**MR HANSON** (Murrumbidgee) (11.55): I present the following report:

I move:

*Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee—Report 1—Annual and Financial Reports 2019-2020; Appropriation Bill 2020-2021 and Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2020-2021, dated Thursday, 1 April 2021, together with a copy of the extracts of the relevant minutes of proceedings.*

I move:

That the report be noted.

This is the first report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety for the Tenth Assembly, following referral by the Assembly on 9 February of relevant annual reports and budget papers. The committee held two public hearings; 29 questions were taken on notice and 83 questions were placed on notice. Answers are available on the committee's webpage.

The committee made 19 recommendations in relation to ACT Policing, courts, tribunals, the Emergency Services Agency, the Alexander Maconochie Centre, payday loans, road safety, smoke air quality, victims of crime, oversight of the Human Rights Commission, and funding for Legal Aid and community legal centres. I will not go into any of those in detail now—you all have copies of the report to review at your leisure—but they are substantive and important recommendations.

On behalf of the committee, I thank ACT government ministers, statutory office holders and directorate and agency officials for their contribution to this inquiry. The committee welcomed this first opportunity to engage with ministers and officials and looks forward to monitoring agencies and the important work they perform during the term of this Assembly.

I thank the other members of the committee, Ms Clay and Dr Paterson, for what was an interesting and useful exercise. It was their first opportunity to be involved in this process, and I thank them for the collegiate way that they worked with me through the process. I thank the secretary of the committee, Brianna McGill, for outstanding work. She really is very impressive in what she does. I commend the report to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

## **Education and Community Inclusion—Standing Committee Statement by chair**

**MR PETERSSON** (Yerrabi) (11.57): Pursuant to standing order 246A, I wish to make a statement on behalf of the Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion relating to statutory appointments in accordance with continuing resolution 5A.

The reporting period, 1 July 2020 to 31 December 2020, to which this statement relates bridges two Assemblies—the Ninth Assembly and the Tenth Assembly. I wish to inform the Assembly that during the applicable reporting period the Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion and its predecessor in the Ninth Assembly, the Standing Committee on Education, Employment and Youth Affairs, considered a total of four appointments to the following bodies: the Board of Senior Secondary Studies; the Canberra Institute of Technology Board; and the Teacher Quality Institute.

I now table a schedule of the statutory appointments considered by the committee during this period:

Education and Community Inclusion—Standing Committee—Schedule of  
Statutory Appointments—10th Assembly—Period 1 July to 31 December 2020.

## **Environment, Climate Change and Biodiversity—Standing Committee Statement by chair**

**DR PATERSON** (Murrumbidgee) (11.58): Pursuant to standing order 246A, I wish to make a statement on behalf of the Standing Committee on Environment, Climate Change and Biodiversity. At its private meeting on 23 February 2021 the committee resolved to conduct an inquiry into renewable energy innovation in the ACT. At that meeting, the committee agreed to the following terms of reference for the inquiry:

- (1) The Standing Committee on Environment, Climate Change and Biodiversity will inquire into and report on matters relating to renewable energy innovation in the Australian Capital Territory, with particular reference to:
  - a) opportunities and challenges to boost renewable energy research, technology development and new zero emissions industries in the ACT;
  - b) opportunities and challenges to establish the ACT as a national hub for renewable energy technologies and industries including zero emissions vehicles;
  - c) opportunities and challenges to innovatively finance and/or manage renewable energy in the ACT;
  - d) strategies to address limitations to collaboration and innovation between renewable energy stakeholders;
  - e) the effectiveness of administration and funding of Australian Capital Territory Government policy and regulatory settings relating to renewable energy, climate action and emissions reduction;

- f) opportunities and challenges in battery storage including neighbourhood-scale batteries and vehicle-to-grid technologies; and
- g) any other relevant matters.

(2) The Committee will report to the Assembly at a time to be determined.

The committee called for public submissions on 24 February 2021, with a closing date of 29 April 2021. The committee intends to hold public hearings from May 2021.

## **Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee**

### **Statement by chair**

**MR HANSON** (Murrumbidgee) (12.00): Pursuant to standing order 246A, I wish to make a statement on behalf of the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety relating to statutory appointments in accordance with continuing resolution 5A.

I wish to inform the Assembly that during the reporting period 1 July 2020 to 31 December 2020 the committee and its Ninth Assembly predecessor considered a total of six appointments and reappointments to the following bodies: Official Visitors for the purpose of the Disability Services Act 1991; Official Visitors for the purpose of the Corrections Management Act 2007; and the Professional Standards Council.

I now table a schedule of the statutory appointments considered during this period by the JACS Committees of the Ninth and Tenth Assemblies:

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee—Schedule of Statutory  
Appointments—10th Assembly—Period 1 July to 31 December 2020.

## **Planning, Transport and City Services—Standing Committee**

### **Statement by chair**

**MS CLAY** (Ginninderra) (12.01): Pursuant to standing order 246A, I wish to make a statement on behalf of the Standing Committee on Planning, Transport and City Services. I advise the Assembly that the Standing Committee on Planning, Transport and City Services, on 3 March 2021, resolved to inquire into and report on petition 4-21, concerning Giralang shops, referred to the committee by the Assembly under standing order 99A, and on 11 March 2021 resolved to inquire into and report on draft variation No 365 to the Territory Plan, after it was referred to the committee by the Minister for Planning and Land Management on 1 March 2021.

## **Health and Community Wellbeing—Standing Committee**

### **Statement by chair**

**MR DAVIS** (Brindabella) (12.01): Pursuant to standing order 246A, I wish to make a statement on behalf of the Standing Committee on Health and Community Wellbeing relating to the committee's decision not to continue with a self-referred inquiry on tobacco, alcohol and drug programs in the ACT, reported to the Assembly on 9 February 2021.

Since the Assembly last met, discussions and correspondence have occurred between the standing committee and the newly established Select Committee on the Drugs of Dependence (Personal Use) Amendment Bill 2021. That correspondence resulted in recognition by the standing committee and the select committee that matters to be the subject of inquiry of the standing committee's original inquiry were likely to be examined by the newly formed select committee under the detailed terms of inquiry notified last week. Such a situation may have also caused unnecessary confusion in the community and among stakeholders.

As a result of discussions between the two committees, a joint media release from the two committees was published. It notes the decision by the standing committee to discontinue its self-referred inquiry.

For the reasons I have stated—regarding the provisions of standing order 217, which require a standing committee to ensure that it does not inquire into matters subject to examination by a select committee—the committee will take no further action on its self-referred inquiry and will remove notification of the inquiry and invitation for submissions from the committee website.

I note the considered tripartisan commitment of this Assembly to investigate the important matters raised in the two committees' attendant inquiries and I look forward to that work later this year.

### **Statement by chair**

**MR DAVIS** (Brindabella) (12.03): 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 newly self-referred inquiry which the committee has resolved to undertake.

The standing committee commences this inquiry as a result of matters I dealt with in my statement a few moments ago. The committee's inquiry will be a review of all aspects of current screening and health assessment programs and processes in the ACT for hearing, vision, speech, motor skill difficulties and general health of children and young people. Included in this review are two particular matters: current programs for screening, diagnosis, assessment and treatment in the ACT for foetal alcohol spectrum disorder, FASD; and the implementation of the National Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Strategic Action Plan 2018–2028, the national FASD plan, in the ACT.

The committee will now invite submissions to the inquiry, and I will announce a hearing program in the near future. The committee will present its report to the Assembly by the end of November 2021. 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—Review of ACT health programs for children and young people—Terms of reference.

## **Drugs of Dependence (Personal Use) Amendment Bill—Select Committee**

### **Statement by chair**

**MR CAIN** (Ginninderra) (12.04): Pursuant to standing order 246A, I wish to make a statement on behalf of the Select Committee on the Drugs of Dependence (Personal Use) Amendment Bill 2021. The committee was established by resolution on 11 February 2021 to examine the Drugs of Dependence (Personal Use) Amendment Bill 2021 and any related matter. The committee has decided that, in addition to an examination of the terms of the bill, it will inquire into the following related matters:

- a) best practice policy approaches and responses undertaken in other jurisdictions, including internationally, to reduce harm and societal impacts from drugs;
- b) the health, criminal justice and social impacts of current policy and legislation approaches to drug use in the ACT (including the ACT government's ACT *Drug Strategy Action Plan 2018-2021*);
- c) the adequacy and implementation of the ACT government's current funding commitments to support drug control and harm reduction;
- d) opportunities and challenges for community-based and community-controlled organisations, programs and initiatives to reduce harm from drugs (for example a clinically supervised drug consumption site in the ACT);
- e) issues specific to the drug rehabilitation and service sector (covering alcohol and other drug services) including the following:
  - i) identifying current strengths and weaknesses in the sector;
  - ii) assessing current and future demands;
  - iii) recommending services, referral pathways and funding models that will better meet people's needs;
- f) the availability, access and implementation of best practice drug education material to enable and support prevention, early intervention, and community safety.

The committee may yet identify further related matters in the course of its inquiry and reserves the right to inquire into those matters also. The select committee considers that the matters outlined cannot be separated from a detailed and holistic examination of the policy underpinning the bill, as well as the potential social and legal consequences associated with changes to the Drugs of Dependence Act 1989 proposed by the bill.

The select committee also acknowledges that many of the matters forming part of the scope of its inquiry are matters relating to health and community wellbeing—an area

where the Assembly has already established a standing committee. However, under standing order 217, a standing committee is required to take care not to inquire into any matters which are being examined by a select committee. The select committee is required to table its final report on the last sitting day in October.

### **Committees—Standing Membership**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Pursuant to standing order 223, the opposition wrote to me on 12 March 2021 advising of a proposed change to the membership of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. Mr Hanson proposed that, due to the resignation of Mr Coe, Mrs Kikkert be appointed to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. I agreed to the change on 12 March 2021.

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

That the change to the membership of Standing Committee on Public Accounts, as proposed to and agreed to by the Speaker, be adopted.

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

That Mrs Kikkert be discharged from the Standing Committee on Health and Community Wellbeing and that Mr Milligan be appointed in her place.

### **Committees—Standing Amendment to resolution**

**MS ORR** (Yerrabi) (12.09): I move:

That the resolution of the Assembly of 2 December 2020 that established the general purpose standing committees be amended by omitting paragraph (5) and substituting the following:

“(5) all bills presented to the Assembly stand referred to the relevant standing committee for inquiry and report within two months from the presentation of the bill, except for those bills introduced in the last sitting week of the calendar year where the committee shall report in three months. Within 14 days of the presentation of the bill in the Assembly, the committee must decide whether or not to undertake an inquiry, and shall inform the Speaker of its decision, the Speaker must then arrange for all members to be notified. In the event that the subject matter of the bill makes it unclear which committee it should be referred to, the Speaker will determine the appropriate committee;”

This is just a consequential change to the standing order changes that went through earlier.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

### **Legislative Assembly—members’ code of conduct**

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

That we, the Members of the Tenth Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory, having adopted a code of conduct for Members, reaffirm our commitment to the principles, obligations and aspirations of the code.

**Sitting suspended from 12.10 to 2.00 pm.**

## **Ministerial arrangements**

**MS BERRY** (Ginninderra—Deputy Chief Minister, Minister for Early Childhood Development, Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, Minister for Housing and Suburban Development, Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, Minister for Sport and Recreation and Minister for Women) (2.01): I will be taking questions for Mr Barr, who is on a pair for question time today.

## **Questions without notice**

### **Budget—capital works**

**MS LEE:** My question is to the Deputy Chief Minister, who is representing the Chief Minister. I refer to the audited budget papers, which revealed an almost \$250 million underspend on infrastructure projects in 2019-20. This represents one-third of the total capital works budget for that year. Deputy Chief Minister, why did your government fail to deliver more than 30 per cent of the capital works building program last year?

**MS BERRY:** I will take the detail of that question on notice for Ms Lee, but I will say that the ACT government have always had an aspirational infrastructure project plan and we have always done our very best as a government to ensure that infrastructure projects have a pipeline for strong work across the ACT community. Last year was an extraordinary year and I expect that COVID will have had some influence and impact on infrastructure being delivered. I will take the question on notice and provide Ms Lee with details.

**MS LEE:** Deputy Chief Minister, what planned funding was not spent, and how will this impact on delivery time frames for each affected project?

**MS BERRY:** There is quite a lot of detail in that question. I will take it on notice.

**MS LAWDER:** Deputy Chief Minister, will your government achieve its full capital works building program this financial year?

**MS BERRY:** That is definitely the target that the ACT government is attempting to achieve. Again, COVID-19 did have a special impact on the ACT community and its ability to perform with regard to infrastructure projects. We have a number of very large projects in the pipeline, with an expanded health system, as well as light rail and work within the city. There are some very significant infrastructure projects in the pipeline. I will get some more detail for Ms Lawder on our projected time frames for achieving those outcomes.

**Molonglo Valley—infrastructure**

**MRS JONES:** My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services. Minister, last week Coppins Crossing, on the Molonglo River, which is the only northern bound exit from the Molonglo Valley, was closed and is still closed, I believe, due to flooding. As a result, peak hour traffic on Cotter Road, the only other exit, is slowed to walking pace for many kilometres. During last year's election campaign, after years and years of local members and the community asking when the new bridge over the river would be constructed, the government finally committed to building a bridge. Minister, when will construction begin?

**MR STEEL:** Following the design of the project, and in relation to the very long description Mrs Jones has provided to the Assembly, we do know that there is significant congestion on John Gorton Drive and the Cotter Road. At the moment, right across the country, what we are seeing is public transport patronage affected by the pandemic. Public health messaging has been asking people not to travel at peak times. It is down about 24 per cent, and that has resulted in significant congestion in not only Canberra but also areas like Perth and other CBDs around the country. We expect that, over time, that will correct itself as we come out of the pandemic.

The ACT government has a significant infrastructure program underway not only to build the bridge over the Molonglo River and the lead-up road, the 500-metre extension to John Gorton Drive, but also works to duplicate William Hovell Drive—

**Mr Hanson:** Madam Speaker, on a point of order—relevance—the question was: when will construction begin? The minister is talking about a broad range of infrastructure across Canberra. This is a specific question about the construction and commencement of a bridge.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mr Hanson, thank you. The response is in order. Mrs Jones, in her question, made reference to broader infrastructure and the congestion on the roads. Mr Steel, in the time remaining.

**MR STEEL:** Thank you. As I mentioned, it will occur following the design of the project, and the procurement of this very substantial and comprehensive project. The ACT government has a range of projects underway which are complementary. There continue to be feasibility studies on upgrades to the south-west corridor of the city, which of course is a major corridor for those coming out of the Molonglo Valley into the city on the Tuggeranong Parkway, through Glenloch Interchange and onto Parkes way.

**MRS JONES:** Minister, in which month of which year will construction begin on the bridge?

**MR STEEL:** That is subject to the design and procurement.

**MR HANSON:** Minister, when will it open?

**MR STEEL:** It is anticipated at this stage that it could open as early as 2025.

### **Molonglo Valley—community facilities**

**MR HANSON:** My question is to the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development. The Molonglo Valley has no purpose-built community facilities for general public use except for the Charles Weston school hall, which is currently heavily booked. Future community facilities in Wright and Denman Prospect have not yet been built. Coombs has what is called a “community activity centre”, which has been constructed but not fitted out and has sat empty and locked up for more than two years. It is a concrete shell without flooring, window coverings, paint, chairs or tables. The developer who built it has been asking for more rent than any community group is able to afford. Minister, when is the official opening of the Coombs community activity centre?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Madam Speaker, I will take that. I think it is more of a planning matter, in the way that we procure the land and get it ready for those community facilities to take over in the long run. We have done some very careful planning work in Molonglo. You can see the EPDs that have been done in preparation for the growth of Molonglo, and we look forward to the opportunity for community facilities and shops to take up those proposals in the future.

**Mr Hanson:** On a point of order, although I accept that the preamble talked about future community centres, it is specifically about the Coombs community activity centre, which is already constructed and awaiting opening. This is not a planning matter; this is a matter of when a facility that has already been constructed is going to be available to the community. It is not about future planning law. I would ask the minister to be directly relevant and advise when the Coombs community activity centre will be opening.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Madam Speaker, I do not have that information in front of me. I will take it on notice.

**MR HANSON:** Minister, will the government subsidise the cost of the centre so that community groups can afford to rent it and use it?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** That is a matter for government to work with the community on. At this stage we have no plans to subsidise the centre.

**MRS JONES:** Minister, will you ensure that a minister from this government meets with the Molonglo Valley Community Forum and resolves this issue?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Certainly. I look forward to meeting with the Molonglo community forum, and I am sure other ministers, in their portfolios, do as well.

### **Trees—urban canopy**

**MR BRADDOCK:** My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services. Minister, newly developed suburbs often have the least canopy cover. For example, Gungahlin has four per cent and Molonglo has one per cent. Once plantings have matured, will these suburbs achieve 30 per cent tree canopy cover in their own right?

**MR STEEL:** I thank Mr Braddock for his question. Of course, we hope to achieve 30 per cent canopy cover or equivalent—

**Mr Parton:** Or is it aspirational?

**Mr Hanson:** After the design phase.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Order, members!

**MR STEEL:** across our city by 2045 as part of our Living Infrastructure Plan and Urban Forest Strategy, which I have released today. The focus of the strategy is to plant trees in areas where there is low canopy cover and also in areas where trees are reaching senescence and the end of their life, either due to climate change or because they have reached the end of their natural life.

The focus of the plantings, going forward, will be in areas like Gungahlin and Molonglo that have low canopy cover at the moment. In the strategy which I have released today there are some really telling photos: one that was taken before Woden Valley was developed, the other while it was being developed and then afterwards, today. What you see is that it does take time for an urban forest to grow. The best time to plant a tree is 20 years ago. The other best time is now. We are getting on with that work, and 9,000 trees will be planted this year as we ramp up the fifth largest tree planting in Canberra's history.

**Mr Parton:** How long have you been in government?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mr Parton, you have been quite persistent in interjecting and I would ask you to stop, please.

**MR BRADDOCK:** Minister, will the suburbs of Molonglo and Gungahlin achieve 30 per cent tree canopy cover in their own right by 2045?

**MR STEEL:** I thank the member for his question. The canopy target has been set across the city and, as I said, the focus will be on areas with low canopy cover. In our new suburbs we know that the public space will have to do the heavy lifting in terms of areas where the trees will be planted. Of course, the government has also been consulting in the planning area on changes to ensure that new greenfield blocks have at least 15 per cent space for canopy cover to be grown. So the two combined, both leased private land and public land, will need to provide that extra tree canopy cover.

At the moment, across the city, based on the LiDAR data that we have, we know that there is 19 per cent canopy cover. Right across the city we actually need to increase canopy cover up to 30 per cent. We are looking forward to getting on with that work and also bringing forward future legislative reforms to the Assembly which will enact the objectives of the Urban Forest Strategy in the future.

**Mr Parton:** Aspirational.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** You are about to be warned, Mr Parton, because I have asked you to stop. Mr Davis, you have the call for the supplementary.

**MR DAVIS:** Minister, what accountability measures will the government implement and impose upon itself to ensure that the community's expected tree canopy coverage is met?

**MR STEEL:** I thank Mr Davis for his question. The ACT government, in the Urban Forest Strategy, will provide a community update on an annual basis in relation to the actions undertaken under the plan. We are also committed to five-yearly updated LiDAR data to evaluate how the canopy is growing. It does take some time for different tree species to grow, and we need to evaluate that over that period. We look forward to updating the Assembly as the work on the Urban Forest Strategy progresses. An important part of the strategy is to protect existing trees, as well as planting out the canopy. We also want to work with the community to involve them in growing and maintaining the urban forest.

### **Women—International Women's Day**

**MS ORR:** My question is to the Minister for Women. Minister, it has been a momentous International Women's Day this year. Can you please update the Assembly on some of the activities that occurred to mark the occasion?

**Mrs Jones:** Do we have enough time?

**MS BERRY:** That is certainly a very good question, Mrs Jones. I thank Ms Orr for her question. The celebrations this year have extended way beyond a day, as they should every year, to celebrate International Women's Day. This year I want to pay particular attention to women working on the frontline, the hardworking women who got us through this international health pandemic. I refer to those women from the United Workers Union that I had a gathering with in my office to understand the experiences that they had during the international health pandemic, working across cleaning, hospitality and other women's services industries to keep the community going.

Importantly, it was also an opportunity to present the ACT Women's Awards. The ACT Woman of the Year was Sonam Choden, who migrated from Bhutan, so English is not her first language. Sonam has worked at Calvary Public Hospital for four years and during the pandemic she led her colleagues at Calvary to achieve secure jobs and fair wages.

