



Debates

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Tuesday, 20 April 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.

His Royal Highness Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh Condolence statement by Speaker

MADAM SPEAKER: Like many Australians, I was saddened by the news of the passing of Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, on 9 April.

Prince Philip visited Australia on many occasions, both with and without Her Majesty, and he developed a unique relationship with our great country. From his first royal visit to Australia in 1954 to his last in 2011, when he accompanied the Queen to a Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Perth, Prince Philip is remembered as a man genuinely interested in Australia, its culture and its people.

In Canberra, Prince Philip opened the Royal Australian Mint in 1965, and was present at the opening of the Australian Parliament House in 1988—two significant moments in our local history. Since his passing, many Canberrans have shared their personal stories of moments when Prince Philip spoke to them in a crowd, acknowledged their presence, smiled and shared a joke. I am sure that there are individuals in this chamber who remember just such a moment.

On behalf of the ACT Legislative Assembly, I extend our most sincere condolences to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and family on the death of Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh.

As a mark of respect to the memory of the deceased, I ask all members to rise in their places.

Members standing in their places—

MADAM SPEAKER: I thank members.

Correction to the record

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra—Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Minister for the Arts, Minister for Business and Better Regulation, Minister for Human Rights and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (10.04), by leave: On 31 March 2021, during a debate on veterans mental health, I incorrectly described Minister Davidson as a veteran. It was a genuine mistake, and I unreservedly apologise.

MS DAVIDSON (Murrumbidgee—Assistant Minister for Seniors, Veterans, Families and Community Services, Minister for Disability, Minister for Justice Health and Minister for Mental Health) (10.04), by leave: I thank Ms Cheyne for correcting the record. I have always been very clear that my time as a public servant at Navy is not the same as being a veteran. I thank Ms Cheyne for her ongoing commitment to supporting the mental health, wellbeing and human rights of people in the ACT, including our veterans community.

Petitions

The following petitions were lodged for presentation:

Yerrabi electorate—Yerrabi Pond—petition 5-21

By Mr Pettersson, from 601 residents:

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

Yerrabi Pond is the only major public recreation area in Gungahlin and likely to remain so for the foreseeable future.

Unlike Lake Burley Griffin, and Lake Ginninderra, which are well maintained and improved on a continuing basis, Yerrabi Pond has languished.

Minister Gentleman in a letter of 16th December 2020 mentions “the ever increasingly popular Yerrabi Ponds area”. Then goes on to say “There are no plans to install more toilet facilities at Yerrabi Ponds in the near future”.

Yerrabi Pond was established in 1999. Since then there has been an explosive growth in local population. What might have been a reasonable facility 22 years ago is now neglected and inadequate.

Your petitioners, therefore, request the Assembly to Call upon the Government to:

- (1) aid and support the establishment of “The Friends of Yerrabi Pond association”, to highlight the need for upgrading the area;
- (2) provide more toilet and hand washing facilities;
- (3) provide signage particularly on shared pathways concerning rights of pedestrians and instructions re: dogs and their droppings;

- (4) upgrade the western children’s playground with the provision of a toilet and hand washing facilities;
- (5) upgrade the many areas around the Pond that are currently overgrown with weeds, bushes etc.

Provision of the above improvements would allow many more older users to Walk around the Pond because of a western toilet.

Planning—Chisholm—petition 10-21

By Ms Burch, from 1,043 residents:

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

The following residents of the ACT draw to the attention of the Assembly:

- the Chisholm Village Shopping Centre is privately owned by Ganellen;
- Ganellen plans to build a drive-through major fast food chain outlet (McDonalds noted in plans), at the site of the existing Chisholm Family Tavern and public toilets;
- the two previous petitions submitted to the Assembly in July 2019 and August 2020 opposing this development;
- Ganellen has had two DAs refused and only recently through an appeal to ACAT received a conditional approval—conditional on the sale of the public toilets. And Government decision not to sell public toilets;
- media articles indicate Ganellen will seek to have this decision overturned and have issued notice for the eviction of the Tavern operators;
- community interest in future development for Chisholm shops, and its opposition to this proposal that does not add value to the existing businesses or amenity of the area, rather the community consider it to be detrimental to local businesses and social good;
- community disappointment that rather than allow a viable existing or new tenant to continue to operate while alternatives are sought, that Ganellen would allow the space to become unused and potentially fall into a state of disrepair.

Your petitioners, therefore, request the Assembly to call upon the government to recognise and understand continued community concerns surrounding the proposed development at Chisholm Village by Ganellen.

Planning—Chisholm—petition 11-21

By Ms Burch, from 321 residents:

1. The following residents of the ACT draw to the attention of the ACT Assembly:

- That the Chisholm Village Shopping centre is privately owned and leased by Ganellen.

- Ganellen plans to build a drive-through major fast food chain outlet (McDonalds noted in plans), at the site of the existing Chisholm Family Tavern and public toilets.
- The two previous petitions submitted to the Assembly in July 2019 and August 2020 opposing this development.
- Ganellen has had 2 DA refused and recently through an ACAT appeal received a conditional approval—conditional on the sale of public toilets. And Government decision not to sell public toilets.
- Media articles indicate that Ganellen will seek to have this decision overturned and have issued notice for the eviction of the Tavern operators.
- Community interest in future development for Chisholm Shops, and its opposition to this proposal that does not add value to the existing businesses or amenity of the area, rather the community consider it to be detrimental to local businesses and social good.
- Community disappointment that rather than allow a viable existing or new tenant to continue to operate while alternatives are sought, that Ganellen would allow the space to become unused and potentially fall into a state of disrepair.
- The community’s interest in future developments in Chisholm Village Shopping Centre and the strong resistance to the proposed DAs to demolish the Tavern and build a drive through [McDonalds].

2. Calls on the government to recognise and understand continued community concerns surrounding this proposed development at Chisholm Village by Ganellen.

Pursuant to standing order 99A, the petitions were 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.

Motion to take note of petitions

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

That the petitions so lodged be noted.

Yerrabi electorate—Yerrabi Pond—petition 5-21

MR PETTERSSON (Yerrabi) (10.06): I want to thank John and Kay Beagle for their hard work in bringing this petition together, as well as Darron Marks, who was vitally involved as well. They have diligently gone out amongst the community and gathered these signatures.

These are only the e-petition signatures. We are still gathering and collecting the paper copies. They will be presented later this week, and I look forward to all members engaging on the Yerrabi Pond motion later this week.

Planning—Chisholm—petition 10-21

MR DAVIS (Brindabella) (10.06): I thank all 1,043 constituents in Brindabella for signing the petition calling on the government to recognise the importance of the Chisholm shopping centre and continued community concern over the proposed development.

When I gave my inaugural speech only six months ago, fellow members chuckled when I dared to suggest the establishment of a Brindabella caucus. I said what a great opportunity it would be for all members of Brindabella to collaborate with one another to work on issues of shared concern for our constituency.

I am really excited that six months later three members from three different political parties joined together on the exact same campaign to sponsor the exact same petition, which more than 1,000 of our shared constituents have now signed. It is a really exciting indication to our community of how this Assembly can work at its best. It has been a really great way to highlight to our Chisholm community how its elected members can work together on a shared issue of concern.

Madam Speaker, I look forward to continuing to work with you and Mr Parton as we continue to bring the voices of the people of Chisholm into this Assembly. I call on the developers to earnestly and most sincerely engage with that community in the future development of their local shopping centre. They owe them nothing less.

Yerrabi electorate—Yerrabi Pond—petition 5-21

MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi) (10.08): I would like to take a minute to talk on the Yerrabi petition. I thank Mr Pettersson for bringing it forward to the Assembly, and I note the motion that we will discuss on Friday this week.

The number of signatures on the submission and the hard copy submission indicate the importance of Yerrabi Pond to the Gungahlin community. It is a very much loved facility. They wish to see more investment in that space so they can continue to enjoy it.

I draw attention to the fact that there are already a number of people who use kayaks, sailboats and so forth on Yerrabi Pond. We need to look at how Yerrabi Pond is used and whether we ensure that water quality testing is done.

MS CASTLEY (Yerrabi) (10.08): I rise to endorse the Yerrabi petition and put on the record the Canberra Liberals' absolute support for the amazing Yerrabi community which has made this happen.

In particular, I want to pay tribute to Yerrabi warrior activist John Beagle, who at 89 may be our oldest Canberran to have organised a petition to this Assembly—one which attracted more than 1,000 signatures—as well as Darron Marks, an active member of the Gungahlin Community Council, who became a bin militant following years of frustration at not being able to get bins for Yerrabi Pond. Not only have

Mr Beagle and his wife, Kay, mobilised to start the petition; they are also establishing the Friends of Yerrabi Pond organisation to harness community support and ensure that the neglected Yerrabi Pond receives the attention that it needs—not just this week or this month, but now and into the future.

As a proud Liberal member for Yerrabi, I also want to put on record my campaigning efforts to get the government to fix our pond, which in some places is an eyesore. Last month I wrote to Minister Chris Steel and asked him when his Labor-Greens government would prioritise improving Yerrabi Pond by installing more lights, bins, taps, playgrounds and barbecues. Yerrabi Pond is a community hub in Gungahlin—well, it should be, and I hope it will be one day once it gets the government attention it deserves and families and local residents, young and old, decide it is an attractive place to visit and be together.

I want to make two more points. Firstly, I want to highlight the fact that Yerrabi is the only Canberra electorate that does not have a minister representing the area. That was a decision of the Chief Minister, Andrew Barr. It is no surprise, therefore, that many parts of Gungahlin and my electorate are ignored and neglected by this government. Meanwhile, Mr Barr has looked after his own electorate of Kurrajong, with not one, two or three ministers, but four ministers.

Finally, I note that one of the many signs around Yerrabi Pond erected by John and his team encouraging people to sign a petition said, “The Friends of Yerrabi Pond are the only group active and able to achieve action to bring the pond and surrounding facilities and parklands to a better state for everyone.” How sad is that? It is wrong. The Labor-Greens government are meant to be the active ones. They are meant to be the ones achieving action to bring the pond, and the surrounding facilities and parklands, to a better state for everyone. Instead, it has been left to an 89-year-old Canberra warrior named John Beagle to do the government’s job, to bring Yerrabi Pond to a state the community expects so that the community can enjoy it. If only Mr Barr had appointed a minister to represent Yerrabi, things might have been so different.

Planning—Chisholm—petition 10-21

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (10.11): I want to speak on the Chisholm village petition. This has been an extraordinary exercise, the likes of which I have not seen before and certainly have not participated in before.

Testament to the unity of the three of us coming together is that on what I will call the WhatsApp group between the three of us—even though it is SMS—there has been discussion this morning about the fact that the official total on that petition was 1,364. I need to note that there were 70 signatures on the backs of pages, because they ran out of space, that were not counted as being official. The actual number would have been quite high. And the emails continue to come in.

I want to thank Ms Burch and Mr Davis for their ability to put our differences aside to, hopefully, bring about an outcome which aligns with the wishes of the bulk of the community in Chisholm. Ultimately, that outcome is still in the balance.

There is a little something, though, that I want to put on the record in here regarding this petition and this ongoing saga. My participation in this process has been based on the overwhelming community groundswell of opposition to this development proposal. My participation has been about sticking up for a small business that has continued to operate against the odds for 30 years. My participation in this process has been about this specific proposal and how it affects all stakeholders.

I am not anti-McDonalds. I want to put on the record that I am genuinely dismayed by some of the extremely strong rhetoric about the golden arches that has been bandied around. Individuals have tried to characterise McDonald's in Canberra as an American multinational corporation that somehow does not belong in the suburbs of Canberra. At the suburban level, McDonald's is far from the global corporation; it is a family business. At its core here in Canberra we are talking about franchises that are run by Canberrans, employing over 2,000 Canberrans. I do not think we should forget that. Those 2,300 employees are not employed by the global corporation of McDonald's; they are employed by the family businesses here in the ACT.

McDonald's in Canberra plays a genuine, positive role in the community, not the least of which is Ronald McDonald House. Additionally, at a suburban level, the Macca's franchises contribute to countless sporting and community groups. Why do they do that? They do it because they live here, too. They live here just as we do.

All I am saying is that, although I am committed to backing the community voice on this development, I am urging a balanced conversation. I do not share the views of my friend Mr Davis, who said in this chamber that he is 100 per cent opposed to everything McDonald's. I look forward to Mr Davis's motion to ban McDonald's from the ACT.

Mr Davis: I do not think that is a direct quote.

MR PARTON: I think it is a direct quote.

It may sound like hyperbole, but if you are on the record as being 100 per cent opposed to everything McDonald's and you find yourself elected to parliament as a member of the government, I would think that you pretty much have to try to ban them completely. I wonder if that ban is going to extend to KFC, Oporto and Guzman y Gomez. I love Guzman y Gomez.

In closing, let me say that this battle is far from over. The odds are quite possibly still stacked against the good old Chissy Tav. I suggest that you get in there as soon as you can and have a meal and a beverage. Go the bangers and mash and tell them Parto sent you.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Economy and Gender and Economic Equality—Standing Committee Report 2

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (10.16): I present the following report:

Economy and Gender and Economic Equality—Standing Committee—Report 2—*Report on inquiries into Annual and Financial Reports 2019-20 and ACT Budget 2020-21* dated 7 April 2021, together with a copy of the extracts of the relevant minutes of proceedings.

I move:

That the report be noted.

I am pleased to speak on the Standing Committee on Economic and Gender and Economic Equality *Report on inquiries into Annual and Financial Reports 2019-20 and ACT Budget 2020-21*.

As members will be aware, annual reports are the principal and most authoritative way in which directors-general and equivalents, and chairpersons, account to the Legislative Assembly and other stakeholders, including the public, for the ways in which they have discharged their statutory and other responsibilities and utilised public funds over the preceding 12 months.

Further, as members will be aware, the annual budget is considered the most important economic tool of the government and provides a comprehensive statement of a jurisdiction's priorities. While the executive is tasked with preparing and presenting a jurisdiction's budget, the role of a parliament is to exercise oversight by reviewing a government's draft budget, including revenue estimates and spending plans, and authorising the executive to raise revenue and spend money.

In December 2020, the majority of the 2019-20 annual and financial reports of all government agencies were referred to the relevant standing committees of the ACT Legislative Assembly. The ACT budget for 2020-21, which was due to be released in the Ninth Assembly, was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The budget was then presented on 9 February 2021. In the resolution establishing committees of the Tenth Assembly, the Assembly determined that, on presentation of the annual budget, appropriation units would stand referred across the seven standing committees in accordance with the areas of responsibility assigned to each committee. Accordingly, annual reports on the roles, functions and services of agencies and entities, and relevant appropriation units, covering a total of nine portfolios, were referred to this committee for inquiry and report.

With the change in practice from a single select committee inquiry focus to a multiple committee inquiry focus for examination of the budget, the committee considered how the longstanding practice of inviting input from community, industry and other representative stakeholder groups on the annual budget, via a survey, submissions or appearance at a designated public hearing date, could be accommodated. The committee was mindful that any practice it adopted in this regard needed to respect the initiative of each committee and avoid stakeholder groups putting in multiple submissions, whilst also providing an opportunity to contribute views on the budget.

The committee liaised with the Standing Committee on Public Accounts to establish a lead committee for the purpose of managing the administrative aspects of the direct invite process and publication of submissions. It was agreed that the invites would be extended on behalf of both committees, with the administrative aspects falling to the EGEE committee. After publication, submissions were made available for other standing committees also inquiring into the 2020-21 ACT budget to access. This was drawn to the attention of the relevant committees.

The committee held public hearings on 22 and 23 February 2021. At these hearings, the committee heard from ministers and accompanying directorate and agency officers and statutory office holders. The committee would like to thank directorates and agencies for providing responses to questions taken on notice at its public hearings and questions submitted on notice following its hearings. That information assisted the committee in understanding the many issues it considered during the inquiry.

The committee acknowledges that the 2020-21 ACT budget was framed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Further, the reporting period for referred 2019-20 annual reports span the period preceding the World Health Organisation's declaration that COVID-19 was a global pandemic and the period the ACT government was at the front line in implementing emergency response systems and crisis management to respond to COVID-19's asymmetric health, economic, social and physical impacts.

The committee observes that the impact of COVID-19 will underpin government functioning and finance, the framing and presentation of budgets, and parliamentary oversight and scrutiny, not only for the 2020-21 budget and across its out years but for future budgets over many years to come. In considering the several issues it sought clarification on at public hearings and the evidence received in written submissions, together with emerging best practice on managing COVID-19's impact, the committee identified a number of matters that it was of the view were important. These included accounting for how responsibilities have been discharged and public funds were utilised over the preceding 12 months; the framing of future budgets; the sustainability of recovery strategies; and restoring fiscal stability over the medium and long terms. The committee's report includes its views on these matters and makes 18 recommendations. In the committee's view, nine of its recommendations were directly related to the ACT budget for 2020-21.

The committee's recommendations cover a range of matters, including parliamentary oversight and scrutiny of future budget estimates; incorporating gender perspectives on recovery funds and policies; recognising the economic contribution of the community sector to the ACT economy; implementation of investment recovery strategies; making artsACT facilities climate ready; COVID-19 organisation emergency support funding for arts organisations; a Canberra economic advisory group; job retention rates for people with a disability and people of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background who participate in ACT public service programs; flexible work provisions in the ACT public service; insecure work; the gender pay gap; review of the pricing arrangements in place for non-potable water in the ACT together with assistance programs; Icon Water's expansion of its Staying Connected

hardship program to include small businesses in addition to its residential water customers; and funding of a utilities hardship fund and utilities concessions.

In concluding, I would like to thank: my fellow committee members, Ms Suzanne Orr and Mr Johnathan Davis, for their contribution and their collaborative approach to this inquiry; relevant ministers and their accompanying directorate and agency officers and statutory officers who assisted the committee during its inquiry by appearing before it to give evidence and/or producing additional information; and key interest and stakeholder groups and organisations who made written submissions. And of course, I thank the secretary of the committee, Dr Andrea Cullen, for her very excellent work throughout the process and in the preparation of the final report.

I commend the report to the Assembly. My committee colleagues might also wish to make comment.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Education and Community Inclusion—Standing Committee Report 1

MR PETTERSSON (Yerrabi) (10.24): I present the following report:

Education and Community Inclusion—Standing Committee—Report 1—*Annual and Financial Reports 2019-2020 and Appropriation Bill 2020-2021*, dated 6 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 Tenth Assembly for the Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion. The report deals with two inquiries—the inquiry into the annual and financial reports 2019-2020 and the inquiry into the Appropriation Bill 2020-2021. Both of these inquiries were referred to the standing committee on 2 December 2020.

The committee compiled one report in consideration of both inquiries, which was tabled out of session on 6 April 2021. On 1 and 5 March, the committee conducted two days of hearings for the inquiries, at which it heard from 36 witnesses. During the course of these hearings, 35 questions were taken on notice, while 80 questions were provided on notice by members following the hearings.

The committee makes 12 recommendations. They relate to child and family centres, legal services in ACT public schools, teacher librarians, school construction, literacy and numeracy among ACT public school students, funding for vocational training, the young Canberra citizen of the year award winners, Gungahlin pool and procurement processes in the ACT.

On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank all ACT government ministers and directorate and agency officials who appeared at the public hearings and participated in the inquiry. I would also like to thank my fellow committee members, Mr Davis and Mr Cain, for their hard work in the inquiry process and in compiling the report. It was, for them, a new experience. I think that they did a very good job. It was a pleasure to work with them and I look forward to working with them again. I also want to thank the committee secretary, Danton; he is a wonderful asset to the committee. I commend the report to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Environment, Climate Change and Biodiversity—Standing Committee Report 1

DR PATERSON (Murrumbidgee) (10.27): I present the following report:

Environment, Climate Change and Biodiversity—Standing Committee—Report 1—*Report on Annual and Financial Reports 2019-20 and Estimates 2020-21*, dated 31 March 2021, together with a copy of the extracts of the relevant minutes of proceedings.

I move:

That the report be noted.

I rise to speak to the report by the Standing Committee on Environment, Climate Change and Biodiversity on its inquiry into annual and financial reports 2019-20 and budget estimates 2020-21. This is the first report of the Standing Committee on Environment, Climate Change and Biodiversity. The COVID-19 public health emergency delayed the delivery of the budget for this financial year and the presentation of annual reports. As with other standing committees, the environment committee inquired into both aspects of expenditure at the same time.

On 2 and 4 March 2021, the committee held public hearings to examine the ministers responsible for the relevant portfolio areas and their officials. The report makes five recommendations, including on the topics of the management of invasive plants and animals, and lake water quality. On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank all ministers and witnesses for their attendance at the public hearings. Canberrans clearly love their environment and have a deep desire to see it managed carefully and considerately as we face climate change and increasing natural disasters.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the other members of the committee, Mr Braddock and Ms Castley, for their contributions to this inquiry. I commend the report to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Health and Community Wellbeing—Standing Committee Report 1

MR DAVIS (Brindabella) (10.29): I present the following report:

Health and Community Wellbeing—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 9 April 2021, together with a copy of the extracts of the relevant minutes of proceedings.

I move:

That the report be noted.

From the short time that I have been a member of this place—six months—I have no doubt that I speak for other members as well when I say that health and community wellbeing is the number one issue on which community members make representations to me in my office. I would like to thank and particularly acknowledge Mrs Elizabeth Kikkert and Mr Michael Pettersson for their membership of this committee and the work put into the 35 recommendations made to government to support the health and community wellbeing outcomes of members of the Canberra community, as well as our secretary, Andrew Snedden. We look forward to receiving the government's responses to our 35 recommendations and continuing our work to advocate for health and community wellbeing outcomes for the people of Canberra.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Planning, Transport and City Services—Standing Committee Report 1

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (10.30): Pursuant to order, I present the following report:

Planning, Transport and City Services—Standing Committee—Report 1—*Estimates 2020-21 and Annual Report 2019-20*, dated 9 April 2021, together with a copy of the extracts of the relevant minutes of proceedings.

I move:

That the report be noted.

Madam Speaker, I have a few more words to say than other people have said, so I might try to cut it short. First of all, we had a really useful and informative inquiry. We had a really broad remit across a lot of areas that cut across big issues for Canberra—planning, housing, sport and recreation, transport, city services, and the City Renewal Authority. We covered a lot of issues in those areas.

We considered many issues and made recommendations about whether future residential developments would be connected to gas, about the current review that is going on with the Territory Plan and the ACT planning framework and how that is

progressing, and about whether the ACT government had a policy in favour of adaptive reuse of public buildings. We looked at the impact of the Orroral Valley fires on flora and fauna, and we looked at a few crown lease commence-and-complete conditions.

We also looked at several issues in terms of active transport. We found out that cycle and pedestrian path surfaces are not being maintained to the same standards that roads are, and we made some recommendations about that. We looked at waste. We found some problems with the way that waste to landfill is being reported in different metrics instead of in tonnes. We have recommended that we survey our customers of the new bulky waste service to find out what would happen to that material if it was not in the service. We looked at the policies that are leading to a lower number of female bus drivers and made some recommendations about how we might increase that number.

We spoke to the City Renewal Authority about the remodelling of roads and footpaths in Braddon and made a few recommendations about how that might be done to better improve cyclist and pedestrian safety in the area. We also spoke to the City Renewal Authority about contractors and about matters settled out of court.

I would like to draw attention to a couple of our recommendations in particular. We spent a bit of time talking to the Suburban Land Agency, who are doing a lot of land releases in our newly developing suburbs. They are making decisions that we only have one chance to get right, and we need to make sure that those decisions are made right, from the start. We need to make sure we are running those processes in a way that gives us high quality and sustainable development.

Our committee has recommended that the Suburban Land Agency take sustainability into account for all of their land releases in all locations. We want our block and building sizes to be big enough to meet our government targets for 30 per cent tree canopy coverage and 30 per cent permeable surfaces. We need our cycle and footpaths to be well connected to encourage active travel. We need our developments to be built and oriented to ensure they have a low-energy footprint, so that they are comfortable to live in as the climate heats up. We need to make sure that our car parks have separately metered electrical wiring, so that those people in future who want to buy an EV and charge it at home will be able to do so.

With transport contributing around 60 per cent of Canberra's emissions, we spent a bit of time looking at transport, and I am glad that we did. We have asked for a few measurable targets on our active transport network, such as maintaining our cycle paths and footpaths to 90 per cent good condition, which is exactly what we do with roads. We also want to better integrate those network connections into our new developments, and that will help everybody. It is not just people who ride around who use those paths; it is people pushing prams and people in wheelchairs, and it is most members of our community. We made some recommendations to make the flexibus service more convenient and responsive with the use of an app.

We have called for better coordination of our parks and conservation services and our transport and city services, because both of these agencies have a fairly major role in

our land management and they are not always as well coordinated as they could be. We also recommended that the government take ongoing advice from ParkCare groups to conduct more native plantings in urban areas. That would provide much-needed habitat for our bees and wildlife and, combined with our tree target of 30 per cent canopy coverage, it would help cool our city and offset the heat island effect.

I would like to thank my fellow committee members, Ms Orr and Mr Parton, for the collegial and friendly way in which we conducted that inquiry, and I would like to thank all of the directorates and ministers who gave up such a lot of time to answer our questions. I am looking forward to hearing the government response on these issues. I commend the report to the Assembly.

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (10.35): As a member of the planning, transport and city services committee, I will not go through the recommendations in the detail that the chair has, but I want to thank the other committee members, Ms Clay and Ms Orr, for the genuinely collegial nature of everything we have done thus far as a committee, including the process of putting this report together.

I know that other members in this place may consider trudging off to a planning committee meeting as being somewhat similar to sticking needles in their own eyes, but I have to say that I quite enjoy my time in this committee, and that is down to the personalities of the other two members. Although we do not always agree on everything, we are able to reach conclusions quite painlessly and in an extremely respectful manner. I must say to Brian Lloyd: you, sir, are an absolute gem. You are a workhorse, a diplomat, a stickler for detail, but, more than anything else, a wonderfully peaceful soul. I think I speak on behalf of the committee in saying that we look forward to working with you for the rest of the term.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee Scrutiny report 3

MR HANSON (Murrumbidgee) (10.36): Madam Speaker, I was going to make a comment about the joy with which I approach scrutiny committee meetings, but I would be called on for misleading the Assembly if I were to do so! I present the following report:

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee (Legislative Scrutiny Role)—Scrutiny Report 3, dated 14 April 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 3 contains the committee's comments on two bills, 57 pieces of subordinate legislation, three revised explanatory statements and one government response. The report was circulated to members when the Assembly was not sitting. I commend the report to the Assembly.

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) (10.37): Today I rise to provide the third update of 2021 on the COVID-19 situation in the ACT, and the plans, preparations and actions that the government continues to take to protect the health and wellbeing of Canberrans.

I am pleased to report that, since my last update on 30 March, the ACT is still in a strong position in our response to COVID-19. At the time of my last update, the country was dealing with an unfolding situation in Queensland and northern New South Wales, where local transmission had occurred which was linked to the Brisbane clusters. Thankfully, this situation was resolved with very few community-acquired cases.

I would like to reiterate my thanks to the Canberra community for following the public health directions and advice, which remains so critical to stopping the spread of the virus. As we move ahead with our recovery and new “COVID-normal” restrictions, I want 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.

I appreciate the community’s patience as we progress the COVID-19 vaccination program, which will see more and more ACT residents able to book their vaccination appointment. I acknowledge that this is a challenging and complex program, and there may be frustration in the community due to recent setbacks. However, in conjunction with the commonwealth government, we are moving ahead with this program to protect our community, and I will provide more detail on this in a moment.

Consistent with my last update, over the past several weeks we have seen COVID-19 cases rising in many parts of the world. In some places health systems are under enormous strain, and various levels of lockdown are in place to try to control the spread of the virus. This is indeed a solemn reminder that the pandemic is continuing and is having a significant impact on lives and communities.

Comparatively, in Australia, we are in a fortunate position, with our suppression efforts having been largely successful to date in preventing the wider spread of COVID-19 through our communities. As at 18 April 2021, there have been more than 140 million confirmed cases worldwide, including more than three million deaths reported to the World Health Organisation.

New Zealand’s COVID-19 situation has been relatively stable since my last update in March. However, on 8 April 2021 a new case of COVID-19 was reported in a border worker in Auckland, and there have since been two further linked cases. There have been no travel restrictions implemented in response to this recent case. However, ACT Health will continue to monitor the situation and the advice of the AHPPC, the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee.

Earlier this month New Zealand's Prime Minister, the Hon Jacinda Ardern, announced that from 19 April 2021 Australians can now travel to New Zealand without completing 14 days of mandatory hotel quarantine. This is an encouraging development in the COVID recovery of both nations, and it was pleasing news for many Australians, and Kiwis living in Australia, seeking to travel over the ditch or return home to visit loved ones, as we saw in the media yesterday when these arrangements started.

Across Australia, the situation remains stable and many jurisdictions, including the ACT, are operating under eased public health restrictions as we continue to move into the phase of "COVID normal". While the situation is optimistic, we must continue to be cautious, as we expect to see instances of new clusters and outbreaks as the pandemic continues.

In the ACT, I am pleased to report that we are doing an excellent job in maintaining COVID-19 suppression, and there continues to be no evidence of community transmission and no recently reported positive cases. Testing remains an important part of our pandemic response as a community, and we continue to encourage anyone with symptoms to come forward for testing.

Our COVID-19 vaccination program rollout is continuing in the ACT, albeit with some adjustments since my last update. 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. As part of phase 1a and 1b, this includes many frontline workers such as border, quarantine, emergency services and healthcare workers. I would like to acknowledge the incredible efforts of our health staff, who have facilitated the delivery of more than 21,300 vaccine doses as part of our vaccination program to date.

As members will be aware, on 8 April 2021 the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation—ATAGI—communicated advice to the Australian government about the use of the AstraZeneca vaccine in relation to reports of a rare and new "thrombosis with thrombocytopenia syndrome"—TTS—in the European Union, and one reported case of the condition under investigation in Australia, following vaccination with AstraZeneca. Members may also be aware that two additional TTS cases have since been identified in Australia and, sadly, one person has died.

All jurisdictions, including the ACT, have accepted and implemented ATAGI's recommendations, key amongst them being that use of the Pfizer vaccine is preferred over the AstraZeneca vaccine in adults aged under 50 who have not already received a first dose of AstraZeneca.

The release of ATAGI's recommendations has had an impact on the planned national COVID-19 vaccination rollout. The ACT government recognises that safety is absolutely paramount, and we will continue to work to deliver the vaccination program to Canberrans according to the expert medical advice. We have amended our operating procedures in the ACT to ensure Canberrans within the phase 1a and 1b priority groups can still receive their vaccinations.

I would like to thank the Canberra Health Services and Health Directorate staff who worked hard to ensure that everyone who was booked in at the Garran surge centre the day after this announcement was able to get vaccinated appropriately.

The ACT government is continuing to work closely with the commonwealth on delivering the territory's supply of both the Pfizer and AstraZeneca vaccines in a safe and timely manner. The Garran COVID-19 surge centre, which is currently providing both the AstraZeneca and Pfizer vaccines to those eligible under phase 1a, and healthcare workers and other critical and high-risk workers in phase 1b, has the capacity to provide more vaccinations when supply is increased. Subject to a consistent and regular supply, the dedicated facility could provide 6,000 to 7,000 vaccinations per week.

As I announced a couple of weeks ago, we are working towards an expansion of ACT government vaccination sites, with the first additional site to be at Calvary Public Hospital Bruce, opening around the end of this month. The ACT government may also be able to operate more Pfizer and AstraZeneca vaccination sites in the territory, subject to a consistent and planned supply of the vaccination from the commonwealth government.