I also want to celebrate the ACT Senior Woman of the Year, Liz Stephens, who has made an outstanding contribution to improving the lives of queer women through her organisation and coordination of events, as well as bringing together the community via her work in Diversity ACT.

The ACT Young Woman of the Year, Dhani Gilbert, is a proud Wiradjuri woman who is focused on achieving just and sustainable outcomes for country, community and young people. Dhani furthers community discussions about the importance of our environment and the need to address climate change.

I also want to acknowledge and celebrate the contribution of Sue Salthouse, who was an incredible disability advocate as well as respected community leader who sadly passed away in 2020. The impact of her work is long lasting.

**MS ORR:** Minister, how have women working on the frontline during this challenging time been impacted?

**MS BERRY:** Well, 2020 was a challenging year for many people in the ACT and everywhere. It was a year of uncertainty and change, as well as insecurity. In 2020 women were particularly affected by the impacts of COVID-19—their economic insecurity, the greater role they played in undertaking unpaid household and caring responsibilities and the feminisation of frontline education and healthcare sectors during this time.

I wanted to make sure that these women were recognised during the International Women’s Day ceremonies and celebrations, and it was important as part of those celebrations to recognise the health workers as Citizens of the Year for Canberra. That was an important acknowledgement of the workers in that space, as well as an acknowledgement that a lot of these spaces are dominated by women.

**DR PATERSON:** Minister, how is the ACT government continuing to advance gender equality in the ACT?

**MS BERRY:** There has been a significant amount of work done over the last couple of decades in the ACT and also in Australia. Of course there is significantly more work that needs to be done. However, in the ACT we have committed to doing that work collaboratively across the government and with community support. The ACT government officially launched its Equity Together second action plan for 2022, under the ACT Women’s Plan. The goals under that plan are to improve the mental health and wellbeing of women and girls in the ACT; foster gender equity in Canberra workplaces; build a community where women and girls feel safe and supported to participate; improve housing support and sustainability, as well as reducing homelessness for women; and develop appropriate and accessible services, programs and policies.

The ACT government has shown its ongoing commitment to the delivery of these actions under the plan, despite the issues that were faced by our community last year, and redirected resources to ensure that our community was supported during the COVID-19 pandemic. To support the delivery of Equity Together, the ACT government has committed to holding implementation workshops over the life of the plan to ensure that we can continue to consult with the ACT community on the important and complex issues around gender inequality in the ACT.

### **Municipal services—community facilities**

**MS CLAY:** My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services and it relates to community space. Minister, I have recently been approached by many constituents in Scullin who previously hired Humpy Hall as a community facility.

They were really worried about the transition of management to the ACT Property Group. I was pleased to see an email from your office this morning about it, but I still have some concerns about community space. Will all the community users who want to use Humpy Hall be able to access it under the new arrangements, and how much are they going to have to pay?

**MR STEEL:** I thank Ms Clay for her question. Yes, the ACT Property Group has taken over the management of Humpy Hall in Scullin, which was previously subleased to the South Belconnen Community Association. Bookings can be made online, at [humpyhallbookings@act.gov.au](mailto:humpyhallbookings@act.gov.au). The booking rates will not change from those of the previous organisation, with hiring from \$18 per hour.

To give a bit of background to support my answer, let me say that a number of concerns have been raised with the government in relation to access to Humpy Hall by community organisations. The ACT government, through the ACT Property Group, tried to ascertain how the hall was being utilised under the management of the South Belconnen Community Association but was unable to determine that because no information was provided.

On 11 November 2020 a breach notice was issued by the ACT Property Group to the SBCA for failing to provide a financial statement, occupancy rates, utilisation rates, total revenue received and copies of the waiting list. The SBCA were given 28 days to remedy this breach and no information was provided by them during that time frame. That resulted in the Property Group issuing a termination notice on 8 February which came into effect on 11 March. A termination was communicated to the SBCA in a range of different ways. I have also sent correspondence to members of the SBCA executive.

That is why the hall has ultimately come under the control of Venues Canberra, who will be undertaking the bookings. We hope that this will have the outcome of providing access to more community groups and better utilisation of this important community space, which is owned by the ACT government.

**MS CLAY:** How is the ACT government going to ensure that, as our population grows, we are providing enough free community meeting spaces to keep up with demand?

**MR STEEL:** At the election, the Labor Party committed to building a range of new community centres. That includes the new community space and library in Molonglo, which we are looking forward to co-designing with the community, which will be located in the new Molonglo commercial centre. There are plans underway with the Woden community centre, and also in Gungahlin. We know that we need to meet the needs of the community in a range of different ways. That includes our multicultural community and the commitment that was provided, in consultation with that community, for a 10,000 square metre meeting space and events venue which will be located at EPIC in the future.

We will continue to discuss the needs of the community, but we know that the existing properties that fall under the ACT Property Group, which are many and

varied—some old school sites and the like—are in high demand and there is a significant waiting list. We continue to play a bit of a game of Tetris to move people into the best accommodation, but we hope to increase the utilisation of our existing properties through better management. The case of Humpy Hall is a good example of that.

**MR DAVIS:** Minister, what plans does the ACT government have to provide more safe, accessible and affordable community meeting spaces in my electorate of Brindabella?

**MR STEEL:** I thank the member for his question. I am happy to meet with him to discuss that matter. The Tuggeranong community has access to a range of community centres: the Lanyon Mura centre, the Tuggeranong Community Centre and the Tuggeranong Arts Centre. There are a number of community facilities that are owned by the Property Group in the Tuggeranong region.

**Mr Davis:** Madam Speaker, on relevance, I asked the minister what plans the government had to commit to new spaces in Tuggeranong. I am aware of the ones that exist.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** The minister has a minute and a half to conclude his answer.

**MR STEEL:** I am always happy to take feedback from the community about their needs in relation to community spaces, as I am sure other ministers are who have responsibility for this area, including planning for new community facilities.

### **Naas Valley—bridge**

**MS LAWDER:** My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services. On 23 March 2021 the Naas bridge was swept away after a significant amount of rainfall in the area. The bridge had recently been undergoing construction work. In one part, the city services website states that bridge construction was expected to have commenced in early 2020. Even factoring in a six-month delay for the bushfires, it would appear that the bridge could have been completed well before the rain. Minister, did the fact that the bridge was undergoing construction at the time of the rise in water levels contribute in any way to it being washed away?

**MR STEEL:** I will take that question on notice.

**MS LAWDER:** Minister, was the delay to the bridge upgrade affected by the \$250 million infrastructure underspend by your government?

**MR STEEL:** No.

**MR PARTON:** Minister, how will the government support these residents who are cut off from Canberra, given that their next biggest urban centre is over an hour away, in the bustling retail metropolis of Adaminaby?

**MR STEEL:** As advised during road closures that occurred during the recent rain events, there were alternative ways to get to the city, and that included routes through Boboyan Road.

### **Environment—urban vegetation**

**MS CASTLEY:** My question is to the Minister for the Environment. Minister, a recent report by the Conservation Council and Monash University shows that since 2013 the Labor-Greens government has overseen a reduction of total urban vegetation in Canberra from 60 per cent to 35 per cent, making us the worst performing major city in Australia. Minister, why has the Labor-Greens government been reducing tree, shrub and grass coverage in Canberra for the past eight years?

**MS VASSAROTTI:** Thank you, Ms Castley, for the question. I will need to take that question on notice in relation to the reduction of vegetation. Certainly, there has been significant work undertaken around protecting our biodiversity across the ACT, as well as addressing issues such as invasive weeds and threatened species management. This work is supported by the work of environmental volunteers and provides significant support in terms of enhancing our biodiversity—and we work really closely with them in supporting them in that work. But I will take the specific question on notice.

**MS CASTLEY:** Minister, when can Canberrans expect to see the Labor-Greens government actually deliver on their promises to address climate change, given this track record to date?

**MS VASSAROTTI:** Thank you, Ms Castley. As is evidenced in a range of work that has been happening over many years, the ACT government has shown a specific and leading commitment around climate change. This has included work around renewable energy but also significant investment in biodiversity and the environment. Significant commitments were made in the last budget in relation to increasing biodiversity, responding to issues such as invasive weeds, which is an impact of climate change, and a whole range of other activities to support our biodiversity and our parks and nature reserves.

**MR BRADDOCK:** Minister, what are you doing to protect the trees in Yerrabi from developers when they are clear-felling greenfield suburbs?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Are you taking that supplementary, Mr Steel?

**MR STEEL:** Yes, I will take the question because it forms part of the Urban Forest Strategy and strategies around protecting remnant trees in the area. Canberra was built on the limestone plains, and while there is of course some woodland in some areas of Canberra the growth of the city has actually meant more tree plantings. Our intention here is to build up the level of canopy cover that we have with more diverse and resilient species, ones that can actually survive in a hotter and drier climate that we know we are going to have with climate change. The strategy outlines all of these measures. It is something that we are absolutely committed to do, and we will

continue to update people on the actions that we are taking as we go forward. It is part of our approach to climate change that we want to grow our canopy cover and make sure that we are protecting trees at the very beginning.

The number one outcome of the strategy is to protect the existing trees that we have, particularly from property development, and we are looking at a range of ways to do that, including a canopy contributions framework, like the City of Melbourne has introduced, to provide disincentives to remove existing trees. Putting a value on a mature tree both disincentivises it from being removed but also, if it is damaged or removed by a developer, that then funds additional plantings in the area from which it was taken.

### **Environment—water quality**

**MR DAVIS:** My question is to the Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction, and it relates to Lake Tuggeranong. Minister, since being elected less than six months ago, I can tell you that there is no issue I have received more representations on from my constituents than the state of Lake Tuggeranong. Can you please outline what work the government has done and has planned in the future to improve the water quality and overall amenity of Lake Tuggeranong?

**MR RATTENBURY:** I am aware that this is an issue of significant interest for Tuggeranong residents. Unfortunately, Lake Tuggeranong has, for a number of years now, experienced particular problems with blue-green algae. The government has taken a number of steps to seek to address this. Seven of the 20 new assets constructed under the Healthy Waterways program, which is the \$93 million program co-funded with the federal government, have been in the Lake Tuggeranong catchment, recognising the importance of improving that water body and knowing the steps that we need to take. That has included, of course, perhaps the most high-profile one, the Isabella Ponds clean-out, which I know Mr Gentleman has spoken about here a number of times.

These projects are expected to intercept, on average, 732 tonnes of sediment and nutrients a year from inflows to the lake, which will make, we believe, a material difference to the state of the lake. There are a number of other areas of work going on in terms of Lake Tuggeranong. There is further research going on to understand where the nutrient flows are coming from.

Yesterday, I was at Lake Tuggeranong, where we launched a new floating wetland. That has specifically come about from that new research, which identified that that inlet into Lake Tuggeranong was a particular source of nutrient flow into the lake; therefore a particular treatment was needed for that location. This is an example of the sort of work that is going on.

We also need to further educate the community about how to help manage the lake. There is clearly a lot of nutrient flowing into the lake from right across the catchment. We need to do further work to be clear that grass clippings, leaves and those sort of things should not go down the drain, because they are a significant source of nutrients for that catchment.

There is a lot of work to do. There is no single solution, but there is a lot of work being put in to improve the water quality in Lake Tuggeranong and make it the recreational asset that the community hopes it can be.

**MR DAVIS:** Minister, as you would be aware, a number of passionate individuals and groups have volunteered their time over many years to help improve water quality in Lake Tuggeranong and the overall amenity of the surrounding area. What government supports are available for these individuals and groups to assist them to continue this valuable work?

**MR RATTENBURY:** The community groups are a really important part of managing our lakes, waterways, rivers and streams across the city. Perhaps the best known groups are the Waterwatch program, who, with the support of the ACT government, go out and monitor more than 200 sites across the city, including in the Lake Tuggeranong catchment that Mr Davis is familiar with. They help to produce the Catchment Health Indicator Program report, which measures the state and condition of a range of water bodies across the city. They have been doing it for a number of years now, so it is really building up a substantial amount of information that can help government policy, as well as community groups, to understand what to work on next.

The government also provides funding to Landcare ACT and to the three catchment groups—Southern ACT, Molonglo and Ginninderra. The southern one is obviously the one that is relevant to Lake Tuggeranong, which Mr Davis is asking about. I know they are keen to have him come by and participate in one of their working bees. I look forward to seeing photos of him elbow-deep in some of the plantings by those groups that is taking place.

**MS LAWDER:** Minister, what action have you undertaken since the recent annual report and estimates hearings to get the decaying and disintegrating experiment in Lake Tuggeranong cleared up before it spreads more pollution in our lake?

**MR RATTENBURY:** There are a number of things going on. As I indicated in my earlier answer, just yesterday we unveiled a new floating wetland, particularly to address an identified hotspot for nutrient inflow. The other thing that is happening is that changes are being made to one of the gross pollutant traps that flows into Lake Tuggeranong. It has been identified that the current design essentially enables that organic matter to sit there and stew, or ferment, depending on your choice of words. That is then increasing the risk of algal blooms in the lake. That GPT will be modified so that there is a continual flow of water into the lake on an ongoing basis.

**Ms Lawder:** A point of order.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Resume your seat, Mr Rattenbury.

**Ms Lawder:** Could I clarify, for Minister Rattenbury's benefit, that I was referring to the experimental plastic bags in the middle of the lake, an experiment by one of the universities which is falling apart and floating around in the lake. I mentioned it during estimates.

**MR RATTENBURY:** I appreciate Ms Lawder being more specific about what she was referring to. I will take that part of the question on notice.

### **Environment—urban vegetation**

**MR PARTON:** My question is to the Minister for the Environment. The parliamentary and governing agreement has climate change action listed as the first priority of this Labor-Greens government. It also aspires to a healthy natural environment, alongside reducing inequality and poverty. However, this is the same Labor-Greens government that has presided over the largest reduction in urban vegetation of any major city in Australia since 2013. Minister, when will this loss of plant and grass coverage across Canberra be reversed?

**MS VASSAROTTI:** Thank you, Mr Parton, for the question. I assume that you are referring to the same report that Ms Castley spoke about in the previous question. As noted in response to that question, I will take the question on notice in terms of the specific details that you are speaking of.

Certainly over the last period and into the future, this government has an absolute commitment to the environment and to protecting and enhancing biodiversity. This happens through our commitment through the Parks and Conservation Service in managing the national park and other parklands and also in supporting the Transport and City Services Directorate in managing land. Significant work happens in protecting environmental offset lands and reserves, and there are specific programs to protect wildlife as well.

**MR PARTON:** Minister, what is the Labor-Greens government doing differently to mitigate the urban heat island effects of this massive reduction in urban vegetation that it has not already been doing for the past eight years?

**MS VASSAROTTI:** Thank you, Mr Parton, for the question. The issue of the urban heat island is really significant and it is an issue that has been looked at and addressed through a range of strategies, including the Living Infrastructure Plan, which is a significant plan that looks at some of the key issues we need to address in relation to reducing urban heat.

Minister Steel has already spoken about the Urban Forest Strategy, which is a key element. There has also been discussion around planning tools, such as the proposed draft variation 369 or the living infrastructure draft variation, which will also be key elements in responding to the urban heat island and improving tree canopy. How we protect our reserves and our green spaces is also a key issue, and we continue to have significant investment in managing those areas as well.

**MS CASTLEY:** Minister, as a member of the Greens party, how can you justify being a minister in the Labor-Greens government that is making Canberra less green?

**MS VASSAROTTI:** Thank you, Ms Castley, for the question. I do not accept that we are working to make this less green—

*Members interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Do not respond to interjections, Minister.

**MS VASSAROTTI:** In my previous answers I spoke to a number of investments and strategies we are investing in to increase biodiversity, increase tree canopy and work to make this a more livable city and protect our living infrastructure.

### **Health—COVID-19 vaccination rollout**

**DR PATERSON:** My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, can you please advise the Assembly on how the ACT government is supporting the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccination program?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** I thank Dr Paterson for her question. The ACT government is continuing to deliver a comprehensive public health response to the COVID-19 pandemic. We recognise the critical importance of protecting our health workforce and those most vulnerable in the community, and have invested to ensure that they are well placed in the rollout of COVID-19 vaccines in the ACT.

We are working in partnership with the Australian government to deliver a safe, effective and targeted COVID-19 vaccination program. Phase 1a of the ACT's vaccination program commenced on 22 February 2021 at the Garran surge centre. To support the safe and efficient delivery of the COVID-19 vaccination program, the ACT government committed \$19 million in this year's budget, plus \$4½ million in capital funding, to progress with the rollout of the vaccination program for Canberrans. This funding supports the operation of the surge centre and future sites, nursing and medical staff, and the cost of consumable medical items.

This funding is in addition to approximately \$39 million the government is investing to boost our COVID-19 public health response and ensure that our health system and public health response can continue to protect our community. This funding will deliver additional clinical resources, personal protective equipment supplies and dedicated COVID-19 communications resources to ensure that the public receives factual and accessible information.

In light of the rapidly evolving situation in Brisbane, the effectiveness and flexibility of our public health response is putting the ACT in a very strong position to continue protecting the health and safety of our community.

**DR PATERSON:** Minister, can you please update the Assembly on the progress of the rollout to date in the ACT?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** I thank Dr Paterson for the supplementary. As I said, the ACT has been active in supporting the Australian government and working closely with them in the national rollout of the vaccine and the rollout here in the ACT.

To date, more than 7,000 quarantine, border and frontline healthcare workers who are at the greatest risk of exposure have received their first dose. Of these, almost 2,000 have received the required two doses of the vaccine to get to the full level of

protection that it offers. I was just looking at some updated stats, and I think more than 10,000 vaccinations in total have now been given at the Garran surge centre. Given the challenging international supply position, this is incredibly heartening, providing a greater layer of protection for those most at risk in the community and those most at risk of being exposed to the potential for transmission.

The ACT established the first vaccination hub at the Garran surge centre, administering the first Pfizer vaccine in the ACT to Maddy, a Canberra Health Services COVID-19 testing nurse, and to Dr Sanjaya Senanayake, an infectious diseases senior specialist at the ANU and with Canberra Health Services. Maddy and Sanjaya were the first of many frontline workers to receive the vaccine, and I would like to acknowledge the incredible efforts of all of our health staff who have facilitated this program.

In its first week of the rollout, the surge centre administered about 977 doses of Pfizer. During week 5, last week, it delivered a total of more than 2,260 AstraZeneca and Pfizer doses. It will continue to grow as supply continues to increase.

Eligible Canberrans under phase 1a, which includes our border, quarantine and frontline healthcare workers, can book their vaccination at the surge centre at Garran. This has been expanded to more health workers in recent weeks. At this time, the Garran surge centre clinic is only taking bookings for healthcare, border and quarantine workers. Others are encouraged to check out the commonwealth eligibility program.

**MRS JONES:** Minister, on the COVID response, what have you been able to achieve today on the long lines at our testing centres today, yesterday and the night before?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** I thank Mrs Jones for the supplementary question. It has been very busy at our testing centres over the last couple of days. We thank Canberrans for their patience. I know that many people have been lining up for some hours at our testing sites.

We have staffed up as much as we have been able to. It has also been very busy across our hospital system, so there have been some constraints in moving nursing staff into our testing centres. We have done as much as we can. We try to be very clear in communicating with people that there are likely to be waits. We have encouraged people who are in quarantine, because they are not presenting any risk of transmission to the community, to wait a day or two to go and get their test, because they are already in quarantine anyway. We have also been reminding people that they can make an appointment to get tested at commonwealth-funded respiratory assessment centres, which I am sure are also very busy. For people who need to know when their appointment is going to be, that is also a good option.

We have made the decision not to move resources from the vaccination surge centre at this point in time. As I discussed with Mrs Jones this morning, we expect that today will probably be the last of the really peak busy days; we are hoping that demand will start to ease off. We have seen our testing sites go from conducting an average of about 400 tests a day over the past few weeks to conducting about 1,500 to 1,700

yesterday, I understand. I do not have an exact figure for how many swabs were taken yesterday, but it is in that order. So we have ramped up significantly. Again, we are thanking Canberrans for their patience as we get through this peak in demand.

### **Environment—emissions reduction targets**

**MRS KIKKERT:** My question is to the Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction. The Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act requires the government to review the act after 10 years, which was October last year. When asked why your government failed to review the act, during estimates, you said, “We need to get on to it.” You also said that the government may not meet its 2025 emissions reduction target. In response to subsequent questions on notice, you advised that the government is carefully considering a number of options for the delivery of the review. Minister, why has the government been so tardy—seven months late—in this important review?