Our local GPs will continue to play a vital role in the rollout of the vaccination program in the ACT, and the government will work closely with our local primary health network to ensure we are administering vaccinations in an effective manner across the population.

As members may be aware, national cabinet met yesterday and considered a range of issues relating to the national rollout of COVID-19 vaccines. It is expected that a series of changes to the Australian COVID-19 vaccination strategy will be put forward for approval at the next national cabinet meeting later this week. The ACT government will update the Canberra community on any changes that may need to be implemented to our vaccination program here in the ACT.

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 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, children and vulnerable community groups. This includes all people who identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander on the waiting list having been offered appointments. I would like to

thank all 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 ACT has been operating under a new set of "COVID-normal" restrictions. 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.

The use of the Check in CBR app became mandatory for restricted businesses and venues from 6 March 2021 and I am pleased to see the community support for this measure. This is important in our efforts to keep businesses and venues open with increased capacity, while ensuring ACT Health can quickly and accurately conduct contact tracing should there be a new COVID-19 case reported in the ACT.

In response to high compliance with the new COVID-normal restrictions and following a public health assessment and advice recently received from the AHPPC relating to density limits for restricted businesses and events, gathering restrictions, the ACT government announced that, from 14 April 2021, there would be further easing of restrictions.

Cinemas and movie theatres can sell seated tickets at 100 per cent capacity of each individual theatre, subject to having a COVID safety plan endorsed by the Chief Health Officer; otherwise cinemas and theatres must remain at a maximum 75 per cent capacity. Large indoor performance venues with fixed forward-facing and tiered seating can have events up to 100 per cent capacity, provided the events are ticketed and seated, and a COVID safety plan has been endorsed by the Chief Health Officer; otherwise they must remain at 75 per cent capacity. If venues can have more than one performance at the venue at the same time, the COVID safety plan must ensure that start, finish and interval times for these performances are staggered and there is appropriate cleaning, particularly of shared lobby and bathroom spaces. The COVID safe event protocol has been updated to provide advice to live music venues on how to safely host live music event and to seek an exemption for larger audiences.

With these latest conditions comes an increase in responsibility. It is essential that businesses and the wider ACT community continue to follow COVID safe practices, including staying home if unwell and getting tested with even the mildest of COVID-19 symptoms, practising good hand and respiratory hygiene, and checking in with the Check in CBR app for contact-tracing purposes.

I urge Canberrans to keep practising the COVID safe behaviours as we now move into the colder months towards winter, and to continue to follow the public health advice to help keep Canberra in a strong position. The cooperation of the community in following the public health advice is critical to our continued success.

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 ACT government with advice on the status of the COVID-19 emergency and the ACT's public health situation. I have received the Chief Health

Officer's report for April 2021 and note and support the advice to maintain the ACT's public health emergency declaration until 18 May 2021. I will take this opportunity to table the report.

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 is currently stable, the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee advises it is likely that we will continue to see COVID-19 outbreaks. We know that our COVID-19 vaccination program will help to protect the community, and once again I encourage Canberrans to please be patient and, when it is your turn, to please book your appointment and have your COVID-19 vaccination.

We are doing well in the ACT 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 papers:

COVID-19—Update on Government response—Ministerial statement, 20 April 2021.

Status of the public health emergency due to COVID-19—Chief Health Officer Report 13, dated 14 April 2021.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the papers.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Utilities Amendment Bill 2021

Mr Barr and **Mr Rattenbury**, by leave, presented the bill, its explanatory statement and a Human Rights Act compatibility statement.

Title read by Clerk.

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism) (10.51): I move:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

I am very pleased to present the Utilities Amendment Bill 2021, which is co-sponsored by Minister Rattenbury, the Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction. The government understands that the price of electricity is a key

component of the cost of living for Canberra households. That is why we committed, under the parliamentary and governing agreement, to make it simpler for Canberrans to get better energy deals. This reform will help Canberrans to save money on their electricity bills by improving the transparency and comparability of electricity offers as well as advertisements.

The bill amends the Utilities Act 2000 to create a legislative basis for introducing a reference price framework in the ACT. The bill specifically provides the Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction and I, as Treasurer, with the power to jointly determine a reference price. It also creates obligations on electricity retailers to use the reference price and to notify customers when retailers have a better offer.

I note that the bill supports the development of an industry code as part of the reference price framework. The ACT Retail Electricity (Transparency and Comparability) Code, which is currently being developed by the Independent Competition and Regulatory Commission, will provide the operational detail for retailers around the key obligations of this bill.

Members of the Assembly and the community are probably used to seeing electricity retailers spruik their deals by offering a percentage discount off their charges. Under this approach, it can be hard to know if you are getting a good deal. Under the reference price framework, a common benchmark—the reference price—will be provided to electricity retailers.

Put broadly, retailers will have an obligation to tell customers the difference between their price and the reference price when they make an offer. Energy retailers will also be required to regularly notify their existing customers if a better offer exists. This will make a real difference for Canberra households. We know that the difference between a standing offer price and the best market price can be up to \$400 a year. We also know that around 40 per cent of Canberrans are on standing offer contracts, so there are tens of thousands of households who stand to benefit by up to \$400 a year, once this legislation is passed and put in place.

It is a framework that will empower residential customers and small businesses to find the best electricity offer available in a competitive market and, most importantly, to save hundreds and hundreds of dollars each year. It is the government's hope that greater transparency and comparability of prices will promote better competition in the market, and competition is in the interest of consumers. I commend the legislation to the Assembly.

Debate (on motion by **Ms Lee**) adjourned to the next sitting.

Courts and Other Justice Legislation Amendment Bill 2021

Mr Rattenbury, pursuant to notice, presented the bill, its explanatory statement and a Human Rights Act compatibility statement.

Title read by Clerk.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong—Attorney-General, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Gaming and Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction) (10.55): I move:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

I am pleased to present the Courts and Other Justice Legislation Amendment Bill 2021 to the Assembly. This bill is an omnibus bill which makes both minor or technical and more substantive amendments to courts and other legislation, improving the justice system in the ACT.

The bill makes amendments across nine pieces of legislation, namely, the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 2008, the Common Boundaries Act 1981, the Coroners Act 1997, the Guardianship and Management of Property Act 1991, the Judicial Commissions Act 1994, the Magistrates Court Act 1930, the Powers of Attorney Act 2006, the Public Trustee and Guardian Act 1985 and the Supreme Court Act 1933.

The bill contains amendments that will improve the efficiency of ACT courts and tribunal operations and procedures to make it easier for people to participate in court and tribunal processes. The bill also progresses a key reform to facilitate better access to justice for vulnerable elderly people who have experienced financial abuse, and it makes amendments to support the functions of the Public Trustee and Guardian and the ACT Judicial Council. I thank those who have given their time to engage with the Justice and Community Safety Directorate throughout the development of this bill.

This bill contains amendments to the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 2008—the ACAT Act—which will help to support the efficient operation of the tribunal. The amendments will provide the tribunal with greater flexibility to manage its own practices and procedures, allowing the tribunal to resolve matters in a more cost-effective manner for all parties.

The bill introduces a new tribunal principle requiring the tribunal to facilitate the resolution of issues between parties in such a way that the cost to the parties and the tribunal is proportionate to the importance and complexity of the subject matter of the proceedings. Further, the bill introduces a duty on parties, their representatives and anyone else accompanying them or allowed to participate in a proceeding to give effect to the objectives and principles of the tribunal. This provision provides clear expectations of cooperation and engagement on parties to ensure that the tribunal's objects and principles are realised and that matters progress through the tribunal in a timely manner.

The amendments to the ACAT Act also update the law to reflect the current practices of the tribunal and clarify the wording of provisions, thereby reducing confusion for participants. Further, the bill contains amendments that improve the efficiency of the tribunal through amendments to the Common Boundaries Act. These amendments remove restrictive processes that limited the tribunal's ability to resolve dividing fence disputes in a timely and cost-effective manner.

The bill also includes minor amendments to clarify processes for the ACT courts. This includes clarifying the process for the appointment of an acting Chief Magistrate

under the Magistrates Court Act 1930, clarifying entitlements for certain judicial officers, and the process for completing outstanding matters when judicial officers retire from the Supreme Court. The amendments also remove a provision in the Coroners Act to reflect current practice and reduce duplication.

This bill delivers better protection for vulnerable people in our community. These amendments will improve accessibility to redress and justice for those who may have been subjected to financial abuse because of misuse of powers by substitute decision-makers.

The amendments to the Powers of Attorney Act and the Guardianship and Management of Property Act recognise the vulnerability of people who are dependent on attorneys, guardians or financial managers, and the challenges they face in protecting their rights. The changes provide the tribunal with powers to order compensation or account for profit to remedy abuse of powers by an attorney, guardian or financial manager. The changes provide an accessible, less complex and less costly alternative pathway than the Supreme Court for vulnerable people to seek redress for misuse of power by their substitute decision-makers.

These powers complement the existing jurisdiction of the tribunal to oversee substitute decision-makers and to make orders to terminate appointments where these powers are being abused. Now the tribunal will also be able to order appropriate remedies for such abuse rather than those issues needing to be decided by the Supreme Court.

These amendments implement recommendation 5-2 of the Australian Law Reform Commission's report *Elder abuse—a national legal response* within the territory. These amendments are consistent with the objectives of the National Plan to Respond to the Abuse of Older Australians (Elder Abuse) 2019-2023.

The bill also makes amendments to support the functions of the ACT Public Trustee and Guardian as well as the ACT Judicial Council. Following on from interim measures introduced in response to COVID-19 in 2020, the bill introduces a new power in the Public Trustee and Guardian Act 1985 to support the disposal of unclaimed bodies in the ACT. The amendments provide clear legislative power to the Public Trustee and Guardian to dispose of an unclaimed deceased person's remains and investigate and administer their estate, as necessary. Furthermore, the bill makes an amendment to the Judicial Commissions Act to clarify that the Judicial Council can refer complaints against judicial officers to the ACT Integrity Commission without contravening this act.

I am pleased to say that this bill is compatible with human rights and will in fact promote a number of rights, including the right to a fair hearing by providing access to justice that is more accessible, less complex and less costly. I am confident that the amendments in this bill will support the redress rights of our most vulnerable citizens and improve effective administration and operation of the laws in the territory. I commend the bill to the Assembly.

Debate (on motion by **Ms Lee**) adjourned to the next sitting.

Statute Law Amendment Bill 2021

Mr Rattenbury, pursuant to notice, presented the bill, its explanatory statement and a Human Rights Act compatibility statement.

Title read by Clerk.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong—Attorney-General, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Gaming and Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction) (11.03): I move:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

The Statute Law Amendment Bill 2021 makes statute law revision amendments to ACT legislation under guidelines for the technical amendments program approved by the government. The program provides for amendments that are minor or technical, and non-controversial. They are generally insufficiently important to justify the presentation of separate legislation in each case and are inappropriate to make as editorial amendments in the process of republishing legislation under the Legislation Act 2001.

Statute law amendment bills serve the important purpose of improving the overall quality of the ACT statute book so that our laws are kept up to date and are easier to find, read and understand. A well-maintained statute book greatly enhances access to ACT legislation and is a very practical measure to give effect to the principle that members of the community have a right to know the laws that affect them.

The bill contains a number of minor amendments with detailed explanatory notes so it is not necessarily helpful for me to go through them all now. However, I will take the opportunity to briefly mention a few matters. Schedule 1 amends the Controlled Sports Act 2019 section 86 to include the controlled sports registrar as someone who may be informed or advised about controlled sports issues by an advisory committee. Currently only the minister may be informed or advised as such. However, it would be useful for any advisory committee to also be able to inform or advise the controlled sports registrar as the registrar is responsible for exercising many of the functions under the act.

Schedule 1 also amends the Mental Health Act 2015, section 190(1)(h), to include a registered affected person as someone who may appear and give evidence at the hearing of certain proceedings before the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal. The provision was recently amended by the Mental Health Amendment Act 2020 to give the Victims of Crime Commissioner the right to appear and give evidence in proceedings relating to a mental health order, a forensic mental health order, or a review of detention under a court order in respect of which there is a registered affected person. However, the right to appear and give evidence in the same proceedings was not extended to the registered affected person. This was an inadvertent omission from the Mental Health Amendment Bill 2020 and this amendment will correct it.

Section 251 of the Public Sector Management Act 1994 is amended in schedule 1 to disapply the Legislation Act 2001 section 47(3) and (6) in relation to a commonwealth law or an ACT enterprise agreement applied, adopted or incorporated in a management standard. The management standards under the Public Sector Management Standards 2016 incorporate the terms of ACT enterprise agreements in relation to superannuation and other entitlements of certain public servants and statutory office holders.

The displacement of section 47(3) ensures that the enterprise agreements and any relevant commonwealth laws apply as in force from time to time. Further, section 47(6) is displaced because both commonwealth laws and ACT enterprise agreements are readily accessible on the internet and the ACT government intranet and there is therefore no need for them to be published on the legislation register.

An amendment is also made to the Workers Compensation Act 1951 section 75(3) to update an outdated cross-reference. Section 75 sets out how to work out the costs in relation to compensation payable by an employer of taking an injured worker by private motor vehicle to and from a place to receive medical treatment or rehabilitation services. Subsection (3) contains a reference to an amount mentioned in the commonwealth Income Tax Assessment Regulations 1997. However, the cross-reference is outdated as this amount is now determined by the Commissioner of Taxation in a legislative instrument.

Schedule 2 of the bill is reserved for minor, non-controversial amendments of the Legislation Act 2001 initiated by the Parliamentary Counsel's Office. The amendments will omit redundant examples and notes, correct cross-references and omit redundant schedule items.

Finally, schedule 3 of the bill includes amendments of acts and regulations that have been reviewed as part of an ongoing program of updating and improving the language and form of legislation. These amendments are explained in the explanatory notes and are routine, technical matters such as the correction of minor errors, updating language, adding or omitting notes, and removing redundant provisions.

Of particular note are the amendments to remove a standard provision about approved forms from some acts and regulations that have not been used or no longer use approved forms. While originally the publication of approved forms on the legislation register increased their accessibility this is no longer necessarily the best location for them. Many government agencies now have their own websites and make their forms available directly there. Additionally, forms that are of an interactive smart nature and feed information directly into agency databases cannot be hosted on the legislation register.

The bill, while minor and technical in nature, is another important building block in the development of a modern and accessible ACT statute book that is at the forefront in Australia. I commend the bill to the Assembly.

Debate (on motion by **Ms Lee**) adjourned to the next sitting.

Committees—Standing Report—government response

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism) (11.09): For the information of members, I present the following paper:

Standing Committees—Reports on 2020-21 ACT Budget and the *Appropriation Bill 2020-2021* and the *Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2020-21*—Government response, dated April 2021.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

I present the government's response to the matters raised by the standing committee reports into the 2020-21 territory budget, the Appropriation Bill and the Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill. I thank the various committees for their analysis of the budget and the accompanying appropriation bills and I further acknowledge the adept assistance provided by the secretariat teams in the preparation of each of the committee's reports.

This morning we have heard about the collegiate way in which the standing committees conducted the hearings, and I would like to acknowledge that as well. I thank my ministerial colleagues and government officials for their active engagement in responding to the many queries that were raised during the hearings. Another contributor to this process I wish to recognise is Pegasus Economics. I thank that organisation for providing its insights into the budget and other aspects of the territory's financial management. The government respects and values the important role played by the various standing committees in scrutinising the proposed expenditure.

In delivering the government's response to the matters raised I wish to detail the circumstances in which the 2020-21 territory budget was developed and delivered. As we are all too aware, the budget was delivered in the context of an ongoing global health pandemic and at a time when we would ordinarily have delivered a budget review. This delivery schedule was consistent with the decision of national cabinet in March last year that states and territories would delay the delivery of their fiscal 2020-21 budgets, an arrangement subsequently endorsed by the Assembly. The delay in the budget until February this year, of course, reflected the timing of the caretaker period and the territory election that was held late last year. This approach allowed the territory government and all other jurisdictions to focus on the immediate and pressing priorities of responding to the public health emergency and associated economic impacts.

Despite the gap of more than 18 months since the last ACT budget was released, we continued to employ other mechanisms to ensure that this Assembly and the broader territory population were being kept informed as to significant policy decisions and financial updates. Information was provided via a detailed ministerial statement on

what would normally have been budget day in June last year, updated about eight weeks later by the August 2020 economic and fiscal update and then further updated by the Under Treasurer with the release of the 2020 pre-election budget update in September 2020. With the publication of the August 2020 update the ACT was the first government in Australia to present budget forecasts that covered the full four-year forward estimate period since the declaration of the public health emergencies across the nation.

Across Australian jurisdictions, COVID-19 response packages have given rise to significant outlays in public finances and coupled with significant revenue writedowns every government budget—not just here in Australia, but indeed globally—has been placed under significant pressure. Our 2020-21 budget indicates that for the current fiscal year the headline net operating balance deficit is expected to be in the order of \$600 million and net debt is expected to be around \$4.7 billion.

These changes in our fiscal position demonstrate the costs associated with addressing the impacts of COVID-19. Their magnitudes reflect that the pandemic is the most significant economic and fiscal shock we have faced in the territory's self-governing history; arguably, perhaps only World War II would be comparable in the nation's history. Following each significant shock we have faced—from the global financial crisis, commonwealth reductions to GST and health funding, the asbestos eradication scheme costs and now COVID-19—the territory's budget has returned to broad balance with the introduction of stabilising initiatives designed to buffer our local economy and protect jobs.

As we indicated in the 2020-21 budget outlook, our return to balance will take some time and will be a function of evolving pandemic conditions and the strength of our economic recovery. However, from the vantage point of today, with no community transmission within Australia and a strong domestic rebound, we expect our current positive trajectory to continue. But I put a note here that at any moment this can change, and it has more than once during the course of the pandemic. As a broad statement of fiscal policy, the recovery of our fiscal position will be gradual and consistent with the pace of our economic recovery. This is to ensure that high quality essential services can continue to be provided to Canberra residents.

Whilst we have not emerged from the pandemic unscathed, our outlook is now somewhat brighter. Acknowledging the national supply issues, we are doing everything we can to support the rollout of vaccinations to the ACT community, with funding provided in the budget to facilitate this and, of course, to facilitate other essential public health actions. It is a little over three weeks since the last recorded active case in the territory moved from active to recovered.

More broadly, the 2020-21 ACT budget marks the first of five budgets in this Tenth Legislative Assembly. It is a budget that demonstrates the government's commitment to action its key priorities for this parliamentary term which, as I am sure members are aware, have been outlined in great detail in the parliamentary and governing agreement and include a range of areas to improve the wellbeing of Canberrans and our environment, with a particular focus on addressing climate change.

The 2020-21 ACT budget provided funding for many of these significant priorities, including the sustainable household scheme, to encourage a shift towards more sustainable household practices, as well as encouraging the shift to zero-emissions vehicles and to strengthen housing and homelessness services. Through the budget the government has also clearly reaffirmed its commitment to delivering key existing projects, including those that were funded in the August 2020 economic and fiscal update.

We are continuing work on the light rail extension, the Canberra Hospital expansion and the new CIT campus in Woden and are further expanding our program of new and expanded public schools to meet growing demand for these services. Our investments are also framed in the context of prudent fiscal and debt management, which is needed, of course, to retain the territory's recently reaffirmed AAA credit rating. I note that we now stand alone as the only Australian state or territory retaining its AAA credit rating. This does not happen by accident and is something we are very conscious of in our future budgeting and borrowing decisions

The standing committee reports contain collectively 54 recommendations that relate to budget or Appropriation Bill matters. I am sure members will be relieved to hear that I will not be going through each one of them in this speech; the government's detailed response fulfils this purpose. I advise the Assembly that standing committee recommendations relating to annual report matters will be addressed separately and later in the year pursuant to the four-month time frame as set out by standing order 254B.

In summary, the government has agreed to 25 recommendations, agreed in principle to 12, agreed in part to two, noted 14 and not agreed to just one recommendation. I do not consider there to be anything in the reports of the standing committees that would prevent the passage of the Appropriation Bill and the Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill. I thank the committees again for their detailed scrutiny in the unusual circumstances of the budget, the appropriation bills and annual reports. I commend the government's response to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Standing orders—suspension

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

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent the order of the day Assembly Business relating to the Government response to the standing committees' reports on the Appropriation Bill 2020-2021 and the Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2020-2021 being called on and debated cognately with orders of the day Nos 1 and 2, Executive Business, relating to the Appropriation Bill 2020-2021 and Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2020-2021.

Appropriation Bill 2020-2021

[Cognate bill:

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

Cognate papers:

Committees—Standing—report

Committees—Standing—report—government response]

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

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Pettersson): I remind members that in debating order of the day No 1, executive business, they may also address their remarks to executive business order of the day No 2 and Assembly business order of the day relating to the government response to the standing committees' reports on the Appropriation Bill 2020-2021 and the Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2020-2021.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Families and Community Services and Minister for Health) (11.21): It gives me great pleasure to speak on the budget bills today and to be kicking off the debate this week in relation to the health portfolio, which comprises the ACT Local Hospital Network, the ACT Health Directorate and Canberra Health Services, which I understand are being debated cognately this morning. Of course, the reason they are first cab off the rank is that Health comprises the largest single proportion of the ACT budget, with health portfolio expenses set to rise to almost \$2 billion in the 2020-21 budget. Excluding territorial grants, it is more accurately \$1.99 billion. This represents an increase of \$95 million, or a five per cent increase on 2019-20.

New funding announced in this budget is approximately \$24 million in 2021 for the health portfolio. Of course, these amounts are additional to the increased funding which was announced prior to the 2020 election. The Chief Minister has gone through a number of economic updates and statements that have been made in the last few months in relation to our budget position. New initiatives overall will fund 103 additional full-time equivalent staff in 2021, with the majority of the resourcing adding to the COVID-19 public health emergency response. The budget also on-passes all components of the commonwealth's community health and hospitals program national partnership agreement, which will fund a combination of capital and recurrent projects worth \$53 million.

It was important that the Chief Minister talked about the context of this budget. As we talked to the community about the things that were and were not in this budget, it was important to think about the timing and the focus, given it was a delayed budget for 2020-21 and it was pulled together in that short time frame effectively between the election and Christmas. The focus has really been on those items that needed to be funded in the 2020-21 financial year or that needed absolute certainty by 1 July to be able to get moving in that time period.

The other element of the context for this budget, the element that has driven that timing, is the response to COVID-19 and the impact of the global pandemic on all governments. The Chief Minister has touched on that. Two of the major health commitments in this budget relate specifically to the COVID-19 public health response. The government is continuing the COVID-19 response through the next phase of the pandemic in the coming 12 months. That initiative, which is worth about \$26½ million over two years, will continue to support the whole-of-government response to the health emergency and will be funded as a cost-sharing arrangement between the commonwealth and the territory.

There is also, of course, more than \$19 million over four years, plus almost \$4½ million in capital, to deliver the COVID-19 vaccination program in line with the national strategy. It is anticipated that the costs associated with operating the vaccination clinics will be funded, or they are being funded, through a cost-sharing arrangement between the commonwealth and the territory, although we would always welcome more support from the commonwealth in relation to this very important national initiative.

The budget also reflects a number of other principles. One of those is the fact that we simply needed to fund continuity and growth in our health services. As we see our community, our population, continuing to grow, we see ongoing increased demand for our health services. The budget includes \$6½ million to provide additional funding for acute medical, birthing and non-elective surgery services at Calvary Public Hospital in Bruce for this financial year. Calvary Public Hospital Bruce is a very important part of our public hospital system. It is critical that those on the north side continue to have access to high quality services as we continue to deliver quality health services across Canberra.

The budget also includes relatively business-as-usual investment in the upgrade and refurbishment of buildings at Canberra Hospital, including continuing the electrical upgrade works in Building 10 at Canberra Hospital. These works will support critical pathology and clinical research services. Of course, we are all very familiar with how absolutely vital our pathology services have been in response to COVID-19, but they are always absolutely important in terms of supporting both diagnosis and treatment of those in hospital and those in our community health services.

That is not the only capital investment in this budget; there is almost \$350 million across the forward estimates in health portfolio infrastructure, including new facilities and IT infrastructure, the digital health record and refurbishing existing facilities. That does not include the Canberra Hospital expansion and the new critical services building which, as we all know, is the largest health infrastructure project undertaken in this city since self-government. The money for that is provisioned in the budget. We continue to work with our partner, Multiplex, through the development application process. People can expect the development application to come out for public comment in the next little while.

Just finishing on the relatively business-as-usual elements of this budget, I want to touch on what is a relatively small amount of money in the context of the health

budget. It is an important initiative, I think, and it is called investigating insourcing options. The government is establishing a task force to conduct a feasibility study into insourcing work currently subcontracted to external parties. I know there have been some questions about this, so I want to clarify that what we are really talking about in relation to this particular task force is cleaning and security services at the Canberra Hospital.

Members would be aware that, under Minister Berry's leadership, cleaning services for our ACT schools were insourced. This provided secure jobs for cleaners. It very much supported their right to good, secure jobs and ensured they were appropriately paid. We had seen previously that that was not always the case. We are certainly working very closely with and will be consulting staff through the process of considering whether there are opportunities to provide secure work in the ACT public sector for our cleaning and security staff at Canberra Hospital. That is what that measure is all about.

The other context for this budget is the 2020 election and the election commitments that were made. We went to that election with an ongoing commitment to deliver high quality health care when and where Canberrans need it, with more health workers and the infrastructure that we need for the future. We highlighted, as we went through that campaign, that over the previous decade the ACT Labor government had invested more than \$1 billion in healthcare infrastructure and doubled our investment in frontline services.

From the innovative nurse-led walk-in centres that Canberrans have embraced and the Canberra Liberals up until now have not so much—although I think they are probably taking a different view now—to a specialist women's and children's hospital, a regional cancer centre and a rehabilitation hospital, we have been building a health system that provides better care, closer to home, for all Canberrans. This budget continues that journey.

The election commitments that are supported in this budget—and, as I say, against a background of doing those things that needed immediate action—include a new imaging service at Weston Creek co-located with the Weston Creek walk-in centre. That is more than \$5 million over four years, plus almost \$5.7 million in capital, to establish an outpatient imaging service at Weston Creek walk-in centre that will provide greater access to commonly needed diagnostic medical imaging services, including ultrasound, X-ray and computed tomography, commonly known as CT, reducing demand for this outpatient imaging activity from the busy Canberra Hospital campus. What that means in practice is that those people who are referred for public imaging services through their GP or a walk-in centre, for example, will not have to go onto a busy hospital campus to access those services. That will be better for them, and it will also take pressure off our imaging services to better support inpatients and those outpatients who are already on the hospital campus or need to be on the hospital campus.

The budget also provides half a million dollars over three years and \$250,000 in capital to establish the new walk-in health centre in Coombs. This is a different model of care. The walk-in health centre will pilot an alternative model, integrating services

with general practice with a focus on maternal, child and family health. This program is being delivered in partnership with the National Health Co-op. The pilot centre, or hub, will be operational in July 2021 and will support the Molonglo region's growing population. The purpose of this exercise is to pilot co-locating publicly funded appointment-based child and maternal health services—in this particular instance, antenatal health and lactation support, for example—with a general practice that can also provide short notice urgent care.

It is important to note that we stressed throughout the election campaign that the five new walk-in health centres that we were talking about are not the same as the walk-in centres that Canberrans have become used to. It is not just about immediate care, minor injuries and illness; it is about providing continuity of care for people with chronic and complex conditions, providing wraparound services and integrating care with the important services that are provided by general practitioners, allied healthcare workers and our acute hospital system so that coordinated care can be provided closer to home. The Coombs walk-in health centre will be a pilot. People in Molonglo will continue to have access to excellent care at the Weston Creek walk-in centre as well when they need those minor injuries and illnesses treated.

The budget also provides \$2 million over two years to undertake a feasibility study into the establishment of the other four new walk-in health centres across Canberra's suburbs, offering a combination of walk-in and appointment-based services. The locations of those four walk-in health centres, as members would be aware, will be south Tuggeranong, west Belconnen, the inner south and north Gungahlin. The feasibility work will also consider how the new centres, the existing walk-in centres and our community health centres can come together in a network to deliver the range of services that Canberrans need in the right place at the right time. It is really about rethinking that model of care in the community.

Finally, in relation to our election commitments I note the \$900,000 over two years to provide funding to Palliative Care ACT to operate a proof of concept respite hub for people with life-limiting illness who wish to spend the end of their life at home and need support for them and their carers. Leo's Place is a fantastic initiative. It is trialling an absolutely new model of care. That is why the funding is for two years to work with Palliative Care ACT as it pilots this program and to see what it delivers for families and their loved ones who are at the end of their life.

In the couple of minutes I have left I will touch on some health policy initiatives that are outside my direct responsibility but absolutely reflect Labor's election commitment to focus on youth mental health. This is the expansion and continuation of AMOS. This was a key element of ACT Labor's youth mental health election commitment. It is a community-based mental health outreach service that provides assessment and treatment seven days a week for adolescents aged 12 to 18 years. We are putting more than \$3 million into continuing that successful service.

We have also committed almost \$2.4 million over four years to expand mental health services and supports that directly reflect ACT Labor's youth mental health election commitments, including an alcohol and drug nurse to bolster our support for young people in contact with the youth justice system. We are allocating funding to begin the

planning and project work for a multi-disciplinary service to support young people who have mental health needs co-occurring with trauma, disability and/or drug and alcohol abuse or use, as well as an intensive trauma service for adolescents built on the very successful Melaleuca Place model, which currently supports children in out of home care up to the age of 12 years. This new service will support the recovery of 13 to 17-year-olds who have experienced trauma, including abuse and neglect.

This initiative is particularly close to my heart as the minister responsible for children, youth and families. Unfortunately, I too often hear about young people who have co-occurring mental health and trauma experiences that lead to self-medication with drug and alcohol abuse. Often there is an element of disability in there as well. These wraparound services are going to be critically important for those young people. I commend the budget to the Assembly.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Detail stage

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Pettersson): Standing order 180 sets down the order in which this bill will be considered. That is, in the detail stage, any schedule expressing the services for which the appropriation is to be made must be considered before the clauses and, unless the Assembly otherwise orders, the schedules will be considered by proposed expenditure in the order shown. With the concurrence of the Assembly, I am proposing that the Assembly consider schedule 1 by each part, consisting of net cost of outputs, capital injection and payments on behalf of territory.

Is this the wish of the Assembly?

That being so, schedule 1 will be considered by each part, consisting of net cost of outputs, capital injection and payments on behalf of the territory, then the clauses and the title.

Schedule 1—Appropriations—Proposed expenditure.

ACT Local Hospital Network—Part 1.1

MRS JONES (Murrumbidgee) (11.36): Just six months into this re-elected government and all we have to show for it are more broken promises, failures and services that continue to decline. In the last six months since the election, Canberrans have seen more of the same that they have become all too used to over the last 20 years—failure to tackle hazardous toxic materials in over 70 government schools, skyrocketing rates, not enough support for our small family and multicultural businesses, a complete lack of action on housing affordability and massive delays on massive infrastructure projects and key services.

There is no clearer example of the Labor-Greens government's broken promises than the failures in the area of health. After 20 years of successive Labor-Greens rule, this government's complacent approach to health has led to poorer outcomes for all Canberrans. Labor and the Greens have overseen significant deterioration of the

health system. Our public hospitals are operating at full capacity, at times even overflowing, leaving patients in beds in hospital corridors—something I have witnessed with my own eyes.

Wait times for emergency department treatment and elective surgery are some of the longest in the country and have been for some years. As the *Canberra Times* noted just last week, ACT Health has, for years, returned disappointing report cards when it comes to wait times for people who present to the territory's emergency departments. Not only are we failing to meet our current national targets but now there are moves afoot to change the targets to a more lenient and lower benchmark and then to measure the flow of patients being admitted into hospital.

For the record, I think it should be possible to report on the flow of patients being admitted into wards as well as maintaining our current standards and targets. No-one is served by benchmarks which have been nationally agreed upon or reported on for years being lowered so that failing jurisdictions like ours can look better without doing the necessary work to improve actual wait times.

Labor has known for over a decade that critical new hospital infrastructure is needed to keep up with both a fast-expanding city but also the need for more complex and more invasive treatments. This government has been talking about expanding the Canberra Hospital for well over a decade. In 2008 then health minister Katy Gallagher described an impending health tsunami. In 2010 the Labor-Greens government promised a major redevelopment of the Canberra Hospital. It was the biggest health commitment in the territory's history, but it never eventuated. The government broke their promise and dumped plans shortly after the 2012 election.

By 2016, only after the Canberra Liberals made clear our commitment to redeveloping the Canberra Hospital, the government rushed through yet another hospital promise—the SPIRE Centre. SPIRE was promised to be open to patients in 2022 but has since been renamed and delayed to 2024 and possibly will not even be delivered by then.

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

The budget does nothing to address the years of complacency and failure by the 20-year-old government. The budget does nothing to deliver the increase in critical health infrastructure that our growing city needs. Today Kate Gallagher's predicted health tsunami has well and truly hit and yet this government has failed to deliver many of the health promises it claimed were and are critical to meet the needs of our growing city.

I note the health minister's commitment in January to fix some hospital wait times within nine months, by the end of October 2021. Indeed, there are a number of waiting issues because of the stressors on the system. The ED waits are well known. If you turn up to ED as a category 1, the system works; it really does. Critical life and

death emergencies, as they should be, are dealt with immediately. However, as soon as we look at category 2 and, in particular, category 3, things get hairy. I am really hoping that we will soon be informed by the minister how her statements about improving these wait times in ED will be enacted. For the sake of the staff in our hospital, for the sake of those waiting for urgent care, I hope there will be an improvement.

Canberrans also wait far too long for specialist appointments. After they finally get their initial appointments with specialists, it takes many more months or years of waiting to actually get their procedures. The areas of particular concern to me include ENT. This is something we need children, especially, to receive almost immediately upon diagnosis. Kids who, for example, need grommets need to get them within months because these children experience infections which can cause speech and other developmental delays that can affect their outcomes for a lifetime, not just in health but in education and access to opportunities.

Last week we discovered that a wait for an endoscopy is now blowing out to be over 500 days. This is hard on those with a family history of stomach or bowel cancer, and repeat customers, and it is a disgrace that, given that these waits are so long, some Canberrans are potentially having cancers appear whilst on the waiting list. I see nothing in this budget that will turn around some of the longest wait times in the country.

The ongoing issue of culture is not just a word. We use the word “culture” a great deal, but what does it refer to? In our health system it refers to two things—things do not get fixed, even when they are raised by staff, and if you are the brave enough staff member who is vocal about a problem you are likely to be at least ignored or bullied and at worst sidelined and ultimately terminated or not have your contract renewed. This is not a one-off event; it happens time and again. As a result, the most vocal disappear and the problems in the system go on, and on, and on.

I accept that no employment system is perfect, but more respect for employees and the concerns they raise would be a very good start. There is an insidious side to the culture in the hospital and it makes employees scared and stressed. It says to those who want to stand up for themselves, “You don’t matter as much as our reputation, or your concerns aren’t not important enough for us to fix.” That is the reason we have a culture problem at TCH. The antiquated buildings do not help and the tower block does not help, but if the culture was better all those things could be managed if necessary.

To the nurses who have had to stand up for themselves and for patients on a daily basis, I say thank you. To all those who have tried to improve the system, I say thank you. To all those who have thought about giving up, I hear you and I see you. I would like you to be able to come to work in a much more respectful place. I could comment on this place too, but anyway. I honour you for the amazing care you give to those in need in the hospitals and in the system despite the fact that, for over a decade, the insulting culture has prevailed. I hear you, I see you and I am fighting for you.

Whilst this budget fails to address the years of complacency and failure from the government, there are still some initiatives that the Canberra Liberals wholeheartedly support. The budget allocates \$14 million in new funding for the Police, Ambulance and Clinical Early Response Program. The PACER program brings together an expert team of frontline workers to help Canberrans in their time of most need for mental health support. Paramedics from ACT Ambulance Service, officers from ACT Policing and mental health clinicians from Canberra Health Services all work together to provide a more comprehensive response for people experiencing mental health emergencies.

Since it started in late 2019, over 80 per cent of people who have been assisted by the PACER team have been found suitable to be left at home and referred to other mental health services for support. Not only does this provide the patient with better mental health support but it also helps reduce the number of people needing to present to the emergency departments with complex mental health conditions. There is ample evidence that the program works and that Canberrans who need this type of mental health support benefit enormously from it. The Canberra Liberals welcome the funding for the expansion of this program.

I also note that this budget commits \$20 million for the vaccine rollout. As we have seen over the past few weeks, there is no silver bullet to tackling COVID. Canberrans, and all Australians are pinning a lot of hope on the rollout of the vaccine, and it is important that the ACT government does its bit, as it has been, in achieving this. I support so far the commitment this government has made to be as good as we can, given the national and international situation on vaccine rollout, and I think many Canberrans feel the same way.

Despite the bumps in the road, I am sure we will get to a position where life can return to relative normality in the months and years to come. I thank the minister and her officials for their work in this space and particularly those working on the frontline in the testing locations and the vaccine clinics, and all the GPs and their staff who are now involved. From the heart, I say thank you for the work you do every single day.

In conclusion, the budget fails to deliver where it matters the most in our health system. Twenty years of Labor and the Greens have left our health system lacking in the new state-of-the-art infrastructure it so critically needs. Over a decade ago the government warned of an incoming health tsunami and today we are living it. (*Second speaking period taken.*) The government failed to act when they should have. As a result, we have some of the longest waiting times for emergency department treatment and elective surgery in the country.

Hospital staff are affected by constantly increasing workloads and are suffering from a toxic workplace culture. A long-promised infrastructure improvement at the Canberra Hospital continues to suffer delay. This budget does not go anywhere close to addressing the government's failures in health.

MS DAVIDSON (Murrumbidgee—Assistant Minister for Seniors, Veterans, Families and Community Services, Minister for Disability, Minister for Justice Health and

Minister for Mental Health) (11.47): I rise today to speak about mental health initiatives in the budget. We know that the mental of people nationally and in the ACT has been affected by both the 2019-20 bushfire crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic. The impacts of these crises are likely to be long lasting and more severe if services are not available to support people when they need it. As a result, continued investment in mental health supports, particularly early intervention and prevention, is important to promote resilience and positive mental wellbeing in the face of these impacts.

This was a crucial reason why the ACT government took the step of announcing a \$4.5 million COVID-19 mental health support package in 2020 which included funding to expand community-based mental health services and a range of new projects to support the Canberra community in a time of need. However, despite the ACT government successes so far in responding to the pandemic and managing the impacts on community, we cannot rest or believe our job is complete just yet.

As such, I am very happy to see that the ACT government has committed more than \$19 million over four years for mental health services in the budget. These investments include providing \$3.156 million for the continuation of the Adolescent Mobile Outreach Service, AMOS. AMOS is a community-based mental health outreach service that provides services seven days a week for young people aged 12 to 18 years with moderate to severe mental illness who experience barriers to accessing mainstream services or require intensive outreach support.

The budget provided \$14.129 million for the expansion of the Police, Ambulance and Clinical Early Response service, PACER. This service brings together a team of experts to better respond to Canberrans in mental health crisis. Police, paramedics and mental health clinicians provide in-community assessment and treatment of people, significantly reducing demand on the emergency department. This funding enables PACER to expand its operations to seven days per week.

Lastly, the budget provides \$2.39 million for expanding mental health supports and services. This includes extending the delivery of the COVID-19 mental health support package until 30 June 2021 and delivering ongoing increased mental health support for young Canberrans with highly complex needs who are at risk of mental illness, criminalised behaviour and substance misuse.

Each of these ACT budget investments is important to address some of the immediate mental health needs in our community. There is a particular focus on expanding community outreach for mental health services and on ensuring significant targeted investment in youth mental health supports as a crucial element of effective early intervention and prevention.

Increased funding for youth mental health services forms an early part of the ACT government's response to the findings and recommendations from the inquiry into youth mental health in the ACT presented to the Assembly by the Standing Committee on Education, Employment and Youth Affairs. These investments also continue the government's commitment to increased investment in what works by way of community-based mental health programs, including education, awareness and

early intervention work in our community by organisations including Mental Illness Education ACT and Menslink. It is also illustrated in the expanded and ongoing investment in PACER.

So far in its operation, PACER has resulted in a significant downturn in the number of people in emergency response situations who are subsequently taken to the emergency department. More than four in five people that PACER responds to remain in the community as a consequence of receiving local after-hours clinical assessment. This is a strong indication of the success of the model, which also results in reductions of healthcare and emergency response costs and better care for people in our community.

The ACT government will continue to invest in mental health services to meet the needs of people in the ACT during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure that people receive the right care to meet their needs at the right time. However, as we move forward, I ask you to consider how we can continue to protect the mental health and wellbeing of Canberrans into the future. As highlighted recently in the Productivity Commission's final report into mental health, good mental health is about much more than clinical care alone. People's mental health can be affected by a range of social, environmental and economic factors, including housing, employment, education, social inclusion, the justice system and even the physical environment around them. All these factors contribute to a person's overall mental health and wellbeing.

The ACT Regional Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan, launched in August 2020, furthers this commitment to improving whole-of-person mental health outcomes for everyone and ensuring that our service system is responsive, integrated and sustainable. The wellbeing framework further reminds us to embed thinking about all of the different things that are important to a person's quality of life and personal wellbeing.

We have the policy evidence to enact lasting change and, as such, I believe that in future budget processes we will need to work together to protect the mental health and wellbeing of all people in the ACT. The success of programs like PACER is evidence that we can achieve more change for the community by working together. I look forward to continuing to work together to achieve meaningful, whole-of-government action for improving mental health in future.

MR DAVIS (Brindabella) (11.53): The ACT Greens support in principle the direction this budget takes to ensure that Canberrans can continue to access quality public health facilities while keeping us safe from COVID-19. We know that access to well-resourced, easy to navigate, quality and secular health care is a fundamental human right and a pillar of our liberal democracy. In a society like ours, everyone who needs medical support should be able to access it, no matter their income or circumstances.

I would like to say thank you to all of the healthcare workers in our city for continuing to keep us safe and informed over the last 12 months of the pandemic. The continued low numbers of COVID-19 cases and the high rates of testing we have seen over the

past financial year are a testament to the Directorate of Health, Canberra Health Services and the Minister for Health.

We are particularly pleased to see the government's investment in planning for Canberra's future health needs through support for continued funding towards the new walk-in centres, the commitment to support the establishment of a new residential respite facility for people living with a life-limiting illness, and the north-side hospital scoping project.

We know that a well-resourced public sector is an integral part of the delivery of health services and look forward to working within government and from the crossbench to ensure that the planning work for these services is transparent, collaborative and centres on the experiences of healthcare consumers and healthcare workers.

It was disappointing, though, that, yet again this year, the publicly funded services at Calvary hospital were unable to be given the same level of scrutiny as our other public health services through the estimates process. As a new member of the health and community wellbeing committee, I was shocked to learn that this is a well-known but frowned upon lack of accountability. It has been recommended to the government through two prior estimates processes that they ensure that senior executives from Calvary Public Hospital attend annual reports hearings of the health committee. The ACT government has a responsibility to ensure that the public funding given to Calvary for the provision of these essential public health services is appropriately accounted for.

In developing the plans for future walk-in centres we expect to see the government continue to work collaboratively with community partners to examine the potential of collocating community health services such as sexual health testing and parent and child health care.

We note the implementation work that has come from the ACT Health and CHS culture review and we remain cautiously optimistic that this will mean that we will observe improvements in the health and wellbeing of ACT Health and CHS staff, particularly junior doctors and nursing staff.

As the ACT Greens spokesperson for drug harm reduction, I was pleased to see the outcomes of the government's commissioned feasibility study for a medically supervised drug consumption room, the funding for which is followed through in this budget. In future budgets it will be vital to see this work come into fruition through a pilot consumption room. I also look forward to future budgets including funding for a permanent pill testing site, which we know will help significantly to improve the health of, and reduce any risk to, people who use drugs. We are pleased to see an increasing emphasis in successive ACT governments on social equality and attention to the experiences of marginalised populations, including those who use drugs.

We went to the election with a promise of a better normal after COVID-19. We know that COVID was not just a health crisis and that it exacerbated existing inequalities, including in existing healthcare systems. The ACT Greens are pleased to support the

passing of the appropriation bill for our public health system and are looking forward to continuing to work in partnership in government and on the crossbench to ensure that our healthcare system responds and rebuilds from COVID-19 and that we have a stronger and more responsive health system.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

ACT Health Directorate—Part 1.2

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Canberra Health Services—Part 1.3

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

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

Sitting suspended from 11.59 am to 2.00 pm.

Questions without notice

Government—fuel pricing

MS LEE: My question is to the Chief Minister: Chief Minister, Canberra fuel prices reached a 12-month high this month, as Canberrans continue to pay more for fuel than motorists in other states do. In April last year you threatened petrol retailers who did not lower their price with intervention under the Fair Trading Act. Chief Minister, will you use powers under the Fair Trading Act to intervene and impose a cap to ensure that Canberrans are not continually ripped off at the petrol bowser?

MR BARR: When I made those statements ACT fuel prices were consistently above the Australian average. That has, fortunately, not been the case in the intervening 12-month period. There is some new data this week, but in fact last week ACT fuel prices were below the Australian average. That is the benchmark we have set: were prices in the ACT to be consistently higher than the Australian average, that would be the trigger for the government to seek to intervene. Since I made that very clear to the petroleum industry and the retailers, amazingly, we have seen fuel prices in the ACT at or below the average price Australia-wide.

Of course, prices have gone up since the peak of the pandemic because demand has gone up and the wholesale price has gone up. But what we do see in the ACT is much more stability within our prices, whereas in Sydney they tend to fluctuate. Last week, it was about \$1.68 a litre on average in Sydney and closer to \$1.45 here in the ACT, but in another week, Sydney prices can fall below ours. Ours tend to be very stable.

The short answer to the Leader of the Opposition's question is yes, prices have increased; they have done so across the world and across Australia and they have

gone up more in other cities. But if they are consistently above the Australian average for a prolonged period that would be the trigger for the government to utilise the legislation that we have available to us.

MS LEE: Chief Minister, what do you consider to be a prolonged period of time, and why has your government not implemented all five recommendations of the 2019 Legislative Assembly's select committee inquiry into why Canberrans are continuously and consistently charged more for petrol?

MR BARR: Since the government's intervention last year, the latter part of Ms Lee's statement is just not correct. I am just doing a quick check now. At the moment, in Sydney it is 158.3c a litre for unleaded; in Canberra the average is 138.1c. So it is about 20c a litre cheaper in Canberra today according to one of the available apps doing live monitoring of petrol prices.

A prolonged period would be months consistently above the Australian average, noting that we get weekly price reports on which we base our decisions and our engagement with the industry. If I saw four or five weeks in a row where we were significantly above the Australian average, that would be a trigger. If it is 1c a litre above the Australian average, that is not a trigger. But significantly above—by that I mean 10c or 15c above—would clearly be a trigger, particularly if that was prolonged. That is what we were seeing prior to the government's intervention last year.

In relation to the recommendations of the committee, the government responded to those. Some have been delayed because of COVID, but we will continue to monitor prices, as we do every week, with a report that is available on Monday afternoon on the Australian Institute of Petroleum website. They publish it weekly; it gives the data for all capital cities, all states and territories across Australia. That is the basis on which we have been assessing where prices are at. Fortunately, since the government's intervention, prices in Canberra have generally been below the Australian average, and more often than not significantly below Sydney and Melbourne.

MR CAIN: Chief Minister, will your government introduce a real-time and mandatory price monitoring system similar to that of other states? If not, why not?

MR BARR: NSW FuelCheck is a possibility for real-time monitoring in that there is an app available. That is one way. At the moment, we can also go to Petrol Spy and MotorMouth. That is where I have been getting the data from. That is live and available. The question really is around it being mandatory and how often in a day you would require petrol retailers to update their prices.

Ultimately, though, we need to reduce our reliance on foreign oil and, in fact, on internal combustion engine vehicles. That is why the government is particularly focused on the shift away from petrol to electric-powered transportation. That is the direction of policy; that is the direction in the motor vehicle industry globally. Australia does not manufacture cars, so we will get what we are given by the rest of the world. The world's manufacturers are moving and moving quickly. Some will no longer produce petrol engine cars by 2025, others by 2030. Fortunately, at some point

in our lifetimes this debate about being gouged at the petrol pump will be a thing of the past. Won't that be a good thing for the environment, for cleaner air and for the cost of living for households?

Anzac Day—commemorations

MRS JONES: My question is to the Minister for Veterans: Anzac Day is one of the most significant days of national remembrance in Australia and is coming up in a few days. Last year because of COVID our veterans for the first time in living memory were unable to hold remembrance marches. Minister, will marches be permitted on Anzac Day this year and, if not, why is that?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I will take that as Minister for Health, given that public health restrictions and directions are the responsibility of the Chief Health Officer. As I have indicated publicly, I understand that the RSL is the organiser of the march generally and the War Memorial is the organiser of the service and the event.

The RSL has been invited publicly by me—and I understand that the office of the Chief Health Officer has also reached out to the RSL to invite them—to talk to the office of the Chief Health Officer and the exemptions team if they are interested in holding a march. We talked about that a couple of weeks ago. It is obviously now getting very close to Anzac Day and it is probably too short notice now. But certainly the invitation has been there if they did want to hold a march.

There have been many exemptions given for outdoor events. We know the risk associated with outdoor events is significantly less than indoors. If the RSL had wanted to contact the office of the Chief Health Officer to seek an exemption for a march, that would have been looked on in a very positive light to see what the exemptions team could do in working with the RSL.

MRS JONES: Has the Minister for Veterans consulted with veterans groups concerning the overall Anzac Day preparations and veterans themselves, other than the veterans advisory council?

MS DAVIDSON: I thank you for the question. We have indeed had conversations with the Ministerial Advisory Council for Veterans and Their Families and there will be a Light up the Dawn event this year, as there was last year. People found the Light up the Dawn service—

Mr Hanson: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, the question asked by Mrs Jones was whether there had been any consultations with veterans organisations or veterans other than the veterans advisory council. The minister has gone to the point that she met with the veterans advisory council. The question is specifically in terms of consultations that occurred—

MADAM SPEAKER: You are getting into the question time and it was 20 seconds into the answer when you rose. The minister has time left. Minister.

MS DAVIDSON: The Ministerial Advisory Council for Veterans and Their Families represents 12 community members with an interest in issues affecting veterans and their families in the ACT, formed from a number of different community groups, as you know.

Mr Hanson: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, the question is specifically: other than the veterans advisory council, what consultations have occurred? On a point of relevance.

MADAM SPEAKER: I cannot direct the minister how to answer the question. She is in order. She is talking about the groups that she has consulted. Minister.

MS DAVIDSON: Thank you. As to the question about what they would like to do this year, there will of course be the community event in Woden, as there has been previously, and we will be doing the Light up the Dawn service. The feedback from people in the community and from organisations involved is that people found it a very moving way to commemorate that day and a very personal way to connect with their families. *(Time expired.)*

MR HANSON: Minister, beyond the veterans advisory council, what consultations have you had with the veteran community, with which groups, and what specific initiatives has the ACT government got for ACT veterans in the budget?

MS DAVIDSON: As I have just spoken about the consultations around Anzac Day events, I might go to your question about what initiatives there are for veterans in the ACT. The ACT public service sector employment strategy is a key way of making sure that we continue to support veterans in transition and outlines the ACT government's priorities for ensuring veterans and their families can choose to remain in or move to Canberra as they transition to civilian life.

The ACT Public Service was named the nation's Public Sector Veterans Employer of the Year in 2020 in the Prime Minister's Veterans Employment Awards. We also run the ACT Public Service Veterans Mentoring Program, which was launched in November 2019. The mentoring program is open to veterans and family members of veterans and provides a development opportunity for participants to build on career skills, connect with professional individuals and networks from across the public service and consider further opportunities in the public service.

We have a number of mental health services that we also provide to veterans, which I have talked about previously, and we also support the ACT veteran community through the annual Veterans Grants Program, which provides a total of \$80,000 each financial year to local projects supporting the veteran community. One of the things I particularly love about the Veterans Grants Program is the diversity of different veteran community groups that are able to provide support and connection to people in their community, with the support of the ACT government.

ACT Policing—resources

MR HANSON: My question is to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. The latest Productivity Commission's report on government services shows that the

ACT has fewer sworn operational staff now than it did nearly a decade ago. The Australian Federal Police Association has said, in response to low staffing issues, “This concerns us greatly, especially on the welfare front. It is the members on the ground that suffer as a result. It is their physical and mental wellbeing that is impacted by having to do more work with less resources and colleagues. Police officers are constantly asked to do more with less, and police officers are breaking as a result.” Minister, are the Australian Federal Police Association wrong when they say that their members are suffering because of low police numbers?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Mr Hanson for the question. I congratulate AFPA for its advocacy for ACT police and the hard work it does across the territory. It is this government’s work that is putting more investment into police than ever before—\$33.9 million in the last budget for the PSM model with 60 new police across the territory. The Canberra Liberals did not vote for that. They voted against it. They called a division.

Mr Hanson: Madam Speaker, I have a point of order that goes to relevance. The question was very clear—whether the AFPA is wrong or right when it says its members are suffering because of low police numbers.

MADAM SPEAKER: Also in your question you were asking about numbers. The minister’s answer is in order. As you know, I cannot direct the minister to provide you with a yes or no answer.

MR GENTLEMAN: There are more than 923 FTE in ACT Policing as we speak. The numbers that Mr Hanson quotes are those that were counted previously of SRG and the forensics unit, which sit under the AFP nationally. Those do not sit under ACT Policing. This is where the muddy waters go, when those opposite try to confuse members of the public in particular about the numbers that had previously been in the AFP.

Each year we have invested more and more into ACT Policing and the results speak for themselves. Our hardworking police are doing more across the territory than ever before. And, yes, they are hardworking; they do deserve some relief. They are taking leave at the moment, after the COVID-19 crisis, which I am pleased to see. And there is a bit of overtime to ensure that those officers can take that leave.

MR HANSON: Minister, what risk is being placed on the physical and mental wellbeing of police by their having to do more work with fewer resources and colleagues?

MR GENTLEMAN: There are not fewer resources. As I have just said to the chamber and publicly, we have invested more into ACT Policing than ever before. There are more resources to support them than ever before. Of course, we do take into account the wellbeing of our hardworking police, and that is why we have strategies and wellbeing systems in place to support them on the ground.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, is the Australian Federal Police Association wrong when they say that police officers are breaking because they are constantly being asked to do more with less?

MR GENTLEMAN: They are not being asked to do more with less. We are investing more and more every year into ACT Policing, and the results show that. The results on the ground show that crime statistics are dropping, particularly in areas Mr Hanson frequents—which is interesting when we read the press release today—but it is important that we support the police into the future. That is our policy and that is our program, and you have seen it roll out. As I said, there was \$33.9 million in the last budget to support 60 new officers in the PSM and more than \$30 million in resourcing prior to that over the years.

Floriade—COVID-19

MR DAVIS: My question is to the Chief Minister: while many Canberrans are excited to see the government's announcement that Floriade will go ahead at Commonwealth Park at the end of this year, there is no denying that Floriade Reimagined had tremendous social and economic benefits in our town centres and our smaller group centres. Chief Minister, what is the government doing to ensure that all Canberrans, and particularly Canberra's small businesses in the outer suburbs, are enjoying the social and economic benefits of Floriade?

MR BARR: Yes, I do acknowledge that in the pandemic staging major events was difficult. We sought to be creative and to utilise the more than a million bulbs that we had available, and to plant and distribute them to about 60 to 80 sites around the territory. Clearly Floriade 2020 was not a significant tourism event, for obvious reasons, so as part of the planning for the 2021 event—and subject, of course, to health advice as we get closer to spring—the government's intent is both to have a Commonwealth Park presence and also continue a range of plantings in town centres and suburban areas.

It will not be as extensive as in calendar year 2020 because we do need to plant some flowers in Commonwealth Park as well. I think the feedback from the community, the engagement of so many community groups and the dispersal of sites around the city meant there were some economic benefits, as Mr Davis indicated, and perhaps more considerable social benefits.

Floriade is a major economic driver for the city's tourism and hospitality industry, so the government will need to balance the attendance—clearly, it is about 50 per cent tourists and 50 per cent locals—and we will seek to strike that balance. As we get closer to the event, I will have more to say about how we intend to do that.

MR DAVIS: Chief Minister, what is the government's strategy to diversify the economic benefit of tourism more broadly as borders reopen, particularly in my electorate of Brindabella?

MR BARR: I think there is considerable opportunity associated with the southern part of your electorate, Mr Davis, particularly the national park, and the range of tourism activities and venues—Tidbinbilla and Corin Forest, amongst others, together with the national park itself. Within the Tuggeranong town centre there are accommodation providers and a range of tourism experiences that people who might

be staying within central Canberra can also experience as part of a day of tourism activities outside the parliamentary triangle.

It is clear, though, that the major drivers for interstate tourism into the ACT—that is, leisure based and not visiting friends and relatives nor business associated—focus around central Canberra. But we are producing through VisitCanberra a bunch of regional guides and opportunities to highlight some of the other tourist attractions that are within the Australian Capital Territory, including in the electorate of Brindabella.

MR BRADDOCK: Chief Minister, how can members of the community provide feedback on Floriade in the suburbs to ensure that it aligns with their expectations?

MR BARR: There was considerable engagement with the community in the lead-up to the 2020 event when it became clear that we would need to re-imagine it. We have a wide variety of communication channels to the ACT government, one being directly to Events ACT and VisitCanberra. Members in this place can forward any particular requests they receive from community organisations. We have the database of all of the organisations who were involved in the 2020 events, and we will be in contact with them. There is the YourSay website, social media, emails directly to the government and Chief Minister’s Talkback, where the issue comes up quite a bit. I can say that there are at least a dozen different communication channels, and there are 25 of us here whose job it is to represent our local communities. If you have any particular issues, Mr Braddock, on behalf of your constituents, please forward them to my office.

Education—teachers

MR PETTERSSON: My question is to the minister for education: how is the government ensuring new teachers are ready to teach in ACT schools?

MS BERRY: I thank Mr Pettersson for his question. Teachers are at the frontline of reducing inequality in our city. Other than socioeconomic factors, teachers are the single biggest influence on education outcomes. That is why the ACT government has recognised this and made sure that ACT public school teachers are the highest paid in the country, because we know what a difference they make to giving every child the best chance at a great education. It is why it is so important that beginning teachers are as prepared as possible when they start their first jobs in schools.

The ACT government has a nation-leading partnership with the University of Canberra through the Affiliated Schools Program. The Affiliated Schools Program is a relationship that is across 25 ACT public schools with the University of Canberra. It is about giving beginning teachers more opportunities to practise and learn their craft in real classrooms in ACT public schools. This includes professional experience placements for pre-service teachers across all subject areas and stages of schooling, to get that important hands-on experience.

The program also includes pre-service teacher education clinics which are delivered by the University of Canberra’s academics in ACT public schools. These clinics give pre-service teachers a chance to deliver lessons and activities and see how the theory

that they have learned at university works in practice. Pre-service teachers tell us that more time in the classrooms before they get there for real is better, and that is what this program is all about.

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, how does the Affiliated Schools Program benefit public schools in the ACT?

MS BERRY: The Affiliated Schools Program is a great way for teachers in our public schools to learn from each other. The beginning teachers that I have spoken with say that they loved the opportunity to learn from more experienced teachers and the more experienced teachers also get to learn the most modern methods from the beginning teachers. The more experienced teachers often tell me that they were thrown in the deep end in their first teaching jobs and that it would have been amazing to have had the same kinds of opportunities that our beginning teachers have with the Affiliated Schools Program.

The program also means that the University of Canberra students have connections with our public schools before they start their careers. Another cool element of the program is the school-based action research projects. These research projects are co designed by the University of Canberra and ACT public schools to answer the questions that schools might have about their teaching and learning. The teachers then do the research themselves, supported by academics. The results of the research are then shared with other schools through professional learning as well as resources and programs based on the evidence that was developed. So the Affiliated Schools Program is all about sharing new knowledge, best practice and experience across our public schools before our beginning teachers start their careers.

MR DAVIS: A supplementary question. Minister, what specific supports are provided, in particular, to student teachers to support them in overcoming barriers in accessing their placement?

MS BERRY: I am not sure of the relevance to the particular program that I am referring to that Mr Davis is after, but in the ACT the government has provided scholarships to ensure that teacher librarians are increased in our school communities. We made a commitment before the election last year that we would engage 50 teacher librarians across our ACT public schools. We do not have 50 teacher librarians at the moment. By allowing teachers with a four-year degree in education to get that extra year of a master's scholarship, the ACT government is providing a scholarship program to ensure that teachers get support to make that decision to take on the important role of teacher librarianship across our schools.

ACT Policing—resources

MR PARTON: My question is to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services: the latest report on government services from the Productivity Commission shows the ACT spending less per person in the ACT on policing than it did almost a decade ago. This amount is the lowest in the nation. The Australian Federal Police Association has said in response that, "Our members are tired, worn out and getting sick of having to do overtime just to make sure there are enough officers on duty and will often work

overtime or extended hours when they really should be looking after their own physical and mental wellbeing and taking some time away from the job.” Minister, is the AFPA wrong when it says that its members are tired, worn out and sick of having to do overtime just to make sure there are enough officers on duty?

MS BERRY: On a point of order, Madam Speaker, that sounded extremely familiar to me from the question that Mr Hanson asked, and I wonder if I could seek your guidance on that.

MADAM SPEAKER: It is on the same theme, but it is a different element of the question. So it is in order. Mr Gentleman.

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank ACT Policing for the work they do in supporting their colleagues when they need to take leave. Now as you and I know, Madam Speaker, shift work requires some overtime. It means that those people trained to do specific jobs in specific areas are needed when their colleagues take leave. I worked it for 11 years, and I know you, Madam Speaker, worked it for a long time as well. Most people who have work shift work in these frontline positions understand there is some overtime needed, but we need to balance it. That is why I am very pleased to hear from the CPA today that a number of our police staff have been taking their recreation leave early this year, and that means they are supported by their colleagues.

MR PARTON: Minister, why do some police work unacceptable overtime time or extended hours when they really should be looking after their own physical and mental wellbeing and taking some time away from the job, and is the AFPA wrong when it complains about this?

MR GENTLEMAN: I do not agree with the premise of Mr Parton’s question.

Mrs Jones: Which premise?

MR GENTLEMAN: I am going to get to that, Mrs Jones. When you look at the work an officer needs to do, it is appropriate that we delegate that as a roster clerk and duty sergeants would do, to that those officers have the time off they need to recover with their families.

MR HANSON: Minister, why did you vote for the government cuts of \$15 million from the police budget in the 2013-14 budget? I note that we did not vote for that.