**MR RATTENBURY:** The requirement of the act is that the review is to be completed after 10 years. It is now after 10 years, so we now have to do that. The government is currently putting together terms of reference, consulting with a range of stakeholders to look at what is the most effective form to do that review in, because the legislation does not prescribe it specifically. So the government is having a think about that.

I also will pick up the paraphrasing that Mrs Kikkert has done of my answer in estimates about the 2025 target. I said that the 2025 target is very challenging. The government have not conceded yet that we cannot meet the 2025 target. I was being upfront with the community about the fact that it is very challenging and we are going to have to work very hard to get there. But I am not conceding that we cannot make it. We will continue to strive to meet that target. I do not appreciate the paraphrasing in the question.

**MRS KIKKERT:** Minister, how will your government meet its 2025 emissions reductions targets?

**MR RATTENBURY:** I am glad Mrs Kikkert asked that question. The government has a climate strategy that has been set in place from now until 2025. It seeks to address the key sources of emissions in the ACT, which are transport, which makes up more than 60 per cent of our emissions, and natural gas use, which makes up more than 20 per cent of our emissions. These are the areas in which we need to cut emissions. There are a series of measures set out in both the climate strategy which was released in September 2019 and further measures that were put in place as election commitments that have now been committed to in the parliamentary and governing agreement.

I note that my colleagues across the chamber, every time we have talked about needing to reduce emissions from gas use, have set about to make comments like, “The government is going to come around and rip out your gas heater.” Those sorts of things are very unhelpful. They are very unhelpful when we are trying to take our community on a journey of understanding that, whilst for a long time gas has been

promoted as a clean and cheap alternative in this city, that is no longer the case. It is simply now another fossil fuel that we need to tackle and we need to provide sustainable alternatives. I would welcome the opposition taking a more helpful stance when it comes to helping the community understand the challenge that sits in front of us.

**MS CASTLEY:** Minister, what options are you carefully considering for the review, and when will the review be completed?

**MR RATTENBURY:** I believe I am not allowed to make those sorts of policy announcements in question time. But I can assure Ms Castley that we will release the details and there will be an opportunity for Ms Castley and others to contribute to that process. I would welcome her feedback.

### **Environment—Big Canberra Battery site**

**MR CAIN:** My question is to the Minister for Climate Action, and that will be the deputy chief today, I understand. The Canberra Times reported this month that the Big Battery storage facility's proposed site at west Belconnen would need more than five hectares of critically endangered habitat to be cleared, which is home to countless animal and plant species. The federal environment department has ruled that the project needs further assessment approval, and the federal and ACT governments will prepare a bilateral environmental impact statement. Plant and grasslands ecologist Sarah Sharp said that the Big Battery site needs to be moved to protect the environment. Minister, do you agree with Ms Sharp that the location needs to change to protect our environment?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mr Gentleman, you are responding?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Madam Speaker, I take that as a planning matter as we look forward to introducing new ways to combat climate change, including the Big Battery storage system for the ACT and across the ACT as well. Of course, whenever we move into these sorts of areas we need to look at considerations around the EPBC Act to ensure that we are doing the right thing in the environmental sense. On occasion when we are doing planning into the future we look at offsets for environmental work. This will be a part of the study for the Big Battery in the ACT.

**MR CAIN:** Minister, has the ACT government spoken with French-based Neoen about finding another site for the Big Battery?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** I am not aware that we have. I will take that question on notice.

**MRS KIKKERT:** Minister, did the ACT government make any submissions or representations to the federal environment department inquiry into the project's approval? If not, why not?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** I understand that we did make submissions, but I am not sure. I will take that on notice and come back to the Assembly.

## **Energy—solar**

**MR MILLIGAN:** My question is to the Minister for Climate Action, represented by the Deputy Chief Minister. The Australian Energy Market Commission is examining imposing fees on families with rooftop solar panels who sell excess power back into the grid. Introducing a charge would reduce the return that solar consumers receive. The commission said that it must act to reduce grid congestion or state-wide lockouts could result. Community groups oppose these fees. The commission's draft recommendations are out for public consultation. Will the Labor-Greens government make a submission and support slugging families with these new fees?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mr Rattenbury, you are responding to this?

**MR RATTENBURY:** Yes; it is within my portfolio responsibilities. As Mr Milligan has rightly pointed out, this is out for consultation. The Australian Energy Market Commission have issued a proposal. What they are trying to grapple with is that we are seeing points of congestion in the national grid at points in the day, with the high rate of solar penetration in Australia. This is obviously great news on a lot of levels, but there is going to be a need to upgrade the grid. The AEMC is weighing these issues up. I think this is a tricky balance.

We need to make sure that those who do not have solar are not left paying for all the expense so that those who do have solar can sell into the grid. This does not necessarily affect everyone who has solar panels. For example, if you have a battery in your home as well and you are putting all of your solar into your battery, this issue will not affect you so much. So I say to people who are concerned about this AEMC proposal: think about your own system. It may or may not affect you. The ACT government are considering whether to make a submission. We are looking in detail at the proposal at the moment.

**MR MILLIGAN:** Minister, given that the final report will be made in June, will the Labor-Greens government reconsider its \$15,000 loan subsidy scheme for solar panels if new charges are introduced?

**MR RATTENBURY:** No, because for a range of people, whether this measure comes into place or not, solar will still be a worthwhile proposition for them to take on. People take on solar for a range of different reasons. Some have done it because they want to save money and they think this is the best way. Others have done it because they feel they can make a contribution to reducing greenhouse emissions and improving the environment by investing in solar. People have a range of motivations.

What I say to individuals and households, if they are thinking of investing in solar and putting it on their roofs, is: have a good chat with not just one installer but maybe a couple. Ask them about your ideas, about what the best system for your roof would be and their ideas on how to approach that. Weigh up whether solar stacks up for you before you jump in and invest.

**MS LEE:** Minister, what modelling, if any, has the Labor-Greens government done on how the \$15,000 loan scheme will increase the uptake of rooftop solar in the ACT and how it will lead to more solar energy being put into the grid and more congestion?

**MR RATTENBURY:** I will have to take that on notice. The Chief Minister has lead responsibility for that household loans scheme. I do not have that information to hand.

### **Light rail—progress update**

**MR PETTERSSON:** My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services. Minister, can you please outline the broad benefits of light rail to Canberra?

**MR STEEL:** I thank Mr Pettersson for his question. I never thought I would say this, but I will refer to the comments made by the Deputy Prime Minister, Michael McCormack, who said that extending the light rail will create jobs and cut congestion in the ACT by improving public transport and pedestrian and cyclist safety. I could not have put it better, Madam Speaker. Light rail to Woden will create a north-south spine for our city. We expect that it will create over 6,000 jobs, and many more indirect jobs in our hospitality and retail sectors.

The benefits of light rail go well beyond construction. It will encourage Canberrans to use public transport. This is a key part of the ACT's transport strategy. We are committed to a safer, greener and less congested Canberra. Transport benefits have been proven on stage 1. Light rail is already helping Canberrans to make the choice to use public transport. We have seen sustained popularity through higher patronage figures. More than 43 per cent of people surveyed on light rail have stated that they never used public transport before catching light rail. Patronage at the moment has returned to about 80 per cent of pre-pandemic levels. We are optimistic that over time these levels will be surpassed, as we go through the pandemic recovery. The addition of a new Sandford Street stop in Mr Pettersson's electorate will no doubt help to grow these figures even further.

Taking light rail to Commonwealth Park and then on to Woden will mean that more Canberrans can share in the same benefits that those on Canberra's north side have benefited from.

**MR PETTERSSON:** Minister, can you please provide an update to the Assembly on the progress of the construction of the new light rail stop in Mitchell?

**MR STEEL:** I thank Mr Pettersson for his supplementary. The Sandford Street stop is one of the government's important infrastructure projects that has helped to create jobs during the COVID-19 recovery. It will add a 14th stop for the existing light rail network, which will grow to 17 with the delivery of light rail stage 2A in the future as well. This stop will allow Mitchell to enjoy the benefits of light rail at the southern end of Mitchell, in addition to the Well Station Drive stop, so that people can access the many businesses there. It will also provide residents of the future suburb of Kenny with access to a clean, modern and integrated public transport network.

Construction began in December. The second of the two system shutdowns to undertake work took place over the weekend of 13 and 14 March. On both occasions work went smoothly, and replacement services were arranged, via Transport Canberra and City Services, with Qcity. The artwork for the stop was designed by local artist Hannah Quinlivan, and the canopy structure was prefabricated in Mitchell for Mitchell. It is expected that no further service shutdowns will be required to complete the remaining works, which are minor civil works connecting the stop's operational systems to the rest of the network, and essential testing will also be taking place. We expect the stop to open to users later in the second half of this year.

**Ms Berry:** I ask that all further questions be placed on the notice paper.

## Papers

**Madam Speaker** presented the following papers:

Administration and Procedure—Standing Committee—Report 2—*Report on the Conduct of Mr Coe, MLA*, dated 9 February 2021—Recommendation 1—Letter to the Speaker from Mr Coe.

Auditor-General Act—Auditor-General's Reports—No 2/2021—Total Facilities Management Contact Implementation, dated 25 March 2021.

Government Agencies (Campaign Advertising) Act, pursuant to subsection 20(2)—Independent Reviewer—Report for the period 11 September to 31 December 2020, dated 23 March 2021, prepared by Professor Dennis Pearce AO.

Government Responses to Committees in the Ninth Assembly—Schedule, dated 25 March 2021.

Standing order 191—Amendments—

Justice and Community Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2020, dated 17 February 2021.

COVID-19 Emergency Response Legislation Amendment Bill 2020 (No 3), dated 17 February 2021.

**Mr Gentleman** presented the following papers:

Administration and Procedure—Standing Committee—Reports presented—2021—Report 17—Inquiry into possible structures of the committee system for the 10th Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory—Recommendation 9: Use of Zoom for Committee Public Hearings—Government Response.

Administrative Arrangement 2021 (No 1)—Notifiable Instrument NI2021-84, dated 16 February 2021.

Annual Reports (Government Agencies) Act—

Pursuant to section 13—Annual Reports—2018-2019—Canberra Health Services—Second corrigendum.

2019-2020—

Canberra Health Services—Corrigendum.

Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate—  
Corrigendum.

Auditor-General Act, pursuant to subsection 17(5)—Auditor-General's  
Reports—No 9/2020—2019-20 Financial Audits Overview—No 10/2020—  
2019-20 Financial Audits—Financial Results and Audit Findings—Whole of  
Government response.

Australian Capital Territory (Self-Government) Ministerial Appointment 2021  
(No 1)—Notifiable Instrument NI2021-85, dated 16 February 2021.

Financial Management Act—

Pursuant to section 26—Consolidated Financial Report for the financial quarter  
ending—31 December 2020.

Pursuant to subsection 30F(3)—Capital Works Program—Progress report—  
2020-21—Year-to-Date December 2020.

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee (9th Assembly)—Reports  
presented—2020—No 9—Inquiry in the Form of an Evaluation of Current ACT  
Policing Arrangements—Government Response.

Public Sector Management Standards, pursuant to section 56—Engagements of  
long-term senior executive service members—1 September 2020 to 28 February  
2021, dated March 2021.

Remuneration Tribunal Act—

Pursuant to subsection 12 (2)—Determinations together with statements for—

ACT Supreme Court Judicial Positions—Determination 16 of 2020, dated  
24 December 2020.

Members of the ACT Legislative Assembly—Determination 15 of 2020,  
dated 22 December 2020.

Pursuant to subsection 12(2)—Determinations together with statements for—  
Part-time Public Office Holder—Canberra Economic Recovery Advisory  
Group—Determination 14 of 2020, dated December 2020.

Special Gazette No S1, Wednesday 17 February 2021, incorporating:

Administrative Arrangements 2021 (No 1)—Notifiable Instrument NI2021-84,  
dated 16 February 2021.

Australian Capital Territory (Self-Government) Ministerial Appointment 2021  
(No 1)—Notifiable Instrument NI2021-85, dated 16 February 2021.

Territory-owned Corporations Act—Pursuant to subsection 9(2)—Notification of  
voting shareholders to the Legislative Assembly.

**Subordinate legislation (including explanatory statements unless otherwise  
stated)**

Legislation Act, pursuant to section 64—

Blood Donation (Transmittable Diseases) Act—Blood Donation (Transmittable  
Diseases) Blood Donor Form 2020 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument  
DI2020-304 (LR, 14 December 2020).

Canberra Institute of Technology Act and Financial Management Act—Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT Board Member) Appointment 2020 (No 4)—Disallowable Instrument DI2020-241 (LR, 17 August 2020)—Revised explanatory statement.

Cemeteries and Crematoria Act—Cemeteries and Crematoria (Fees) Determination 2020 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2020-308 (LR, 21 December 2019).

Children and Young People Act—Children and Young People (Death Review Committee) Appointment 2021 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-14 (LR, 25 January 2021).

Civil Law (Wrongs) Act—

Civil Law (Wrongs) Professional Standards Council Appointment 2021 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-19 (LR, 28 January 2021).

Civil Law (Wrongs) Professional Standards Council Appointment 2021 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-20 (LR, 28 January 2021).

Civil Law (Wrongs) Professional Standards Council Appointment 2021 (No 3)—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-21 (LR, 28 January 2021).

Court Procedures Act—Court Procedures Amendment Rules 2020 (No 5)—Subordinate Law SL2020-45 (LR, 21 December 2020).

Domestic Animals Act—Domestic Animals (Fees) Determination 2021 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-15 (LR, 21 January 2021).

Financial Management Act—Financial Management (Territory Authorities) Guidelines 2020 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2020-273 (LR, 10 September 2020)—Revised explanatory statement.

Health Act—

Health (Fees) Determination 2021 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-8 (LR, 18 January 2021).

Health (Interest Charge) Determination 2020 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2020-309 (LR, 24 December 2019).

Health Records (Privacy and Access) Act—Health Records (Privacy and Access) (Fees) Determination 2020 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2020-300 (LR, 19 November 2020).

Heritage Act—

Heritage (Council Chairperson) Appointment 2021 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-26 (LR, 22 February 2021).

Heritage (Council Deputy Chairperson) Appointment 2021 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-27 (LR, 22 February 2021).

Heritage (Council Member) Appointment 2021 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-28 (LR, 22 February 2021).

Heritage (Council Member) Appointment 2021 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-29 (LR, 22 February 2021).

Heritage (Council Member) Appointment 2021 (No 3)—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-30 (LR, 22 February 2021).

Heritage (Council Member) Appointment 2021 (No 4)—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-31 (LR, 22 February 2021).

Heritage (Council Member) Appointment 2021 (No 6)—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-32 (LR, 22 February 2021).

Heritage (Council Member) Appointment 2021 (No 7)—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-33 (LR, 22 February 2021).

#### Integrity Commission Act—

Integrity Commission (Acting Commissioner) Appointment 2021 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-2 (LR, 11 January 2021).

Integrity Commission (Acting Commissioner) Appointment 2021 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-3 (LR, 11 January 2021).

Integrity Commission (Commissioner Selection Criteria and Process) Determination 2021—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-36 (LR, 19 February 2021).

Land Tax Act—Land Tax (Affordable Community Housing) Determination 2021—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-18 (LR, 1 February 2021).

Leases (Commercial and Retail) Act—Leases (Commercial and Retail) COVID-19 Emergency Response Declaration 2020 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2020-283 (LR, 1 January 2020)—Supplementary explanatory statement.

#### Legislative Assembly (Members' Staff) Act—

Legislative Assembly (Members' Staff) Members' Salary Cap Determination 2020 (No 3)—Disallowable Instrument DI2020-295 (LR, 13 November 2020).

Legislative Assembly (Members' Staff) Variable Terms of Employment Of Office-holders' Staff Determination 2020 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2020-310 (LR, 22 December 2019).

Liquor Regulation 2010—Liquor (COVID-19 Emergency Response—Licence Fee Waiver) Declaration 2021 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-23 (LR, 11 February 2021).

Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act—Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods (Fees) Determination 2020 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2020-297 (LR, 19 November 2019).

#### Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Regulation 2008—

Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods (Medicines Advisory Committee) Appointment 2021 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-34 (LR, 18 February 2021).

Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods (Medicines Advisory Committee) Appointment 2021 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-35 (LR, 18 February 2021).

Nature Conservation Act—Nature Conservation (Fees) Determination 2021 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-16 (LR, 28 January 2021).

#### Official Visitor Act—

Official Visitor (Corrections Management) Appointment 2020 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2020-305 (LR, 14 December 2020).

Official Visitor (Corrections Management) Appointment 2020 (No 3)—Disallowable Instrument DI2020-306 (LR, 16 December 2020).

**Pest Plants and Animals Act—**

Pest Plants and Animals (Pest Animal) Declaration 2021 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-40 (LR, 1 March 2021).

Pest Plants and Animals (Pest Plants—Frogbit) Declaration 2021—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-22 (LR, 1 February 2021).

**Planning and Development Act—**

Planning and Development (Lease Variation Charge Deferred Payment Scheme) Determination 2021—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-12 (LR, 20 January 2021).

Planning and Development (Remission of Lease Variation Charges—Construction Sector Recovery) Determination 2021—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-13 (LR, 20 January 2021).

Public Health Act—Public Health (Public Health Risk Activity Licensing Exemption) Determination 2021 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-38 (LR, 25 January 2021).

**Public Place Names Act—**

Public Place Names (Belconnen District) Determination 2021—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-25 (LR, 12 February 2021).

Public Place Names (Whitlam) Determination 2020 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2020-301 (LR, 26 November 2019).

Race and Sports Bookmaking Act—Race and Sports Bookmaking (Sports Bookmaking Venues) Determination 2021 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-1 (LR, 7 January 2021).

Radiation Protection Act—Radiation Protection (Fees) Determination 2020 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2020-298 (LR, 19 November 2019).

**Road Transport (General) Act—**

Road Transport (General) Application of Road Transport Legislation (Manuka Oval) Declaration 2020 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2020-296 (LR, 19 November 2020).

Road Transport (General) Application of Road Transport Legislation (Manuka Oval) Declaration 2021 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-5 (LR, 12 January 2021).

Road Transport (General) Application of Road Transport Legislation (Manuka Oval) Declaration 2021 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-7 (LR, 13 January 2021).

Road Transport (General) Application of Road Transport Legislation (Manuka Oval) Declaration 2021 (No 3)—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-17 (LR, 28 January 2021).

Road Transport (General) Application of Road Transport Legislation Declaration 2020 (No 8)—Disallowable Instrument DI2020-302 (LR, 26 November 2020).

Road Transport (General) Application of Road Transport Legislation Declaration 2020 (No 9)—Disallowable Instrument DI2020-303 (LR, 27 November 2019).

Road Transport (General) Application of Road Transport Legislation Declaration 2021 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-6 (LR, 13 January 2021).

Road Transport (General) Application of Road Transport Legislation Declaration 2021 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-9 (LR, 15 January 2021).

Supreme Court Act—Supreme Court Regulation 2020—Subordinate Law SL2020-46 (LR, 21 December 2019).

Taxation Administration Act—Taxation Administration (Amounts Payable—Ambulance Levy) Determination 2020—Disallowable Instrument DI2020-307 (LR, 21 December 2020).

Tobacco and Other Smoking Products Act—Tobacco and Other Smoking Products (Fees) Determination 2020 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2020-299 (LR, 19 November 2020).

University of Canberra Act—University of Canberra Council Appointment 2021 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-37 (LR, 25 February 2021).

Utilities Act—

Utilities (Improving Transparency and Comparability of Retail Electricity Offers) Ministerial Direction 2021—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-39 (LR, 26 February 2021).

Utilities (Licensing) Exemption 2021—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-24 (LR, 9 February 2021).

Work Health and Safety Act—Work Health and Safety Amendment Regulations 2021 (No 1)—Subordinate Law SL2021-1 (LR, 29 January 2021).

Working with Vulnerable People (Background Checking) Act—Working with Vulnerable People (Background Checking) Risk Assessment Guidelines 2021 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-4 (LR, 14 January 2021).

## **Family and domestic violence—legislative reforms**

**MS LEE** (Kurrajong—Leader of the Opposition) (2.59): I move:

That this Assembly:

- (1) acknowledges there is no place for family or domestic violence in our community;
- (2) notes the *Family Violence Act 2016* (the Act) was implemented to address the scourge of family and domestic violence;
- (3) further notes the *Review of the Implementation of the Family Violence Act 2016* (the Review) and its findings that the Act is “not operating as intended” and requires reform;
- (4) condemns the ACT government for delaying the release of the Review; and

- (5) calls on the ACT government to table a formal response to the Review, including what legislative reforms will be undertaken, by the last sitting in June 2021.