MR GENTLEMAN: I do not recall voting against any funding for policing.

Gungahlin—policing resources

MR MILLIGAN: My question is to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. For more than a decade, the Australian Federal Police Association have been campaigning for a dedicated police station in Gungahlin, which is their top priority. The station has been operating 24/7 since 2009, with officers making an around-the-clock commitment to former minister, Simon Corbell, on the understanding that a

dedicated police station would be built. Eleven years on, they are still waiting. The fact that Yerrabi is the only electorate without a Labor-Greens minister means that, as usual, local needs are neglected. The *Canberra Times*, last August, quoted your spokesman as saying:

This feasibility work is underway for Gungahlin and Belconnen police stations, which will inform the government's next steps.

Minister, what does the feasibility work entail and when will it be finished?

MR GENTLEMAN: We are continuing to work with ACT Policing in relation to current and future accommodation needs to ensure that our workforce is best equipped to serve the ACT community now and into the future. The government undertook a feasibility study last year to relocate the traffic operations centre from its current site at Belconnen to a fit-for-purpose facility which will better meet the business and operational needs of ACT policing. We will move the traffic operations centre, and the budget will provide the funding for this. Once this site has been settled, I will be able to provide some more details on the particular site.

Feasibility work is also underway for the Gungahlin and Winchester stations in Belconnen. These studies will inform the plans to improve the stations as well as the government's next steps.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, what feasibility study have you done specifically for the Gungahlin police station?

MR GENTLEMAN: I do not do that; I ask experts to do those feasibility studies. Those experts will report back to ACT Policing and through that to me.

MR HANSON: Minister, what is the impact on delivering police services in Gungahlin as a result of their unsatisfactory facilities?

MR GENTLEMAN: Again, I do not agree with Mr Hanson on the statement regarding the facilities. We know there are challenges at Gungahlin as a joint services position and that is why we are doing that extra work to ensure that we can provide the best accommodation for them. If you look at the work ACT Policing has been doing you will see the reduction in crime and the amount of effort they have been putting in. I thank them once again for the work they do.

Budget—health funding

DR PATERSON: My question is to the Minister for Health: ACT Labor made a commitment at the last election to continue delivering health care when and where people need it. What key investments does the 2020-21 budget include to help realise this aim?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Dr Paterson for the question and for highlighting the comprehensive plan that we took to the last election to deliver health services for Canberrans when and where they need it. We know that delivering care closer to

home is not only more convenient for people but improves outcomes for Canberrans. That is why a fundamental pillar of our health plan was to deliver care closer to home, and the 2020-21 budget continues our ongoing work on delivering in this space.

A key element of our commitment was to deliver medical imaging services co-located at the Weston Creek walk-in centre. I am pleased to advise that the budget has committed \$10.9 million in funding, including \$5.7 million in capital, to develop and operate the new medical imaging outpatient service. This service will provide the community with access to commonly required diagnostic medical imaging, including ultrasounds, X-rays and CT scans. This new service will be conveniently located and will help to reduce wait times to eligible outpatients and reduce pressure on the Canberra Hospital emergency department and inpatient services.

We know how important it is to improve this access. Whether the member's constituents present to one of our walk-in centres or a GP after injuring themselves, with this new service they will be able to get quick access to timely care without needing to attend one of our emergency departments for medical imaging. This funding will continue the government's work on delivering our election commitments and improving access to health care for Canberrans when and where people need it.

DR PATERSON: Minister, can you advise the Assembly on how the government is working to deliver better integrated care by moving more services off the Canberra Hospital campus and closer to home?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Dr Paterson for the supplementary question. It is a key question as we continue to deliver better care for Canberrans: how we move services off the hospital campus, which is better for the hospital but is also better for patients, their families and carers. As members would recall, during the election campaign we committed to develop and implement five new walk-in health centres to complement our existing walk-in centres and community health centres. These new services are aimed at meeting the twin objectives of delivering more services when and where people need them and integrating more with existing local services.

I was pleased to see the AMA's support and excitement as we continue to develop these new local health hubs in partnership with our non-government providers, our GP counterparts, including the Capital Health Network, as well as with our acute services.

As we stated through the election, these new centres will complement and support our existing services by delivering a mix of appointment-based and immediate care, depending on each location and each local community's needs. The 2020-21 budget funded the first of these new centres to be piloted in partnership with the National Health Co-op in Coombs, and this centre will focus on health care for women, children and young families in the area. This partnership presents a chance to deliver better integration of care with general practice for a growing community of families in the Molonglo region and will be operational in July 2021.

In addition to our first hub at Coombs the government also committed \$2 million in feasibility and site selection for the four additional centres. Through this project

Canberra Health Services will work with local communities and other healthcare providers to ensure the services at each centre are tailored of the needs of the region.

We will also take the opportunity to consider how walk-in centres, community health centres and these new local health hubs can work together as an integrated network to ensure we are providing the range of services Canberrans need in the right place at the right time.

MS ORR: Minister, can you update the Assembly on how the 2020-21 budget is helping people who wish to receive end of life care in their home and their families?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Ms Orr for this important question—a matter that is so vital and so sensitive and so very important for those who are affected. During the last election I announced that the government would support Palliative Care ACT to establish and operate a residential respite hub for people with life-limiting illness and their families and carers. This budget delivers by providing funding to operate a four-bed proof-of-concept respite facility, Leo’s Place. Leo’s Place supports carers to continue to care for their loved ones at home for as long as possible by providing non-clinical, overnight and day respite services for people with life-limiting illness, providing carers with a break from their caring duties.

People who attend a non-clinical respite facility have access to the same clinical services as if they were at home. Not only does this support carers and patients to access their preferred care options, but it may also slow the growth in demand for more costly and limited inpatient palliative care services, although I note we are also expanding those.

I was lucky enough to visit Leo’s Place just prior to its opening, and I am pleased to report that the care and sensitivity that the team at Palliative Care ACT have taken and the calm environment that they have created was very impressive. This is being borne out by feedback. In the very early stages of operation the feedback from families, carers and clients has been overwhelmingly positive.

Leo’s Place is going well so far with more than 30 days of day respite and 18 night stays, the longest being a week, with more booked in and lots of referrals coming through. The majority of referrals are coming from the specialist care team at Clare Holland House and about half of the clients have been under the age of 70, with the youngest client in their 40s. The government recognises the importance of providing people with care closer to home, and this budget and this initiative continue to deliver on that commitment.

Municipal services—play spaces

MS CLAY: My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services. We know that community groups and residents know their area best, and they often come to me to give me their great ideas about how we can improve our suburbs. I recently spoke to a community group called SMILE, who would like to revitalise some land adjacent to the Melba Copland school’s playing courts and turn this unused space into a

disability-inclusive playground. Minister, would the government support the conversion of this space into a disability-inclusive playground?

MR STEEL: I thank Ms Clay for her question. As a former early childhood advocate, I, and the government, understand the importance of access to play spaces for the development of children, both their physical health and wellbeing and their social development, because they are a community hub for their entire neighbourhood.

We welcome the ideas coming forward from communities about how to revitalise their playgrounds. In fact, later this year we will be going out for consultation on a new play space strategy. I will be encouraging the community to come forward and to have a strategic discussion about how we manage our existing play spaces in the ACT; how we build new spaces and revitalise existing spaces, particularly in our older suburbs like Melba; and the variety of different play experiences that are available to children across the ACT and how we can enhance access, particularly for children with a disability, and in a range of age groups. Many of our local play spaces focus on the zero to nine age group; district spaces focus on a slightly older age and ability; and central play spaces also play a role.

We are interested in hearing from communities about what they would like to see in their local neighbourhoods and how we can better use public spaces. We have seen the benefit of that in many communities around Canberra with upgraded play spaces, like Farrer, in my community, which has become a real community hub. Of course, this will need to be assessed based on a range of different priorities. Those priorities were established by a play spaces forum in 2018, which was part of a community democracy project that the ACT government ran. It also looked at specific areas where those priority play spaces should be developed in the future. We are interested in hearing from them, and I look forward to hearing from the Melba community on their play spaces.

MS CLAY: Minister, how will you make sure that you get the full range of community voices on play spaces and other improvement projects for under-utilised government land?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. In relation to this particular piece of land, I understand that it is actually an Education property, so there would need to be a range of different conversations between various different arms of government around the use of land that the community wants to look at. We will need to seek a variety of different views as we consult on our new play space strategy. One of the views that I am particularly keen to hear is that of children, because children are the primary stakeholder in a conversation around play spaces. They are the users of the play spaces, and we want to hear from them about what they would like to see.

On the weekend, I heard from a family in Duffy that wanted to see a ninja playground developed next to the Duffy shops—a unique experience, no doubt, and one that I do not think we have in Canberra at this stage. So there are a variety of different views. I certainly was not aware that ninja playgrounds were a thing, and that is why we need to hear from a variety of voices, because things do change over time. Preferences and needs change over time, and we want to make sure that we are meeting the needs of

the community. Certainly, parents are their children's best advocates, so we will be consulting with children, with early childhood groups like Early Childhood Australia, and nature play groups, of which there are many in Canberra, to build a play space strategy that can make sure that children's development is supported in Canberra into the future.

MR BRADDOCK: Minister, as the minister responsible for the neighbourhood democracy trial project through the PAGA, wouldn't this be a prime example to be considered for that line item?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question. This is a really good opportunity to work with local communities around their preferences. Of course, the government has committed, through the parliamentary and governing agreement, to look at that neighbourhood democracy project, and to work with local communities on what their preferences are. That may be a play space; it may be another community project that they would like to work on. We will need to consult directly with the communities to find out exactly what that is.

In relation to the Melba play space, I understand it is quite an extensive project. I certainly welcome that initiative, but we will need to consider that amongst the range of priorities that we have for upgrading priority play spaces across Canberra, of which many have already been committed to by the government.

Crime—clearance rates

MS CASTLEY: My question is to the minister for police. The latest Productivity Commission Report on Government Services shows that crime clearance rates are falling behind in the ACT. Investigations finalised at the 30-day mark for sexual assault, armed robbery, unarmed robbery, unlawful entry with intent, motor vehicle theft and other theft are the lowest percentage rates in Australia. The AFPA says that this is not an indication of policing; it is an indication of overstretched and overworked officers. Minister, why are clearance rates for all categories of crime the lowest in Australia?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Ms Castley for the question and once again thank the AFPA for their advocacy for policing. It is not the case that crime clearance rates are at that state for all crime clearance rates. In fact, 1 and 2 are doing quite well across the ACT. There are certainly lower clearance rates for those categories below that, and we are looking to see how we can support ACT Policing to improve that number.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, what is the impact of low clearance rates for sexual abuse and assault?

MR GENTLEMAN: There are quite a variety of impacts, I think, for those low clearance rates. I think there is an opportunity to assist more people that are affected by that particular crime through the other avenues that the ACT government has to support those victims of crime. It is also important that the crime team that works in those areas is properly supported. The support that we do give them, I believe, is

appropriate. In the case where the CPO feels there is any deficiency in resourcing for those groups then he will come to me and we will apply it in the budget sense.

MR HANSON: Minister, is the AFPA correct when they say that low clearance rates are an indication of overstretched and overworked officers?

MR GENTLEMAN: Commencing, I think, from 21 February we have seen some very good clearance rates across the ACT. Police intelligence will of course realign its structure when it looks to enhance advice in relation to incidents of those particular trends, assist to develop strategies to counter them and also provide enhanced inline operational support for the investigation of allegations of criminal conduct as well.

Housing—City Renewal Authority

MR CAIN: My question is to the Minister for Planning and Land Management: I refer to a recent article in the *City News* which raises a possible conflict of interest for a staff member of the City Renewal Authority. A staff member stands to benefit from the Labor-Greens government's commitment to demonstration housing projects by turning her single residential dwelling on a suburban street in Griffith into a medium-density development. Minister, do you agree that there is an obvious conflict of interest here?

MR GENTLEMAN: It is a new claim for me to have a look at. I will certainly investigate any conflict of interest, and the directorate will act appropriately.

MR CAIN: Minister, I look forward to your response. Do you agree that staff of EPSDD and its subagencies should not be allowed to participate in the directorate's programs if they stand to receive a financial gain?

MR GENTLEMAN: I think this is pretty well straightforward: of course, any officer or public servant that works for the territory should ensure that they do not receive any financial gain from the work that they do for the ACT community. There are some very strong policies in place in a HR sense—and in a strategic sense from government—to ensure that officers act appropriately.

MS LEE: Minister, how many other staff members of your directorate and its subagencies are involved in projects like this one where it appears—

Ms Stephen-Smith: A point of order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Can we conclude the question and then I will come to your point of order.

MS LEE: I will start again. Minister, how many other staff members of your directorate and its subagencies are involved in a project like this one where there is an appearance of special treatment, of a conflict of interest or of a significant financial incentive?

Ms Stephen-Smith: Madam Speaker, I want to seek some clarification. Mr Cain's initial question very clearly indicated that the staff member in question is a staff member of the City Renewal Authority. To clarify, the City Renewal Authority does not report to Minister Gentleman; it is not one of his agencies.

MADAM SPEAKER: The minister has taken the substantive and the supplementary question, but it is just a reminder that admin orders are clearly spelt out and if they are directed to the wrong minister, another minister is free to stand. Mr Gentleman, to the question.

MR GENTLEMAN: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As I said earlier, any staff member that works for the ACT government, whether it is in my directorate or other directorates, is supposed to act correctly. Any conflicts are appropriately managed.

Alexander Maconochie Centre—Official Visitor

MRS KIKKERT: My question is to the Minister for Corrections. The AMC was named after the visionary penal reformer Alexander Maconochie, known for his, at the time, radical ideas, which would prove to be re-adopted in various ways in modern times. The AMC was to be managed under human rights principles, so, fittingly, it was named after this reformer. At the time, it attracted international interest, though nowadays it would probably only catch the attention of UN human rights inspectors. There have been recent suggestions that the prison change its name as it is unfair to the late Alexander Maconochie that his name be associated with this prison. Minister, now that it is clear that the AMC fails to live up to its namesake, will the government consider changing its name?

MR GENTLEMAN: I have not heard any suggestion that there should be a change of name for the AMC. I think that the view originally of Mr Stanhope and the government at the time to have a human rights prison was appropriate. Of course, we do as much as we can to remain human rights compliant. There is a good deal of work done by the Human Rights Commission and the official visitors to ensure that we can be as close to that as possible. But I would say that it is a prison; it does take away the freedoms of people who, as decided by the courts, have committed offences. Therefore, there is a limit to the amount of human rights compliance we can have in that sense. Once you take away a person's freedom, there is an impact on human rights.

MRS KIKKERT: Minister, what is the most pressing issue that would need to be addressed at the AMC in order for it to be found to be compliant with UN rules?

MR GENTLEMAN: My most pressing issue at the AMC at the moment is staff and their wellbeing. That will then transfer down to assisting detainees as well. Now, where we have some staff shortages; we see more lockdowns across the ACT in the prison, because we cannot staff those particular posts that need to be staffed. If we are to support our staff at the AMC with more recruiting, which is what I have announced, we will be able to provide a more human rights compliant prison.

DR PATERSON: Minister, could you outline the official visitor scheme in more detail?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Dr Paterson for the question. It is, of course, important that we have official visitors who can go in and look to support people for their time in the prison and report back to us and the Minister for Human Rights on what is compliant within the prison and what needs to be addressed in the prison. They do a very good job, whether they work at the AMC or Bimberi. They report back to us in a procedural way.

Planning—Gungahlin

MR BRADDOCK: My question is to the Deputy Chief Minister. Why is the Suburban Land Agency auctioning off blocks in the Gungahlin town centre whilst DV364 is before committee?

MS BERRY: Those blocks are being sold. Four blocks are currently for sale and are going for auction in Gungahlin. The Suburban Land Agency has taken measures to make sure that those sales meet the community and social housing targets as well. My understanding, from the advice that I have, is that there is no reason why the auction process for the sales of those blocks cannot go ahead, even though there is a process before a committee at the moment.

MR BRADDOCK: I have a supplementary question. What happens if the committee decides that the Gungahlin town centre will be best served by an alternative use for those blocks of land?

MS BERRY: That is a bit of a hypothetical question. I think we will have to wait until the committee deliberates on that subject and see how the sales process goes.

MR DAVIS: Minister, what would you consider the best practice if the committee does determine that those blocks would have had a different community use?

MS BERRY: I think that that is asking for an opinion, Madam Speaker, but what I can say on the Suburban Land Agency and the process that is engaged in around the sale of these blocks in Gungahlin is that it is about making sure that Gungahlin is a good neighbourhood where people really want to live, but ensuring, also, that there are businesses, as part of that, to bring vitality and vibrancy to that part of the city, with new businesses being able to operate out of those land sales.

Housing—strategy

MS LAWDER: My question is to the Minister for Planning and Land Management: the Winton report published in 2015 shows that more than 80 per cent of Canberrans would prefer to live in detached housing yet the Labor-Greens government continues to constrain the supply of land for new detached housing and is forging ahead with the so-called demonstration housing project. Why is the demonstration housing project given such importance given the overwhelming preference of Canberrans for detached housing?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Ms Lawder for the question. I will say that over 70 per cent of Canberrans live in detached housing, and that is their choice. What this government wants to do is provide choice for all Canberrans. There will be Canberrans that would like to live in denser situations. We have seen that with the influx of people into lively areas like Braddon and the Northbourne corridor. So it is important that we as government are able to provide both styles of living for them and, of course, the in between—the missing middle, which we see as townhouse accommodation.

This has been well surveyed across the Canberra community through the minister's statement of planning intent workshops and those other surveys that have occurred. This is why we strategically moved to the planning strategy that we have of 70 per cent infill and 30 per cent greenfield sites. We have quite a deal—70 per cent—of detached housing at the moment and Canberrans have said to us they would like to live in different ways. We are providing that accommodation opportunity for them.

MS LAWDER: Minister, what exactly is the so-called demonstration housing project demonstrating, given we already have RZ2 zoning available?

MR GENTLEMAN: It is demonstrating a variety of opportunities and housing options for people into the future. We are looking at ways of being inventive for people so that they can live in the way they want to live into the future in Canberra. Of distinct interest, we saw a group of younger people in the statement of intent planning workshop—we had over 100 on a Friday night—who told us how they would like to live in the future in the ACT; not about the product that they would like to live in but how they would like to live generally, how they would like to live closer to their friends, closer to public transport, closer to amenity like Braddon, nightclubs and restaurants. It is those interests I think and those surveys that we have fed into the planning strategy.

MR CAIN: Minister, is this project simply a way to change the Territory Plan by stealth by quietly converting RZ1 to RZ2?

MR GENTLEMAN: No, it is a reflection on what Canberrans have asked us to have a look at. And that is what we are doing. We have seen changes in the territory from when I was born here, and the suburbs barely extended past the mountain tops that we see around Lake Burley Griffin where every block was somewhere near a thousand square metres to the changes we see now in the modern Canberra where we sometimes have smaller blocks and in the more suburban areas the larger blocks. People can have a choice on how they would like to live into the future.

Government—climate change strategy

MS ORR: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, what is the government doing to ensure that the ACT continues to lead the nation on climate action policy?

MR BARR: I thank Ms Orr for the question. Canberra is undoubtedly the renewable energy capital of our country. Through a concerted effort by progressive parties in this place over the last 10 years, we have worked hard to achieve our target of 100 per cent renewable electricity, and we have done that ahead of schedule. I stood up at a Labor Party conference in 2015, my first conference as Chief Minister, and announced a commitment to get to 100 per cent renewable energy by 2025. We were able to get there by 2020, and that is a tremendous achievement for this jurisdiction. We have exceeded our legislated emissions reduction target for 2020 of a 40 per cent reduction on 1990 levels. Through the budget that we are debating this week, we are delivering more than \$300 million in new programs and initiatives to accelerate the territory's transition to net zero emissions, whilst at the same time supporting Canberra households in making that transition.

The government's science-based policy demonstrates what climate action can be achieved in a short time frame, and I think it does set an example for the rest of the country to follow. Pleasingly, at least at a state and territory level, and indeed across both blue states and red states, we are seeing action at state and territory level, but the ACT has consistently led the way.

MS ORR: Chief Minister, how will you ensure that all Canberrans benefit from the transition to net zero emissions?

MR BARR: By offering zero interest loans for rooftop solar panels, household battery storage, zero emission vehicles and energy efficient electric appliances, we will support more households to make good long-term investments in their homes. Canberrans can immediately start saving hundreds of dollars annually on local electricity bills without having to pay the large up-front costs associated with those major appliance purchases.

With the Sustainable Household Scheme, we are seeking to address what has been identified by middle Canberra as a significant up-front barrier, and to let households repay interest free over a period of up to 10 years. In addition to this scheme, we are ensuring that those who do not own their own home are still able to benefit from a sustainable infrastructure program by investing \$50 million to improve building efficiency and sustainability for social and public housing, lower income owner-occupiers and the lowest performing rental properties.

Finally in this section, I wish to highlight the government's investment in large-scale battery storage, already underway and with a lot more to come, to support Canberrans' investment, particularly in solar, to ensure the stability of our electricity network and to provide a revenue source for the territory—at a household level, clearly, but also territory wide, as we sell our clean energy back into the national grid.

MR PETTERSSON: Chief Minister, what measures is the government considering to ensure that the ACT can continue adapting to a changing climate?

MR BARR: I thank Mr Pettersson for the question. Unfortunately, it is now a fact of life that many of the negative effects of climate change are already locked in, and they

are becoming more pervasive and more damaging. The ACT will need to increase adaptation and resilience to cope with this impact. That is why the government declared, in 2019, a climate emergency and recognised the need for more concerted action across all levels of government.

Recent modelling has identified the four most significant impacts of climate change for the ACT. Bushfires will be more frequent and severe as rainfall is reduced and temperatures increase. Heatwaves will become more frequent, they will be longer and they will be hotter, day and night. Droughts will become more frequent and prolonged, as rainfall will be seasonally much more variable. Severe storms will be more frequent and over a longer summer season, with flash flooding and violent winds a fact of life for us now.

The current focus of work across government has been on urban heat island mitigation and response to severe heat events. We have released the Canberra's Living Infrastructure Plan as a next step in increasing adaptation and resilience. In the months ahead the government will work across all directorates to develop an understanding of the capability of the territory government to respond to climate risks. We will be developing a whole-of-government approach to adaptation and resilience in the territory.

With that, I ask that all further questions be placed on the notice paper.

Supplementary answers to questions without notice **Environment—urban vegetation**

MS VASSAROTTI: I will respond to some questions I took on notice on 30 March 2021 on urban vegetation from Ms Castley and Mr Parton. I was asked why the government had reduced tree, shrub and grass coverage in Canberra over the past eight years. The question referred to a recent report, *Temperature Check: Greening Australia's Warming Cities*, by the Australian Conservation Foundation and the Monash Climate Change Communication Research Hub. This report claimed that total urban vegetation in Canberra had reduced from 62 per cent in 2013 to 34 per cent in 2020. This was clearly a concerning claim that required further investigation.

I am relieved to confirm that I did not fail to notice 60 per cent of Canberra's vegetation disappearing some time after 2013. It was, in fact, a major error in the report. Noting that the original research was done by RMIT University and presented in the report, Mr Braddock's office contacted the researchers from RMIT. The researchers confirmed that there was an error in the ACT results reported in the national assessment of urban tree cover.

I have included the technical details of this error in formal written responses to the members' questions. The researchers are confident that this was an isolated error, affecting only ACT data, and have now recalculated the ACT-wide results published in the report. Their corrected results show that the combined tree and shrub coverage in the ACT in 2013 was 61.7 per cent. It actually increased to 67.4 per cent in 2020. Canberra and Hobart are the only capital cities that had more vegetation in 2020 than in 2013.

The RMIT research team have passed this corrected data to Monash University and to the Australian Conservation Foundation, who in turn have updated and reissued their report, and I have provided a link in the written response.

I thank Mr Parton and Ms Castley for drawing this report to my attention and allowing the public record to be corrected. The ACT government is accurately measuring our urban vegetation cover. By using light detection and ranging satellite imagery, we ensure that we are not counting the beautiful native bushland that surrounds our capital but instead focusing on tree canopy in our urban areas. This means we can target the suburbs where Canberrans are most in need of more trees.

Planting trees is a crucial action we are taking in implementing Canberra's living infrastructure plan to reduce urban heat islands and make sure that Canberra is a more living city under a changing climate. We are planting 54,000 trees in Canberra between 2020-21 and 2023-24 to contribute to the 30 per cent canopy cover for Canberra's urban footprint and to increase biodiversity in our city. We are also trialling innovative solutions for planting advanced trees by using water passively from street run-off and increasing permeable surfaces across our suburbs.

The government is committed to ensuring that Canberra retains its unique character as the bush capital and is recognised as an outstanding example of a livable and resilient city in a changing climate. Planting and maintaining our urban canopy will keep Canberrans cool, provide shade and beauty to our city and provide more habitat for the native birds and animals we all treasure. Thank you for the opportunity to correct the record.

Housing—City Renewal Authority

MR GENTLEMAN: My response is to the question asked by Mr Cain and Ms Lee in regard to City Renewal Authority employees. The proponent's conflict of interest declaration was approved by the CEO of the City Renewal Authority in May 2018 as a part of the expression of interest for the demonstration housing project. A conflict of interest declaration was approved on the basis that the demonstration housing project is not related to any City Renewal Authority work and that the staff member would exclude herself from any involvement in the assessment process if it was.

The ACT Public Service Code of Conduct requires employees to notify management if a potential conflict of interest may arise so that appropriate safeguards can be put in place. In the last 12 months, 50 conflict of interest declarations have been recorded by the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate, the Suburban Land Agency and the City Renewal Authority.

Most ACT public service employees live in Canberra and are members of the community and may submit planning applications in the ACT. These applications are assessed by the independent ACT planning and land authority, which follows processes in its considerations and determinations. The ACT government widely communicated the opportunity to be part of the demonstration housing project, which was open to everyone in the Canberra community. The questions once again show the

disdain those opposite have for our public servants and how they will do anything to slur their good work.

Papers

Madam Speaker presented the following papers:

Inspector of Correctional Services Act—Pursuant to subsection 30(2)—Report of a Review of a Critical Incident by the ACT Inspector of Correctional Services—Serious fire at the Alexander Maconochie Centre on 14 November 2020, dated 20 April 2021.

Planning, Transport and City Services—Standing Committee—Bills referred and not being inquired into—Domestic Animals Legislation Amendment Bill 2021—Correspondence to Speaker, dated 1 April 2021.

Standing order 191—Amendments—

Crimes Legislation Amendment Bill 2020, dated 8 April 2021.

Planning and Unit Titles Legislation Amendment Bill 2020, dated 8 April 2021.

Plastic Reduction Bill 2020, dated 8 April 2021.

Mr Gentleman presented the following papers:

Annual Reports (Government Agencies) Act—Pursuant to section 13—Annual Reports—2019-2020—

Canberra Institute of Technology, dated 23 March 2021.

Justice and Community Safety Directorate—Corrigendum.

Coroners Act—Report of Coroner—Pursuant to subsection 57(4)—

Inquest into the death of Dr Teresa Erika Foce, dated 24 September 2020.

Government Response.

Freedom of Information Act—Pursuant to section 39—Copy of notice provided to the Ombudsman—

Community Services Directorate—Freedom of Information request—Decision not made in time—

CYF-20/9, CYF-20/11, CYF20/12, CYF20-13, dated 30 October 2020.

HOU-20/19, dated 10 December 2020.

Justice and Community Safety Directorate—Freedom of Information request—Decision not made in time, dated 2 March 2021.

Subordinate legislation (including explanatory statements unless otherwise stated)

Bail Act—Bail Amendment Regulation 2021 (No 1)—Subordinate Law SL2021-4 (LR, 1 April 2021).

Gambling and Racing Control Act and Financial Management Act—Gambling and Racing Control (Governing Board) Appointment 2021 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-44 (LR, 18 March 2021).

Legal Profession Act—Legal Profession (Barristers) Rules 2021—Subordinate Law SL2021-5 (LR, 6 April 2021).

Magistrates Court Act—Magistrates Court (Public Health (COVID-19) Infringement Notices) Amendment Regulation 2021 (No 1)—Subordinate Law SL2021-6 (LR, 1 April 2021).

Official Visitor Act—Official Visitor (Disability Services) Appointment 2021 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-48 (LR, 29 March 2021).

Public Place Names Act—Public Place Names (Beard) Determination 2021—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-43 (LR, 15 March 2021).

Racing Act—Racing Appeals Tribunal (Assessor) Appointment 2021—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-49 (LR, 29 March 2021).

Road Transport (General) Act—

Road Transport (General) Application of Road Transport Legislation (Manuka Oval) Declaration 2021 (No 4)—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-42 (LR, 5 March 2021).

Road Transport (General) Application of Road Transport Legislation Declaration 2021 (No 3)—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-41 (LR, 4 March 2021).

Road Transport (General) Application of Road Transport Legislation Declaration 2021 (No 4)—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-45 (LR, 16 March 2021).

Road Transport (General) Application of Road Transport Legislation Declaration 2021 (No 5)—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-47 (LR, 22 March 2021).

Road Transport (General) Application of Road Transport Legislation Declaration 2021 (No 6)—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-50 (LR, 6 April 2021).

Security Industry Act—Security Industry Amendment Regulation 2021 (No 1)—Subordinate Law SL2021-2 (LR, 18 March 2021).

Surveyors Act—Surveyors (Surveyor-General) Practice Directions 2021 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-51 (LR, 6 April 2021).

Taxation (Government Business Enterprises) Act—Taxation (Government Business Enterprises) Amendment Regulation 2021 (No 1)—Subordinate Law SL2021-3 (LR, 29 March 2021).

Taxation Administration Act—Taxation Administration (Amounts Payable—Utilities (Network Facilities Tax)) Determination 2021—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-46 (LR, 22 March 2021).

Budget—ACT Policing

MR HANSON (Murrumbidgee) (3.14): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) the latest Report on Government Services (ROGS) from the Productivity Commission shows that the ACT has the lowest number of police per-capita in Australia;
 - (b) ROGS shows that the ACT has fewer sworn operational staff now than it did nearly a decade ago;
 - (c) ROGS shows that the ACT spends the least per-capita on police in Australia and this amount has declined over the decade;
 - (d) the ACT Government cut \$15 million from the ACT Policing in 2013;
 - (e) the Australian Federal Police Association say that “Police officers are constantly asked to do more with less and police officers are breaking as a result”;
 - (f) the significant population growth in the Molonglo region of Canberra;
 - (g) the reports of criminal activity in Molonglo Valley and adjacent suburbs in Weston Creek; and
 - (h) the lack of a permanent police presence in Molonglo or Weston Creek; and
- (2) calls on the ACT Government to:
- (a) increase the number of police to at least match per-capita levels with NSW by 2024; and
 - (b) establish a permanent police station in Molonglo Valley by the end of 2022.

I will have a chat before we have a vote, although, tragically, it probably will not change the outcome. Members, the motion that I am moving today is pretty simple. It is backed up by the evidence. It is backed up by statistics and by voices from our community and voices from our police association. What we want to see is an increase in police numbers across the board so that we no longer have the lowest number of police per capita in Australia but we are at least level with the next lowest jurisdiction, New South Wales.

We want to see a new police station in Molonglo. As members would be aware, it is a growing area which, at this stage, is begging for infrastructure. A police station is part of that. I have noted what some members of the community have been saying, and I will refer to the Weston Creek Community Council. Up until recently—before the establishment of the community forum—that council was advocating on behalf of Molonglo. In the lead-up to the election forum that was held last year there were comments from Tom Anderson, who is the president. He is quoted in the *RiotACT* news:

“We have been saying for years that there is no meaningful police presence in Weston Creek or Molonglo,” Community Council president Tom Anderson says, ahead of the council’s ACT election debate on Wednesday.

“Unfortunately, that has only been highlighted by the tragic events of this weekend.” He’s referring to the stabbing of a teenager at the Weston Creek skatepark but the Council says they have been deeply concerned for years by the threat to property from multiple burglaries.

They say they have been consistently requesting a permanent police presence in the area, citing attendance times of well over an hour for callouts.

It goes on:

“We’ve been promised a police station in the Weston Creek town centre, but we’ve seen no plans and have no idea when it will be developed ...”

The article continues:

“The police do arrive but it can be several hours later. But it’s not just the police at Woden. The police force has not grown with the Canberra population,” Tom says. “Not much money has been spent on police for a very long time.”

That was from the *RiotACT*. Those comments are certainly backed up by the experience that Mrs Jones and I had—and, no doubt, my other Murrumbidgee colleagues as well—when we were standing at Cooleman Court and other places when these unfortunate events were unfolding.

Members of the community were coming to us and saying, “Look, we are seeing police here for the first time in years.” Certainly, there was a big, strong police presence following that stabbing. It was notable because there had been such a lack of police in the area in the lead-up to that. That stabbing and a number of other incidents then led to a meeting that was held in the car park of a local school, where many members of the local community came down to list the concerns they had.

A common thread that you get when people are referring to these matters is that the police are just too busy—that people make the reports, but the police are stretched too thinly to do anything substantive. I think that goes to the clearance rates that we were talking about in question time. So these matters arise, complaints are made and people ring up. But, sadly, when you look at the clearance rates for all of those offences—and I will go through them a bit later—you find that we are just not seeing the response.

Many of us got an email—from looking at the list I think it may have gone to all members—from Donna. I have not met Donna, but I gave her a call the other day and she is happy for me to quote from the email that she sent. What she said to all of us is:

I’m sure you are already aware that Weston Creek has a massive problem at the moment, with a network of teenaged and young adults repeatedly committing criminal offences and not being held to account.

The lack of accountability and powerlessness of the community has given this group serious confidence that they will never get caught. They have a good understanding of how they can commit crimes without any risk of consequence.

She says:

... PLEASE, PLEASE help us solve this problem. People are terrified! Surely the law is not so powerless that this issue cannot be solved. Otherwise it’s only going to get worse.

She says:

PLEASE help our community to restore a sense of peace. What can we do? What will it take? If the law cannot take action, there is a risk of the community taking matters into their own hands—due to fear, a sense of powerlessness, and a complete lack of support from law enforcement.

That is an email that went to, if not all, certainly the majority of MLAs in this place. It echoes a lot of comments I hear from members in the community. Often people are not prepared to put their names to it, for understandable reasons, but in this case Donna has. The problem stems from a growing population. We know that the ACT is growing significantly. It has a fast growth rate—particularly in areas like Gungahlin and Molonglo Valley—and an increase in the complexity of crime. We have seen the issue with bikies that required the establishment of Taskforce Nemesis, the increased response to domestic and family violence, and drug crime. There is a significant increase in the complexity of many of the issues, not just an increase in the number of issues.

When you go to the Productivity Commission's *Report on Government Services, RoGS*, it shows you that, in terms of frontline operational staff, police on the beat—sworn officers—we actually have fewer now than we did back in 2012. So despite the fact that we have this increase in population and an increase in complexity, we have got fewer police now than almost a decade ago. In terms of per head of population that number is decreasing as well. Not only have we got fewer than other jurisdictions but we have fewer than we did previously. If we look at the need to improve this as a jurisdiction and keep pace with a growing demand and population, it is evident that we are falling behind.

There are some comments made by the Australian Federal Police Association in response to these numbers, which I will quote. The association says:

This concerns us greatly, especially on the welfare front, as it is the members on the ground that suffer as a result. It is their physical and mental wellbeing that is impacted by having to do more work with less resources and colleagues. Police officers are constantly asked to do more with less, and police officers are breaking as a result.

In terms of dollar amounts, we have the lowest amount spent per capita in Australia. And, again, that is falling behind. In the latest *RoGS* report it was \$433 per capita, but back in 2012 it was \$459 per capita. So we are spending less now than we were back in 2012 in percentage terms. Mr Gentleman takes great delight in saying, "You voted against the budget." Mr Gentleman voted for those police cuts. Back in the 2013-14 budget, when there was \$15.36 million ripped out of ACT Policing, who was voting for it? Mr Gentleman. So if we want to get into debates about who voted for what, I can tell you that Mr Gentleman voted for the police cuts that were made in 2013-14.

The fact is that, as a result of successive budgets in this place, we now have the lowest spending. It is less than it used to be and has been supported every step of the way by this minister, Mr Gentleman. He continues to defend the lowest spending, the lowest

number of police, and decreases in those frontline officers and in per capita spending. And the AFPA says, “Our members are tired, worn out and are getting sick of having to do overtime just to make sure there are enough officers on duty. They will often work overtime or extended hours when they really should be looking after their own physical and mental wellbeing and taking some time away from the job.”

What does this mean, then, in terms of the ability to investigate and resolve matters? There is the crime reporting, but when crimes are reported and investigated what is happening? I refer again to the *RoGS*. It has measures for investigations finalised at the 30-day mark—what is happening with reports of crimes and where they are at. We have the lowest in country on sexual assault, armed robbery, unarmed robbery, unlawful entry with intent, motor vehicle theft and other theft. Across the board, on the indicators reported on by the Productivity Commission, we are way behind other jurisdictions in terms of their clearance rates.

The AFPA, in response to this, says that it is not an indication of poor policing. I agree with them. It is not. I commend our police; I think they do a fantastic job. There are just not enough of them and they are stretched way too thinly. As the AFPA said, it is an indication of overstretched and overworked officers. That is absolutely the case.

This matter has been debated in this place for some time. I was the shadow police minister when those police cuts were made. We called on them to be restored, and the AFPA then made the point that this would have a negative impact in terms of their members. I will quote from the *Age*. It probably was the *Canberra Times* but under the Fairfax banner. The headline from 2015 was: “ACT’s frontline police officers under pressure from spending cuts”. It said:

The federal police union has warned officers in the ACT have been stretched as job losses and ongoing spending cuts begin to take a toll on front-line employees.

Mrs Jones was working, in the previous term, as a strong advocate, calling for more police numbers and making sure that our police facilities in places like Gungahlin—we have no police station in Molonglo Valley—are addressed. This is not a new issue. Mr Gentleman says, “This is just tired.” He thinks that the job of the opposition is to raise issues, and then if the government does not respond we should just forget about it. Let me assure Mr Gentleman, through you Mr Assistant Speaker, that we will not relent. The opposition will continue to work with the community, with Donna and with Tom. We will continue to work with the Australian Federal Police Association and its members to make sure that the community is safe and to make sure that our police officers are safe—that they are not overworked and are not overstressed.

I will again quote from the Australian Federal Police Association. This morning Mr Shirley on ABC radio said:

A couple of times Mr Hanson said the AFPA Association is clear it does not have enough police, that your flock are burnt out and that some people are leaving. Is he right or is he wrong?

As you can imagine, I waited for the answer in trepidation. But, no, the answer from the president of the AFPA was:

No. Look, Mr Hanson is correct. Our members are burnt out. We are concerned about the welfare of our members. Our members don't have the opportunity to take time off or mental health days and spend times with their families, like a general public servant would, purely because they are spread thin on the ground, and they have such a strong camaraderie that they do not want to take leave knowing that taking leave will leave their mates on the road thinner on the road.

He went on, as well, to an important issue—and that relates to crime statistics. We have heard about clearance rates and we have heard about numbers. The minister hides behind crime statistics, but the AFPA makes the point that there is a lot that police do beyond crime statistics—and what I mean is call to service. I mean all calls to the police, because not all those calls are registered as crime statistics. The AFPA representative was talking about things like missing persons, issues with members with mental health, some of the domestic violence reports that police have to attend, suspicious people in your backyard and noise complaints. These are the sorts of things that police respond to whilst trying to go out there and fight crimes which are recorded as crime statistics. So the minister will hide behind stats. He will hide behind those statistics that do not present in any way the full picture of what ACT police do.

What the opposition will do, though, is to stand with ACT Policing, with the Australian Federal Police Association and with the communities in Weston Creek, Molonglo and across Canberra to make sure that they have sufficient resources. I call on members here to support this motion. It is important. What greater responsibility does this place have than to keep its community safe and to look after its workers?

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Minister for Advanced Technology and Space Industries, Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Minister for Planning and Land Management and Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (3.29): I thank Mr Hanson for the motion. Firstly, I want to express my sincere thanks and appreciation to our ACT Policing officers for continuing to keep our community safe.

The government has worked closely with ACT Policing to reduce crime and ensure that all Canberra remains one of the safest cities in Australia. I have said, as Mr Hanson said, that the Canberra Liberals are rolling out the same tired argument, year after year, while ignoring the government's new investments and the excellent results ACT Policing continues to achieve. With that, I move the amendment circulated in my name:

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

“(1) notes that the ACT Government has:

- (a) worked closely with ACT Policing to reduce crime and ensure Canberra remains one of the safest cities in Australia, with crime rates in the ACT on average lower than 10 years ago;
- (b) in the 2019-20 ACT Budget, the ACT Government delivered a \$33.9 million commitment dedicated to the Police Services Model, which will deliver more than 60 ACT Policing members in its first four years.

(2) further notes that the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety Annual and Financial Report 2019-2020; Appropriation Bill 2020-2021 and

Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2020-2021 cites the following evidence provided by the Chief Police Officer during the Committee's hearings:

"We talk about police numbers all the time. It is very difficult to compare the territory with any other jurisdiction in the country because our population is fairly compacted to a very small part of the territory. I always hear people talk about the number of police in a place like Tasmania. The fact is, it is three hours between their biggest cities- here it is literally 10 minutes and I can move patrols around very quickly."; and

(3) calls on the ACT Government to continue to:

(a) implement the Police Services Model;

(b) invest in ACT Policing members, better facilities, and equipment to ensure ACT Policing remains well-resourced to keep Canberra safe."

I am pleased to report that crime rates in the ACT are, on average, lower than they were 10 years ago, with an 11 per cent decrease in the number of offences reported to police in the last decade. The number of overall offences reported in the 2019-20 financial year shows a decrease of five per cent when compared to the previous financial year. As a result of ACT Policing's strong performance, Canberrans feel safe, with the highest level of perceived safety in both the home and public places. The 2021 *Report on Government Services* that Mr Hanson quotes found that ACT Policing continues to enjoy the trust and confidence of the ACT community. Canberrans have strong perceptions of safety when at home, walking in their neighbourhood and travelling on public transport.

The perception is not misplaced. Statistics demonstrate that Canberra is a safe city, with low crime rates. Mr Coe and Mr Seselja might no longer be in this place, but their conservative hands continue to pull the strings of the opposition. We see this through their well-worn law and order campaign that has failed for over a decade. Mr Hanson needs to look no further than his own committee report for clear evidence that policing numbers cannot usefully be compared across jurisdictions.

Let me quote from page 53 of the JACS standing committee report on estimates and the budget, citing evidence from the Chief Police Officer. The CPO says:

We talk about police numbers all the time. It is very difficult to compare the territory with any other jurisdiction in the country because our population is fairly compacted to a very small part of the territory. I always hear people talk about the numbers of police in a place like Tasmania. The fact is, it is three hours between their biggest cities—here it is literally 10 minutes and I can move patrols around very quickly.

I know the Liberals do not like experts and evidence, but I am surprised to see them ignoring the Chief Police Officer. In contrast, I have worked with successive CPOs to deliver the resources and support that they have asked for. Unlike those on the other side, we do not just talk about supporting our hardworking and dedicated police officers to score political points; we actually do support those officers on the ground with investment and with resources.

The ACT government has a strong record of delivering for ACT Policing and investing in our police. In the 2019-20 ACT budget, I was proud to work with the Chief Minister to deliver a \$33.9 million commitment to the Police Services Model, which will deliver more than 60 ACT police members in its first four years. If the Canberra Liberals are so concerned about police numbers, why did they vote against that investment in our police, in that budget?

The opposition failed to stand up for our police when they had the chance and are now scaremongering for their own political advantage. Our police deserve better and so does our community. That is why we remain committed to implementing the Police Services Model and we are continuing to invest in ACT Policing members, with better facilities and equipment to ensure that our police remain well resourced to keep Canberra safe.

In this budget alone, we are providing funding for police to continue the COVID-19 response and keep members of the community safe during the pandemic. We are making major investments in policing accommodation, including a new traffic operational centre and a feasibility study to consider strategic accommodation options for the Winchester Police Centre in Belconnen and the ACT Policing Gungahlin police presence, currently located at the JESC in Gungahlin.

We are also providing funding for on-call forensic medical services, and this builds on our strong record of investment in ACT police in recent years, which has included \$9.2 million to upgrade ACT Policing facilities; \$8.8 million for new initiatives, including funding for enhanced protective security measures for our police; \$6.4 million for the expansion of Taskforce Nemesis to target organised crime syndicates, including criminal motorcycle gangs; \$2.6 million to recruit four new specialist positions to expand ACT Policing's strategic analysis capability, helping to identify and target emerging crime trends; \$5.6 million to provide new smartphone equipment to all police officers to improve the secure capture transmission and sharing of data and radio communications; and \$1.5 million to upgrade the public safety CCTV network.

The ACT government will continue to ensure that Canberra is adequately served by frontline police and emergency services. We will continue to stand up for our police and make sure that they have the resources necessary to keep our community safe. I invite those opposite to do the same when they next get the chance, unlike what they did during the 2019-20 budget.

I would like to end today by once again congratulating the Chief Police Officer and all police officers for their efforts in reducing crime. Thank you for your ongoing service to our community. Together we will ensure that Canberra remains a safe city.

MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi) (3.36): The ACT Greens believe everyone has a right to live in a safe and peaceful community, free from crime and fear of violence. We do not believe this goal can be met through increasing the police force. This is one of those situations where difficult, complex problems have simple, intuitive, easy to understand but wrong answers. A more-boots-on-the-ground response is simple and easy to understand but not what is required in this situation.

Firstly, we need to note our low crime rates. In contrast, the ACT government should pursue justice reinvestment processes to address the systemic causes of crime for the benefit of the whole community. To do this, we need interagency coordination to address the social and economic circumstances that increase people's risk of both committing a crime and becoming a victim of crime. This focus was supported by Deputy Commissioner Gaughan in his comments to the justice and community services committee last month. He said:

It is also important when we do this—
respond to community problems—

that we do not look at it just through the policing lens. It is important that we use services across all ACT directorates to solve the problem. Through my experience, sometimes it does not actually start out as a justice problem; it might start out as a health problem or a housing problem or even an education problem. So we have to work with everyone to address the issues and come together to find a solution. To be frank, I think that the best solution in most instances is not justice; it is something previous to that.

An example of interagency coordination is the very successful and innovative intermediary program run by the Human Rights Commission. Vulnerable witnesses, such as children in sexual abuse cases, face extraordinarily significant communication barriers when giving evidence to police. Intermediary schemes help vulnerable witnesses communicate their evidence. Police have said that the intermediary program has assisted many ACT Policing investigators to receive the best possible information and statements from victims and witnesses. Their 24/7 availability has ensured that they can access the service when required, supporting the efficient investigation of what are often difficult matters.

We hope this program will be given expanded funding in the future. I note that to get these efficient outcomes we need not more police but, rather, highly trained speech pathologists, social workers and psychologists. Another example of interagency coordination is the PACER program, where police work with mental health professionals. The collaboration is acknowledged for its achievements in interagency cooperation and favourable outcomes for people with mental illness or disorder.

The ACT Greens also welcome the continued funding of the PACER program and the plans to expand it out to 2024. Investment should also be made in programs for people exiting detention, to support their transition back into the community and to reduce rates of recidivism, as well as in programs to address drug and alcohol addiction and mental health, through access to rehabilitation centres and mental health services.

We need ACT Policing to be well resourced and skilled, to have close relationships with the ACT's diverse community, and to be able to respond to the community's diverse needs. Deputy Commissioner Gaughan said:

... to get the right culture in the organisation we probably need to change who we recruit and who we employ in the AFP ... Therefore, we need more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees; we do need more people that come from other linguistic backgrounds; and we need people that have disabilities. We need to represent the community that we police ...

This means we need to think about changing the character of the police force rather than its size. And whilst talking about size, it is important to compare meaningful measures. Comparing a city state such as the ACT with a large spread-out state such as New South Wales is flawed. It is a short distance from the Woden police station to Molonglo Valley—a lot less than the distance from Broken Hill to Wilcannia. To compare the two is not to compare apples with apples but to compare apples with durians—two very different flavours, as I am sure you would agree.

It is for these reasons that the Greens support the amendment as proposed by the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. I would like to close by also expressing the ACT Greens' support for our police force and what they do to keep us safe. Your service is very much appreciated. Thank you.

DR PATERSON (Murrumbidgee) (3.41): I would like to thank Mr Hanson for bringing this motion to the Assembly. I support Minister Gentleman's amendment. Mr Hanson states that the ACT has the lowest number of police per capita in Australia. This is a misrepresentation of the data; the ACT also has the smallest geographical area of any jurisdiction.

Mr Hanson: That is not a misrepresentation.

DR PATERSON: You are aware of this, Mr Hanson, as you were in the estimates hearings with me, as chair of the JACS committee, when the Chief Police Officer stated this. By bringing forward this motion Mr Hanson seems to suggest that police stations solve crime. I would like to point out that there has been a police station in Woden for 16 years, yet, as a proportion of the population, Woden Valley has a substantially higher crime incidence than Weston Creek.

However, I would like to take this conversation a step forward. January to March 2021 saw Weston Creek and Molonglo have the lowest crime rates in all of the ACT. I did some analysis of the publicly available statistics in the crime reports. Let us look at the numbers of reported offences over the last five years in Weston Creek for the first quarter of the year. The rate of offences has dropped very significantly in Weston Creek, decreasing by 39 per cent over five years. In the same time frame, the Molonglo Valley has seen a doubling of reported crime offences—from 82 offences in 2016 to 160 in 2021. However, the population of Molonglo Valley has nearly tripled in that time frame, and ultimately the number of offences is in proportion, per population, to other suburbs in Canberra and, as I noted earlier, is actually even lower than other suburbs.

Mr Hanson, you, Mrs Jones and I all live in one of the safest parts of Canberra. I argue that your long-held calls for a new police station in Molonglo are for political expediency only. Your motion calls for a police station to be built at Molonglo by the end of next year. You have been in this game long enough to know how these things work, and the impossibility of that time frame, given budget processes and planning. Your motion is disingenuous. Your constant rhetoric comes to the detriment of our community.

Mrs Jones: Point of order: Dr Paterson is constantly referring to members of the opposition as “you”. It is the custom in this place to refer to people either by their appropriate titles or through the Speaker. This is not how debate is meant to be held in this chamber.

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Dr Paterson, if you would direct your remarks through me, as chair, that would be appreciated.

DR PATERSON: Yes, Chair. Nobody wants crime in their neighbourhood—no-one—but unfortunately it does happen. We need to stop it happening, and the way to do that is by ensuring a highly engaged community that has trust and confidence in the police, and that supports police to do the job. The constant rhetoric coming from Mr Hanson on crime is to the detriment of our community and the relationship between the community and police. What is brilliant about Weston Creek and Molonglo is that we have a hyperactive, highly engaged community and Neighbourhood Watch Facebook pages. I commend the administrators of those pages for creating an inclusive space for the community to connect—which they do, in droves. It means that often within minutes of anything taking place, good or bad, it is posted online.

There is a significant positive in this, in that the community really rallies around people to help with information and support, and there is an awareness of what is going on, which I view, personally, as really important. However, it can also be used as a political tool to exaggerate a perception of crime and inadequate policing. I want to change that. I want to speak to the Weston Creek and Molonglo Valley. We live in one of the most spectacular parts of Canberra. We live in one of the safest parts of Canberra. We are a highly connected, integrated community with a strong sense of identity. We have a police force that works day and night to keep us safe and deserves enormous credit for the part it plays in the creation of this amazing community.

However, I also would like to speak to the victims of the crimes that have been committed. I am so sorry for the experiences they have had. Every single one of those crime statistics has a victim or multiple victims. I also want to make a point of how distressing property crime can be, as Mr Hanson pointed out. Any violation of your space, your place or your person can hugely impact your life. For those victims, our community has not been a safe place, and their experiences and their inputs into this conversation are greatly valued.

The next point I want to make is that, although I believe that Mr Hanson’s point about a police station is political rhetoric, that does not mean that I will not advocate very strongly for police time and resources being spent in our electorate and in the areas of Weston Creek and Molonglo. I am excited to see money put into police jobs and community engagement through the Police Services Model. I want to support the Weston Creek and Molonglo community to better understand how the police work and how we can support them to do their job; what information is useful to them, and in what manner we present that information. I also think it would be useful for the community to understand how the information we give to police is used, and what becomes a report and what does not, for example. I want to see the crime rate reduced, and I want to support the community to work together to do this.

The Weston Creek community is currently working together through a challenging issue that falls somewhere in the cracks as a social welfare/crime/public nuisance issue. It is distressing and it is frustrating, and the community is aligned in desperately wanting the behaviour of a particular individual to stop. I think the community should be commended for coming together to address this and for raising awareness and supporting older and vulnerable people in our community. I can only imagine the number of police call-outs and resources that have gone into responding to the constant calls regarding this individual's behaviour. Unfortunately, we still have a way to go to resolving this.

I have no doubt that down the track, as Molonglo Valley's population and geographic footprint grows, there will be legitimate conversations and planning regarding a police station in Molonglo Valley. However, I look forward to seeing the Police Services Model in action—a prevention and community engagement approach. I also want to see investment in youth and social welfare programs and community and sports facilities to get to the real heart of crime prevention.

To finish, this Thursday, 22 April, ACT Policing is joining ACT Neighbourhood Watch and Legal Aid ACT at the Kambah Village shopping centre for a community engagement stall. The community is encouraged to head down and have a chat with local police officers between 10 am and 3 pm.

MS DAVIDSON (Murrumbidgee) (3.49): I would like to say a few words in support of Minister Gentleman's amendments. Thank you very much for pointing out those crime statistics; that was very useful. If you go to policenews.act.gov.au, you can see an interactive map that shows you where crime is being reported and what types of crime. That is incredibly useful in understanding what is actually happening in our communities.

To see that the Molonglo district had the lowest rate of crime statistics in the ACT in the first quarter of 2021 is very reassuring, I am sure, for a lot of people in that community. But perceptions of safety need to be acknowledged and taken seriously, and if people are not feeling safe there are things that we can do to help. We can activate spaces and ensure that there is good lighting and passive surveillance on active travel routes and public transport stops in the area. I am very happy to report that the Molonglo Valley shared paths are some of the smoothest and best skating paths we have in the ACT, and I highly recommend everyone getting out there and making use of them on the weekend.

I would also like to note that one of the reasons we have had a generally lower rate of crime in the first quarter of this year has been an increase in online crime, while people have been home more and other things like burglaries have been less possible for people. But, as Mr Hanson noted, there are quite a number of call-outs to police that are not technically about crime. They might be call-outs for people who are having a mental health crisis. Again, I refer to what we do with IT these days. PACER, for example, have IT in their vehicle, which means that they can spend more time in the community and less time going back to base. I understand that our community policing officers are doing the same thing in terms of spending more time in the

community and less time having to go back to a station. That means that they are able to be more mobile and get to know their community better.

I also note the social determinants approach that reduces the number of crimes that occur in the community. If we can provide better family support services, better housing, better homelessness, drug and alcohol services, and better mental health services, and provide for better recreational spaces and sports facilities that build resilience in individuals as well as strengthen communities, then we will not have to worry as much about crime happening because the social determinants will be being addressed. We are doing a lot of work to address these issues. I would just like to say that the amendments that Minister Gentleman has noted here are very worthwhile supporting and that we will continue to work collaboratively on improving services in the ACT to reduce perceptions of safety issues and crime.

MR HANSON (Murrumbidgee) (3.52): The minister said he is tired of this debate. Well, let me tell you, I am not. We will continue to fight for this issue. We will be tireless. We will continue to argue for our community's safety and we will continue to fight for our frontline police officers. We will not allow the minister, as he has today and often does, to hide behind a selective use of the statistics.

We will not be supporting the amendment for a number of reasons. Firstly, it ignores the issue at hand—that is, a new station in Molonglo and the need for more numbers on the ground. But it is also wrong. It refers to investing in ACT Policing numbers to ensure that ACT Policing remains well resourced. Well, it does not. That is the nub of my argument; that is the nub of the AFPA's argument. It is not resourced as it should be. It is resourced at the lowest rate in Australia, and in terms of frontline officers and dollars per capita it is resourced less than it was a decade ago. The amendment is simply not true, so we will not be supporting it.

I am a bit surprised that Dr Paterson will not support this motion and spoke so strongly against it. She has accused me and Mrs Jones of fearmongering and playing politics. Well, this is coming from the community. To claim that this is all politically motivated is a slur on Tom Anderson. In the lead-up to the election forum last year he said, "We've been saying for years that there's no meaningful police presence in Weston Creek or Molonglo." He said that they have consistently requested a permanent police presence in the area, cited attendance times of well over an hour for call-outs and that they have been promised a police station in Weston Creek town centre but have no plans and no idea when it will be developed. He also said that when police do arrive it can be several hours later and that it is not just the police at Woden—the police force has not grown with the Canberra population. If you want to make a slur against me and Mrs Jones, well, that is great. We do not mind; we have broad shoulders and that is politics.

Mr Gentleman: A point of order, Mr Assistant Speaker. Members should direct their comments through the chair and not call "you" across the chamber.

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr Gentleman. Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: That is all he has got. If Dr Paterson wants to make slurs against me and Mrs Jones, that is fine. But saying that this is all just a politically motivated issue and is fear-raising goes directly to the comments that we are hearing from the community, including her own community council president.

Dr Paterson also said that I misrepresented the fact that the ACT has the lowest number of police per capita in Australia. Well, a fact is a fact. Statistics in this case are reported in the *Report on Government Services*, and I refer her to that. Per 100,000, the ACT has 206 frontline sworn officers. New South Wales has 240, Victoria has 307, and Australia-wide the average is 281. We have the lowest. We have the lowest per capita in Australia, and that is a fact.

The accusation is that we are comparing apples with oranges. I do not buy into that argument. We are surrounded by New South Wales; we are an island within New South Wales. I do not see why we should have fewer police officers per capita than places like Yass or Queanbeyan, Wagga Wagga and so on. But even if you want to accept that argument, let's compare ourselves to ourselves of a decade ago. Let's compare the ACT of today under Minister Gentleman with the ACT of 2012: we have fewer frontline officers. Despite the significant growth of Canberra in that period we have fewer frontline police officers now than we did back then. And in terms of funding we are spending significantly less per capita.

So even if you want to buy into your apples and oranges argument—which I do not—how do you argue that? How do you justify the fact that under this government we are reducing the number of frontline police officers and we are spending less on police? If Mr Gentleman wants to argue the fact that he was there cutting the police budget with his ministerial colleagues in the 2013-14 budget, I will look forward to that as well.

Mr Gentleman also talked about Mr Coe and Senator Seselja—I am not quite sure why, but he likes to do that—and that that is conservatism writ large. Is caring about workers a conservative value? Is caring about our police and their welfare and listening to their union a conservative value? I am happy to wear that. I am happy to be the man that cares about his frontline workers, who listens to the union and who will litigate their case.

There is Mr Gentleman ironically arguing the line of the boss here—ignoring what the AFPA is saying and ignoring the plight of the frontline police officer. He is there with the bosses, arguing against the union and the frontline members. They are a bit selective, aren't they? You have to look at which are the ones affiliated with the Labor Party and the ones that give the buckets of money to the Labor Party and the Greens. I bet my bottom dollar that the minister would be in here championing the workers, championing the union for standing up for their members, as he should. But he only does it if they are affiliated and if they make a nice, generous donation at election time. As I said, if caring about community safety and if listening to the community council are conservative values, well, I am happy to wear it.

I conclude by thanking members for their contributions. It has been quite enlightening. I am sure the Weston Creek and Molonglo Valley communities will be very interested

in the position of Dr Paterson and Ms Davidson that they are somehow playing politics and fearmongering.

I thank Tom and Alex from the Australian Federal Police Association for the work they do in standing up for their members. I appreciate it and I am sure their members do. I particularly thank their members, because at the end of the day the people who will pay the cost for this will be victims of crime out there in the community. Every day, while we sit comfortably in this place, our hardworking police officers are on the frontline and pleading for more resources through their union, the Australian Federal Police Association. But they are being ignored by the Labor Party and the Greens.

I thank Donna, who sent you all an email. I do not know how many people responded to her or just ignored her email, but she is a victim and she has raised these concerns. She is happy to speak about them. She is saying she is living in fear, and she is not alone. I thank Tom Anderson from the Weston Creek Community Council. I value what he says. I do not always agree with it, but I certainly value it and I believe in this case that he is 100 per cent correct. I think he is better connected and understands the Weston Creek community far better than Ms Davidson and Dr Paterson.

We will not be supporting the amendment because it is not correct and it takes away from the substance of the motion. I commend my motion to the Assembly.

Question put:

That the amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 16

Noes 9

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

Amendment agreed to.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

Health—assisted reproductive technology

DR PATERSON (Murrumbidgee) (4.06): I move:

That this Assembly:

- (1) notes that:
- (a) in 2018, there were 84064 initiated Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART) cycles in Australia and New Zealand. In the five years to 2017, the number of ART procedures increased, on average, by over 10 percent a year;
 - (b) ART can provide an option for individuals and couples looking to conceive and may or may not include the use of donated gametes;
 - (c) currently the ACT does not have any specific regulatory arrangements for ART, though these services are guided by the National Health and Medical Research Council's *Ethical guidelines on the use of assisted reproductive technology in clinical practice and research*;
 - (d) the recently established national register of in-vitro fertilisation (IVF) clinics provides some comparative data and information about the likelihood of success for individuals and couples trying to conceive which addresses some concerns about access to transparent information about IVF services;
 - (e) other states have legislation regulating ART, which provides a framework for ART providers and individuals and couples who choose to access these services, including for:
 - (i) support and counselling;
 - (ii) access to donor information and linking;
 - (iii) surrogacy;
 - (iv) patient access; and
 - (v) provider accreditation and licensing;
 - (f) people born as a result of donated gametes, and their parents, may find it difficult to access information about their donor, obtain information about their genetic heritage and background or find and connect with siblings born from the same donor; and
 - (g) the Commonwealth Government is currently considering legislation regarding mitochondrial donation clinical trials with the intent to eventually become accessible through ART; and
- (2) calls on the ACT Government to:
- (a) review the availability of support services for individuals and couples choosing to access ART to ensure that appropriate information and care are readily available—pre, during and post treatment;
 - (b) investigate and review comparable ART regulatory arrangements in other states and territories;
 - (c) consider establishing a regulatory framework for ART in the ACT, including consideration of the position of sexuality and gender diverse couples;
 - (d) consider the establishment of a register that will contain mandatory information in relation to all births resulting from ART treatment where donor gametes are used;
 - (e) support the welfare of donor conceived people by providing regulated access to identifying information about their donor and links to siblings from the central register looking to connect;

- (f) consider the potential impact of the Mitochondrial Donation Law Reform (Maeve's Law) Bill 2021 currently being considered by the Commonwealth Parliament and related issues on the ACT's current legislative arrangements;
- (g) consider the accessibility of ART for individuals coming from low socio-economic backgrounds; and
- (h) report back to the Legislative Assembly no later than August 2022 on findings.