I brought this motion for debate today because victim survivors of domestic and family violence deserve better. They deserve better than the laws that are clearly not working as they should. They deserve a government that can acknowledge when they get it wrong. They deserve a government that moves quickly to fix problems when they are told about them. And they deserve a government that face up to their failings when they are told repeatedly that things are not working.

The review into the implementation of the Family Violence Act was damning—so damning, in fact, that the review sat with this government for 12 months before it was made public. Even then, it was only publicly released because of a pending freedom of information request.

The review contained criticisms about what the government had been implementing. Instead of taking these criticisms seriously and asking themselves how to address these problems, this government spent a year hiding it from the public and arguing over the critical comments.

We all agree that there is absolutely no place in our community for family and domestic violence. We have all read too many news reports dealing with and detailing horrendous acts of violence against, particularly, women and children. I am sure that none of us want to hear another story.

In February 2015, when Tara Costigan applied for a domestic violence order against her ex-partner, no-one could have imagined the horror that would unfold the very next day. As thousands marched in the streets of our city against domestic and family violence, those in this place began looking at our own legislature, and rewrote our domestic violence legislation to ensure that what happened to Tara Costigan did not happen again. The system failed Tara then; and, until we actively work to fix the problems with the Family Violence Act, we continue to fail those in our community who are victims and victim survivors of domestic and family violence every year.

It is us here in this place that are responsible for ensuring that our laws are working to protect every single Canberran from these kinds of horrific instances; yet it is this government that has buried, hidden and delayed the public release of this important review for 12 months. Only recently, a Canberra man pulled an axe on his wife, rammed a police vehicle with his children in the car, and held the axe to his young daughter's throat. His sentence was suspended after serving four months in prison.

It is clear that the ACT's family violence laws are not working as they should. Victim survivors have told us that they are not working. Experts have told us that they are not working. Frontline workers and those in the legal profession have told us that they are not working. In fact, this Assembly's own Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety told us they are not working. Yet, when the review of the implementation of the act was handed to this government 12 months ago, the government did nothing.

The review made 18 recommendations which highlighted several ways that the government can create meaningful change and ensure that the Family Violence Act operates in the way that it should. It recommends that further work needs to be done in consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, as well as culturally and linguistically diverse groups, to ensure that we can protect them from cultural abuse.

It recommends that the legislation needs to refer to specific types of abuse, especially technological abuse like monitoring someone's online accounts or tracking someone's location. It recommends that after hours orders need to be better facilitated so that there are no more delays in protecting Canberrans from domestic and family violence.

All of these recommendations, and the 15 others included in the review, have sat with the ACT government for 12 months. That is 12 months that this ACT government has failed victims and victim survivors of family and domestic violence. That is 12 months that this ACT government has failed our community.

Let us not forget that this review follows a bipartisan committee report tabled in 2019 that made 60 recommendations to government on this very issue. A number of these recommendations were similar to those in the review—better communication between courts and agencies, more support and tailored services for children, and that government identify service gaps that need to be addressed.

It is unacceptable that this government, which claims to be the most progressive government in this country, has allowed this review into domestic and family violence to sit on a minister's desk for 12 months, gathering dust. How many Canberrans have fallen through the cracks in these 12 months? How many Canberrans have been betrayed by the system that was designed to protect them?

All the while, this government were concerned about how this review would make them look. If they thought that the review made them look bad, the fact that they hid it for 12 months makes them look even worse. The now Attorney-General admitted to the media last week that the review had been "around for some time" but failed to take any responsibility for its delays; instead blaming COVID-19, the caretaker period or the "other bits and pieces".

It should not have taken an FOI request for the review to be published. The Attorney-General cannot blame anyone else. The buck stops with him. After 20 years of this Labor-Greens government, Canberrans deserve so much better. This government cannot continue to stand idly by while more cases of domestic violence get reported to the police, and they cannot wait until another innocent Canberran is harmed. They must act now.

My motion today calls on this government to formally respond to the review, including outlining a concrete legislative agenda to make Canberra a safer place. The Canberra Liberals are calling on those opposite to take the concerns raised in this review seriously and respond to the concerns of the legal profession, of the frontline workers, of the experts, of our victim survivors, and of our community.

The Family Violence Act is not operating as it should, and Canberra's families are paying the price. As lawmakers, the onus is on each and every one of us to make sure that not a single woman, man or child falls through the same cracks that Tara Costigan did in 2015.

Canberrans need to be able to trust their government when they are needed most. This is not the first time that this government have been told about serious concerns and serious inadequacies in the domestic and family violence area, and they have still done nothing. This is, rightly, of serious concern to the Canberra community. In moving forward, this government need to engage in meaningful consultation and more. They need to listen and they need to act. They can no longer bury their heads in the sand. Canberrans want, need and deserve action now.

I have brought this motion for debate today because we can never know the true extent of the horror of family violence in this city. We are talking about real people, real families, that are suffering whilst this government sat on a report for 12 months.

It is our duty, not only to the victims and victim survivors, but to every single person in Canberra, to get these laws right and to get them working as they were intended as soon as possible. I hope that I can count on the support of every member in this place to make sure that we reach the goal of having Canberra as a safe place where everyone is fully protected by our laws, by our institutions and by our community.

There are some serious changes that need to be made, and this government need to get to work before they see another horrific incident. I commend my motion to the Assembly.

**MR RATTENBURY** (Kurrajong—Attorney-General, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Gaming and Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction) (3.11): I thank Ms Lee for bringing this motion today. I do not agree with her characterisation of the situation, nor the motive she ascribes to members involved. But I do agree that there is no place for domestic and family violence in our community. It is abhorrent, and it is on all of us to do what we can to prevent it and address it.

Violence against women has been an issue dominating the public discourse in recent months and in our Assembly today. That attention is well deserved. Domestic and family violence is an issue overwhelmingly affecting women, and the government remains deeply committed to a continuing program of reforms.

As part of this commitment, we are working to ensure our services and laws are as effective as they can be to prevent family violence, to protect and support victims of family violence, and to hold perpetrators to account. This work is ongoing. As we develop our understanding of how domestic and family violence is occurring in our community, we will identify better ways to do it. As new technologies emerge, our laws and services need to cater to this and to these new ways that people are inflicting this on others.

It is incumbent upon the government to remain vigilant in ensuring that our laws and systems are able to respond. It is for this reason that the government commissioned the review of the Family Violence Act, and I welcome the publication of the review report. I should start by saying that this was not a review that was required by statute or from a motion that came from this place. The government initiated this review to make sure that we were keeping on top of where this legislation was up to and whether it was having the desired effect.

I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank Professor Lorana Bartels and Emeritus Professor Patricia Eastaerl for their work in conducting the review, as well as the professional stakeholders and the people with lived experience who participated in the review.

When the Family Violence Act was passed in 2016, the act implemented 22 key recommendations made in the joint report of the Australian Law Reform Commission and the New South Wales Law Reform Commission titled *Family violence—a national legal response*. It broadened the definition of family violence in the ACT to include coercive and controlling behaviours, provided for consistency with national family violence law reforms, and improved practice and procedure in family violence legal proceedings. These changes brought the ACT in line with national best practice at that time; but best practice can and should evolve over time to capture contemporary learnings and improved approaches. It is important that our policy and practice in the ACT reflect this.

At the time that the review was commissioned, the Family Violence Act had been operating for two years. The government initiated the review to gauge the extent to which the act had improved the protections and experience of victims of family violence and to inform the government on family violence work, going forward.

We did not commission the review to get a pat on the back, but to learn where fresh efforts might be required. We cannot bring forward new legislation and assume the job is done merely because it is best practice at the time. Commissioning this review is how the government finds the gaps in our framework, and gets on with fixing them. The government welcomes all of the findings and recommendations from the review, positive and negative. We cannot expect to make improvements without acknowledging what sometimes might be harsh truths. The review report finds that not all aspects of the act may be operating in practice as intended. That is not a finding from which the government or I will be shirking.

As to the wording of the motion, I note that many of the reforms are more practical than legislative. To quote the report, “The main reasons the amendments are seen as limited concern their implementation more than the actual drafting.” The review provides useful insights, including into the perceptions of those who work in the family violence sector and those with lived experience of family violence. Such insights are vital to help shape the ACT’s response to family violence now and into the future.

Turning to the timing of the release of the review report, I would like to make two points. Firstly, the government is committed to acting on the report openly and honestly. Ms Lee is well aware that good reforms sometimes take time, and to suggest that the government is concealing anything is disingenuous. Secondly, the government has no interest in avoiding criticism of the new act. The whole point of the review was to identify gaps and opportunities for improvement.

As a time line, government directorates did receive a version of the report in March 2020. Following consideration of that version, and the time taken by the report writers to consider and reflect feedback from stakeholders, together with delays due to COVID, the final report was provided to government on 14 December 2020 and it was published online on 23 February 2021. So the final report was received in December.

It is not uncommon for draft reports to be received by government agencies and for clarifications to be sought or for some areas to be contested. That is standard procedure. The Auditor-General does it. With just about any government agency that I can think of, that is the approach that is taken.

Of course, sooner is better, but getting it right is the most important thing, in my view. The importance of getting these sensitive issues right is underscored by the media releases that have been issued subsequent to the release of the report from the Magistrates Court and the Australian Federal Police, providing their perspectives on some commentary in the report. We must progress these reforms by taking a considered approach when applying lived experience to the administration of the systems in place. As the report was commissioned by government with the aim of identifying shortcomings, while publication took some time, this did not operate as a bar to us progressing much-needed work.

For example, a pilot program is being run by the Office of the Coordinator-General for Family Safety and the Victims of Crime Commissioner to test a working model for coordination and information sharing around domestic and family violence. The pilot is focused on the assessment of risk, using shared information to create a full picture of that risk. The courts have reviewed relevant forms and improved the information available on their website, both for applicants seeking family violence orders and respondents. The new Charter of Rights for Victims of Crime in the Victims Rights Legislation Amendment Act 2020 requires justice agencies to provide victims with certain updates about their case and information to support their participation in the justice process, including about services they can access through the Victims of Crime Commissioner.

The continual need to reform family violence laws and responses is not unique to this jurisdiction. The government is closely watching the work taking place in other states and territories, including the inquiry by the New South Wales parliament into coercive control in domestic relationships.

The review makes a range of recommendations traversing further consultation and research, improved processes, and proposals for legislative change. Many of the

review's recommendations complement or reflect current and ongoing work by the government in response to family violence.

I reiterate that despite some time passing between receipt of the first and final versions of the review report, the government has been working, and continues to work, to improve the experiences of victims of domestic and family violence in the territory.

Family violence is a complex and challenging area of law, policy and service delivery. As the review's authors highlight in their findings, views on how best to respond to these challenges differ. The government is committed to continuing to work closely with those in the family violence and justice sectors, and those with lived experience of violence.

Many of the issues identified by the review will require detailed conversations in a range of forums, and meaningful progress will take time and sustained effort. I am pleased to say that the government has both the will and the determination to have these conversations and to ensure that our framework for dealing with family violence in our community is the best that it can be.

The government is happy to table a response to the review this year. This is unusual, as this was a report commissioned by government to itself. However, there is evidently strong community and parliamentary interest, so the government is happy to offer open and honest updates on where we are at with those recommendations, on the public record. I have proposed in my amendments that the response will be provided in the August-September sitting. Ms Lee has proposed June. I have looked at the calendar and, as it will be a government response, it will need to go through cross-agency coordination and through cabinet. I think that it will take longer to get a good version than by June.

It is a little later than Ms Lee's motion has sought, but I think that is necessary to ensure that there is a well-considered and useful response for the Assembly. As I say, though, things are not standing still, and by the time that report comes in that sitting period, members will see that a range of important steps have been taken in response to the report.

My amendments omit the condemnation of government contained in the motion. I expect that that is part of the process. Let us focus on the issues at hand here. Ms Lee is free to make the comments that she wishes to make.

I thank Ms Lee for the opportunity to speak about this important topic, and reiterate the government's commitment to taking a considered, evidence-based approach to the important and complex issues arising from the review. I am pleased to support the bulk of Ms Lee's motion, but I now move the amendments that have been circulated in my name:

- (1) Omit (4); and
- (2) omit “,by the last sitting day in June 2021”, substitute with “, during the August-September 2021 sitting period”.

**MRS KIKKERT** (Ginninderra) (3.21): When the ACT Greens and ACT Labor formed their coalition, they published a media release. Fittingly, on the list of things that they said they would focus on, governing with integrity and transparency is last on this list. Go figure it! During the campaign I met many people who were traditional Labor voters who were disillusioned by the actions of this government. Some decided to vote Liberal; some decided to vote Green. The actions of this government in relation to this review is a severe let down to anyone who hoped that a stronger Green voice in this coalition government would bring more honesty and integrity to the table. This is true.

Consider these facts: the Green Attorney-General only released this review into legislation that is supposed to protect some of our most vulnerable when his hand was forced by a freedom of information request. The JACS website says that they were pleased to publish the final report of the review of the Family Violence Act. If they really took so much pleasure in publishing it, why did it take so long for them to do it? And why, despite this review being handed to the government a year ago, did they publish only eight days before they published the report through the FOI?

Even after being forced to release the review they are still digging their heels in and not tabling the review with the government's response. It is true that they are not legally required to do this but, considering the Greens policy of a clear presumption of proactive disclosure, they are ethically obliged to publish the government's response. Mr Rattenbury had this to say about the review, "The findings are clear and spelt out in the paper. We will now follow through and make those considerations." What does this even mean? What does the minister mean when he says, "We will now follow through and make those considerations"? It almost sounds like he will follow through with the recommendation. But that is not really what he said. What it does sound like is a noncommittal response.

We already know that when the government has a report with findings and recommendations, they can drag their feet with their response and implementation. In fact, Mr Rattenbury's response to a finding of a review of the AMC way back in 2018 still has not been completed. Right?

The government must commit to a public time line for when they will table their formal response to the review, including what legislative reforms will be undertaken and whether the recommendations will be implemented by the last sitting day in June 2021, for the sake of their integrity and, most importantly, for the sake of those who participated in this review and for those most closely affected by family violence.

**MS LAWDER** (Brindabella) (3.25): In 2015 I stood in this place to pay tribute to Tara Costigan, who was murdered by her ex-partner who was sentenced to 32 years and two months in jail for the attack. Days after Tara's death, police were called to another murder—that of 28-year-old Sabah Al Mdwali, who was stabbed to death by her husband. Both women were holding their babies when they were killed, and the babies' older siblings were in the house at the time. About a month later Daniela D'Addario was killed by her ex-boyfriend, who put her body in the boot of his car and drove to Bermagui before he was caught by police. These are just some of the roll of women murdered by their partners and ex-partners

In 2015, when I rose in this place to pay tribute to Tara Costigan, I spoke of her as a mother, a daughter, a granddaughter, a niece, a cousin, an aunt, a sister and a colleague to many. She was symbolic of any mother, daughter, granddaughter, niece, sister, cousin, aunt, friend or colleague to any of us, and she became, in Canberra, the public face of domestic and family violence and the terrible, terrible toll that it takes in our community.

This huge groundswell of shock and anger in the ACT led the ACT government to rewrite its Family Violence Act and, with funds from the new domestic violence levy, the ACT government rolled out a suite of new policies. This was a proportionate, measured, considered, consultative response.

The focus shifted to the frontline—police, health workers and others likely to come into contact with those most vulnerable to domestic violence—but recently we heard what many people on this side of the chamber feared the most, that a two-year review into the new Family Violence Act determined that it is not operating as intended and recommended that it be significantly reformed. I quote:

... most of the lived experience participants did not feel protected by the legislation and many professional stakeholders were at best equivocal in their responses about the protection of [family violence] victims.

Amongst numerous criticisms in the report are warnings from workers in the sector that police are not, in some cases, applying for emergency after-hours orders because of a reluctance to call magistrates late at night, and concerns that children at risk are being left out of family violence orders because it can be too complicated for them to be included.

Perhaps worst of all is that the ACT government had this report for pretty much a year and, because of highly critical comments made of a government agency, the directorate eventually re-engaged the researchers. The report was then formally accepted in December, then quietly published last month after the government was pretty much forced to release it under the freedom of information laws.

To recap, we have the events of 2015 which sparked such anger from ACT residents and really kickstarted the conversation about family violence in our community. It brought it up out of a personal and family problem into a societal problem. And we had a huge appetite for change in the ACT community. Now we have a review which was held back and kept quiet. What a coincidence that the largest part of that was an election year! Perhaps the government did not want any distractions to get in its way. This is a failure in the basic duty of a government to its citizens. It is unconscionable.

It is a betrayal also of the fantastic services that we have here in the ACT and the work that they do. It is unfathomable to me that, in a year that domestic violence increased significantly during the shutdown of the pandemic, this government would choose politics over the distribution of information that could have helped community organisations, members of the public and frontline services in the fight against domestic and family violence.

I am by no means a member of this government, but I would like to apologise to the Tara Costigan family for this betrayal and to the families of the other women killed here in the ACT—the mothers, daughters, sisters, aunts, cousins, nieces, friends, colleagues—that have suffered at the hands of someone who professed to love them and who were then betrayed by the government.

We all probably know someone who has been affected by violence. The Domestic Violence Crisis Centre received a 310 per cent increase in anonymous clients from March to April—a 310 per cent increase! We know that domestic and family violence is found in all corners of our society, and here in the ACT, despite a lot of talk to the contrary, this government has failed victims and services. Shame on any of you who are party to this cover-up of this report.

I thank Ms Lee for bringing this to the Assembly. Shedding a light once again on this issue and the need to actively engage and take notice of the feedback from our services is so important.

**MS LEE** (Kurrajong—Leader of the Opposition) (3.32): I thank my colleagues, Mrs Kikkert and Ms Lawder, for their support of my motion. The Attorney-General can reject whatever assertion that he likes but the facts do not lie. The fact is that this report was handed to the government in March last year. The fact is that it was not published until almost March this year. The fact is that the report was going to be released under freedom of information.

It does not matter who commissioned it, why and when. The fact is that this government had access to a scathing review into the Family Violence Act, a piece of legislation that was designed to protect victims of family violence—the very piece of legislation that experts, law, legal profession, frontline workers and victims have been saying is not working.

I note the Attorney-General's first amendment, which is to remove paragraph (4) of my motion which states:

(4) condemns the ACT Government for delaying the release of the Review; and

The second is to push back the government response to the August-September sitting period. The Attorney-General gave his explanation why that extra time might be required, given that my motion asks for a response by June, and I accept that explanation and I am happy to support that part of the amendment.

But it is important that this government does not get away with sweeping under the carpet the significance of holding onto this report for 12 months, the 12 months in which we saw our most vulnerable Canberrans let down by this government. We will not let them sweep under the carpet the significance of that betrayal like they attempted to sweep under the carpet this very review.

The Canberra Liberals will not be supporting that amendment, and the Attorney-General's paltry and pathetic excuse for the timing is just that: paltry and

pathetic. It does not stack up, it does not pass the pub test and it is not the response that the Canberra public deserves.

The Attorney-General also blamed COVID as one of the reasons why there was a delay in the release. Let us not forget that domestic and family violence, particularly with a gendered lens, is a COVID issue. We know about the greater risks of victims of domestic and family violence being denied access to support and services, the support and services that they desperately need. We know about those increased risks during COVID. So to blame COVID is just downright hypocritical.

I do welcome the Attorney-General's acceptance of some of the issues that I have raised in this motion. We have demonstrated very clearly today that this entire Assembly, that every single member in this place, condemns violence against women and condemns family and domestic violence that has no place in our society. But what this government has failed to do and is failing to do now is accept its responsibility for the failures that they have shown in this space, and that is not acceptable.

*Ordered that the question be divided.*

Question put:

That Mr Rattenbury's amendment No 1 be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 15

Noes 8

Ms Berry	Ms Orr	Mr Cain
Mr Braddock	Dr Paterson	Ms Castley
Ms Burch	Mr Pettersson	Mrs Jones
Ms Cheyne	Mr Rattenbury	Mrs Kikkert
Ms Clay	Mr Steel	Ms Lawder
Ms Davidson	Ms Stephen-Smith	Ms Lee
Mr Davis	Ms Vassarotti	Mr Milligan
Mr Gentleman		Mr Parton

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment No 2 agreed to.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

## **Work health and safety—psychosocial hazards**

**MS ORR** (Yerrabi) (3.42): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) the *Respect@Work: National Inquiry into Sexual Harassment in Australian Workplaces* report released in 2020 by the Australian Human Rights Commission showed sexual harassment is both widespread and pervasive in Australian workplaces with two in five women and one in four men experiencing sexual harassment at work in the previous five-year period;
  - (b) sexual harassment is a societal issue, and all members of society can and must contribute to addressing it;
  - (c) Australia was once at the forefront of efforts to end sexual harassment in the workplace with the enactment of the Federal *Sex Discrimination Act 1984*, however, efforts for change have increasingly stalled and the Sex Discrimination Commissioner concluding the legal and regulatory system is no longer fit for purpose;
  - (d) the *Respect@Work* findings as well as other advocates are calling for a shift from a reactive model reliant on victims to make a complaint to a positive system which requires employers to create an environment of prevention;
  - (e) reviews of the model work health and safety (WHS) laws and regulations, including the Boland review, have recommended psychosocial risk definitions and controls be strengthened;
  - (f) the ACT, through WHS responsibilities, its own workplace management and through its contractual reporting policy has an opportunity to drive this called for change and shift work environments to preventive environments; and
  - (g) the ACT Legislative Assembly's WHS Committee is close to finalising a review undertaken over the past year or so that will result in a contemporary "Respect in the Workplace" policy that will not only set out the sorts of behaviour that will not be tolerated but will increase the focus on prevention measures; and
- (2) calls on the ACT Government to further improve the safety of workers in the ACT by:
- (a) amending the notifications section of the WHS Act to include psychosocial hazards, while taking into consideration the privacy and autonomy of workers;
  - (b) developing regulations under the Act that incorporate psychosocial regulations;
  - (c) developing a code of practice for psychosocial hazards that enables workplaces to create a prevention focused work environment;
  - (d) developing as part of the code of practice, guidelines to address gender-based violence including sexual harassment;
  - (e) consulting with workers and their representatives on the implementation of these changes;
  - (f) reporting in the State of the Service report, as three separate reporting categories, the number of bullying and harassment, sexual harassment and gender-based violence incidents in the ACT Public Service;

- (g) reporting in the State of the Service report, as three separate reporting categories, the number of non-disclosure agreements entered into which pertain to incidences of bullying and harassment, sexual harassment and gender-based violence in the ACT Public Service;
- (h) requiring all government partners and contractors to publicly report, as three separate reporting categories, the number of harassment, sexual harassment and gender-based violence incidents that occur within the organisation while contracted by the ACT Government;
- (i) requiring all government partners and contractors to publicly report, as three separate reporting categories, the number of non-disclosure agreements entered into which pertain to incidences of bullying and harassment, sexual harassment and gender-based violence within the organisation while contracted by the ACT Government;
- (j) developing guidelines to put clarity and rigour around how this information is to be reported;
- (k) writing to the Federal Government calling on them to ratify the ILO C190—Violence and Harassment Convention and adopt in full the recommendations of the Respect@Work report;
- (l) taking specific consideration of the principles of Recommendation 17 of the Respect@Work report when conducting future reviews of the *Discrimination ACT 1991*; and
- (m) provide an update to the Assembly every six months on the implementation of this motion for a period of 12 months.

The revelations of the past several weeks in both the federal parliament and the wider community bring to the fore yet again the plight of many women in society and the unsafe spaces which workplaces can and do create. While by no means isolated to Canberra and federal politics, it is particularly galling that the most recently spotlighted instances of sexual assault, rape and other awful behaviour have occurred in Parliament House.

It should be uncontroversial to say that this is foul behaviour. But can any of us here even claim that we are especially surprised! I think what we are seeing here is an intersection. What we are observing is the natural consequence of institutionally entrenched misogyny and classism. I worked in several industries before I was elected to this place, and federal parliament certainly is not the only place where problems exist. This is a social problem. What we have right now is eye-watering inequity and it is incumbent on us to do what we can to combat this disparity.

Work health and safety is one of the most important elements of our working lives. We have come a long way over the centuries in developing this code of laws, regulations and legal precedents that keep us safe at work.

There would not be one member of this Assembly who does not understand the importance and history of work health and safety regulation. We are a long way from the bygone days of systemic lost fingers and systemic industrial deafness and conditions that caused the deaths of 16 people while building the Sydney Harbour

Bridge. However, unacceptable accidents and workplace deaths do still happen, even here in the ACT. Clearly, there is still a way to go.

Any situation where a worker does not come home from work is unacceptable. Work to prevent physical risks and their tragic outcomes continues in this place. It also continues within the union movements. Union members have been pivotal in pushing change throughout Australia's history and they continue to do so. While much progress has been made over the past decades to reduce risks to the physical health and safety of workers, there is comparatively a lot more work to do when it comes to psychosocial health and safety at work.

Like with all psychosocial stress or injury, evidence of this stress or injury in the workplace may not be as obvious as physical stress or injury. Likewise, the risks which are responsible for psychosocial stress and injury are not always as obvious as they might be for physical stress or injury; however, they can be just as dangerous and impactful.

Psychosocial injury at work can be debilitating to a person. Anxiety disorders, depression and, in extreme cases, post-traumatic stress disorder can all occur after prolonged exposure to dangerous workplace pressures. Psychosocial injury can impact the lives of victims in many ways. Professional performance can be impacted severely by injury at work. In some cases—colloquially referred to as burnout—loss of motivation, ability and output can occur quickly and dramatically. This impacts both the employee and the organisation for which they work. Most importantly, these impacts can severely disrupt the lives of workers. PTSD can be a crippling condition which makes socialising and doing daily tasks difficult and stressful.

The effects of psychosocial injury are broad and can be severe and dangerous. Suicide can be and has been an outcome resulting from psychosocial injury at work, including from bullying and harassment, and sexual harassment. The risks and impacts of these injuries are felt by workers in all sectors. It has been well documented that bullying and sexual harassment are still major issues in the hospitality sector.

I would like to give voice to a statement from a young woman who is a current hospitality worker and a member of the United Workers Union:

As a woman who has worked in the hospitality industry for a decade, I know all too well how present and widespread sexual assault is throughout the industry. This harassment comes not only from the customers you serve but also your co-workers, managers and bosses. And it can feel almost never ending at times.

With work in hospitality totally insecure, being highly casualised, and the status of your employment often relying solely on how much the person writing the rosters likes you, it can feel like an absolutely daunting task to raise concerns to your superiors about sexual harassment occurring in your workplace. Even worse, when you do, your problems are often diminished and dismissed, totally swept under the rug. You're made to feel like you are the problem for reacting at all.

What I find most startling about this quote is that I could have written this 20 years ago when I worked in hospitality. This attitude needs to change. Workplaces need to improve. I don't want to see another generation of young people entering this industry only to be harassed, exploited and beaten down; to become hardened and angry, like myself and so many other are, from the poor treatment we ourselves and our fellow co-workers receive.

Many reports have exposed a multitude of law firms where excessive work hours are culturalised as normal and lead to subsequent incidents of burnout and other psychosocial trauma. Workplaces where workloads reach excesses of 60 and 70 hours a week are not safe workplaces.

Psychosocial injuries account for approximately 30 per cent of the cost of all Comcare claims. Sexual harassment, bullying and other psychosocial risks at work, and their mitigation, are not areas of workplace safety which are particularly well defined, regulated or enforced.

Our work health and safety legislative framework in the ACT is based on the model WHS Act and its regulations. These are harmonised in uniform in every state and territory, except Victoria. The model act and its associated regulations put the primary onus of work health and safety on the person conducting a business or undertaking. They must take all reasonable steps, in consultation with the workers and health and safety representatives elected in working groups, to reduce risks to health and safety in their workplace.

The model regulations provide for some reasonably specific risk mitigation rules for all sorts of hazards: confined spaces, demolition work and many, many others. The regulations are 529 pages long. Not one section deals with psychosocial health. That is why the motion on the notice paper calls on the government to amend the notification section of the ACT WHS Act to include psychosocial hazards, develop regulations under the act that incorporate psychosocial hazards and develop a code of practice. These changes will better enable a proactive and preventive approach in workplaces to create a prevention-based work environment.

Development of guidelines to address gender-based violence, including sexual harassment in the workplace, as part of the code of practice, will additionally aid the creation and prevention of focused workplaces as opposed to reactive workplaces. This will keep the territory's WHS framework in line with the intent of the model act, while also providing a mechanism to begin to really deal with these issues in ACT workplaces.

It is important to codify these changes in law as opposed to waiting for cultural change or encouraging employers to implement them of their own volition. Employee assistance programs, nap rooms and yoga classes to deal with the stresses of excessive workloads are not reasonable risk mitigation measures if workloads are still excessive. Waiting for meaningful change to come from employers has broadly never worked for work health and safety, and probably never will. It has always been the work of union members and legislatures which have moved safety standards in the right direction.

As such, the motion calls on the government to consult with workers' representatives regarding the implementation of these changes. I am confident that the Minister for Industrial Relations and Workplace Safety will find an appropriate forum in which to undertake this consultation.

As part of this policy direction, the motion moved in my name includes calls for regulations, a code of practice and guidelines to be developed in order to help PCVUs to comply with any new framework. This is of benefit to both employers and employees, as workplace safety and culture affects everyone.

It is also important that the ACT begins to make changes rather than waiting for changes to the model act and regulations to be agreed. The last meeting of WHS ministers, which was organised by the federal minister, occurred two and a half years ago, and little to no progress has been made on implementing the recommendations of either the Boland review or the respect at work inquiry.

There are a number of references in this motion to the respect at work inquiry, a report which was released in 2020 by the Australian Human Rights Commission. This national inquiry into sexual harassment in Australian workplaces identified widespread sexual harassment in many industries and among different demographics. It recommends a change in the way this issue is dealt with, including a move towards prevention and hazard identification as opposed to post-incident management. The report also calls for changes to the federal Sex Discrimination Act. These policy directions are set out in the motion I have moved today. Additionally, the motion calls on the government to take into consideration the principles of recommendation 17 of the *Respect@Work* report when further reviewing our own Discrimination Act in future.

The Boland review is a 2019 report on a review of the model work health and safety laws. The report makes 39 recommendations in total, among which are recommendations around psychosocial health and risk identification in the regulatory framework. It has good recommendations. The federal government has made no effort to implement the recommendations from these reports. It is not interested in fixing the psychosocial work health and safety framework with regard to sexual harassment and bullying, or any other issues.

The motion appearing on the notice paper in my name also calls on the ACT government to include some statistics in the state of the service report and also to require that these statistics be provided by government partners and contractors in relation to the period in which they are contracted by the government. These statistics pertain to non-disclosure agreements entered into because of bullying and harassment, and sexual harassment, and also incidents of both bullying and harassment, and sexual harassment. In many workplaces non-disclosure agreements are used by powerful individuals to effectively silence victims of bullying and harassment, and sexual harassment, in exchange for a provision of compensation after incidents—compensation which, in reality, should come without strings attached.

If these practices are occurring in the ACT public service, or entities contracted to or working with the ACT government, the Canberra community deserves to know. Very often, non-disclosure agreements are used as a method of protecting the identity of perpetrators of bullying and harassment, and sexual harassment. This sort of measure would not pass the pub test if it were to occur in the ACT public service due to bullying or sexual harassment. This section of my motion does not call on the government, or anyone else, to reveal details of any non-disclosure agreement, for obvious privacy and legal reasons. It merely calls for some more transparency about how public money is being spent to ensure that it is not being spent in ways that might not be in the public interest.

Finally, I would like to note that the motion I have moved also calls on the government to write to the federal government and call on them to ratify ILO convention 190 on workplace violence and harassment. This should have already been done by the federal government, but that would be a step too far for them; they would have to do something about it. In conclusion, while recent revelations from federal parliament have shone a particularly bright light on these issues, they have always been there. Workplace safety includes psychosocial safety and it certainly has a gendered lens. The federal government needs to do more to implement the recommendations of the Boland report and the respect at work inquiry. In the meantime, these are measures that I urge the government to take. I commend the motion to the Assembly.

**MS CLAY** (Ginninderra) (3.54): I am pleased to support Ms Orr's motion. Like most women in Australia, I am downright furious about the revelations dribbling down from the hill—furious, but not surprised. I am not going to detail the latest assault or outrage by men who hold power but take no responsibility. We all know about it. We have all heard. We are all disgusted and furious. But we are not surprised because we have seen this our whole lives. Most of us have felt it directly. We have lived with it and worked with it and we have been stuck with it. And now there is another wave of unrepentant revelations from people in positions of trust.

Women often pay the high price of accepting unwanted behaviour to keep our careers and our reputations intact because the systems that are supposed to support us in these situations, counterintuitively, hurt us and they hurt our careers. We live in a world that often treats women as second-class citizens, or that treats us like objects to be handled, heckled and harassed. The extent of this mistreatment differs greatly, even in Australia.

Where we were born, our background, age, socio-economic status, our level of education and connection to a stable community—these all determine how comfortable we are at speaking up when our boundaries are crossed. They also affect what happens when we do speak up. Make no mistake: all women experience sexual harassment. But the extent of the damage differs based on what perpetrators feel they can get away with.

This is why the theme of this year's International Women's Day, "choose to challenge", is an important half of the equation, but it is not complete. Yes, women

need to challenge. We need to challenge casual and overt sexism, unwanted behaviour and biases that mean we are the ones asked to take notes or fetch coffee rather than speak up at an important meeting or ask for a promotion. We need to challenge our own fear of inadequacies and we need to challenge our imposter syndrome. Alongside this we need clear laws, policies and codes of conduct, with strong repercussions for perpetrators. We need justice. For too long the parliaments and workplaces of this country have been boys' clubs. We women of Australia are speaking loud and clear and we are saying, "Enough is enough."

I am one of the lucky ones. I am educated, middle class, and privileged to work with a strong team of women across parties to make the ACT a better place. The sexual law reforms currently being worked on by Attorney-General Shane Rattenbury is an example of this. But when we, here, when we, the people in power, design codes of conduct and law reforms, we are not just acting for ourselves. We are acting for women everywhere—the women who clean up our offices, the women who make our coffee, the women who are doing the work after we go home. We are acting for the women who now, or at some stage in their life, did not have the power to stand up and choose to challenge.

Women in our workplaces need to be supported so that we can make full contributions. We know strong workplace safety laws will protect all workers, but particularly those who are most marginalised and those who have less power than others. Different women have contributions to make; and when workplaces are less diverse, that is when we need to consult better, empathise more and create more pathways. I was recently mentored by an amazing woman, Harriet Elvin, under the Audrey Fagan program, which is a program that helps create women leaders. I am now mentoring a young woman and I am speaking to many more about the pathway into politics, which is one way that we can help.

When women leave their workplace because of sexual harassment and because the system does not support them, the women lose, but their workplaces lose too because our workplaces and society are robbed of their contributions. The ACT Greens welcome and support Ms Orr's motion. We look forward to our continued extended work to support women across the ACT to be safe, healthy and happy in lives of their choosing.

**DR PATERSON** (Murrumbidgee) (3.59): I want to thank Ms Orr for bringing this motion to the Assembly. When writing this speech, I was trying to think how to convey what even the most subtle experience of sexual harassment is like and where it starts. Think of your most cringeworthy moment. Think of where you have embarrassed yourself. You feel a sense of horror. You feel the blood rush up your neck to your face. Your heart beats faster. Your stomach feels sick, and all your head wants to do is get the hell out of there. It is a physical, emotional and mental response, and it is quite an awful feeling.

So now, go to the office meeting, the professional workplace setting. The scene surrounding you is something that you have dreamed of. You are at the table. If you have read US corporate executive Sheryl Sandberg's book, you are leaning in. Then the man sitting to your left looks you up and down. He starts talking to you. His body

language is directed at you. The way he looks at you is intense. His attention is on you. He speaks only to you. And suddenly, instantly, you get that flood of a feeling of embarrassment, which, coincidentally is the same physical, emotional response as when you feel threatened. This situation manifests itself in you being incredibly conscious of your own behaviour and you withdraw. You know he is watching. You make yourself small. You cannot think straight. That is just the beginning. And that is just a look and a feeling.

I want to dispel a myth about sexual harassment, that it is nice to have the attention from a superior or a colleague at work. It is not. From the moment it starts, as I have described, it is a deeply embarrassing, threatening situation. If the attention of the colleague was on you because you are a superstar at work, bring it on. Everyone likes to be recognised and acknowledged for their good work. Sexual harassment is attention that has nothing to do with your good work. It is an explicit articulation of a power imbalance that is sexual in nature. The second you first experience that feeling that I described, that feeling of embarrassment, dread, it is a massive problem.

Let us now go to the other part of the problem: making a formal complaint. In my case, I made a complaint with the support of my previous workplace, ANU, to the Vice-Chancellor of Auckland University of Technology, Derek McCormack. I naively believed that, once I had exposed the nightmare I had been living for two years, institutional professionalism, institutional self-preservation, and basic right versus wrong would kick in. It did not. The perpetrator, Dr Abbott, remained in his job, with no repercussions for his behaviour whatsoever, despite admitting what he had done. I was the one who was going to have to change my behaviour, and my career was the one that was going to be impacted.

As I discussed in my inaugural speech in December, I reached a point of desperation and I ended up going to the New Zealand media to tell my story. The media attention resulted in Dr Abbott losing his job. The backlash on AUT was so significant that it resulted in the university commissioning one of New Zealand's leading female QCs to conduct an independent inquiry into sexual harassment at the university. The report was finally released a couple of weeks ago. The report found that Vice-Chancellor Derek McCormack was aware of Dr Abbott's longstanding health issue, alcoholism, and well aware of other complaints of sexual harassment and poor behaviour before mine. The QC, Kate Davenport, reported on my story, stating:

A feature was also the need to protect Dr Abbott's reputation and not to start an investigation which in itself might damage his reputation. If AUT had viewed the complaint as one impacting on Dr Abbott's ability to carry out his role at AUT (i.e. one of sexual harassment/harassment and not a personal matter), I consider that it is likely that the investigation would have continued ... No one can now say what conclusion AUT would have reached if they had widened their inquiry into Dr Abbott's conduct ... However, AUT did not do this and it is this failure that I am most critical of—the failure to take formal action. Even with the information known, the response by AUT was muted and Dr Abbott did not even receive a disciplinary warning.

The reason I share this is to highlight the inner workings of a complaint process that is entrenched in misogynistic workplace culture, at least at the very top, where mates

protect mates. All I ever wanted was a fair investigation into my original complaint. Instead, this has been a four-year ordeal for me. And we wonder why women do not pursue sexual harassment complaints.

As much as the experience of sexual harassment was a very destructive one, the process of making a complaint and having that complaint ignored and disrespected has been an equally devastating process. Although I feel vindicated from the findings of this report, AUT Vice-Chancellor Derek McCormack is still in his job, despite being the very person who made every single decision the QC was most critical of. Because of his failure to act on previous complaints, that directly paved the way for the harm to come to me.

While sexual harassment may be the behaviour of one individual, it is a workplace problem. It is a cultural problem. Culture is set at the top. I speak to workplaces across the ACT: reflect on your own culture; having appropriate policies, codes of practice and reporting structures in place is so critical. It protects you, as an employer, and it protects your workers.

What we spend a lot of time talking about in this space is conflict, but the critical part for high functioning workplaces is also resolution. If we promote work environments that are proactive and focus on prevention, with all the appropriate frameworks in place, then hopefully we will start to head in the right direction of where women are respected and treated as equals in the workplace. That is why I welcome and support Ms Orr's motion to help bring about this cultural change in the ACT.

**MS LAWDER** (Brindabella) (4.06): I would like to start by thanking Ms Orr for bringing this motion to the Assembly today. We have already said today that recent events in our federal parliament, and the community, have shocked and horrified us. People are angry, women have had enough, and it is time that we have real change.

According to a 2018 Australian Human Rights Commission survey, 72 per cent of Australians over the age of 15 have experienced sexual harassment in their lifetimes. The same survey found that 40 per cent of workplace sexual harassment incidents were witnessed by at least one other person. In 69 per cent of these cases, the witness did not intervene. Almost one in five people who did report were labelled a troublemaker, ostracised, victimised, ignored by colleagues, or resigned.

Ms Orr has acknowledged that the recent events at Parliament House are not unique. It has happened pretty much forever. It happens everywhere. I have worked in the public, private and not-for-profit sectors in a 40-year or so career. I want to give a short summary of things that happened to me over those years. This is not an exhaustive list by any means; it is just a few things.

There is being trapped in the photocopy room with the boss who cops a feel every time he can. There are the jobs or promotions missed out on, given to a man who may not have had the same caring responsibilities as a woman. There is being asked at job interviews about your plans to start a family. Once, when wearing a dress, back in the 1980s, when puffy sleeves were a bit of a thing and the dress had cut-outs in it, there was being asked by a male colleague, in front of quite a large crowd of people, if he

could put his hand in my slit. There was being asked about coffee when I was the most senior person, but the only woman, present in a meeting. There was the situation where, when disagreeing with a female colleague, a male colleague called it a catfight. There was the situation where, when disagreeing with a male colleague, he said, "You must have your period and that is why you are cranky."