Many jurisdictions across Australia have legislation and regulatory regimes that provide a framework for ART. The ACT currently does not have any such regulatory arrangement. ART includes all fertility treatments in which either sperm, eggs or embryos are handled. It includes a range of fertility treatments, such as ovulation induction, artificial insemination and in-vitro fertilisation—IVF. The first test tube baby conceived through ART treatment was born in the UK in 1978. Since then the number of ART procedures has risen dramatically. In 2018 there were 84,064 initiated ART cycles in Australia and New Zealand and in the five years to 2017 the number of ART procedures increased, on average, by over 10 per cent each year. Latest estimates indicate that 3.1 per cent of babies born in Australia are the result of ART treatment.

The most common, IVF, is a complex treatment in which one cycle alone takes several months and costs thousands of dollars. The process for IVF patients includes attending consultations with one or more specialists, taking medications to allow for egg production, regular ultrasounds and blood tests, a surgical procedure to retrieve the eggs and sperm collection, insemination outside the body, embryo transfer and maybe daily pills or shots of progesterone for the first eight to 10 weeks of pregnancy.

Depending on the complexity of the case, the process can also involve a range of other surgical and clinical procedures. This often comes with an acute emotional and physical strain. Many patients require more than one round of treatment to become pregnant, if they do at all. Although ART and IVF can increase a woman's chance of becoming pregnant, it does not work for everyone and this can cause emotional distress and heightened financial burden, as well as placing stress on relationships. ART can also produce incredible euphoria for those who have success.

I am calling for a review of ART services and regulation in the ACT to ensure that patients, including those undergoing treatment, as well as donors, receive the best possible information, care and support throughout their journey. In some jurisdictions legislation and regulation include a range of matters associated with ART. In Victoria and South Australia an individual or couple can only access ART if it has been deemed that conception by means other than ART is unlikely or there is risk for serious genetic effect. Victoria's legislation also establishes the need for clinic registration, consultations about treatment, and a patient review panel responsible for considering applicants with ethically complex issues.

New South Wales has legislation which governs the registration of providers, prevents the commercialisation of human reproduction, and protects the interests of the person

potentially born. In the ACT, along with some other jurisdictions, the decision to take on an ART patient is at the discretion of the service provider, with neither regulated criteria for accepting patients nor accredited licensing or registration of ART clinics in the ACT. In the absence of legislation, ART practitioners must comply with the ethical standards of governing bodies, including the Fertility Society of Australia, the Reproductive Technology Accreditation Council and the National Health and Medical Research Council.

I have no doubt that our ART practitioners in the ACT apply sound judgement and due diligence when accepting an ART patient or donor, and in the provision of their services. However, it is of benefit for patients, donors and service providers to undertake a review in the context of comparable legislation elsewhere and global best practice to ensure that appropriate rigour and consistency is applied across all ART services in the ACT.

Of real concern to me in the lack of regulation in the ACT is the matter of gamete donation—that is, donations of eggs, embryos and sperm. Ethical questions arise as to whether conception should occur with the knowledge that a child will never know or have any knowledge of his or her genetic history. I acknowledge that this is a very complex and emotive issue with many different opinions and perspectives. However, I am keen to ensure that this matter is comprehensively researched, analysed and understood so that the ACT has an informed and considered approach to the legislation, recognising the rights of a donor-conceived child to identify their biological parent or, at the very least, obtain information about their genetic heritage and background, should they wish to do so.

The ACT is not alone in a lack of record and recognition of donations. The Northern Territory, Tasmania and Queensland also have no legislation governing donor conception. I call on the ACT government to review the rights of donors to be recognised as such and the rights of donor-conceived children to have the opportunity to connect with their medical and genetic history, should they wish to do so at an appropriate stage in life.

I note that ART can be a traumatic experience for individuals and couples. Many couples spend months or years and tens of thousands of dollars trying unsuccessfully to have a child. Regarding patient support—and this is a big one—I want to ensure that patients in the ACT feel they have the best possible care and treatment when undergoing ART treatment. Across Australia there are many different patient experiences, and levels of quality of service range considerably from clinic to clinic. Patients describe everything from: “The whole process feeling like I was just on a production line,” and “A completely traumatic process. We just felt like numbers; we were not people at all. We were just next in line in a very expensive queue of false hope” to “It is naturally a clinical and difficult process. Friendly and understanding staff seem to be vital to make people not feel like a number” and “Our support team were great. We had the same nurse each time, she knew our situation and we were treated with kindness and care.”

Setting realistic expectations from the outset about the likelihood of success is paramount to patient experience. The recent establishment of the National Register of

IVF Clinics goes a long way towards this, whereby people can compare the success rates of clinics, based on criteria pertaining to their circumstance. Counselling also needs to occur pre, during and post treatment. Post-treatment counselling needs to address matters particularly for people who come to the end of their ART journey and face the prospect of never having children.

I draw attention to the need for support services and care for males involved in ART, either with a female partner or as a donor. In a society of gendered norms where men are typically expected to be strong and invulnerable, I imagine many men carry a sense of responsibility to provide care for their partner who is undergoing treatment while also suffering emotionally themselves. There are also men who suffer emotional turmoil in cases where it is the male factor that prevents a couple conceiving naturally. I want to ensure that ART services recognise the unique needs of both men and women and are capable of providing personalised services where patients, female and male, do not feel like they are just a paying client.

That brings me to another point—ART is expensive. Even after Medicare rebates, an individual or couple is likely to be out of pocket at least \$4,000 per IVF cycle. Lower income people in our community cannot afford ART treatment, especially when there is no guarantee that they will have success. As part of the motion I call on the ACT government to investigate funding models and explore opportunities for ART services to be available for lower income individuals and couples in our community.

The federal government has recently introduced a bill addressing mitochondrial donation. If passed, it will allow for the use of permitted mitochondrial donation techniques as part of the ART process across all Australian states and territories. This will allow women whose mitochondria would otherwise predispose their potential children to severe and life-threatening mitochondrial disease to have a biological child who will not inherit that predisposition. I call on the ACT government to consider the potential impact of this bill on the ACT's legislative arrangements.

I know that some, if not all, of our ART service providers in the ACT provide excellent patient care and services of the highest professional standard. In bringing this motion to the Assembly I do so not in any way to criticise our clinics and their staff but to ensure that our attention is on patients and that their emotional wellbeing is the first priority in ART treatment.

I call on the ACT government to review and report by August 2022 on the availability of ART support services, comparable regulatory arrangements in other jurisdictions, the appropriateness of the current regulatory regime in the ACT, the potential impact of the federal government's mitochondrial donation law reform and the availability of ART for low-income earners in the ACT.

ART is a life-changing experience. It is emotionally and physically draining. It can be invasive and distressing and a long, grief-filled process. In contrast, it can be the most life-giving, joyful experience for couples and individuals. I want to make sure that anyone in Canberra undergoing ART treatment is provided with the best possible care, resources and patient support. I look forward to continuing to be a part of the

discussions with colleagues, stakeholders and the community to help influence best-practice outcomes for ART support and regulation in the ACT.

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee—Minister for Skills, Minister for Transport and City Services and Special Minister of State) (4.19): I thank Dr Paterson for bringing this motion forward. It addresses a longstanding gap in the ACT's statute book—the regulation of artificial reproductive treatment or technology, otherwise known as ART. ART services play an incredibly valuable role in our health system in making and supporting families and ART providers perform a variety of different fertility services, from IVF, IUI and ICSI through to fertility preservation and gamete donation used in ART procedures. They support a diverse range of families, some of whom would otherwise find it difficult to have children—couples of all forms with fertility issues; LGBTIQ families, including both lesbian couples with donor sperm and gay couples through egg donation, including surrogacy—and they enable single mothers by choice to have children with donor sperm.

ART is often a very expensive process and one that can have significant physical and health impacts on patients, as well as significant emotional impact on intended parents and children born as result. As Dr Paterson noted in her motion, the NHMRC has provided *Ethical guidelines on the use of assisted reproductive technology in clinical practice and research*. These detailed guidelines play an important role, are evidence based, were developed by experts, including through consultation, and address many of the practice related issues. However, they are just a guide.

To what extent an ART provider in the ACT delivers services under the guidelines may differ. The guidelines are not enough on their own to ensure that ART services act ethically, and they are to be read in conjunction with federal and state and territory legislation. When it is read in conjunction with those pieces of legislation there is a robust framework in place for the conduct of ART in Australia, but because there is no specific legislation in the ACT this is a significant gap in creating a robust framework in the territory.

Legal parentage, including parentage resulting from an ART procedure, including surrogacy, is already regulated through the Parentage Act 2004. This act has been identified for reform in reviews into equality in the ACT. Legislation is required to support the adherence to ethical practice and ensure that it is based on an approach that takes into account the ACT's unique circumstances.

There is some self-regulation in the area by the Reproductive Technology Accreditation Committee, or RTAC, the professional group of the board of the Fertility Society of Australia, which sets standards for the performance of ART through an audited code of practice and the granting of licences to practise ART within Australia. However, a framework for ART in the ACT should consider licensing or registration of ART providers by the ACT government, as in other jurisdictions, to ensure that any breaches of ethical guidelines are monitored and addressed as a requirement of being licensed or registered.

A range of other issues also need to be considered. Children born as a result of donor conception have a right to know where they came from, including identifying

information about the donor and being able to link with biological siblings. Historically, donors of gametes, including eggs and sperm, were anonymous. However it is now recognised that this is unethical and has a significant lifelong impact on donor-conceived people and their families. Anonymous donation is no longer a reality, as a result of the advent of low-cost DNA testing through sites like Ancestry and 23andMe which match biological relatives with one another, although there may be legal implications in donor-conceived people accessing information about their donor through these means. A range of other informal online platforms may be used by donor-conceived children or their parents to connect with biological relatives, often using the de-identified donor code, including online Facebook groups like Donor Children Australia and through international websites like the Donor Sibling Registry, or DSR.

These matching platforms should not have to be the primary source of information about where people came from. A regulated framework is required to make it easy to get identifying information about donors, as well as those voluntarily wishing to contact other children born as a result of the same donor.

Government registers have been established in New South Wales and Victoria, under legislation, to ensure that donor information and offspring from the donor are recorded in a central database. Appropriate information sharing can then be established. For example, under the Victorian VARTA legislation a register is established so that donors can apply for information about their donor offspring.

Donor-conceived people and their descendants are entitled to receive identifying information, such as the name, date of birth and donor code, of the donor, and they can apply for that information when they reach 18 years, or a younger age on the basis they have been counselled. Parents can also apply at any time after the birth of their child for information about their child's donor. They can also apply for non-identifying information about their child's donor siblings if they wish to connect.

In addition to the central register in Victoria, a government-run voluntary register exists. This is a free matching service for people linked through donor conception treatment in Victoria looking to connect. Two or more people need to apply for there to be a match, and this includes donors, donor-conceived adults and donor siblings, parents, partners, family members and descendants.

In New South Wales the ART Act established a central register to support information about donor-conceived people, donors of gametes, parents and siblings of children who are donor conceived and those born through surrogacy arrangements to give donors and donor offspring greater opportunity to access information about each other. That includes where conception occurred after 1 January 2010. Mandatory information is also required in relation to all births resulting from ART treatment where conception occurred after 1 January 2010. Where it occurred before that date, a central register includes voluntary information about children who are born as a result of ART treatment.

In the ACT a number of clinics provide donor gametes as part of ART procedures. All allow for known donors, some have local or national sperm donor programs and a

number use gametes imported from overseas by companies like Xytex. The use of foreign donors occurs for a few reasons. Firstly, there is a recognised shortage of donors in Australia. In Australia donation is altruistic and it is illegal to be paid for donating. Secondly, anonymous donation is ruled out under ethical guidelines, although the person's identifying information may not be made available to a donor conceived person until they are 18. Thirdly, Australian clinics have limits on the number of families created as a result of a donation.

The overseas sperm banks and egg donor banks have varying requirements. Their donors are often paid, they can be totally anonymous, and often a very large number of children and families are allowed to be created from one donor. It is common for over 40 or even 60 donor children around the world to be reported from one Xytex donor.

An ACT framework should consider what legislation should support the NHMRC's guidelines and be based on our own circumstances. The guidelines say that gametes from a single donor must be used to create only a limited number of families. In the absence of specific state or territory legislation, clinics must take account factors outlined in the guidelines, but other states and territories have established a maximum number of families that may be created. For example, in Victoria the VARTA legislation requires that there be a maximum of 10 families created. In New South Wales and WA it is five.

The ACT has not determined a number, and so it is up to the individual ART providers. Some have chosen a smaller number of five families, reflecting our smaller community, while others have chosen a far greater number of families to be born from overseas donors. Fair access to fertility services may be a relevant consideration in this regard, as well as weighing the risks of consanguinity based on the origin of the donor.

Unfortunately, there are many examples internationally and in Australia of fertility clinics who have done the wrong thing by families and donor-conceived people. Historically, gamete donations in Australia were totally anonymous, making it incredibly difficult for children find out any details about their donor, even today with DNA testing. In Victoria this issue has been addressed through legislation to give all donor-conceived people, no matter when they were born, the right to know their genetic heritage. This has had the effect of retrospectively piercing the veil of anonymity, which was once promised to donors, and putting the rights of donor conceived children first.

The issue of historic donor anonymity needs to be considered in the ACT, based on the Victorian approach, to ensure that any people conceived from ACT donors can access identifying information about anonymous donors in the ACT. This is just one of the issues that has resulted from no regulation in the past. There is a role here for government to play in righting these wrongs through legislation, providing regulatory oversight and providing clear legislative requirements and expectations for practice in the future.

It is in the interest of children and families to have a well-regulated artificial reproductive technology sector. This has been acknowledged in other states across Australia that have regulatory frameworks in place. Currently, the ACT does not regulate in this space, and a regulatory framework should be seriously considered by the ACT government. This will support the significant proportion of our population that uses fertility services to have fair and ethical access to reproductive services and it will ensure the wellbeing of children born as the result of an ART procedures.

MR DAVIS (Brindabella) (4.29): The ACT Greens will be supporting Dr Paterson's motion to investigate the accessibility and regulations around artificial reproductive technology in Canberra. I would like to begin by acknowledging the thousands of Canberrans who have been born through ART and the parents who have had children through ART. The process of ART, and IVF in particular, can have an enormous social, emotional and financial impact. For those couples who have undergone IVF, they are all too aware that IVF can be extremely expensive, physically invasive and emotionally taxing—sometimes resulting in a much-wanted baby, but oftentimes, heartbreakingly, not.

Infertility impacts 15 per cent of the population worldwide for a range of biological and social reasons and does not discriminate against rich or poor, meaning that the people who consider IVF come from many different walks of life. While some of the procedures offered by ART and IVF clinics have Medicare rebates, the gap is big and indirect discrimination in access remains. This means that many people are locked out of using ART as an option for starting their family. This includes many queer women and trans couples, and people from low socio-economic backgrounds.

During last year's election, the ACT Greens promised to ensure that LGBTIQ+ people in the ACT have access to affordable and non-discriminatory reproductive services, such as ART and IVF treatment and procedures. At present some IVF clinicians seem to believe they are entitled to use their discretion as to whether same-sex couples are socially or medically infertile, which directly impacts on their ability to access Medicare. While this seemingly contradicts local anti-discrimination protections, it continues. I will quote a participant in the 2018 report from the Women's Centre for Health Matters:

When we first went to the fertility clinic we saw [redacted] —we went on a recommendation from friends and our GP. After one year of meeting with her we found her to be judgemental and queerphobic as she continued to misstep—she would mis-gender me, make assumptions about how we wanted to parent and conceive, and refused to support us to access Medicare rebates where heteros[exual people] would have direct unquestioned access. Since changing clinics we've had a totally different experience immediately.

As this quote goes some way to demonstrating, there is an inherent vulnerability in the power dynamic between privately owned IVF clinics and those who use their services. This uneven power dynamic remains true regardless of a couple's gender configuration. The information provided by IVF clinics on success rates, costs and the evidence base of so-called add-on treatments is notoriously mixed. The desire to have a baby is a powerful one, and the promise to provide it at a cost means that consumer transparency is extremely important.

In 2019, in response to advocacy on behalf of people who have used IVF, the federal parliament passed legislation which ensured that the data on success rates from IVF clinics was collected by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare and made publicly available. This enabled the Australian government, earlier this year, to develop and launch the Your IVF Success website, which provides detailed information for couples on the process of using IVF, the success rates of all clinics in Australia, and information on your individual likelihood of having a baby through IVF. Dr Paterson's motion notes these important developments.

Other state and territory governments have taken a range of steps to provide their residents with extra consumer protections, support and government rebates to move towards equitable access to ART. A review undertaken by the Victorian government in 2018 led to a series of recommendations to improve safeguards and supports, as well as access and affordability to ART.

Dr Paterson's motion speaks directly to many of the complex issues I have raised by calling on the government to review the availability of support services for people who are undertaking ART, look into the regulatory frameworks around IVF, and consider the accessibility of IVF to people from lower socio-economic groups. As a result of these investigations and considerations, we would expect the government to implement a series of changes to the way that IVF clinics are regulated and the support provided to people undergoing their processes.

This motion also calls on the government to consider establishing a government-regulated donor registry to provide information to children born from donor gametes on their biological information. At present this information is collected and stored by IVF clinics themselves, meaning that the records they keep are vulnerable to being lost, should an IVF clinic fold. This information is not regulated, either, meaning that different information is kept and stored in different clinics.

This motion seeks to provide clarity, consistency and reliability to donor-conceived children, should they wish to access information in the future about their donor. It also investigates the impacts of impending federal mitochondrial donation laws on couples in the ACT. I thank Dr Paterson for her motion, which the ACT Greens support today.

MRS JONES (Murrumbidgee) (4.35): I thank Dr Paterson for bringing this motion to the chamber today. The desire for family, and healthy family, is a fundamental and natural one. As our society has evolved, the opportunities and optimism for achieving these desires can be more easily fulfilled.

As the motion notes, we are seeing an increase in the use of assistance from reproductive technologies across Australia and the region, and it would be fair to assume that a similar trend is occurring here in Canberra. As such, I think it is wise that Dr Paterson's motion calls on the government to look at some guidelines and an appropriate regulatory framework for these technologies. I suggest it probably is about time that we did.

Stronger and clearer guidelines and regulations can help to strengthen the system and ensure that we can avoid any unintended consequences that can impact the lives of people in varying ways. My hope is that those conceived through these technologies will be allowed to know their full identity. Identity is a broad concept and very important to human flourishing. It is a matter that is very well understood in the area of adoption and fostering. Who your biological parents and siblings are is not merely a matter of medical knowledge, although it is, importantly, a matter of medical knowledge; it is also of importance to culture, behavioural tendencies and understanding what kinds of people are in your history—your tribe, so to speak.

The motion also suggests a review of support services. It is a really good idea. Fertility difficulties can cause people great distress and the processes that they go through in such treatments can also be a great roller-coaster ride. We need to ensure that appropriate support is provided. Fertility treatment is intense. As I said, people deserve appropriate care. There is profit being made in the businesses that provide these services, and the needs of individuals need always to be at the centre of these services.

Reviewing and considering an appropriate ART set of regulations is a positive idea, and looking interstate is a good way to commence the process. The impact of mitochondrial donation law is something that we should certainly be across as a jurisdiction, given that it is a highly likely possibility that it will be allowed through the federal parliament soon. There are questions worth reviewing on access to these services so that they are not inequitable based on socio-economic backgrounds. Therefore, I support the intent of this motion and consider it a timely and useful area to pursue. I thank Dr Paterson for bringing it to the chamber.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Families and Community Services and Minister for Health) (4.37): I also want to thank Dr Paterson for bringing this motion to the Assembly in relation to a service that is so important and can be, as Dr Paterson rightly outlined, some of the most stressful but also some of the most exciting moments for people in their lives.

As has been outlined by other speakers, artificial reproductive technology—ART—is a brilliant technological advance that has assisted many Canberrans and families to conceive children when, without medical intervention, they may otherwise have been unable to do so. As others have said, ART covers a range of different processes and methods to increase or preserve fertility.

In the ACT ART is available through private health service providers. While some costs are covered through Medicare rebates or private health insurance, I acknowledge that there are still significant out-of-pocket costs associated with accessing ART. I also acknowledge Mr Davis's point that decisions that are made about whether Medicare rebates are accessible or otherwise are not always necessarily made on the basis of health-based evidence but can be a matter of judgement. That is indeed something that we should look into.

In any case, the out-of-pocket costs associated with accessing ART can be a barrier for people wishing to access services or procedures. Of course, some private clinics offer payment plans or access to Afterpay. Individuals can, in fact, choose to access their superannuation to assist in paying for ART or fertility payments. But, as Dr Paterson has outlined, given the challenges associated with successful fertility treatment, that is a big call to make for individuals and couples who are accessing ART services.

Others have spoken about the importance of support services being available to assist in both decision-making and throughout the process. Any person who accesses assisted reproductive technology must be supported with access to counselling by an appropriately trained and experienced professional.

The recent launch by the commonwealth government of the Your IVF Success website does provide increased support to people who are wishing to access IVF by making it easier for them to understand what is involved in the IVF process, and relevant success rates, and to locate a clinic in their local region. But, as has been correctly observed, there are differences across the country in the regulation and oversight of ART clinics, and the extent to which ART is regulated varies throughout Australia, as there is currently no commonwealth legislation that directly regulates ART.

The ACT is not alone in not having specific legislation that regulates ART. Queensland, the Northern Territory and Tasmania are also in this space, although I believe that the Northern Territory does not actually provide any reproductive technology services because they tend to be provided in South Australia.

However, as others have mentioned, there is a framework that governs the provision of ART. The National Health and Medical Research Council—NHMRC—national *Ethical guidelines on the use of assisted reproductive technology in clinical practice and research* provide an overarching national framework for ART in both clinical practice and research across Australia. All ART service providers are required to comply with these guidelines to be accredited by the Reproductive Technology Accreditation Committee, unless there is a conflict with jurisdictional legislation; then, of course, the jurisdictional legislation takes precedence.

The ethical guidelines encourage data to be collected and maintained in a centralised register by the relevant ART clinic, and each clinic must have policies and procedures in place regarding the collection, storage and release of data. So although there is no central register for sperm, egg or embryo donors in the ACT, the ethical guidelines list a minimum set of information to be recorded for each ART activity. Certainly, as part of this review, and absolutely supporting Dr Paterson's motion in this regard, it would be imperative to look at the lessons learned in other jurisdictions and to ensure that the approach to any central register is considered as part of that work.

As other members have talked about, and as everyone is aware, this subject matter is very sensitive for donors, families and the children born from ART. Mr Steel spoke eloquently about the impact of ART and the impact of various historical decisions on

children who are born as a result of ART. Everybody who has contributed to this debate has made extremely valid points about why it is so important to ensure that we have a good look at our legislative framework and regulation of the industry to ensure that we do have contemporary arrangements. That is what the review that the motion calls for will do.

It is also important that the motion recognises the consideration currently being given in the commonwealth parliament to laws that would allow for the introduction of mitochondrial donation. As members would be aware, mitochondrial disease is an umbrella term for a myriad of illnesses that can result from when a child inherits a mitochondrial genetic defect. Issues which affect the mitochondria can have significant consequences for the entire body. Muscle, brain, heart and lung function can all be severely impacted.

Mitochondrial donation, of course, is a new assisted reproductive technology which can help some parents to avoid transmitting mitochondrial DNA disease to their biological children. The term collectively refers to a number of specific techniques aimed at ensuring that only healthy mitochondrial DNA is passed on to an embryo. Used in conjunction with in-vitro fertilisation, mitochondrial donation techniques allow for an embryo to be produced using material containing nuclear DNA from a man and woman and the mitochondria in an egg donated by another woman.

This approach minimises the risk of transmission of the abnormal mitochondria from the mother to her child. It means that children who would otherwise be born with an inherited genetic condition and have either a terminal or an utterly debilitating condition might be able to avoid that circumstance. It has been reported that members of the commonwealth parliament will have a conscience vote on the proposed bill. We recognise, again, the sensitivity in relation to a number of these matters. I commend Dr Paterson for her foresight in including this in her motion and looking to ensure that the ACT is prepared for future technological changes and has the time now to consider the impacts in a measured and ordered way.

I also want specifically to acknowledge the issue that Mr Steel raised in relation to historic donor anonymity. I think his point about that needing to be included in the review was very well made, and his broader points about the human rights of children born as a result of ART. More broadly, I thank Dr Paterson for highlighting this important service and bringing this motion forward to the Assembly to ensure that the services provided in the territory are delivering for individuals and families. We will be supporting the motion.

DR PATERSON (Murrumbidgee) (4.46), in reply: I wish to thank colleagues in the Assembly for their support for this motion calling on the ACT government to review the available support and regulatory services for assisted reproductive technology in the ACT. The debate that has ensued has demonstrated significant interest in the topic and has reinforced the need for the ACT government review. This is a very important matter which I believe will bring significant improvements for individuals and couples involved with ART services in the ACT.

I look forward to working with colleagues, stakeholders and community members over the next 12 months as the review is undertaken, and look forward to receiving the findings by August next year. This is important to ensure that the ACT's framework for ART is best practice and provides the best possible outcomes for our community.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Anzac Day—commemorations

Statement by minister

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Families and Community Services and Minister for Health) (4.47), by leave: I believe that, during question time, I indicated that the office of the Chief Health Officer had been working directly with the RSL in relation to a proposed Anzac Day march. I can advise that the office of the Chief Health Officer has in fact been working with the Australian War Memorial in relation to the arrangements for the dawn service and the national ceremony, which includes the march. I understand that the War Memorial has been working with the RSL.

The Chief Health Officer has approved all exemption requests that have been submitted by the Australian War Memorial, without change. The office of the Chief Health Officer has not been in direct contact with the RSL in relation to the march, as these arrangements were being coordinated by the Australian War Memorial as the host of the national ceremony.

Appropriation Bill 2020-2021

[Cognate bill:

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

Cognate papers:

Committees—Standing—report

Committees—Standing—report—government response]

Detail stage

Schedule 1—Appropriations—Proposed expenditure.

Debate resumed.

Education Directorate—Part 1.4

MR HANSON (Murrumbidgee) (4.49): In responding to the appropriation for education, it is important to look at the underlying performance of our education system and what there is in this budget that will actually lift what has been described by numerous experts and a series of reviews as underperforming.

In 2016 the Education Directorate commissioned a study by Professor Stephen Lamb, the Lamb report, to analyse the academic performance of ACT government schools, which found that ACT schools, on average, achieved negative results on every

measure. In 2017 the Australia Institute produced a report into the performance of the ACT education system and called for a public inquiry. In 2017 the ACT Auditor-General published a report on performance information in ACT government schools which found that the majority of ACT government schools' NAPLAN results were lower than similar schools in Australia. It said that "since 2014 reviews of ACT government schools had consistently identified shortcomings" and that these shortcomings "indicate a systemic problem".

In August 2018 two researchers from the ANU published a working paper on academic underperformance in ACT schools which found that, when NAPLAN results of ACT schools were compared with schools from similar socio-economic profiles, a large number of ACT students were, on average, more than six months behind the levels of learning.

Ms Lee, as the previous shadow minister for education, moved a motion in this place in response to those reviews, and to others, calling for an independent inquiry into underperformance in ACT schools to ascertain the reasons for academic underperformance. Unfortunately, the minister has rejected those calls, so here we are again, discussing the underperformance of what could be, in my view, and in the view of my colleagues, so much better. By not heeding the message in that motion from Ms Lee, in many ways the minister continues to let down our hardworking teachers and students. And there is no excuse, Mr Deputy Speaker, because the ACT enjoys the highest socio-economic advantage of any Australian state or territory.

Indeed, when ACT Labor came to power in 2001, and in their 19 or 20-odd years since, their stance has always been that the ACT has one of the highest performing education systems in Australia. But you need to look into the detail to really understand its performance. As early as 2005, the ACT government was aware that there were problems. Analysis of publicly available national and international standardised assessments for the last 10 years has enabled the real outcomes of the ACT government school system to emerge; that is, long-term underperformance and downward trends in literacy and numeracy at both primary and secondary levels, whereby ACT students can be up to six months or more behind achievement levels in like jurisdictions.

The ACT performance is not simply a reflection of an Australian trend of stagnation in literacy and numeracy outcomes since the start of NAPLAN in 2008. There are a number of important sources of evidence that support the claim of underperformance in the system.

The first piece of evidence is the most recently reported education performance indicators available in the ACT Education Directorate annual report for 2019-20. Out of the seven key performance indicators, only one was met. On their own measures, the ACT education system is missing its performance targets, in some cases by up to 30 per cent, even though none of these targets that were set were particularly ambitious.

Indeed six indicators were missed, and some by a mile. I refer you to that report, Mr Deputy Speaker. But it was not only literacy and numeracy targets that were

missed. None of the targets relating to students, staff or parents identifying with their school were achieved. That is concerning; it goes to cultural issues that we have seen in the past, and concerning issues of bullying and violence within the system.

The second piece of evidence supporting the claim of underperformance in the ACT school system is 13 years of NAPLAN. Compared to like jurisdictions, the ACT has been underperforming on these assessments since at least 2012, and that downward trajectory is continuing. No fewer than five independent reports examining ACT literacy and numeracy outcomes have concluded this. I quote from one of them, the Victoria University report, which says:

After taking account of intake and context differences, ACT government schools on average achieve negative results on every measure.

That is from a Victoria University report of 2017. These reports estimate that the deficit in learning can be up to six months by year 5, and it continues to get larger.

While NAPLAN is not perfect, and I recognise that, it is a very important tool to improve schools and teaching. It does provide transparency, and it does provide accountability. I am certainly open to reforms of NAPLAN, but I note that a recent report commissioned by the ACT and a number of other jurisdictions highlighted its worth. I note that in a number of reports that were done, including the Auditor-General's, NAPLAN was strongly supported by ACT school principals as a very useful tool.

With such consistent underperformance in NAPLAN results, it is not surprising that the minister has sought to discredit it. I refer again, as Ms Lee has previously, to what Ms Berry said in 2019 to WIN News:

Data from NAPLAN is used to create league tables, and then belittles school communities and sort of points out dumb students, if you like, compared to the smart students.

That was a very disappointing comment. At the time, Ms Lee said:

NAPLAN isn't an excuse to put insulting labels on our students, it's an opportunity for teachers to assist our students in their learning.

I noticed that the minister did apologise for that, and hopefully we have moved on. We should not have a battle over NAPLAN; we should have a big fight about literacy and numeracy, and making that better. As I said, we are open to improvements.

The third piece of evidence supporting the claim of chronic underperformance in the ACT system is years of international standardised assessment of literacy and numeracy—PISA—and of literacy, numeracy and science—TIMSS. On the most recent PISA assessment, the ACT is below the average for comparably high Australian socio-economic advantage quartile groups on every indicator—literacy, maths and science.

On TIMSS, in 2019 ACT mean maths and science scores were well below the means used for assessing socio-economic advantage in both year 4 and year 8. Further, the ACT maths year 4 mean decreased, and there was a decrease in the percentage of high performers. Conversely, the means for New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and South Australia increased.

ACT, national and international assessments all point to a long-term underperformance and downward trend in the ACT on literacy, numeracy and science; but, on a number of those measures, in comparable jurisdictions in Australia and overseas, they have shown improvement, so this decline is not inevitable, and it is not irreversible.