There was the situation at a meeting discussing job cuts where the view put by many of the men present was that the women should be the first to go because they had husbands to look after them. There was the boss when I was 18 who stood behind my chair, trapping me against the desk, rubbing himself on the back of my chair, breathing heavily behind me and looking down the front of my top. There was having to keep pregnancies secret because you were afraid of being sacked. In one organisation, there was a work hard, play hard culture, where excess alcohol consumption was encouraged, and paid for by the company, leading to predictable problems. One time, when speaking with my boss about needing some time off for a dental appointment, a male co-worker loudly said, "I know what I would do with your root canal, and I am not a dentist." There was the situation of hands on your knee under the table at work-related dinners.

I could go on and on. These are the types of actions that many women have experienced and continue to experience. Of course, as we have heard recently, there have been much worse incidents than I have outlined.

We cannot continue to keep having these conversations. Something has to change. I do not want my granddaughters to be having these same conversations years from now. Everyone should feel safe in their workplace. They should feel supported. They should not dread going to work. They should not have to make plans with co-workers, usually female, about never leaving someone alone in a room with a particular person.

Enough is enough. Legislative change is a great start, but we must remember that women will not settle for just legislative change; there must be societal change. It is not only about what happens in our parliament; it is about the community at large. It is about what happens in our homes, at dinner tables and in schools, as well as what happens in workplaces.

My colleague Mr Cain is going to talk further about the legislative changes, but more needs to be done. I think we have all acknowledged that. We need more education in schools; stronger protections in our workplaces; and proactive leadership in state, territory and federal parliaments. It is not easy to get things right. If it were easy, we would have already got it right by now. But by listening, reflecting and believing women and their experiences, we can work towards practical solutions.

This motion on its own will not solve the entrenched problems of bullying, harassment, gender-based violence and sexual harassment in our workplaces, but we have to start somewhere. Once again, I would like to thank Ms Orr for bringing on this motion, which we will be supporting.

**MR CAIN** (Ginninderra) (4.12): I would like to add some comments in support of this motion. The outpouring of anger, frustration and sadness over the past month

from both women and men is very understandable, to say the least. I attended several International Women's Day events where women told me they were glad I was there and willing to listen. This made me want to hear more, so I attended March 4 Justice just over two weeks ago. It was a revelation. Women, and the men who marched alongside them, were calling for an acknowledgement that the status quo is not acceptable and major changes must happen.

I commit to listen, learn, support and work with my colleagues to achieve equality and safety for women in our workplaces and more broadly in our society. From a work health and safety perspective, it is critical that everyone, especially women, is able to fulfil their potential in the workplace in a safe environment where both their physical and mental wellbeing are assured.

The estimated cost of the personal, social and economic impacts of workplace sexual harassment has been estimated by Deloitte Access Economics at \$3½ billion in 2018. This includes damage to the personal wellbeing of victims, the use of resources in the health and legal systems, lost productivity for employees and employers, and the delay it causes to career advancement. The flow-on effects beyond this are not yet known.

Ms Orr's motion calls for amendments to include psychosocial hazards in the Work Health and Safety Act 2011. This must be a priority and must involve proper consultation with a range of stakeholders. Additionally, the clarity and rigour called for in clause 2(j) of the motion should apply equally to any amendments made to the act, so that psychosocial hazards are well understood and able to be addressed by everyone in the workplace.

I am in favour of stronger reporting requirements for the ACT public service as a way for the ACT to take a lead on transparency on this issue. The same requirements for providers of goods and services should apply, and there should be close consultation with industry to ensure that they are clear and easy to comply with.

The enormous cost of sexual harassment in the workplace is holding us back as a society. As shadow minister for jobs and workplace affairs, I am committed to supporting measures to eliminate it. There is a lot of work to do. The past month has demonstrated a demand for change across Australia. I believe that we must lead the way in the ACT. I support Ms Orr's motion.

**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) (4.15): I thank Ms Orr for bringing this important motion to the Assembly today. I stand here today to listen but also ready to take action. Those of us that are here are in a privileged position, and it is incumbent upon us to take the responsibility for protecting women and their right to be safe. This is what leadership is. We do not need a "Prime Minister for Women"; we need accountability and we need action.

This motion concerns sexual harassment in the workplace. But sexual harassment happens everywhere, every day, in homes, in schools, in workplaces, in public and

private, and online. We must do better, and we must be better. As men, we must own that this problem is caused by our own privilege, and our behaviour must change. This is not an issue for women to fix; this is an issue for all of us.

Bullying, harassment and sexual harassment are never okay. They are all psychological health hazards in the workplace that must be managed under work health and safety duties and obligations. The ACT government is committed to ensuring the health and safety of workers in the workplace. The ACT has adopted the nationally agreed model work health and safety laws and participates at the national level to ensure that the model laws are maintained and effective.

While the Work Health and Safety Act itself clearly defines the health of workers to include psychological health, more work needs to be done to ensure that there is a focus on addressing psychological health risks or hazards under the supporting work health and safety regulations and codes of practice.

In line with model work health and safety laws, the ACT's Work Health and Safety Act requires all workplaces to manage the health and safety risks of workplace sexual harassment. A person conducting a business or undertaking has the primary duty to ensure that workers and other people are not exposed to psychological health and safety risks at work. This duty requires, where practicable, the elimination of exposure to psychosocial hazards, including sexual harassment.

Safe Work Australia has published guidance material to help duty holders to understand their obligations. This includes the national guide on work-related psychological health and safety. Safe Work Australia has also published a guide to preventing workplace sexual harassment, to provide detailed information for employers on practical ways to prevent sexual harassment at work. If the risk of gender violence or sexual harassment is identified by a PCBU, a PCBU must, under the model work health and safety laws, implement controls to eliminate or minimise those risks. WorkSafe ACT provides links to the Safe Work Australia guidance material for all PCBUs operating in the ACT.

In 2020 the Australian Human Rights Commission released its report *Respect@Work: National inquiry into sexual harassment in Australian workplaces*. In its report, the commission stressed that sexual harassment is not a women's issue; it is a societal issue, which every Australian, and every Australian workplace, can contribute to addressing. The commission recommended that work health and safety ministers agree to amend the model work health and safety regulations to deal with psychological health. It also recommended the development of guidelines on sexual harassment, with a view to informing the development of a code of practice on sexual harassment. Ms Orr's motion today addresses these important recommendations. It is important that we have a code of practice, because a code is admissible in court. We need strong protections for women that allow for just outcomes to be pursued.

The commission further recommended that the Sex Discrimination Act be amended to introduce a positive duty on all employers to take responsible and proportionate measures to eliminate sex discrimination, sexual harassment and victimisation. This recommendation is in addition to the recommendation that the Sex Discrimination Act

be amended to achieve substantive equity between women and men by expressly prohibiting sex-based harassment; prohibiting the creating of, or facilitation of, an intimidating, hostile, humiliating or offensive environment on the basis of sex; including the definition of “workplace participation” and “workplace” to cover all persons in the world of work; and removing the current exemption of state public servants.

Ms Orr’s motion notes that Australia used to be at the forefront of efforts to end sexual harassment in the workplace. The 1984 Sex Discrimination Act was a large part of these efforts. The ACT Sex Discrimination Act 1991 makes it unlawful for an employer to subject an employee, including a person seeking employment, to sexual harassment. The Discrimination Act also makes it unlawful for employees to subject a fellow employee or a person seeking employment with the same employer to sexual harassment. The Discrimination Act expressly provides coverage for all workplace participants, which includes an employer, an employee, a commissioned agent, a contract worker or a partner in a partnership.

In 2018 Marie Boland undertook a review of the model work health and safety laws. Ms Boland made 34 recommendations, one of which addressed specifically the lack of regulatory support to control psychosocial risks of injury. The Boland review further recommended a continuous assessment process to critically assess where there is a need for legislative change and the introduction of new regulations and model codes to address emerging and changing risks. The Boland review identified that women, both prior to and returning from maternity leave, were often vulnerable to inappropriate behaviour which posed significant risk to their psychological health.

As the Minister for Industrial Relations and Workplace Safety, I am pleased to be able to provide the ACT government’s in-principle support for implementing the Boland review’s recommendations, in particular, those that provide for improved regulations for psychological health hazards in the workplace.

The ACT government is committed to maintaining the agreed national work health and safety model laws. However, in the absence of national action, the ACT will look to initiate early adoption of recommendations made by the Boland review and the Human Rights Commission in the territory.

Work health and safety ministers across Australia are meeting in the next month to consider a national response to the Boland review recommendations. I hope that the new federal Minister for Industrial Relations is ready to protect the rights of workers to be safe at work. She certainly could not be more dangerous to women’s safety than her predecessor. However, given that this important review has been before the federal government for some two years with no action taken, it is unlikely. That is why Ms Orr’s motion today is so important. The federal government has shown time and again that women’s safety and workplace rights are not a matter they take seriously. The ACT government takes this extremely seriously, and I look forward to delivering on the measures Ms Orr brings forward in her motion.

The respect at work national inquiry, which has been before the federal government for over a year, recommended that the Australian government ratify the ILO

convention concerning the elimination of violence and harassment in the hours of work. The Australian government is yet to ratify the ILO convention and associated recommendations to eliminate gendered violence at work.

Sexual harassment and other psychosocial injuries impose a cost to Australian businesses and the Australian community in the workplace beyond immediate trauma and inequity. These costs include lost productivity; staff turnover; negative impact on workplace culture; resources associated with managing and responding to complaints, litigation and workers compensation; reputational damage; negative impacts on workers' health and wellbeing; negative impacts on employment and career progression; and significant financial consequences to individuals and families.

Workers compensation data from the last three years shows that the mental health claims from time off work make up approximately five per cent of the total lost-time injury claims in the ACT private sector workers compensation scheme. It is important that the government work with employers and their representatives, along with industry, to provide safe workplaces in the ACT. I look forward to doing just this. We will find a suitable forum for this consultation to occur.

**MR STEEL** (Murrumbidgee—Minister for Skills, Minister for Transport and City Services and Special Minister of State) (4.25): I thank Ms Orr for bringing this motion to the Assembly, and for the contributions of other members on workplace sexual harassment and the associated psychosocial risks. I would like to particularly focus my comments on clauses 2(h), (i) and (j) of the motion, regarding government partners and contractors, with my responsibilities for Procurement ACT and broad ACT government procurement policy.

I would also like to acknowledge Ms Orr's work, as minister, on the Charter of Procurement Values, which is an important document in this regard. The charter outlines the ethical considerations our government wants to see from potential suppliers and aims to reflect community standards in the ACT. Released in September last year, the charter outlines six key values for territory entities to consider in the management of all procurement activities. Key among them are fair and safe conditions for workers and transparent and ethical engagement. To meet the requirements of the Charter of Procurement Values, territory entities must actively consider whether opportunities exist in their procurement activities to build capacity for people who face social barriers and barriers to equal opportunity in employment, such as people with a disability; culturally and linguistically diverse people; children and young people; older Canberrans; women; veterans; and LGBTIQ+ Canberrans. It also requires entities to procure from suppliers who demonstrate inclusive practice in employment decisions, career development, business operations and engagement with customers and clients; and procure from social enterprises or businesses owned by under-represented demographics, for example women-owned businesses.

Areas of the ACT government undertaking procurements are encouraged to consider how the goods or services or works being procured will support these values, and how they will help all Canberrans to contribute to and participate equally in investing in our city.

While the application of the Charter of Procurement Values is dependent on the category, size, risk and scope of the individual procurement, our government has been clear that this is something we want to strengthen, going forward. The parliamentary agreement outlined a number of areas of procurement reform, including that we want to ensure that all businesses obtaining government contracts are meeting high ethical and labour standards.

As we embark on strengthening our government's procurement approach and procurement values over the term, we acknowledge that more can be done when it comes to diversity, equality and inclusion, particularly in addressing workplace sexual harassment and the associated psychosocial injuries that it presents.

I am looking forward to working with Ms Orr to implement clauses (h) through (j) of this motion. They would require all government partners and contractors to publicly report, across a range of categories, the number of harassment, sexual harassment and gender-based violence incidents that occur within the organisation while contracted by the ACT government; require all government partners and contractors to publicly report across the categories the number of non-disclosure agreements entered into which pertain to incidents of bullying, harassment, sexual harassment and gender-based violence within the organisation while contracted by the ACT government; and require the development of associated guidelines. This is going to be important to meet our procurement values over the term. I am looking forward to working with Ms Orr to make sure that we can deal with the risks of injury that come with sexual harassment in the workplace.

**MR BRADDOCK** (Yerrabi) (4.30): I wish to add my contribution to this very important debate and say that this is not a women's issue—this is a men's issue. We men need to stand up and take ownership of this problem and be part of the solution as to how we manage this as a society. When 52 per cent of the population is doing poorly, that is not sustainable and is not something we can continue to do. We need to be able to work together effectively to address this. And that involves men taking ownership of the problem and being part of the solution in terms of calling out each other's behaviour when it is not acceptable, saying that it is not okay, taking effective action, and making sure our workplaces are safe for everyone, not just for the alpha type or the boys-will-be-boys type, but making sure they are truly inclusive for those who are vulnerable or disabled or from minority groups. This is such an important issue that we cannot let lie.

I am proud to be a part of the Greens party. I am proud to be part of a party which has such strong women in its party room who are such strong vocal advocates for societal change and who were there with me at the March 4 Justice last week. I also support this motion.

**MS VASSAROTTI** (Kurrajong) (4.33): I, too, thank Ms Orr for her motion. This is a great example of parties coming together to address a really important and significant issue. One of the key things about this issue from a work health and safety perspective is that it is fairly and squarely an industrial issue. This is not an issue around what happens in the personal life; it is about how we support safe workplaces for everyone. I thank Ms Orr for the motion and I am very happy that the ACT Greens will be supporting this motion.

**MR BARR** (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism) (4.33): I thank Ms Orr for the motion and acknowledge in supporting it that all employees have the right to work in an environment free from workplace bullying, discrimination and harassment and to be treated with dignity and respect. The ACT public service is committed to building positive work environments where inappropriate behaviour and misconduct, such as workplace bullying and sexual harassment, are not tolerated.

Members would be aware that the ACT public service has a respect, equity and diversity framework that was introduced a little over a decade ago to support the creation and maintenance of positive, respectful and supportive ACT public sector work environments. The respect, equity and diversity framework ensures that all employees, irrespective of their position, background or individual differences, understand ACT public service values and the general obligations of employees as described in the Public Sector Management Act 1994. As the framework has been in place since 2010, it is appropriate that it be reviewed. That will be undertaken this year, with a particular focus on workplace bullying and harassment.

All sexual harassment complaints made within the ACT public service are treated seriously and with strict confidentiality. If a complainant suggests potential trauma, the employee will be made aware of and ensured access to appropriate support services. Several different avenues are available to ACT public servants to report a workplace issue, including a sexual harassment complaint. These avenues include speaking with a manager, an HR representative or a respect, equity and diversity contact officer, and reporting the issue via the Riskman reporting system.

If a complaint is made, the relevant manager or supervisor will conduct a preliminary assessment. This follows the process set out in the ACT public Service enterprise agreements. If potential misconduct is uncovered, the matter will be referred to a delegate of the Head of Service. The delegate will then determine the most appropriate action. If the delegate determines that an investigation is required, the matter will be referred to the Public Sector Standards Commissioner for formal investigation. Of course, if potential criminal offences are identified, the matter will be referred to ACT Policing.

It goes without saying that bullying, discrimination and harassment are unacceptable in the ACT Public Service and, indeed, should be unacceptable in any workplace. So I thank Ms Orr for bringing this motion forward today and commend it to the Assembly. I thank all those who have contributed to the debate.

**MS BERRY** (Ginninderra—Deputy Chief Minister, Minister for Early Childhood Development, Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, Minister for Housing and Suburban Development, Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, Minister for Sport and Recreation and Minister for Women) (4.36): I thank Ms Orr for bringing this motion to the Assembly today. I have been listening to everybody who has been speaking and sharing their personal experiences with sexual harassment and assault in their workplaces and I want to remind members of this place of the support services we are setting up and putting place as a result of what this might be triggering for MLAs who have experienced that or members of their staff who might have experienced sexual harassment and assault.

In my statement this morning I provided a whole lot of phone numbers and details of support services for people to access if they feel they need it. I am happy also to talk to people if they feel like they need an ear. I am happy to provide an ear for people to talk to about the circumstances they have been through. A lot of distressing stories have been told this morning and I want to acknowledge that. We have talked about how important it is to share those stories and to be advocates for people who share those stories, and to believe that they are real experiences and that we still have a significant way to go before we have a gender-equal society that recognises that sexual harassment is completely unacceptable.

The work we do in our workplaces through the recommendations Ms Orr has put forward in this motion, in responding to the respect at work national inquiry into sexual harassment in Australian workplaces, is long overdue but it is also timely, with the conversations that have been held nationally and the experiences that have been shared by individuals in our community around sexual harassment and assaults in our workplaces.

It was not that long ago that we became aware of a certain construction workplace that used topless barmaids at a celebration for the end of a build. The community was horrified that that behaviour happened in our community on our doorsteps, yet here we are still having a conversation—frustratingly, as Ms Lawder rightly points out—around what is appropriate in our community and respect for women at work and more generally.

What I have heard from everybody today is a commitment to work together and a personal commitment from individuals here to do better—to listen to victims and survivors and participate in real action to make a difference for women and girls in our communities and our workplaces, because every person deserves to have a safe and healthy workplace.

Many stories have been shared today, and I reiterate my support for people whose feelings may have been triggered by the personal experiences that have been shared. I ask them to get the support that I referred to in my earlier speech. I am also happy to be an ear, if they need that. I commend Ms Orr for bringing the motion to the Assembly; it is a really important conversation to be held in this place today.

**MS ORR** (Yerrabi) (4.40), in reply: I thank everyone for the debate we have had today and the overwhelming support for these changes, which I hope bring about the systemic cultural change we want to see.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

## **Plastic Reduction Bill 2020**

Debate resumed from 2 December 2020, on motion by **Mr Steel**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

**MS LAWDER** (Brindabella) (4.41): This legislation aims to regulate and reduce the supply and distribution of single-use plastic in the ACT. The phase-out will be conducted in tranches and establishes a framework for future items to be banned, with the first tranche including plastic cutlery, plastic coffee stirrers and polystyrene cups.

The scrutiny committee noted several concerns about the legislation: firstly, the bill creates a number of strict liability offences, meaning that the prosecution need only to establish the physical elements—in this case, single-use plastic—rather than prove fault when investigating. Similarly, the enforcement powers outlined in the bill include the ability for an authorised person to enter private premises and take photographs or video recordings or require the occupant to provide more information, documents or anything else. An authorised officer may also be able to enter private premises without consent, in accordance with a search warrant or if they believe on reasonable grounds that an offence as listed in the bill is being or is likely to be committed on the premises. These enforcement measures therefore permit the intrusion into a person's private affairs and potentially limit the protection of privacy as outlined in section 12 of the Human Rights Act.

Furthermore, clause 28, under part 6 of the bill, states that a person is not excused from answering a question or providing information or a document on the basis that doing so may incriminate them or expose them to a penalty. I note these concerns from the scrutiny committee and the government's response to them and encourage the government to examine these measures again, following the implementation of the legislation.

Plastic pollution is one of our greatest environmental challenges. On average, Australians use 130 kilograms of plastic per person per year, the effects of which are of course detrimental. Each year up to 130,000 tonnes of plastic finds its way into our waterways and the ocean. We know plastic is harmful to our wildlife, with toxins and microplastics being consumed by the tiniest animals in the sea and poisoning the health of the entire food chain. Entanglement, ingestion and habitat destruction are common consequences we hear of due to plastic entering our waterways and oceans.

Our community want action on plastic reduction. They see single-use plastics discarded around the landscape. Just before Christmas last year I received some reports from students at Gordon Primary School about endangered animals. They had done an assignment about endangered animals, and many of the reports were about sea animals that faced a high risk from plastic pollution, such as turtles. While there is still so much for us to learn and achieve when tackling plastic pollution, it is heartwarming to see such enthusiasm and passion about preserving our environment for our next generation.

This legislation is just one small step in the fight against plastic. The reduction of plastic is a global effort, one that Australia is in a fortunate position to be an active participant in. There are countless organisations in Australia and locally in the ACT dedicated to reducing the amount of plastic in our community. I acknowledge the work of the Australian Packaging Covenant Organisation. This organisation provides

a national regulatory framework under the National Environment Protection Measure 2011 to outline how governments and businesses across Australia share the responsibility for managing the environmental impacts of packaging.