In 2016, under the previous education minister, Shane Rattenbury, the ACT Education Directorate claimed in their policy, *Great Teachers By Design*, that “PISA results indicate that the ACT public school system is one of the highest performing systems in Australia”. They set themselves the goal of doing better. But in the seven years since, unfortunately, that has not proven to be the case.

Put simply, the problem is that, when comparing the ACT with similar jurisdictions, and taking socio-economic factors into account—and I quote from a Grattan Institute report:

The ACT is the worst performer. On a like-for-like basis, its students make two to three months less progress than the national average in both primary and secondary school.

The big question is: why? Why is that the case, Mr Deputy Speaker? Certainly, having regard to all of the evidence, independent reports and reviews by the Auditor-General, the Grattan Institute, the ANU, Victoria University and so on are drawing similar conclusions. Broadly, there are eight main factors impacting on students’ learning: funding and spending; teacher education and practice; curriculum issues; governance and school autonomy; school infrastructure— (*Second speaking period taken.*)

The others are school leadership and culture; student equity; bullying and violence. Expenditure on full-time students in the ACT is \$21,299, which is above the national average, so money has not resolved the issues that we are facing here in the ACT. I note—this flies in the face of the rhetoric that we often hear—that over the period 2009 to 2019 ACT government spending on education in the ACT declined by 3.2 per cent and federal government spending increased by 26.5 per cent. So we have seen a decrease from the ACT Labor government and an increase in education funding from the federal Liberal government.

In terms of teacher education and practice, we need to make sure that we are attracting high-quality teacher candidates, that we have the salaries at the right place, that we are improving the status of teaching, and that there are attractive career pathways. There is no doubt that teachers across the board are overworked in some cases and spend too much time on paperwork, which takes them away from class times.

University entry requirements in the ACT are comparatively low—an ATARS of around 48. I agree with the Australian Education Union that that is too low. I note, as an aside, that I look forward to working, on the matters that we agree with, cooperatively with the Australian Education Union in the interests of teachers and students. I look forward to doing that. We will not agree on everything, but we will look to find common ground.

We know that there are shortages of teachers in maths, science, languages and library services. I note that there is money in the budget—which I welcome—to help address that issue. We do not have enough men taking up the job as teachers, and I think that that impacts on role models for boys, which is important.

With regard to the curriculum, there are reviews that are taking place, and have taken place. It is very important that we draw the lessons from what is happening, certainly in New South Wales. The issues with the ACT include variability between schools and what is being taught, the curriculum being too cluttered and the content potentially being too shallow and not encouraging deep thinking. The curriculum in high school does not encourage tackling more difficult subjects, particularly those that are needed in increasingly complex future jobs, and there is too much subject choice in the curriculum, diffusing the focus on developing and extending important central knowledge and skills acquisition across all ages.

With respect to school autonomy, I think I would agree with the Australian Education Union that we need to strike the right balance. In the ACT we have considerable autonomy devolved to school leaders, and it is an issue where we need to get the balance right. The ACT Auditor-General recently said:

A better balance between school autonomy and consistency across schools in how performance information is analysed and used is needed.

I agree that it is not just necessarily about performance indicators. A similar conclusion was arrived at by an independent inquiry into the New South Wales system, reporting in 2021, that we need a strong, coordinated public education system, not a collection of schools. I think we do not have the balance right at the moment.

Infrastructure is a matter that we have debated, and I note that there is a committee inquiry, but as the Auditor-General concluded in a 2019 report with regard to the maintenance of ACT government school infrastructure, the Education Directorate has a sound framework for the management of school assets, but its implementation is hampered by poor supporting systems and processes. He went on to say that the Education Directorate did not have a clear and consolidated understanding of school infrastructure asset conditions, that annual asset maintenance planning undertaken by the schools was inconsistent and that, where plans were produced, they varied in their purpose, quality and comprehensiveness.

We have seen a lot of increased maintenance cost. This is an issue that will continue to be litigated, particularly through the committee inquiry, and I look forward to participating in that. That also goes to school capacity. We know that some schools

are over-enrolled, and others are under-utilised. There are a range of factors for that. It is demographics and the quality of schools that seem to move parents around. This is a particular issue that is affecting Gungahlin. But as Ms Lee said back in 2019:

We have already seen how the use of transportables is increasingly being used to overcome overcrowding. Where once such constructions were seen as temporary stop-gap measures, we now learn that they may be in place for years if not decades. The use of transportables cannot be considered best practice in education delivery.

I agree. This budget continues that practice, with the purchase of a bunch more demountables. I note that, in an answer to questions on notice from the committee, some of those demountables have been there for decades and decades. They are not being used for their intended purposes.

I move to school leadership and culture. Obviously, school leadership and the culture of a school is vitally important in establishing that positive culture. It often varies between schools. A weak culture enables problems to develop, including bullying and violence. We have seen inconsistencies between schools in how they respond to that, as was found by the Standing Committee on Education, Employment and Youth Affairs report No 6, in 2019.

ACTCOSS has raised concerns, as well, about this approach, and says that it “is not clear why each school requires individual procedures, and how this is necessarily a function of school autonomy”. The council has recommended the directorate implement consistent approaches to policy and procedure on violence and bullying across all ACT schools. This will create a consistent expectation of student safety and will benefit students and teachers who move between schools in the ACT.

In a submission from the Independent Education Union, the union said that there is an abundance of anecdotal evidence that bullying, offensive behaviour, threats of violence and actual violence in school settings is increasing. The union submission said that their survey into principals’ health and wellbeing records that the ACT now reports the highest incidence of threats of violence against principals and assistant principals, at 65 per cent. Measured against an increase in the experience of threats of violence in the general population of nine per cent, it is alarming. I agree with the union on that measure.

Our schools are full of dedicated teachers and bright young students, and there really is a lot to admire about many of our schools. I am not blind to the many positives—I am really not. I am a fan of public education. I am a fan of our independent school system, as well. When I come into this place and do critiques of our school systems, it is not to be negative; it is to make the point that we can do better. We should all be striving to do the very best that we can and make sure that our teachers are well supported and our students have the very best opportunity, because I think it can be better. Certainly, my vision is to bring out the best in every child, regardless of their background, opportunity or ability.

To do this we need better education outcomes. The points I have raised in this speech are all points that need to be improved. We should always be striving to do better, and

I really believe that we can. We need more effective teaching and a simpler curriculum. We need genuine equity and opportunity, not just rhetoric. We need stronger positive leadership and culture, smarter funding and governance, and evidence-based decision making and practice. Our kids deserve nothing less. So I welcome the fact that we spend a lot of money on education in this jurisdiction. I think that is good—I welcome it—but I want to make sure that every dollar that we spend does what it should, which is to support some of those brightest young minds in the country.

MR DAVIS (Brindabella) (5.09): The ACT Greens are pleased to see significant ongoing investment in our public schools, their teachers and students, through this year's budget. Over the last 12 months our schools have experienced significant upheaval in responding to COVID-19. I would like to congratulate all of our teachers, students and public servants for their resilience and creativity in responding to the pandemic. There is no doubt that stay at home orders had a significant impact on many students and that the work to bring children back together and move forward in their education system will continue for some time.

The ACT Greens understand that free, high-quality education promotes equality of opportunity, is a cornerstone of a healthy democracy and is fundamental to society. This education starts at a young age and continues right through life. The continued implementation of the early childhood strategy, particularly the rollout of access to early childhood education, is fundamental to ensuring that every child in this city is given a fighting chance.

The ACT Greens are pleased to have agreed, in the parliamentary and governing agreement, to see the rollout of this important program to every child by the end of 2024 and expect this to be an integral part of future budgets. The sooner all children and their families are provided with the same opportunities for education, the better. During the election campaign, the ACT Greens were proud to support the Australian Education Union ACT Branch's election pledge to support public education in the ACT. The ACT Greens are proud to be a part of a government that deeply values the teachers who educate and support our young people.

This pledge and our policy platform also strongly supported increased resourcing of public school libraries and training teacher librarians. The ACT Greens know that libraries are essential for all school students' learning and understanding of the world. That is why we promised to make sure every public school has a great school library as part of our pledge to the Australian Education Union, with fully qualified teacher librarians and support staff wherever possible. This budget delivers on that commitment. The ACT government is investing \$888,000 to provide 10 scholarships each year for teachers to complete a master's degree to become a qualified teacher librarian.

I am pleased to see that the commonwealth has increased funding in this budget to the MoneySmart Teaching national partnership, which no doubt will be used to support teachers to implement comprehensive and contemporary financial literacy programs in our public schools, which is again important in ensuring that our education system is a key part of the government's plan to reduce inequality in Canberra.

In future budgets I look forward to seeing funding for audits of our school facilities to ensure that they are able to respond to the changing climate, including being appropriately heated and cooled, well ventilated and smoke-free environments. All new school developments must take into consideration the impact of the climate on our students and teachers, as well as the broader environmental impacts of our schools on their local area. Having spoken with schools and P&Cs which are due for significant capital injection as a result of this budget, we know that these issues are top of the schools' and communities' agendas. I encourage the government to work closely and involve these school communities in the development of these proposals as they move forward.

The ACT Greens look forward to continuing to work within the government and from the crossbench to ensure that our schools remain foundational parts of our community in our continued plan to build a better normal.

MR PETTERSSON (Yerrabi) (5.12): A strong and well-funded education system is what you get when you vote for a Labor government, and that is what the people of Canberra did last year. Gungahlin is one of the fastest growing regions in the country. The population growth of Gungahlin, and of Canberra in general, means that there is an increased demand for places in our public education system. Canberra's projected population is over 500,000 people by 2030, and sometimes it feels as if they are all going to live in Gungahlin. With four of the five largest primary schools in the ACT being located in Gungahlin, every announcement about public education is keenly followed in Gungahlin.

The reason I have risen to speak today is to note the important investment this government is making in Gungahlin's public schools, with \$24.4 million allocated to building the infrastructure for the new high school in Kenny. When the Kenny high school is finished it will have 800 places for years 7 to 10, with the ability to expand to 1,000 places. A further \$2 million is being put towards Taylor High School, which accommodates 800 students, with the potential for up to 1,000. We are also expanding Margaret Hendry School. This will cater for up to 600 additional primary school students. This is vital work needed in our northern suburbs, and I am very proud that this budget delivers it.

The government is also supporting our teachers by continuing to fund the teacher librarian scholarship program, with 10 scholarships totalling \$888,000, in effect until 2025. As a kid I relished my time in the library. It was a place of learning and sometimes some socialising, but there was always something very reassuring about a librarian who would swoop when I had a looming deadline and direct me to all the resources I could ever need. I hope the next generation benefits even more than I did from the assistance of teacher librarians.

Public education will always be a priority for this government, and I know it is important to my constituents. We are committed to ensuring that we have a well-funded education system that caters to the unique learning needs of every student. It is our job to make sure that we prioritise public education so that no Canberran is left behind. As a Labor government, we truly believe in creating an equitable city with

equal opportunity, and that is why we will continue to properly fund our public education system.

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) (5.15): The ACT government is committed to making sure that Canberra kids get the best possible education. We continually invest in Canberra schools, and this budget is no different. The 2020-21 budget provides more than \$1.14 billion in funding for education in the ACT. This includes funding for public and non-government schools and is a three per cent increase on the actual spend in the 2019-20 financial year.

In addition, this budget continues the ACT government's significant investments in school infrastructure, providing \$145 million in capital works funding in the 2020-21 financial year and more than \$400 million over the forward estimates. This infrastructure program includes new public schools, school expansions and facility upgrades. This investment will ensure that our public school infrastructure keeps up with our growing population and that older public schools continue to be comfortable environments to work and learn in.

The ACT government invested in a number of new initiatives for education in the 2021 budget: three-year-old preschool; teacher librarians; as well as new and expanded schools in Gungahlin. We are increasing the number of weeks available to priority families for three-year-old preschool from 40 to 48 weeks per year. This brings the program in line with typical attendance for early childhood education and care, rather than it being based on a school year.

We have funded 50 scholarships for public school teachers to do their master of education, specialising in teacher librarianship. At the moment we do not have enough qualified teacher librarians and these scholarships will mean that more teachers become qualified for the important role in these schools. These scholarships are delivering on the election commitments to increase the number of qualified teacher librarians in public schools.

Mr Pettersson has already detailed a number of the investments in schools in the Gungahlin community, but our investment in school infrastructure for Gungahlin, one of the fastest growing regions in the country, shows our commitment to investing in infrastructure to support this growing population.

This budget provides additional funding to support the delivery of a new high school in Kenny. This school will provide 800 places for years 7 to 10 students in east Gungahlin and will be open for the 2023 school year. The budget also includes funding to start work on a new high school in Taylor and an expansion to Margaret Hendry School to cater for demand in north Gungahlin. The high school will have 800 places for students in years 7 to 10 and will open for the 2024 school year. These investments are ensuring that every child has a place in a great local public school. As our population grows, the ACT government will continue to invest in education, from early childhood all the way through to adulthood.

Given that a member of the opposition mentioned NAPLAN, I continue on the points I make consistently around NAPLAN in its current form. It has too many students forming negative perceptions of themselves and their schools. The whole palaver around NAPLAN, the high stakes nature, is offensive, particularly the anxiety and stress it causes young people in our school communities and the increased workload on our teaching and school communities.

I am enormously proud of every single one of the achievements of our public schools. I acknowledge the hard work of schoolteachers, school staff, parents, carers and students. I cannot wait to welcome new school communities into our new and expanded schools over the next couple of years.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate—Part 1.5

MS LEE (Kurrajong—Leader of the Opposition) (5.19): We live in a great city. Through the hard work and sacrifice of our health professionals, doctors, nurses, public servants and all our essential service workers, Canberra is responding to COVID-19 relatively well. And Canberrans deserve a government that is true to its word, a government that delivers on its promises. In what was Mr Barr's ninth budget, Canberrans gave the Chief Minister yet another opportunity to deliver on the promises he and his Labor-Greens colleagues made during the election.

No other individual has had the same opportunities as the Chief Minister to manage and shape the ACT economy. This budget was an opportunity for the Chief Minister to rectify years of neglect, arrogance and broken promises. This budget could have provided so many long-forgotten and neglected Canberrans with hope for the future. This budget could have provided local businesses with respite from decades of endless rates rises and tax spikes. This budget could have outlined an economic vision for our city that would lay the foundation for the economic prosperity of future generations.

But the Chief Minister has squandered this opportunity. This budget is, sadly, more of the same. It is more of the same broken promises, more of the same higher rates and more of the same declining services. Under this Labor-Greens government, rates and taxes will continue to increase. This budget ensures that Canberrans continue to pay the highest rates and taxes in the country and continue to receive a decline in basic health, education and transport services.

This budget was an opportunity for the Chief Minister to offer hope to so many struggling Canberra families who may have lost an income or had their hours cut back. Many of these families are wondering how they will pay next week's rent or whether next month's school excursion is out of reach. Recently I met with a constituent who has been struggling to find a rental property in what is Australia's most expensive city in which to rent a home. My constituent told me that she had been to over 100 property inspections before even having her rental application considered. With just five per cent of Canberra properties considered affordable and with the highest rental

costs in Australia, the cost of living under Labor and the Greens is becoming unaffordable for so many.

Despite promising a rates reprieve before the election, this government slugged 60,000 Canberra households with rates rises. Despite promising before the election that electricity prices would go down by \$43 per year, they are scheduled to increase by closer to \$300 a year. Despite promising before the election to tackle fuel prices, they are at a 12-month high. The Chief Minister was happy to make a song and dance in the lead-up to the election, threatening to intervene under the Fair Trading Act to put a cap on fuel prices, but 12 months on we are back to where we started—Canberrans continue to pay more at the bowser than other Australians.

Mr Barr: That is not true, Elizabeth. You can't mislead the Assembly like that.

MS LEE: You said yourself that there are other times where it is high. That is true; that is what you said.

MR BARR: Not more than other Australians. That is just not true.

MS LEE: Over 38,000 Canberrans, including 8,000 children, are right now living in poverty. The government's endless tax and rates increases, their refusal to tackle land and housing affordability, and the 400 public houses sitting empty despite thousands on the waiting list, ensure that these 38,000 Canberrans remain in poverty.

That is why, two months ago, I stood before this Labor-Greens government offering the Canberra Liberals' support to establish a poverty task force to tackle the rising numbers of Canberrans living in poverty. But, despite offers from the Canberra Liberals to work constructively with our counterparts, Canberrans were told by no less than three government ministers that Labor and the Greens know it all and they know best.

This budget was an opportunity for the Chief Minister to demonstrate to businesses that we can be a flexible, nimble territory government in times of economic crisis. The government's flagship business policy, an economic opportunity to build on the success of our health response to COVID, was a failure. The government told us that their policy would help local businesses get more customers in the door and start the road to recovery. However, only 336 of Canberra's 30,000 small businesses signed up to the government's shiny new business initiative, the Choose CBR scheme. Meanwhile, taxpayers were slapped with a \$123,000 bill just for administering the scheme, with a total uptake of just \$370,000.

After my team and I spoke with traders, it became apparent that many businesses run by Canberrans with English as a second language had either not heard of the scheme or found it too difficult to access. This is particularly disappointing, given that the Minister for Business and Better Regulation is also the Minister for Multicultural Affairs.

Canberra businesses have done the hard yards during the pandemic. They stayed open whenever they could. They kept Canberrans employed. They showed up at work

when they could not work from home. They kept their shelves stocked and their aisles full. They shifted their business offerings when restrictions were enforced. They kept our city moving. These local businesses deserve a government that backs them. They deserve a government that gets things done. And they deserve a government that keeps its promises.

My role in opposition, of course, is to hold the government to account on its promises to Canberrans. But my role is also to support the government when it brings proposals into this place that will benefit our community. One such area I am proud of is the Canberra Liberals' commitment to protecting our environment and taking effective action on climate change.

I note the city services minister's commitment to ensuring that Canberra phases out single-use plastics. I am very proud to lead a Canberra Liberals party room that supported this legislation. Removing unnecessary single-use plastics from our community is a good, practical change we can make as a community to help preserve and protect our environment. I hope, however, that this government undertakes greater consultation with local businesses, many of whom are yet to learn of the implications of these reforms.

Canberra is also home to Australia's greatest minds. Institutions like the ANU, UC, CSIRO, CIT and the Academy of Science offer policymakers in this place a wealth of information and solutions to policy challenges. We must work with industry and our institutions to tackle the next stage of action on climate change. I am proud of the Canberra Liberals' commitment to protecting our local environment and look forward to working towards sensible and sustainable emissions reduction solutions that do not hurt those who can least afford it.

The story of this budget is not just the Chief Minister's continued economic mismanagement of our territory; it is also about the government's arrogant, lazy and disrespectful approach to the Attorney-General's portfolio. The review into the implementation of the Family Violence Act was so damning that the review sat with this government for 12 months before it was made public. Even then it was only publicly released as a result of a freedom of information request.

Labor and the Greens purposely delayed the release of the review in fear of the political ramifications. It is unacceptable for this government to hide and delay the release of this report, to argue over comments critical of its own failures to address domestic and family violence in our community. This budget was an opportunity for the Attorney-General to show what an ACT government with the right priorities and the right leadership can accomplish. The government could have led the way by tabling a timely response to the review and by undertaking the necessary legislative reforms to ensure an actual and positive impact on families affected by this horrible scourge. Instead, this report sat on the minister's desk for a year, gathering dust.

In the recent estimates hearings the government also revealed some alarming yet unsurprising news. During the COVID-19 pandemic, several ACT Supreme Court judge-alone trials took place without the consent of the accused, with at least one case currently under appeal. (*Second speaking period taken.*) In the early stages of the

pandemic, the government legislated to remove one of the most fundamental legal and human rights principles—the right of an accused to a trial by jury. The government replaced the traditional jury with a judge-only trial, citing COVID-19 safety restrictions.

Despite concerns raised by the Canberra Liberals and the legal profession at the time as to the legal and human rights implications of such legislative changes, Labor and the Greens voted down the Canberra Liberals' amendments and pushed ahead—again, because they supposedly know better. The ACT Law Society and the Law Council of Australia condemned the ACT government's changes and warned that it may likely be in breach of its constitutional power and at risk of legislative overreach, which can jeopardise the integrity and independence of the court.

This budget also failed to provide funding for a permanent and full-time coroner. In recent years the Coroner's Court has seen an increase in workloads while it has failed to meet its target for the timely completion of cases. The Canberra Liberals have previously called for the establishment of a permanent, full-time coroner for the ACT. This is a sensible approach to help alleviate the increasing pressures on the Coroner's Court and tackle growing waiting times. Families deserve timely answers after the loss of a loved one. A properly resourced Coroner's Court will help to achieve this.

The government's ignorance and disrespect for the advice of the legal profession highlights this government's attitude towards the rule of law and the broader welfare of the Canberra community. Just like our economy, Canberrans deserve nation-leading outcomes in this space. We are a small and capable jurisdiction and Canberra deserves a government that gets things right.

At the 2020 election Canberrans gave Labor and the Greens a unique opportunity. The voters entrusted in them not only the leadership of our community for the next four years but also a remarkable opportunity to shape what Canberra will be like to live in, to work in, to raise a family in and to retire in for future decades. COVID-19 and its economic impact have well and truly changed the way we work, travel, communicate and interact. Our territory has come to an important juncture.

Our leaders—the Chief Minister and his re-elected Labor-Greens government—have an important choice to make: do we want to continue down this current path, where Canberra families are gouged left, right and centre by increasing rates, taxes and levies; where Canberra households must choose between paying the next household bill and sending their child on the next school camp; where public housing tenants remain on waiting lists for years as housing units are left empty and neglected; where Canberra businesses must battle every day to keep their doors open and their staff employed; where our leaders promise to back small business but fail to deliver; where the most vulnerable members of our community, from our First Nation people to those from the culturally and linguistically diverse community, are forgotten; or does this Labor-Greens government genuinely want to rectify 20 years of broken promises and failing services?

I want to work with the Chief Minister to ensure that Canberrans get a better deal, to make it easier to start and run a small business in Canberra, to lower the cost of living

for all families, to make it easier to buy or rent in this great city, and to make Canberra the capital not just in name but in heart. With the right priorities, the right vision and the right attitude we can deliver the governance Canberrans deserve. We can do better than this budget. We must do better than this budget. Canberra is counting on us.

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (5.34): I wholeheartedly endorse the opposition leader's comments and critique. I want to speak from my own personal experience during the campaign and since being elected. I have been talking to people at their front doors and at shopping centres.

The common theme of such discussions includes gross dissatisfaction with the state of the roads. Steady but gentle rain produces significant potholing in major roads, which are poorly repaired, only for such damage to be repeated the next time the rain decides to visit us. I hear about the burden of rates, not just on households but on businesses. Businesses are discouraged from remaining in the ACT by the high burden of rates, either directly or through rental costs and lease costs. They contemplate or actually act to move elsewhere. The burden of rates on household budgets is apparent to me as I talk to people in my electorate of Ginninderra in particular, and it is becoming increasingly difficult to manage in the face of rising other costs as well.

I endorse the establishment of a poverty taskforce. That would reveal many of the failures of the spending priorities of this government.

At shopping centres in particular, I am constantly reminded of the poor state of paving, with uneven and broken paving. I invite my fellow Ginninderra members to visit Charnwood shops to see very uneven and broken paving that has to be managed by elderly and disabled people. White markings on paving do not seem to indicate that it is being repaired but are just a maze of things to watch out for as you walk or take your wheelchair or other mobility device across the area.

This is what I hear when I talk to the people of my electorate and others. The priorities of this government are not focused on the community, and there needs to be a rebalancing of the government's expenditure priorities. It has often been said, and it is a true adage, that roads, rates and rubbish are what most people notice. That is indeed the case. What people notice is the poor delivery of such utilities and services. This is solvable by addressing priorities of spending, looking at what affects most people most of their days, most of their lives. Why is that not a priority of a government that is meant to be performing both council and state functions?

I am very disappointed in the budget that has been presented. I hope that the government reflects, and perhaps even consults more closely with the community, on the outcomes of its expenditures. I would welcome the Chief Minister coming with me to west Belconnen to talk to shoppers and residents to see what they think, what they have to deal with daily, and to see evidence of wrong spending priorities.

The issues of policing and public housing have been well rehearsed in this place, even today. These are failures that the community notices that affect them daily. I express my extreme disappointment at the government's priorities as expressed in this budget.

MS CASTLEY (Yerrabi) (5.39): In my first speech to the Assembly, I spoke about my experience of being a small business owner. For a good while, life was good. My then husband and I owned three successful car yards, employed five staff and made lots of money. But our success did not last. Unpaid bills pounded us and the debt collector came knocking at the door. At times, we were so skint that Mum kept us in food. I became a Tupperware lady and turned my spare bedroom into a beauty parlour, doing waxing and pedicures to put food on the table. Life is never easy. We liquidated the business and lost the house. The marriage went, too.

I share this story again to show that I understand small business and have enormous respect for the courage of small, often family run, businesses. It takes a stack of courage to start and run a small business, to take on the responsibility of staff, to slog it out day after day to make it work. Running a small business is like riding a roller coaster, with great highs and crashing lows.

Not only do I understand and respect small business; the Canberra Liberals do, too. We get that small business is the engine room, the backbone, of our ACT economy. We understand that Canberra's 30,000 small businesses need and deserve support, the support of this government and the whole Assembly. Our small business sector employs almost two-thirds of Canberra's workforce and generates massive revenue for the territory.

Canberra is a public service town. Time and again we hear it. But guess what? Canberra is also a small business town. You do not hear much about that. Yes, there is life in Canberra beyond the ACT and federal public services. Not everyone understands and lives by the APS Code of Conduct; not everyone is an acting APS of whatever number. Not everybody is penning incoming minister briefs or responding to ministerials. Not everybody has a public service name tag swinging around their neck as they head out for their morning coffee at 9.30 or 10 in the morning.

The other workforces in Canberra are mostly employed by small businesses. They are cleaners and sandwich makers. They are mechanics, gym instructors, beauticians and kitchen hands. They are hairdressers, tailors, carpet layers and shoemakers. They are also our tradies: electricians, plumbers, carpenters. These are the ones that we call on in need, with the desperate cry of: "How soon can you get here?"

It is easy to take our small and micro businesses, and sole traders, for granted. But nine times out of 10 they are the ones that we turn to when things at home go pear-shaped—when the toilet will not flush, the kids' bikes need fixing, the TV is on the blink and the garage door will not open, not to mention a bit of home improvement like upgrading the kitchen, putting a deck on, or pruning and maintaining the trees.

Unfortunately, this Labor-Greens government does not seem to understand small business or seek to do so. I wonder, given that the government has been in power for two decades, whether ministers and advisers have become so used to dealing with big, sprawling directorates employing thousands of bureaucrats that they are the people this government understands, not small business.

If we want the ACT to be the most small business friendly place in the country, that has to change. Instead of the piecemeal package served up to small business in the government's recent budget we are discussing today, with measures that I want to acknowledge do help, small business needs much more. Canberra needs to be a place where it is easy for small business to do business: where it is easy to start a business, to expand a business, to employ more staff, to move to a bigger site, to know that the government has your back and wants you to thrive and not just get by.

The whole government, not just the business minister or Chief Minister, needs to understand small business and support them. To do that, they need to meet and know them. That means getting out of the office, breaking free from the directorate to take a trip to Fyshwick or to hang out in Gungahlin; spending time in our many shopping areas across the ACT; knocking on doors, going in and having a chat, asking the simple question, "How is business?" and then listening.

I turn to a number of recent government initiatives supposed to help small business and illustrate how out of touch the government is with business needs. Minister Cheyne got to her feet in this chamber recently to spruik the government's Better Regulation Taskforce, the BRT. The government announced the BRT in August last year as part of its jobs and recovery plan. The minister rose to declare that the taskforce had started work.

The taskforce was established to identify burdensome rules, review legislation, simplify business engagement with government, encourage new business models and remove investment barriers. The ACT government website says that the taskforce will make it easier to do business in the ACT. How great will that be? It aims to make business and government interactions better, faster and simpler. Bring it on. I think the key word there is "faster". Since August, it seems that nothing has happened.

In question time, Minister Cheyne announced that the first phase had begun, the discovery phase. They want to engage with business to identify issues. Isn't this what a minister for business does every day as part of the role? They need this taskforce to be set up for that. A range of questions come to mind. Who is on the taskforce? Who is heading it? How often does it meet? Has it met yet? How much is the taskforce costing Canberrans? When will the discovery phase end? When can we expect businesses' concerns to be dealt with? Most of all, given that this government has been in power for 20 years, why does it need a taskforce and a discovery phase to understand small business? It speaks volumes about the government's complete lack of interest in the role of the small business sector and genuine commitment to see it flourish.

It is interesting to note the words of the Canberra Business Chamber in welcoming the taskforce. It said:

... to be effective it needs to deliver genuinely business friendly policies.
Business would love to see real change ...

Let us watch this BRT and see what it delivers to help business.

The chamber also referred to the Big Battery project and Woden light rail. It wants to see policies to ensure that money is spent with local businesses. It said:

We would be missing an important opportunity if the government funds out-of-town businesses to do this work but does not mandate any local procurement component.

It is a really sad reflection of this government's low regard for small business that the Canberra Business Chamber has to plead with the Labor-Greens government to keep jobs in the territory.

Another example of this government's poor understanding of small business is the failed Choose CBR scheme, which was a complete flop. Just as importantly, particularly as far as small business is concerned, it was a huge waste of money. The scheme was rushed, messy and complicated. No wonder businesses and consumers did not touch it. The fact that almost \$125,000 was spent on admin costs shows how out of touch the government is. It is a heck of a lot of money. What were the admin costs involved?

As you would expect, Ms Cheyne defended the trial. Now we await the full monty. Given that the government set aside \$2 million for this project, let us hope that mark 2 is better, meaning that it actually encourages consumers to go through the doors of local businesses and shops and see the dollars spent. As winter approaches and the nights get cold, you only have to consider our restaurant and hospitality sector to understand how business will start drying up, given that alfresco dining is no longer an option.

I want to touch on a topic that at first seems a long way removed from small business. I want to mention toilets. While the government talks about supporting business, it seems to miss the fundamentals. Minister Steel has finally announced a long-awaited upgrade to the Gwydir Square shops in Kaleen: \$1.5 million is on the table for this job. It is great news. While the government says the project is about improving the shops to "shop locally, providing improved financial outcomes for businesses", the government is refusing to provide public toilets as part of the upgrade. On the website, under the heading "What we are not looking at", it states:

This project does not include construction of new public toilets.

There will be community consultation about the shops upgrade but not about toilets. If my job as shadow business minister is to campaign for public toilets at a local shopping centre to get more customers through the door, I will do it. I will do it because I know business. I have run small businesses and understand the hard and constant work involved, the stress, the worry, the constant challenges and the many factors that make or break you. (*Second speaking period taken.*) What small businesses need is a government that backs them, not a government that is so attached to its army of public servants that it gets buried in the bureaucratic discovery phase and has to set up a taskforce to build a bridge to a small business world that it has no idea about. Thank goodness the Canberra Liberals are gunning for small business and get the importance of public toilets.

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (5.49): I would like to spend a little bit of time talking about the arts, tourism and the night-time economy. We have a lot of small businesses in this sector. I have run several, particularly in the arts. I think it is really important that we pay a bit of attention to this sector at the moment. Art makes life better. It gives us a sense of voice, place, collective identity and culture. It helps us make sense of the chaos.