The facilitation by APCO of Australia's 2025 national packaging targets is of particular significance. These targets include 100 per cent re-usable, recyclable or compostable packing; 70 per cent of plastic packaging being recycled or composted; 50 per cent of average recycled content included in packaging; and the phase-out of problematic and unnecessary single-use plastic packaging.

The reduction of plastic cannot be done overnight; it will take methodical planning and implementation to get the balance right between protecting the environment and finding more eco-friendly products to take their place. Public consultation was taken on phasing out single-use plastic in 2019, and I am pleased to hear that the engagement report received high levels of involvement. However, I know from personal interaction with a range of businesses that many very small businesses were not consulted.

I appreciate that a discussion paper and using peak business bodies may be an easy and convenient way for the government to collect and report data, but there could have been more outreach to small and micro businesses during this process. Many of these microbusinesses are not members of a peak business organisation. When I spoke to many Tuggeranong food businesses especially, none of them had heard about a phasing out of plastics from government sources. If they had heard about it at all, it was through the media and not because they had been asked about how this change would affect their operations. I would like the government to better seek out the advice and opinions of those the legislation will affect before bringing it to the chamber for debate.

Despite the lack of consultation, I congratulate businesses on their readiness and efforts already to phase out single-use plastics from their operations. Many of these businesses told me they strongly support the reduction or phasing out of single-use plastics, but they noted that some of the alternative products are more expensive. In one coffee shop the owner showed me the paperwork to show that the recyclable products are eight per cent more expensive than the non-recyclable products. Of course, this cost will be borne by the business and passed on to customers. So it is a trade-off between everyone's desire to be environmentally friendly and having to pay for that as well.

But I reiterate that those that had made the switch were absolutely in favour of the phase-out of single-use products. They had already made the switch to recyclable products and were really keen to show me the recyclable products they are using now. They also shared with me the positive feedback they received from many of their customers pleased to see them involved in the phasing out of single-use products. It was great to see so many Tuggeranong business owners adapting to the changing desires of their consumers. We certainly have many wonderful small family businesses in Tuggeranong.

The Canberra Liberals will be supporting the Plastic Reduction Bill. As a Liberal, I firmly believe every individual can and should do their part to help protect our environment. Similarly, we want to preserve and protect our environment from human-made pollutants. It is not up to one country, one government or one person to solve all of our environmental problems; it is up to all of us as individuals to do our part to help conserve and protect the environment we are privileged to call home. I am pleased to support this first tranche of the Plastic Reduction Bill, and I look forward to seeing the revised explanatory statement from the minister.

**MS CLAY** (Ginninderra) (4.49): The Greens are pleased to support this bill. When China brought in its ban on receiving waste from other countries in early 2018 it was a wake-up call for Australia and many other countries that sending our waste offshore is not a good long-term solution. Humanity cannot afford the out of sight, out of mind attitude to waste. China's 2018 national sword policy is a blessing in disguise for the ACT and for Australia. It will drive recycling and it will help make us take responsibility for our own waste.

This bill is an important step towards achieving a circular economy. This is vital if we want to protect our planet for current and future generations. But we still have a long way to go. For a decade ACT resource recovery has plateaued. I am pleased that this bill takes some necessary steps to tackle the issue of waste at its source—the initial creation of products that are used for a few minutes or a few seconds and are then discarded. In doing this, the bill follows the waste hierarchy of reduce, re-use, recycle and recover, with disposal as the last resort.

The reduce phase of this hierarchy has been something many governments have been reluctant to address. With plastic pollution persisting in our environment for hundreds or thousands of years, this needs to change. We are starting that change. South Australia's similar ban on single-use plastic products took effect recently, and the ACT now joins a national and global movement, with many countries in the European Union also banning plastics. And with additional mechanisms like the Australian National Packaging Covenant targets and the sustainable packaging initiatives that are being developed, the ACT is part of a general plastics reduction and recycling movement.

We will keep working constructively at all levels, learning from and contributing to best practice. It is encouraging to note that the bill establishes a framework that allows more products to be added to the provisions in the future. I am also pleased to see that we are streamlining plastic regulation by absorbing the existing plastic shopping bag ban.

Research has shown that if waste reduction and our sorting systems are seen to be too complicated or too inconvenient, they end up sapping consumer confidence. Levels of compliance gradually fall away and people try to circumvent the regulations. That is why we need to make sure that the systems we set up after this legislation is in place are really well designed, accessible to everybody and easy to use. They need to show results that ordinary people can see.

As the Greens spokesperson on waste and the circular economy, I look forward to working with the community, business and industry to try and bring out more innovative solutions to replace our plastics and to set up really good recycling chains for all the substitutes.

While this bill focuses on plastic, I also want to celebrate the government's planned introduction of food and organic recycling. This system will recover household food scraps and organic waste, and I am delighted to see that it is planned to roll out in 2023. A lot of the items we substitute for plastic will be biodegradable, like cornstarch items, and we need to make sure that they can be recovered in our food and organics recycling system once that is up and running.

Any new recycling initiative is a good thing. I was pleased to read CSIRO's recent circular economy road map that made this very point. I come from the recycling sector; I have worked with a lot of recycling companies and have run one. We have long understood that recycling is a huge boon to our economy. Australian recycling creates nine jobs for every 10,000 tonnes of waste. That is three times as many jobs as landfill creates. As we build our circular economy and as we gain ground, we will create more green jobs while saving our precious natural resources. The Greens are pleased to support the Plastic Reduction Bill 2020.

**DR PATERSON** (Murrumbidgee) (4.54): I am pleased to stand here today in support of Minister Steel and the Plastic Reduction Bill. It is absolutely imperative that we act to reduce plastic consumption, which has exploded since the 1950s. Plastic certainly has many benefits: it is strong, adaptable, stable, lightweight and low cost. But it is also insidious and creates serious problems. It persists in our environment, it is made from non-renewable resources and the true cost is borne by our environment, waste management and health sectors. Plastic is hard to avoid, particularly single-use plastic. Plastic also litters our otherwise pristine, beautiful bush capital landscape and waterways. Single-use plastics often end up in our landfills, as they cannot be economically recycled. By definition, these items are not designed or intended to be re-used.

As Minister Steel said, we know that regulating to reduce plastic works. Thanks to our single-use plastic shopping bag ban, between 2011 and 2018 we reduced our plastic bag use by 1,132 tonnes. In 2017-18 alone, we reduced our use by 199 tonnes. This is equivalent to around 55 million plastic bags. The bill both absorbs and builds on the ACT's bag ban. With the evidence in front of us, imagine how much good we can do when we phase out more single-use plastic items.

The first tranches start with items that we are confident can either be phased out or replaced with more sustainable non-plastic alternatives. They are also items that over 90 per cent of Canberrans want us to take action on. Single-use plastic stirrers, cutlery and expanded polystyrene takeaway food and beverage containers are things that we can immediately go without. Polystyrene in particular is a relic of the past. We are ready to leave this malicious material behind; from 1 July 2021, we will.

The government has long been clear about which items it expects to phase out and when. Supported by the results of our consultation, we have a clear plan. The second tranche of products will be phased out 12 months after the commencement of the first tranche. From 1 July 2022, single-use plastic straws, fruit and vegetable barrier bags and all products made from degradable plastic will be banned. Degradable plastic is often sold as being environmentally friendly, but instead of breaking down, it just breaks up into microplastics, which can wreak havoc on our environment, such as our aquatic wildlife. Straws, barrier bags and degradable plastics products have been identified as they also received strong community support for phase-out.

Importantly, we will also undertake detailed consultation with the disability and health communities to develop an exemption to ensure that people who need straws can retain access to them. That is why we delayed the phase-out of straws until the second tranche. We cannot rush making sure that we get this exemption right. We acknowledge the work of other jurisdictions in this space, and look forward to working with our colleagues who have already undertaken detailed consultation with affected stakeholders.

This bill is flexible, with consideration given to how we include additional items in the future, as our understanding of plastic grows with time and the social licence for it expires. Through the bill's regulation-making power, this legislation is futureproofed and adaptable to changing technologies and economies.

Our decisive but staged approach recognises that at this point in time some single-use plastics are more difficult to phase out than others. Staging our phase-out ensures that we are able to limit unintended consequences wherever possible. We do not want to simply replace one problematic product with another. Items such as plastic-lined single-use coffee cups and lids, single-use plastic dinnerware, boutique and heavyweight plastic bags, and cotton ear buds with plastic sticks remain under consideration for future tranches, from 1 July 2023.

We know there is already innovation happening with plastics and packaging. We thank our Plastic Reduction Task Force and their members for their hard work in this space and the milestones they have been able to achieve as a result. But I reiterate Minister Steel's words: manufacturers, suppliers and providers of single-use plastic products are on notice. Phase them out. If they cannot be phased out, find a better and more sustainable alternative.

The Plastic Reduction Bill is a robust and vital piece of legislation which represents global best practice, in line with community expectations. The bill will help to reduce the prevalence of single-use plastics that litter our bush capital, while also being flexible to ensure that the needs of vulnerable Canberrans are met via exemptions. I commend the bill to the Assembly.

**MR PETTERSSON (Yerrabi) (5.00):** The Plastic Reduction Bill represents a joint effort and commitment of government, industry, business and the ACT community in shaping Canberra's future as an innovative and responsible jurisdiction, working to reduce our waste to landfill and protect our beautiful and unique environment.

This is an action we need to take, not only to directly reduce single-use plastics from circulating in our waste streams but also to change the way we as a community think about the role of businesses and individuals in achieving a cleaner and more sustainable city. Overwhelming feedback from Canberrans shows support for clear regulatory action banning certain identified single-use plastics. There is agreement from all sides that this is a sensible and necessary means, creating cultural change and addressing the burden of a growing waste problem.

It is clear that the community's expectation that government take the lead in reducing single-use plastics is not limited to the ACT. Many jurisdictions around Australia and New Zealand are also moving towards phasing out single-use plastics, in line with their own communities. Within Australia, South Australia has already passed legislation to this effect. This shows that now is the right time to take this step towards implementing a ban on the first tranche of single-use plastics in the ACT, as similar discussions are taking place across the rest of Australia and internationally, sending a clear message that our reckless reliance on single-use plastic does not have a place in our future.

Feedback from Canberra businesses shows an openness and willingness to embrace the phase-out of single-use plastics—stirrers, cutlery, polystyrene foam takeaway containers and cups—with many having already implemented their own measures to reduce plastic waste. Based on this, I believe we can expect a high level of compliance, following implementation of the first tranche from 1 July 2021. We know we have a responsibility to ensure that those compliant businesses doing the right thing are not disadvantaged by businesses that are slow or unwilling to adopt the changes. That is why a proven combination of education and enforcement will support the bill.

In the lead-up to and following the first tranche, and future tranches of items, a focus on education and awareness will be used to assist businesses and suppliers in understanding their obligations under the legislation—how to move beyond the need for single-use items or adapt to using more sustainable alternatives. Comprehensive support for businesses is available on the ACT government website, with plain English information on the legislation surrounding things like banned items, alternatives and the disposal options. This will be shortly followed by a telephone advisory service that businesses can call to ask questions, organised face-to-face visits at a major shopping centre, and a supply guide for alternative products, if these are required.

This approach will allow for a smooth transition to the phasing out of these unwanted products. It will also assist the community in adjusting to the changes, as we expect businesses to be the first point of contact for most people regarding the ban.

For businesses that continue to distribute banned single-use plastic, the enforcement framework in the bill for noncompliance, including the potential for prosecution in extreme cases, will ensure compliance. This approach was given a high level of support via the Plastic Reduction Task Force, as it is essential to set an example and to

support the businesses that are actually making changes to comply with the rules. The infringement framework will also be made clear through education and awareness activities so that businesses are not caught off-guard.

While other jurisdictions are also moving towards phasing out single-use plastics, the ACT is taking a different approach to others across Australia. This bill provides flexibility around declaring public events, both government and privately run, as single-use plastic free. Consultation with ACT residents revealed that plastic waste at events was a problem in need of a solution. It speaks volumes to the community that we are taking the lead on this important issue. That is why this bill allows for the minister to declare an event single-use plastic free no closer than three months prior to the event, to ensure that organisers can make the necessary arrangements in time. The government will only make such declarations in consultation with those involved in all cases, particularly given the impact of COVID-19 on the events sector.

The ACT government has already shown initiative in this space in recent years to implement better ways of doing things for major government-run events. This provision in the bill takes this internal commitment even further and declares entire events single-use plastic free, preventing certain government and non-government events alike from contributing devastating quantities of plastic into our landfills. The plastic waste generated as a result of large-scale public events can instantly pollute the immediate environment and waterways. The worst part is that most of these items are entirely avoidable if appropriate alternatives and behaviours are adopted.

This bill follows on from years of public discussion, interjurisdictional and community consultations and policy development in the single-use plastic space. It is clear to all involved that this is a necessary, timely and proven step towards achieving reduction in plastic waste. This bill has built-in flexibility to adapt further in the future, incorporating additional items and undertaking additional and targeted discussions with affected groups to ensure that we can phase out unnecessary and wasteful single-use plastics without impacting negatively on vulnerable persons, business or the environment.

This bill takes us further towards a new and better standard of going about our day-to-day lives, where government leadership and businesses spark a shift in attitudes throughout the community, where more individuals than ever stop to think beyond single-use items and better appreciate the long-term consequences of adding plastic into the waste stream. With this bill Canberra is on track for a brighter, cleaner and more sustainable future. I commend the bill to the Assembly.

**MS DAVIDSON** (Murrumbidgee—Assistant Minister for Seniors, Veterans, Families and Community Services, Minister for Disability, Minister for Justice Health and Minister for Mental Health) (5.06): The Plastic Reduction Bill is good legislation which addresses the urgent needs of a waste industry which does not have good processes in place for all waste streams, including single-use plastics. This has been a problem for our community, and the global community, for decades.

Jo Clay, MLA for Ginninderra, has spoken about the support that the Greens provide to this ACT government for the introduction of the bill. We support measures to

improve the circular economy, to introduce organic waste recycling and to become one of the Australian leaders in the reduction of single-use plastics.

I would like to speak to an issue that Ms Clay touched on briefly. In the Australian Capital Territory we pride ourselves on being leaders in human rights. With this expectation comes the responsibility to follow through in meaningful and tangible ways. Community engagement is a useful process and recognises that every decision we make in government will affect some people in our community more than others. Where possible, changes to legislation and policy need to lean towards co-design. Retrofitting any process, product or legislation is time consuming and results in worse outcomes. A more inclusive process of co-design means extending our consultation processes and accepting that the outcomes of engagement may not result in the changes that we, the government, would expect or intend. This is true democracy.

Earlier this year I hosted several roundtable discussions with peak groups in the ACT disability community about the future reduction in the availability of single-use plastics. The outcome of these round tables was an overwhelming sense of concern that this legislation, while overall a positive move for the territory, would unfairly burden people with disabilities and medical conditions and those who use certain products for therapeutic purposes. These issues are real, and these issues already exist in a transition vacuum, where the supply of some single-use plastics is hard to find. Indeed, I have found myself unable to source plastic straws for drinks supplied during those meetings and round tables. Accessibility is an issue which exists beyond building standards.

For this reason, the legislative changes to single-use plastics will be implemented progressively over time, while government continues to work on ways of supporting ongoing access to single-use plastics that are needed for therapeutic purposes or as accessibility tools. This work on accessibility is necessary, even without this legislative change, as some products become harder to find due to being replaced by re-usable products that are not functional as accessibility tools.

This highlights the importance of meaningful community engagement. I heard repeatedly that people with disabilities support measures for sustainability and environmental protection. But this intersection is not always easy and it is one that we, as a government, must be careful that we address. People with disabilities cannot be further disempowered by having to positively identify themselves and their needs to complete strangers, by paying for a product which has previously been freely available, or by being subject to discrimination based on the use of products for which there is a general disdain in the community.

We must always be thinking of the social model of disability—that people are disabled by the barriers in society, including infrastructure and people’s attitudes—and consider the impacts of policy and legislative changes on people with accessibility needs. These are difficult issues that we must all face, and where the answers might not be straightforward. It is incumbent on all of us to do the best we can for our community.

In addition to supporting the bill, we encourage those people in government who have the power to do so to continue these routes of meaningful engagement and provide solutions to our community for the betterment of the territory, Australia and the global environmental movement. The Greens support the Plastic Reduction Bill.

**MS ORR** (Yerrabi) (5.10): Since being elected to this Assembly, I have spoken numerous times about the need to reduce plastic waste in the ACT. This is an issue not only of local importance but of global importance. Plastic waste from the territory can make it to the ocean via our waterways, and it is clearly evident in our own lakes and ponds.

I was pleased to move a motion on the re-usable cup scheme and to see this initiative get off the ground during the last Assembly. Additionally, it was great to have a commitment to organise a plastic-free government event after another of my private member motions passed in the last term. It was unfortunate that, due to the pandemic, that commitment has not yet been implemented, but I hope to see something in the future.

I rise today to speak in support of the Plastic Reduction Bill 2020. It is great to see such legislation before this place. The first stage of implementation will include single-use plastic items more easily phased out or replaced with an organic alternative. Single-use plastic stirrers, cutlery and expanded polystyrene takeaway food and beverage containers are things that we can immediately go without. Polystyrene in particular is a relic of the past. We are ready to leave this malicious material behind—and from 1 July 2021 we will.

The second group of single-use plastic products will be phased out a year later. From 1 July 2022, single-use plastic straws, fruit and vegetable barrier bags and all products made from degradable plastic will be banned. I would like to note that throughout these changes I have supported the government in liaison and consultation around accessibility issues with the disability community, particularly in relation to single-use straws. I would like to thank the minister for his commitment to working through those issues.

Degradable plastic is a bit of a misnomer; all it does is break down into microplastics more quickly than other plastics, and it goes out of sight and out of mind more quickly. It is just as damaging to the environment. There is strong community support for the phase-out of both of these groups of products.

Reducing plastic in our environment is one of the great environmental causes of our generation. As it stands, a million seabirds die from getting trapped in, or consuming, plastic pollution every year. At least 100,000 marine mammals die from the same pollution every year. Over a third of all fish caught for human consumption are found to have plastic in their stomachs. I could go on and on.

Humans began producing and using plastics on an industrial scale around the start of the Second World War. This new, cheaply produced product with 1,000 uses was seen as a utopian tool for the improvement of human life. While this perception of plastics lasted for a while, it did not last forever.

By the 1960s plastic was beginning to be noticed in waterways and the ocean. At this point, concern about the impact on the environment of this new product began to be more prominent. That was more than 50 years ago, and nowhere near enough action has been taken since that time. We have only been producing it en masse since the late 30s. In less than 100 years, though, we have managed to overrun the planet with plastic waste.

Along with deforestation and carbon emissions, the plastic entering the natural world has the potential to play a part in the catastrophic failure of our ecosystems. Policymakers over the past several decades have attempted to use various measures to reduce the impact that plastics have on the environment. A big one has been to reduce, re-use and recycle. This slogan originated in the 70s, as governments around the world tried to encourage and stimulate individual actions to reduce plastic waste.

Unfortunately, the emphasis has always been on the “recycle” section of the policies. Unfortunately, the reality of recycling is that it is often much more expensive than producing new plastic, some plastics cannot be recycled and it just is not something that happens when market forces are left to do it. Currently, less than 10 per cent of plastic in Australia is recycled. We need to reduce our usage; it is as simple as that. Recycling is not going to be enough, re-using it is not going to be enough and, unfortunately, the market alone will not produce the reductions we need.

The ACT has led the way in this country on environmental policy. We reached our 100 per cent renewable energy target before the 2020 goal. There is great work being done to conserve our grasslands and waterways, but there is always more work to do. Thanks to our single-use plastic shopping bag ban, between 2011 and 2018 we reduced our plastic bag use by 1,132 tonnes. In 2017-18 alone, we reduced our use by 199 tonnes. That is equivalent to around 55 million plastic bags.

This bill both absorbs and builds on the ACT’s bag ban. With the evidence in front of us, imagine how much good we can do when we phase out more single-use plastic items. Reducing single-use plastic is an important environmental issue. There is no doubt that preserving the environment for its own sake is a really important responsibility of all societies. However, let us face it: there is an inherently selfish benefit for human society. After all, our environment is what provides us with air, food and water; and, to put it bluntly, it is what makes our existence possible. The better we sustain our environment, the better it can sustain us.

A prime example of this is the burgeoning research showing microplastics in seafood destined for human consumption. It has been found in mussels, tuna and other species. Some of this plastic can be quite toxic to humans after digestion. It can be carcinogenic and it can also cause digestive problems. If the thought of plastic and its effects on animals is not enough to concern you, how about its impact on us? Microplastics are in the air we breathe and the water we drink. Once these microplastics enter our bodies, they often remain with us for the rest of our lives. That is a scary thought. It is honestly appalling how plastics have infected not only every ecosystem but the whole planet.

There has never been a better time to ban plastics than now. It is essential that we help remove our reliance on plastics as soon as possible. Everything I have just mentioned is only the damage caused in under 100 years; imagine what the impact of plastic would be in another 100 years if we do not take action.

In conclusion, Madam Speaker, I cannot think of one reason why anyone would not support this bill. You would have to be unbothered by the damage plastic is having on this world. That is why I am in full support of my colleague's bill and I encourage everyone else in this chamber to vote in support of it too. I commend the bill to the Assembly.

**MR STEEL** (Murrumbidgee—Minister for Skills, Minister for Transport and City Services and Special Minister of State) (5.17), in reply: I am pleased to close the debate on the Plastic Reduction Bill 2020 in the Assembly today. I welcome the contributions of members supporting our commitment to phasing out certain single-use plastics in the ACT and our commitment in the bill to responsibly manage our environment.

The ACT is one of the first Australian jurisdictions to implement a phase-out of single-use plastics, joining the government in South Australia, and I congratulate them on being the first Australian jurisdiction to pass legislation. Their legislation came into force and commenced in March. The Queensland legislation is also due to commence, but after ours, on 1 September.

The bill complements the work that is already going on to phase out single-use plastic across ACT government operations, with more work to come on further measures to build a circular economy.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank local businesses who continue to act to phase out single-use plastic. The ACT government has given the community and businesses time to act to reduce plastics—action that the community and businesses have overwhelmingly supported.

In December 2019 we released the Next Steps policy document, detailing which items would be phased out and when. In August 2020 we released the public exposure draft of the Plastic Reduction Bill. With this came an updated Next Steps policy document, with a revised time line that recognised the impact of the pandemic on local businesses. In December 2020 the final bill was introduced to the Assembly, providing a further reminder that the transition needed to begin. Today I call on all remaining businesses in the ACT to immediately start the transition away from single-use plastic.

Many businesses are well progressed in making the transition away from single-use plastic, but some will need a little extra help to prompt them to make the change. In the lead-up to the ban in July, the ACT government will be targeting businesses with an education campaign. From April, businesses will be supported through a telephone advisory service and face-to-face visits at major shopping centres, and a supply guide will be provided with acceptable alternative products.

To support business, the ACT government has also developed resources. Web-based information is now available at [act.gov.au/singleuseplastics](http://act.gov.au/singleuseplastics). A range of downloadable resources are included on the website, such as posters. Information for businesses to train their staff and inform their customers will be available closer to the commencement of the ban on 1 July 2021. The phase-out will also be supported by Actsmart, who deliver sustainability programs across the ACT government.

Canberra is a proudly progressive city. Our local businesses understand that our community wants them to act responsibly to manage our environment. Our community is vocal and, as a result, there is a rapidly diminishing social licence for wasteful and unsustainable practices. Our community is also vocally supportive of local business.

I would like to thank our community for their support of local businesses who have already risen to the challenge of the phase-out and the community's future support of those businesses that will be making sustainable changes from July. It will mean that they will be doing their business slightly differently, like receiving your halal snack pack in a sugarcane-based container rather than in an expanded polystyrene-based container. According to the Turkish Pide House in Dickson, they are actually cheaper than the plastic alternative, which is great news.

The ACT government will continue to take leadership to phase out problematic and unnecessary single-use plastic products. We can no longer consume the same volume of resources that cannot be avoided, re-used or recycled. We look forward to continuing to work with the community across the ACT and with other governments, and also with our Plastic Reduction Task Force to implement the phase-out.

I would like to thank task force members who were advising us on the ongoing phase-out for their commitment to sustainability and inclusion. We will continue to work with them, particularly on the phase-out of single-use plastic straws, which Minister Davidson and Ms Orr mentioned. That is something that we need to continue to work on, to make sure that the approach and model that we adopt here in the ACT are compatible with our human rights jurisdiction and make sure that these are accessible for those who need them.

I commend this bill to the Assembly so that we can make unnecessary and problematic single-use plastics a thing of the past. I table the revised explanatory statement, which responds to comments from the scrutiny committee.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Leave granted to dispense with the detail stage.

Bill agreed to.

## Adjournment

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

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

### Schools—language curriculum

**MRS KIKKERT** (Ginninderra) (5.22): Earlier today I presented a petition signed by 61 Canberra residents who want this Assembly to understand how the cancellation of the French language program at Belconnen High School in Hawker has impacted their families and their children's learning. The priority enrolment area for Belconnen high includes three primary schools. Two of these, Weetangera and Hawker, provide well-regarded French language programs to their students from kindergarten through to year 6.

In previous years, students from these schools who enrolled at Belconnen High School had the opportunity to continue learning French for another two years, capping off nine years of intensive language learning. The end result was young people who could speak, read, write and understand French to a high degree.

This seamless learning pathway ended in 2017, however, when the decision was made to discontinue the teaching of French at Belconnen High School. This leaves students who have picked up a solid foundation in the language during their primary years with no option to really build on this foundation and solidify their learning at the local high school.

When I raised this concern with the minister last year and asked what options existed for these families, she noted that they can attempt to enrol their children at a high school that does teach French. Of course, she added that such a request would be considered like all other applications to out-of-area schools, which we know often fail in this territory.

The frustration of those who have signed this petition has been increased by the fact that this change at Belconnen High School has left students in years 7 and 8 with no option to study a priority language at all. The government's curriculum requirements in ACT public schools policy very clearly states that all high schools in Canberra must provide students in years 7 and 8 with at least 150 minutes of instruction each week in one or more of eight priority languages, including French. Students in these years at Belconnen currently receive zero.

The minister has already told me that "the ACT Education Directorate continues to work with Belconnen High School to seek opportunities to deliver language options for students", but it has now been four years since the French language program at Belconnen High School was cut, with no indication that it will be restored any time soon.

Once again, I wish to make it clear that the families who signed this petition are strongly supportive of Belconnen high's Connecting to Country course and wish to see it continue. At the same time they want their local high school to comply with the curriculum requirements that this government has promised Canberrans in its own policy documents. They therefore call on the ACT government to take all steps necessary to resume the teaching of French for students in years 7 and 8 at Belconnen High School. I take the opportunity to commend to the Assembly the petition that I tabled this morning.

### **Ms Jude Byrne—tribute**

**MS VASSAROTTI** (Kurrajong) (5.26): This afternoon I rise to speak about the life of colleague, activist and friend Jude Byrne. Jude Byrne was an internationally acclaimed advocate for injecting drug users, whose life's work was fundamental to advocating for the inclusion of people who use drugs in the development of government policy on drug use. Jude died in Canberra earlier this month after a short illness. Her legacy of undertaking impactful and grounded advocacy will continue amongst drug user advocacy networks across the world as a reflection of her more than 30-year-long commitment to this extremely important cause.

Jude was intimately involved in establishing and running local, Australian and international drug user advocacy groups. Through these organisations, Jude advocated tirelessly against prohibition and for the human rights of people who use drugs, including an end to discrimination and stigma. Integral to this work was Jude's commitment to feminist approaches to care, including amplifying the voices of those who are often unheard in decision-making processes, as well as centring the experiences of women who use drugs. Jude's advocacy on the provision of accessible and timely hepatitis C treatment is one of the most significant contributions that Jude has made to the blood-borne virus and alcohol and other drugs sectors in the ACT. Jude's work was dynamic and responsive. More recently, Jude undertook research with older people who inject drugs and the aged and ageing care sector to provide recommendations for caring for people who use drugs as they age.

Jude was fundamental to establishing the locally based national organisation, the Australian Injecting and Illicit Drug Users League, AIVL, whose research on the experiences of people who use and inject drugs is fundamental to shaping sector conversations about harm reduction, and indeed the national conversation about the dignity and health of people who use drugs.

Jude was also a board member of the International Network on Health and Hepatitis in Substance Users, where I got to work with her very closely, and a founding member of the International Network of People who Use Drugs. Her contribution to organising and advocating, including conducting research and speaking at national and international conferences, and her presence at key decision-making tables within and outside government over the last three decades, has had a profound impact and influence on the way in which this country has approached the needs of people who use drugs and the health and care provided to them.

Jude played an important role in mentoring and upskilling other people in drug user advocacy, ensuring that her impact will continue within these circles. Her mentoring and upskilling went further. I was lucky enough to work with Jude closely for a number of years in her role as a board member of the International Network on Health and Hepatitis in Substance Users. I benefited personally from her wisdom, her advocacy and her fierce belief that we needed to involve people who used drugs in the work around drug policy. As Melanie Walker, Chief Executive Officer of AIVL, wrote in her letter advising Jude’s colleagues of her passing:

Jude’s achievements and contributions to the drug user movement both in Australia and internationally have been greater than the sum of their parts. I know that many of you will continue to ask yourselves ‘what would Jude do’ in any given situation moving forward, and also to inspire the next generation of harm reduction advocates, policymakers, researchers and service delivery workers in line with things that Jude has shared with and taught you.

I know that I will, and I encourage all of my colleagues working in this important area within government to do so too. I extend my condolences to Jude’s family and friends, and thank her for the work that she did.

### **Canberra Liberals—policies**

**MR MILLIGAN** (Yerrabi) (5.30): It is good to be back, particularly after my mini-break and a period of reflection. I am pleased to say that it is an honour to be standing here today. I have always wanted to be a strong local representative, and I have always wanted to work hard for my community. I have always tried my best to represent the values of the Liberal Party. In that sense it is great to be back, with another opportunity to be an even better local representative.

I am determined to continue to achieve success in what I see as my mission to encourage more voters to realise that the values of the Liberal Party do in fact align with their own. At the same time I need to acknowledge that I am standing here because Alistair Coe has resigned after 12 years in the Assembly. Alistair was a strong voice for Ginninderra and Yerrabi, and achieved a very strong following. I will do my best to stand up for the more than 20,000 voters in Yerrabi that voted for the Liberal Party.

I also want to acknowledge the efforts and service of my former colleagues, Vicki Dunne, Andrew Wall and Candice Burch. All were highly capable and passionate members of this place and will be missed.

The result last October was not what we, the Canberra Liberals, were hoping for. Over my term I worked hard in my electorate, seeking to be a champion for residents and local small businesses. In my portfolios I showed real initiative in developing solutions, featured in two booklets, “Find Your Game”, a long-term development for sport and recreation in the ACT, and “Improving the Lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples of the ACT”. The level of endorsement of my policy initiatives was heartening. It showed that I had adopted the right process by seeking the views of people at the coalface.

I acknowledge that the new Labor-Greens government was elected in 2020. I note that we now have six Greens members—three Greens ministers and even a Greens MLA in my electorate. The primary vote was only 13.5 per cent for six seats, compared to the Liberal Party achieving nine seats with 33.8 per cent of the primary vote, and with Labor achieving 35.7 per cent of the vote.

Given this development, I think that the role of the opposition is even more critical so that we do not see extreme ideas and policy experiments take hold in the ACT. The proposals so far—safe injecting rooms, banning natural gas, decriminalising drugs and forcing people to drive electric cars—are all things that the current government are looking to do. The threat from these actions is even more concerning, given the health and economic challenges that our community is facing. In my view, it is vitally important that we do not allow pet projects or irresponsible behaviour to flourish, to the detriment of the majority of the ACT population.

I want to assure the members of this place and the members of my electorate that I am resilient, revitalised and focused on getting the best outcomes for them. I have reflected on my first term, and I have some good ideas on what is required to rebuild support for the Canberra Liberals. I want to assure the Canberra community that there is a real alternative to this long-term Labor-Greens dominance. I look forward to working with our new leadership in Elizabeth Lee and Giulia Jones. I also welcome our newly elected MLAs, Peter Cain and Leanne Castley, as part of our new team. I look forward to working with them as they develop throughout this term and become excellent local members for their electorate.

For me, and hopefully for the Canberra Liberals, it is onwards and upwards, Madam Speaker. I am looking forward to hitting the ground running and cracking on with the important task of bringing common sense, personal responsibility and recognition of the traditional values of the ACT to the Legislative Assembly.

### **Multicultural affairs—Bangladesh Day of Independence**

**MR PETTERSSON** (Yerrabi) (5.35): Today I rise to note that last Friday marked the 50th anniversary of the independence of Bangladesh. This special occasion was marked with celebrations in Bangladeshi communities around the world, but especially in our multicultural community of Gungahlin. Commemorating the 50th anniversary of Bangladeshi independence is an important part of celebrating the rich and diverse history of Canberra and the many people that have come to call our city home. Australia and Bangladesh have a long and special history as partners with shared values and ideals—a history that I hope continues well into the future.

Bangladeshi members of our local community have made Canberra what it is today. They have shaped Canberra into a welcoming, generous and diverse city where people from all backgrounds feel safe to express their heritage and culture. I think that is one of the greatest parts of Canberra—in particular, my community in Gungahlin. It makes me so proud to see people from all backgrounds calling Canberra their home and celebrating within it.

Commemorating important and historic events in all of our cultures is an important way of maintaining connections to where we have all come from. Respecting and participating in these celebrations allows the broader Canberra community to come to understand and know their neighbours even better, and it helps us to build a respectful and multicultural community.

Over the years, as a member for Yerrabi, it has always been an absolute pleasure to attend events and celebrations organised by the Bangladeshi community. I always look forward to attending these events. It is truly a privilege to represent every member of the Yerrabi electorate, and everyone who has come to call it their home.

### **Business—Chisholm Family Tavern**

**MR DAVIS** (Brindabella) (5.37): I rise today to outline for the house the sad and sorry saga of yet another small family business railroaded by the greed of multinational corporations and property developers. The Chisholm Family Tavern in my electorate of Brindabella is a well-known and well-loved staple in the community; a small family business where, year after year, a tidy profit is turned over not by relying on revenue from poker machines or other forms of gambling, but instead, Jenny and Gumby have sustained their business for years on the power of good meals, good beer and good company.

Members may be aware that for some time the owners of the Chisholm shopping centre have been steadfast in their one-eyed commitment to pursue development approval for a McDonald's restaurant on the site where the Chisholm Family Tavern now sits. Two development applications were rejected, citing a range of concerns, including, but not limited to, pressures on parking, which I might add is already a concern for many at Chisholm, and the drive-through access points, particularly as it relates to the adjoining fire station.

Throughout the period when both development applications were being considered, thousands in my community rallied behind Jenny, Gumby and the Chisholm Family Tavern, some in passionate support of the tavern, others in staunch opposition to yet another multinational conglomerate buying up our suburbs. I thank you, Madam Speaker, for your efforts to represent our shared constituency, not once but twice, in the form of petitions in this place against both of those development applications. On both occasions the will of the people was respected, their concerns noted and the development applications rejected.

In January, the owners of the Chisholm shopping centre presented a third development application to government for the exact same fast-food outlet on the exact same site: proof that the concerns raised by the community were not taken on board and that other options had not been considered. Instead, a brazen attempt to disregard the views of the community would see this developer continue to prosecute the case until they got their way.

On the third development application, approval was granted on the condition that the government commit to the sale of the adjacent public toilet block. In February,

planning minister and fellow member for Brindabella, Mick Gentleman, confirmed the government would not sell the adjacent toilet block. Madam Speaker, as you well know, our community was thrilled. Finally, after a long campaign, the community believed they had seen off the golden arches once and for all. But, in recent days, I understand the owner of the site has chosen to terminate the lease of the Chisholm Family Tavern.

Now, my 12 years in real estate before I entered this place tells me that you do not terminate the lease of a good tenant who pays their rent on time without a good reason. Many have speculated what those reasons might be. Have they found a new tenant that they feel would be more commercially viable in the long term, or are they choosing to allow a vacant and boarded up commercial premises sit and gather dust until the community submit to their will and reluctantly accept whatever development is foisted upon them? I remind the house that a development application for a fast-food outlet on this site has been rejected twice, a fact that the owners of the Chisholm shopping centre continue to ignore, as well as their own community. Just pushing through their McHappy meal of bad ideas in the face of strong community opposition is so disappointing, but it is not surprising.

As a small business person, I am proud to be the ACT Greens spokesperson for business. Contrary to popular belief, mine is a political party filled with successful businesspeople. I am committed to supporting small and family sized businesses that create jobs and provide social and economic opportunities for our city and our community.

I appeal to the owners of the Chisholm shopping centre: the community understands your desire and requirements to maintain a commercially viable shopping centre. But we need you to understand that the shopping centre is more than just a means for profit. It is a meeting hub, a community centre, a place of belonging. You own a big chunk of community and you owe it to that community to engage them earnestly and enthusiastically in the development of their suburban centre. The community and people that I represent have made themselves crystal clear. We do not want multinational corporations sinking their claws into our city at the expense of thriving local businesses.

### **Yerrabi electorate—community events**

**MS ORR** (Yerrabi) (5.42): I rise to report another busy period out in the wonderful electorate of Yerrabi. During the past couple of weeks I have caught up with some of the terrific sports groups throughout Yerrabi. I enjoy catching up for coffee with the leaders of community and sporting groups alike. It allows me to gain an insight into how I can better represent their needs and help to address any issues they are experiencing.

I have also made an effort to visit plenty of fabulous residents who call the electorate of Yerrabi their home—from a Giralang resident who wanted me to see an issue with trees blocking the sun into his house, to meeting several residents who all speak a different mother language, to film their message to celebrate International Mother Language Day for 2021.

I wanted to create a video for international mother tongue day to celebrate the diversity of all the languages spoken throughout Yerrabi. Among the constituents who took part there were seven languages represented. There was Spanish, Karen, Bengali, Arabic, Italian and Hindi. The video ended up coming together really well. My electorate has some of the most linguistically and culturally diverse suburbs in the territory. I am really proud to represent an area where this diversity is particularly celebrated. In this vein, I would also like to wish my constituents a happy Holi, a happy Assyrian new year and a happy Easter for this week. I would highly recommend that anyone who has not watched the video visit my Facebook page. It makes me so proud to represent an electorate with such a diverse range of cultures and languages.

I was really happy to join everyone at the Northside Recreation Group's inclusive disco last Tuesday and see Karen spin some tunes. This is a great initiative which provides a safer space for those with different abilities to go to a disco and have a dance with all of their mates.

Earlier this month, along with the Friends of Grasslands, my office and I organised a clean-up day that targeted the Franklin grasslands. I am pleased to say it was a great event. I was so pleased with all the people who turned up to help pick up rubbish around the grassland. Friends of Grasslands provided a guided tour of the area after the clean-up. I think we were all amazed at all the different flora and fauna that reside across the area. These events are one of my favourites to host as I get to engage with people in my community and help to remove rubbish from these gorgeous places across Yerrabi. I will continue to host these clean-up events to sustain the many grasslands and parks that people love to use across Yerrabi. I would also note that, as we have been cleaning up Franklin over the years, we are getting less and less rubbish. Thankfully, we might need to find a new spot to clean.

On Sunday I attended the Palm Sunday Rally for Refugees in Civic. I encourage all those who believe in refugee rights to continue to demonstrate and raise their voices for those in detention who cannot. It was a particular pleasure to walk side by side with refugees. A number of refugees who live in my electorate are workers for the United Workers Union, who are doing great things within our community.

While I met with the Gungahlin Jets at one of catch-ups earlier, they invited me to attend their women's game and perform the coin toss at the start of the match. I must admit that I think this was the first coin toss I have ever done. It was an honour. I managed to execute the coin toss, despite the wind doing its best to stop me and blowing the coin a metre away from where it started. I praise the Gungahlin Jets' continued efforts in relation to both their men's and women's teams. I would also like to thank the club for the invitation to their fabulous season launch on Saturday evening. It is great to see the club going from strength to strength and continuing to grow, particularly in their women's football and netball.

I also had the opportunity to attend both the IWiN annual International Women's Day celebration and the United Nations Women's Day lunch. Both were excellent events, with a really important discussion coming out of the IWiN event, particularly for representation of women from multicultural backgrounds.

To conclude, I proudly want to say that I, along with the whole of my office, attended the March 4 Justice. We attended this event in full support of changing the reality of rape and sexual abuse for women in Australia. For too long we have been silenced and blamed for the actions of men. Enough is enough. Attending the March 4 Justice showed me how many other women and allies are fed up with this toxic culture and want to change the narrative for women experiencing rape and abuse in this country. It was an honour to be able to attend the march, along with the thousands who joined. I will continue to fight for women's equality and to eradicate injustice.

As you can tell, I have had another busy few weeks in Yerrabi. I look forward to continuing to be active and engaging with the community, and updating the Assembly next sitting.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

**The Assembly adjourned at 5.47 pm.**