What did we do during and after the fires? We all turned to art. What did we do when we were trying to get by with the isolation and the job losses of COVID? We listened to music, we watched television and we made and consumed art. It is incredibly important. It helps us celebrate the good things and it helps us process the bad ones. It gives meaning to our experiences and it helps us get through.

COVID has had a devastating impact on our artists in general and on our musicians in particular. Many of our artists were not eligible for federal funding like JobKeeper due to the nature of their gig work. They run small businesses, they tend to work freelance, from job to job, and they just do not fit into those schemes. Many of them lost a lot of their secondary income as well because they work in hospitality or one of the other fields that are also deeply affected by COVID.

Arts and recreation wages have taken a massive dive during COVID. ABS data shows that in the last 12 months arts and recreation wages are still down and they are decreasing. Job vacancies are also down from November 2019 to February 2021. Most of our other industries have rebounded really well during this time, but we do not yet have a full recovery for the arts; we are nowhere near.

I was really pleased to see how fast the ACT government swooped in to provide Homefront grants and other assistance. It was great to see that rolling out in such a simple manner. But we are in this for the long haul and we are going to need more help. We need to get strategic long-term funding if we are to build arts careers and build that creative economy that we all know we want.

We also need to make sure that we are telling the full range of stories. We need more First Nations stories, multicultural stories, LGBTQIA+ and women's stories in particular. Part of the Greens' gender-led recovery package was a women's walk of artwork by, for and about women at the new West Basin precinct. That will be a fantastic new public art project.

I was pleased to see our recent estimates recommendations about increasing transparency and improving feedback on our arts funding. I think that is a great direction to move in. I love the goals we have set to promote Canberra as a vibrant city with world-class tourism, art and cultural experiences. I look forward to seeing more of that in our future budgets.

I also want to take note of some of the progress we are making at the moment in placing a general gender lens on all government decisions. We have heard a little about this already today. We really need to view our budget through a gendered lens right now because COVID has had a disproportionate impact on women, because of

their economic insecurity, the greater role they play in undertaking unpaid household and caring responsibilities and the feminisation of frontline education and healthcare sectors.

Minister Berry tabled the annual statement on the status of women and girls a few weeks ago, detailing some of the work the government is doing in this space. We Greens are pleased that we managed to negotiate the new Standing Committee on Economy and Gender and Economic Equality, which is taking a gender lens to its inquiries. That committee has already started getting to work.

I am glad that the government has agreed to recent estimates recommendations that gender budgeting be applied at every single stage in the COVID recovery and in all future crises. I would really like to see that roll out for every single ACT government decision. We need that gender lens at the front end of all budget and government decisions and we need to make sure that we are supporting our arts, tourism and recreation sectors—and the small businesses that are struggling in those sectors—as we move forward.

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee—Minister for Skills, Minister for Transport and City Services and Special Minister of State) (5.54): I would like to highlight the important work that has been happening through the budget in my capacity as Minister for Skills and Special Minister of State. I am very proud of the ACT government's commitment to increasing employment opportunities for Canberrans in the work that we are doing through skilling up Canberrans.

This work is particularly important for young Canberrans and job seekers who are trying to reskill or upskill following the COVID-19 pandemic, and for supporting the recovery. Through a joint investment with the Australian government, we have invested \$16 million in the JobTrainer program to deliver up to 3,500 places across CIT, the Ginninderry SPARK Program and private training providers. JobTrainer has been incredibly popular, with close to \$14 million allocated so far across full qualifications and short courses. Skills Canberra has worked hard to get this initiative off the ground in a very short time frame, while ensuring that it is reaching the people who most need help to find their first job or get another one after a time of unemployment.

The areas of the directorate that I am responsible for have also been helping Canberrans through COVID-19 in other important ways. The ACT Property Group is the landlord for hundreds of community service providers and local community groups, managing a portfolio of well over 200 properties across the city. Since 1 April 2020, the government has not charged rent to community groups occupying ACT government-owned properties, including Housing Asset Assistance Program properties and school facilities that are rented to the community. Support has also been provided for commercial tenants of ACT government-owned properties, which have lost significant revenue as a result of COVID-19.

In the budget we extended these rent relief arrangements up to 30 June this year, recognising that there are many community groups and service providers who are continuing to be affected by the pandemic downturn. This is a practical form of

support that is helping to take the pressure off local organisations so that they can focus on supporting Canberrans through this challenging time.

CMTEDD has played an important role in leading the ACT government's economic response to COVID-19, alongside the vital public health response led by ACT Health. Skills Canberra and the ACT Property Group have each played their own valuable part in supporting Canberrans through the pandemic with the investments in this budget, and I know they will continue to do so as our economic recovery gathers pace in the months and years ahead.

I want to respond to several claims that have been made in the debate in relation to this output class. I am not sure they were quite in the right output class, but I will respond to them anyway because they have been mentioned. Ms Castley mentioned that the ACT government would rule out putting toilets in upgrades that we have funded in the budget at Kaleen Gwydir Square. At the election Labor made a commitment to upgrade several local shopping centres and a commitment to consult with the community, which is exactly what we are doing in relation to the upgrades. We have, of course, put out some draft plans. Those are not final plans; we are wanting to consult with the community.

It seems like several members in this place—Mr Milligan in particular, Mrs Jones and Ms Castley—seem to have the view that consulting with the community is not a good thing to do. We have not ruled in or ruled out anything. We are consulting with the community. That is exactly what Ms Lee called on us to do in relation to consulting with businesses on the phase-out of single-use plastic.

Opposition members interjecting—

MR STEEL: That is exactly what we are doing—consulting with the community. On that reform, which Ms Lee mentioned, we have extensively consulted with the community. Today I have announced that we are working with the National Retail Association to consult with businesses face to face—700 of them—to talk about the phase-out of the plastics. We have an ongoing plastic reduction task force, with members of all of the peak bodies that are associated with retail and hospitality, to work through these changes and through each tranche of the phases over the past year and going forward. We will continue to work closely with businesses and we will continue to work closely with the community. We are the ones that committed to these reforms and we are the ones that are getting on with doing them, in consultation with the community and business.

MR MILLIGAN (Yerrabi) (5.58): I am very proud to be speaking here today on sport and recreation—

Mr Barr: Welcome!

MR MILLIGAN: Thank you, Mr Barr.

Mr Barr: We missed you in your short interlude out of this place.

MR MILLIGAN: Yes, my wisdom that I bring to this place; absolutely. As you all know, I had sport and rec in my previous term and I have it again today. We are really proud of what we produced last term with our advocacy and policy development. That is why I am reading these budget estimates with keen interest.

I see that the government is finally going to update the Active 2020 plan. The Chief Minister was the minister for sport and recreation back in 2011, when this was first introduced. I think it is well and truly due for an update right now. In fact, back in 2011 the population in the ACT was 357,000. It is now 445,000 and, by 2028, it is going to be half a million. Over the past 10 years this government has not bothered to update its sport and recreation strategy. This obviously reflects its neglect and mismanagement of this very important portfolio.

Sport and recreation is not just about participation; it is about access to facilities, it is about affordability for families and it is about social cohesion and positive mental health. I am pleased to see the commitments to sport in the strategic priorities of this government—commitments to continue to support sport and recreation organisations to deliver growth participation opportunities, particularly for women and girls, to encourage healthy and active lifestyles within our community and to strengthen partnerships with elite sporting teams in the ACT to maximise economic and social returns on funding engagements, although, sadly, output 3.3 offers no detail or plan on how it is going to achieve this.

Via the sport and recreation output, the directorate supports Canberrans' participation in organised sport and recreation through the delivery of programs, facilities, planning developments and pathways. Sport and Recreation will deliver this output by providing support services to local high-performance athletes and teams, administering grants, delivering education and training opportunities to maintain and enhance the capabilities of the community sport and recreation sector in the ACT and planning and developing sport infrastructure to broaden access to participation opportunities.

In my electorate of Yerrabi the community has suffered for too long from neglect and mismanagement. Promises were made during previous elections but, like the promise of a Casey sporting facility back in 2012, I fear that the community will be waiting a long time to see the home of football finally eventuate in Throsby and the tennis facilities in Amaroo.

I am pleased to hear a commitment from this government to invest in sport and recreation. I think it is vital that, as we emerge from COVID, we provide easier ways for people to be active and connected to their community. Health and wellbeing are so important. As always, I want to see the detail and I want to see the follow-through. If the government need any help in finally updating their plan for sport and recreation and a strategy, they are most welcome to come and see me and talk about what we proposed in Find Your Game. I am just thinking that the proposal that we presented during the election last year may have inspired them to do something in this space during this term.

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra—Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Minister for the Arts, Minister for Business and Better Regulation, Minister for Human Rights and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (6.02): This part of the budget includes several areas of my ministerial responsibilities and it is a privilege to outline to the Assembly some of the key initiatives across those areas. To start with, the arts. It goes without saying that the arts and events sectors have been impacted significantly by the pandemic. The government responded immediately, with COVID-19 specific funding and support. Over the past year support has been provided through grants to individuals, support for arts organisations, rent relief and additional capital works at arts facilities.

The government has also announced the Creative Recovery and Resilience Program, which will create employment opportunities for local artists, assist artists to recover from the effects of COVID-19 on their practice and build capacity and resilience for the future. The first phase of this program was the second round of Homefront grants in 2020, which brought the number of artists supported through Homefront grants to 125. In addition to the \$1 million provided through Homefront and over \$10 million provided annually to the sector in grants funding, the ACT government provided more than \$6.6 million in COVID-19 support for the Canberra arts sector to assist during these difficult times.

The annual arts funding allocation facilitates participation in and access to the arts. By working in partnership with the community and the arts sector, the ACT government funds, enables and delivers arts activity and programs, supports great art and great artists by funding and promoting Canberra art and artists, supports and recognises the vitality of the Canberra region arts ecology and the benefits the arts and creativity bring to Canberra, and engages with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts and cultures.

Further, the continuation of capital works projects at arts facilities is an important investment for our community. These projects include the finalisation of Belconnen Arts Centre stage 2, including cafe and foreshore and landscaping works; kiln shed improvements at Watson Arts Centre; the finalisation of upgrades to the former transport depot at Kingston, which includes new public amenities, a roof replacement and accessibility upgrades; design development works at Gorman Arts Centre to prepare the facility for its 50th anniversary as one of Canberra's central arts hubs; work at Strathnairn Arts centre, including at the woolshed; and mechanical upgrades and planning and work health and safety works at Ainslie Arts Centre, Gorman Arts Centre, the Canberra Glassworks and Strathnairn, Tuggeranong and Watson arts centres.

Madam Speaker, the arts reflect who we are as individuals and help build community identity. We recognise that, at an individual level, the arts contribute to wellbeing and health—physical, mental and emotional—and this will be so important as we recover from COVID. At a broader level, the arts and our creative sector are a significant employer in Canberra, making a vital contribution to our economy, as well as being an important tourist drawcard.

The budget also delivers in the business and better regulation and economic development portfolios. It reflects the government's longstanding commitment to protect local jobs while creating new, meaningful opportunities to drive growth into the future. The ACT government is committed to supporting local businesses, talking with local businesses, reaching out, hearing from them, understanding and responding. This budget contains a number of assistance measures to do that, from the Canberra advice and support service to reductions in food business registration and dining fees to help our hospitality sector and reducing liquor licence fees to assist businesses in the recovery.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses cover the full breadth of our city's economy, from air-conditioning systems to medical equipment. The ACT government has provided \$100,000 to ensure that a business advisory and connection service run by an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander business for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses is available to help numerous businesses gain access to much-needed support during the current financial year.

This budget commits an additional \$2 million for the Choose CBR voucher initiative. This commitment is in addition to the \$500,000 trial that ran from November to December 2020—notably, with the vouchers being able to be redeemed a bit over a week in December 2020—and saw \$310,078 in vouchers expended, for a total injection of \$1,940,661 into eligible businesses here in the ACT.

It was a trial. It seems that some in the opposition have conveniently forgotten exactly what a trial means. It is an opportunity to test and understand the market, to determine what works for businesses and consumers. It was the first time that we have ever done anything like this, so it made sense that we trialled it to get that feedback, to learn and to adjust. And we did get plenty of feedback. Among that, more than two-thirds of customers who participated in the Choose CBR trial said that they were more likely to shop at businesses that were participating in it.

Now we are working to make Choose CBR easier to use for both consumers and businesses, ensuring that more businesses are eligible, providing support to more businesses who need it, offering a greater range of options to consumers and extensively marketing the program to make sure that everyone who can benefit from it knows about it.

There is always more that we can do, but some of Ms Castley's and Ms Lee's claims are simply specious. There are 30,000 businesses in Canberra, but it was 2,000 businesses which were eligible for the Choose CBR scheme, not 30,000 like Ms Castley keeps claiming. 30,000 is the total number of businesses in the ACT, the majority of them being microbusinesses. We have been very public that it was 2,000 businesses that were eligible. The opposition know that it was 2,000 eligible businesses, yet they continue to try to lead the ACT community astray. What a start to the term.

Of course, I recognise that not everyone had heard of the trial. It was a very busy time of year, with a lot of information from all quarters. Yes, it was done quickly to

capitalise on the momentum as we headed into Christmas. Ms Lee noted engagement with the multicultural community, and to suggest that we did not, again, is specious. I shared with her how we reached out and the variety of ways that we did that. That has been conveniently ignored too. We did not ask businesses that signed up for the trial to identify whether or not they were multicultural, so I do not have the exact figures in the take-up. However, notably, five of the top 10 businesses, in terms of vouchers redeemed, were multicultural in their offerings and likely ownership.

I am confident that, through this \$2 million commitment in the 2020-21 budget, Choose CBR will continue to meet its goals to encourage people to shop locally at COVID-affected businesses and to stimulate sectors of the economy which have been heavily affected. I look forward to announcing more details on the initiative in the coming weeks.

The budget also provides funding for the Better Regulation Taskforce. I am pleased that Ms Castley has finally decided to pay some attention to it. The task force has recently begun its discovery and consultation phase. It has had an outstanding response so far from businesses across the ACT, including from the peak bodies, who are actively engaging with it. The task force is employing a number of engagement and review mechanisms to engage with businesses and inside government to identify the regulatory and process issues we can address to drive growth and to drive recovery through better regulatory settings.

A primary area of focus for government is to collaborate with Canberra's key sectors to enhance Canberra's reputation as a knowledge economy, harnessing our competitive advantages to address the workforce and skills needs of key sectors. Among the most recently announced initiatives is the ACT government's commitment of \$700,000 to establish the Canberra cyber hub. This investment leverages our city's strengths and cybersecurity and brings together our unique industry, education and research sectors to position Canberra as the cyber capital of Australia. It will focus on four pillar objectives: grow Canberra's cybersecurity education pathways, accelerate small and medium enterprises to grow connections and attract investment, promote the ACT's research capabilities and showcase Canberra's cybersecurity capabilities. The hub will build our skilled workforce through education, helping start-ups and other businesses to attract investment, showcasing our research capabilities and promoting Canberra's nation-leading cybersecurity capabilities.

This past year has proven how quickly our world and expectations can change and how essential it is to protect, support and promote local businesses. It has also proven how essential it is for our economy to have both breadth and depth of activity so that it can readily adapt to sudden changes. Access Canberra has played a crucial role in supporting the territory's economic recovery through the COVID-19 public health emergency. It worked to ensure that its services were delivered safely and adjusted its service centre operations to ensure accessibility for vulnerable Canberrans. It significantly changed its service delivery model in response to the pandemic in a way that has enabled high-level support to the ACT community to continue, whilst ensuring the safety of customers and staff.

Significant efforts were put into engaging with businesses and industry on their obligations under the public health directions, and compliance inspection activity was maintained. This has helped businesses to keep their customers and staff safe. It has provided much-needed assurance to the public as we navigated this together. Access Canberra has also supported the delivery of economic stimulus initiatives, all of which have supported businesses and the territory's economic recovery from the pandemic. I want to take this opportunity to especially thank the many staff at Access Canberra for their enormous and ongoing efforts through this very challenging period.

Finally, my portfolio as Assistant Minister for Economic Development incorporates community events. Through the pandemic the ACT government has actively sought to develop innovative methods for connecting Canberrans through events in a COVID-safe manner. This planning work has been supported by the ACT's COVID-safe event protocol, which was released in September 2020. The primary objective has been to continue delivering the benefits of events but in new ways, while also contributing to the economic security of artists, vendors, suppliers and contractors operating in the local events sector.

Despite the significant challenges that have impacted the events sector during the 2020-21 budget cycle, I am pleased to advise that Events ACT has been able to adapt its work program during this time to deliver a suite of major events, community events, and event support mechanisms. The public response has once again been overwhelmingly positive, with the Canberra community making the most of the opportunity to get out and experience and engage with the wonderfully diverse community event components of the Enlighten Festival program, most recently, where tickets were snapped up.

Moving forward, Events ACT's ongoing efforts to foster the development of the ACT's annual events calendar, including its key event delivery and event support functions, will continue to be focused on engaging, connecting and benefiting Canberra's diverse community, while also helping to support a recovering tourism and events sector as restrictions on travel and public gatherings lift across the country.

In closing, I want to thank the business, arts and event communities for their continued engagement and advocacy, for sharing their priorities and being candid in their feedback, for working so hard in pivoting and showing resilience and for ensuring that there is community and economic confidence right across the ACT. It really is quite extraordinary how everyone has banded together, and none of us makes light of that.

I also want to thank all of those in the directorate who have worked so hard to prepare initiatives that have been responsive to business and community needs, who have given their all, whom we have asked so much of in helping us to continue to keep Canberra's economy strong. After all, we are all in this together. I commend these initiatives to the Assembly.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (6.16): I want to make some very brief comments about the arts portfolio. Firstly, I would like to congratulate everyone in the small but very

vibrant ACT arts community on their resilience and hard work during the COVID pandemic in the last year.

We had some questions during the hearings about some of the grants programs. For example, the Tuggeranong Arts Centre felt quite disadvantaged by what they received, compared to exponentially higher grants in some other areas of Canberra, which has made their operations quite difficult. I look forward to scrutinising further grants to make sure that there is no continued bias, perceived or otherwise, against my electorate.

The government have done some good work in the arts space over the last year. I would like to congratulate them on that. There is always more to be done. There is a constant tension about the spending of government, as in public, money. There is a lot more that can be done to support our struggling arts community, who have been so impacted by COVID, but in the context of today's discussion I will leave it there. I look forward to much greater involvement in the next budget, later this year, in trying to ensure that our arts community is well supported in the next round of the budget

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) (6.18): The ACT government is delivering strong protections for working Canberrans, and I am proud of the government's record in providing safe and secure jobs. This work is being continued through the 2020-21 budget. The government continues to deliver on its commitment to ensure that Canberra workers are treated fairly. With the introduction of the secure local jobs code, the ACT government strengthened its procurement practices so that government contracts are only awarded to businesses that meet the highest ethical and labour standards.

In this budget cycle, the Secure Local Jobs Code Advisory Council completed a comprehensive review of the operation of the secure local jobs code. The advisory council's report on the review was delivered to me in December 2020. The recommendations are currently being considered by government and further announcements will be made in due course.

The government has made it clear that it only wants to do business with ethical employers who do the right thing by their employees. Through the secure local jobs code and our procurement practices, we will hold businesses who do not meet their industrial and legal obligations to account. Ethical businesses have welcomed this approach, as the government has created a level playing field for companies competing for government work.

The ACT government is committed to maintaining the size of the ACT public service and to providing secure, ongoing employment. As part of this commitment, the ACT government established the ACT public service insecure work task force. The task force is systematically reviewing temporary and casual employment to assess whether there are jobs that could be made permanent. Where jobs are identified for conversion,

enterprise agreement provisions allow for the appointment of existing employees without further merit processes, provided that certain criteria are met.

Our public service have worked incredibly hard over the last year in dealing with the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. They deserve safe and secure jobs, and this government is committed to providing those jobs. The government continues to ensure that our workplaces are safe for our employees and the community who use our services. In the last year the focus has been on responding to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. As homes became workplaces for thousands of ACT public service employees, others were involved in providing critical healthcare services or were working to ensure that vital services supporting our community could continue.

The whole-of-government work health and safety response has occurred on two fronts—ensuring that risks of exposure to COVID-19 are identified and managed, and supporting the health, safety and wellbeing of our people in their changed working arrangements.

Once again we have seen that the Canberra Liberals have no respect for our public service. Ms Castley has represented the public service as wandering around the city wearing lanyards and getting coffee. She has no idea that most of the public service are in fact working in hospitals, on the front lines of the COVID pandemic, or working in schools. They are in our depots and behind the wheels of our buses. They are there to take care of us and our city when we need them most.

In question time today, the Canberra Liberals attempted to smear public servants. Here, again, they have no respect. They have no respect for the work of our public servants, and they should be ashamed of their comments.

A survey conducted in December 2020 provided all ACT government employees with the opportunity to provide feedback about their health, safety and wellbeing at work. We heard that, overall, employees are feeling safe and well and are confident about the government's ability to continue serving the community as the pandemic continues.

Other significant work health and safety priorities for the government in 2020 and early 2021 have been supporting the move to new office accommodation in Dickson and the city, and the second Comcare unit, as part of the ACT government's workers compensation self-insurance licence.

Looking to 2021-22, work health and safety priorities continue to be centred on responses to COVID-19. This will include transitioning, guiding hybrid and other changed working conditions—making sure that they are embedded. Work has also begun on commencing the next bargaining round for 15 new enterprise agreements, covering the majority of ACT public service employees. Government representatives met with the relevant unions last week to formally commence bargaining. Further updates will be provided to the Assembly as bargaining progresses.

The ACT government is delivering for working Canberrans by supporting WorkSafe as a strong, independent regulator. The Office of the Work Health and Safety

Commissioner, also known as WorkSafe ACT, was established on 1 July 2020. In its first year operating as an independent regulator, WorkSafe ACT has driven improvements in the work safety culture in the ACT through its compliance and enforcement activities and engagement with industry, workers and employees.

WorkSafe has established a dedicated team of inspectors to identify hazards associated with psychological risk in workplaces across the territory. WorkSafe ACT has responsibility for the implementation and administration of the ACT government's new labour hire licensing scheme, which comes into effect from 27 May 2021. The licensing scheme is intended to protect vulnerable workers by ensuring that businesses that provide labour hire services are compliant with the relevant industrial relations legislation.

Operation Safe Prospect is a key element of WorkSafe ACT's residential construction strategy. The operation is a three-year campaign focused on improving safety in the residential construction industry. Since the campaign began, in August 2020, 302 improvement notices, 92 prohibition notices and 24 infringement notices have been issued in the ACT. As at the end of March 2021, WorkSafe ACT's financial performance was on track against the 2020-21 budget.

The government is committed to providing safe workplaces and secure jobs and will always stand up for working people. Through the budget, we are delivering for working Canberrans.

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) (6.24): I am happy today to speak in the budget debate on sport and recreation.

As Canberra grows, this budget and the government will support a number of initiatives to ensure that Canberrans stay healthy and active and engaged in the sports that they love. The 2020-21 budget included \$500,000 for the detailed design, planning and costing for the tennis facility, which is expected to take 12 months to complete. The centre will include up to 12 full-sized tennis courts, with amenities including LED floodlighting, up to two hot shots courts, a pavilion, a hitting wall, and parking. The centre will allow Tennis ACT to deliver more programs to increase participation in the sport.

The 2020-21 budget also commits \$400,000 for detailed planning and design work for a new home for dragon boats at ACT Grevillea Park on Lake Burley Griffin. Dragon boating is one of the largest water-based sports in Canberra, with more than 600 members across seven teams and three school teams.

The budget also commits more than \$500,000 in funding to begin designing improvements for the Phillip district enclosed oval, including a new pavilion, upgraded grandstands and lights, and additional parking. The project will benefit the sports that regularly use this facility, including rugby union, rugby league and cricket.

Funding was provided in the budget to repair the 50-metre pool at Gungahlin Leisure Centre. In June investigations were undertaken to determine the cause of damage which had prevented the facility from opening since its closure due to COVID-19 restrictions. The ACT government has now engaged Kynetic Construction and Management Services, and repair works will begin soon.

Funding for planning and design has been provided for new district playing fields at Stromlo Forest Park, the district playing fields to be delivered in Molonglo. This commitment will see at least two playing fields, floodlighting, a pavilion and parking delivered in this term.

The ACT government is continuing the important program to upgrade facilities across the ACT to be female friendly, to help remove barriers to participation by women and girls in sport. We will also continue to make improvements to community facilities across ACT public schools. In recent years this work has provided an additional 65 to 70 hours per week of community access to these facilities for several sports, including basketball, futsal and roller derby.

The ACT government is committed to making sure that sporting facilities across Canberra support the growth of sports and ensure that there are no barriers to participation.

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

Adjournment

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

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Health—organ donation

DR PATERSON (Murrumbidgee) (6.28): Every Australian must make a choice about whether to opt into organ donation to help save the lives of others. In 2020 alone, 4,000 Australians benefited from organ donation. One person donating their organs can help up to 50 other people. And it is not only the organ recipient who benefits but also their family and loved ones.

However, throughout Australia there is a lack of organ donors to meet demand. At the end of 2020 there were 12,000 people on dialysis and 1,650 people waiting for an organ donation. Hundreds of people each year die of curable illness because they cannot get the medical treatment they need, due to a lack of donated organs.

In the ACT only 25 per cent of people are registered organ donors, as opposed to the national average of 34 per cent. This problem is exacerbated by the fact that not everyone can donate, even among those who are registered. An organ must be in good condition before it can be donated.

Recently, I reached out through my Facebook page to ask people about their feelings and thoughts surrounding organ donation. I heard from many people who supported organ donation, and none who did not. Some encouraged an opt-out system, which is used in other countries, such as Spain and Scotland, to increase donation rates. The advantage of an opt-out system is that it means that people who have never even thought about organ donation are automatically registered. However, opt-out systems are ethically complex, as they can be viewed as an infringement on an individual's rights and do not allow for active consent.

Currently, in order to register to become an organ donor, a person in the ACT must register through the national Organ Donation Register and discuss their decision with their family. It is absolutely critical to talk to family members about organ and tissue donation because the family of the registered donors will be asked for their consent to donation, regardless of whether the person is registered, before it can proceed. The form is easy to fill in. I encourage all Canberrans to register and make sure you have that discussion with your family.

The low numbers of organ donation in the ACT are probably attributable to it simply not being a front-of-mind issue for people. Before 2012, Canberrans could register as organ donors while renewing their drivers licence. This process was phased out and replaced with the national Organ Donation Register. However, in Canberra, when you renew your licence online, there is a message reminding you to sign up to the register.

It is important to me that Canberrans are aware of the need to opt in and of how they can register. Organ donation registry in the ACT is too low and leaves many people waiting, suffering or, worse still, passing away from conditions that are curable through organ donation. I understand that some members of the community have reasons not to register, and I respect that decision. However, for those Canberrans who are not opposed to donating their organs but who simply may not be aware of the need to opt in and have the conversation with their family, please register today. Less than one minute of your time to register could save lives.

Youth—homelessness

MS VASSAROTTI (Kurrajong—Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, Minister for Homelessness and Housing Services and Minister for Sustainable Building and Construction) (6.32): I rise this evening to talk about Youth Homelessness Matters Day. On an average night across Australia, there are approximately 27,000 young people between 12 and 24 who are without what we would consider a home. Children and young people make up two in five of all Australians who are homeless. These figures are devastating. The ACT Greens want a Canberra where all young people have somewhere safe to live and to thrive. Tomorrow is Youth Homelessness Matters Day, so I am taking this opportunity to discuss youth homelessness and acknowledge the dedicated work of the youth sector.

The most common type of youth homelessness is severe overcrowding. Young people may be in supported accommodation, couch surfing, living in boarding houses or sleeping rough. There are many reasons that a young person or child may become

homeless. The most common reason is family or relationship breakdown. Other young people are fleeing family or domestic violence or are experiencing a housing crisis or inadequate housing conditions. Young people also experience homelessness in the transition from out of home care into independent living. The ACT Greens believe we need to have clear targets to improve these outcomes. We know that the supports offered to young people can often have profound effects in terms of reduced harms later in life.

So much of what happens to young people is beyond their control, but the outcome affects them deeply. Behind the statistics are personal stories of hardship, mental illness, family tension, neglect, substance abuse or fear, and possibly all of these things at once. Youth homelessness should be a concern for the whole community. Youth homelessness matters, but it is a complex issue. There is no single fix, no one-size-fits-all response. It requires a whole-of-government response. As Minister for Homelessness and Housing Services, I want to do my part to ensure that we can assist all young people who are in crisis.

Barnardos here in the ACT offers three programs that assist with youth homelessness: the Friendly Landlord Service, the Young Identified Accommodation Support Program, and Our Place. The Youth Emergency Accommodation Network, operated by the Salvation Army, provides support and accommodation to young people experiencing crisis when all other accommodation options have been exhausted. The Ted Noffs Foundation offers the Continuing Adolescent Life Management Program here in the ACT, providing a range of community-based therapeutic services, including individual and family counselling, life skills development, and education and vocational programs.

Last year the development of the first Youth Foyer at CIT Woden was announced. This is one of our commitments in the parliamentary and governing agreement which I am really pleased to see come to fruition.

I would like to acknowledge the work of my colleague Minister Stephen-Smith and her support for the Safe and Connected Youth Program, managed by the Conflict Resolution Service, Northside Community Service, Woden Community Service and Marymead. I further acknowledge that a Ruby's shelter based on the South Australian prototype will provide young people with a safe place to stay while working with their families to return them home as soon as possible. That will be opening soon.

The services that I have spoken about are currently providing, and will provide, valuable support to some of the most vulnerable members of our community. I would like to acknowledge their work, and the work of many other service providers on these issues, including the Youth Coalition of the ACT and the National Youth Coalition for Housing. I apologise to the countless other people who are also doing great work in this area.

Youth homelessness matters. This day is an opportunity, as Yfoundations says, to "raise awareness and public discussion about youth homelessness so that we can develop sustainable and innovative solutions for not only supporting the needs of homeless young people, but also supporting their dreams". We could not agree more.

Environment—community conservation groups

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (6.37): I rise to speak about caring for our parks and urban landscapes. I am the Greens crossbench spokesperson for parks and conservation and one of the great privileges in my role is heading out on the weekend to join work parties. I have had tours, I have done weeding and I have planted trees on Gossan Hill, Mount Painter, around the townhouses in Belconnen, on the Pinnacle and on Black Mountain. I have dug holes and filled them up with water. I have sworn at many, many thistles. I may even learn to identify a native grass if I am given enough coaching.

This is the best way to meet the enormous crew of volunteers we have in Canberra who are caring for our land. I find out what our government is doing right to help support them, and, because this is Canberra, I also find out at great length what we are doing wrong. We have a huge network of Landcare, ParkCare, catchment and citizen science groups. They run on a tiny amount of funding and a huge amount of donated time and goodwill. But we need to give these groups recurrent funds. It is not good enough to give them a handful of cash one year and no guarantee for the next, because if they are going to do the job properly they need to forward plan and come back year after year and keep at it. Weeds do not stop growing at the end of the financial year; that is not how nature works.

We need to start empowering people in their local neighbourhoods to do small plantings and community gardens everywhere. There are a lot of barriers stopping these small schemes, but when they work they are glorious. There is new self-initiated native planting in Belconnen that has been recognised by the Ginninderra Catchment Group, and there are hundreds of self-starter pocket parks everywhere. My street set up a mini golf course in our walkway during COVID. It is a fantastic invitation to play and is full of kids all the time. We need to recognise the amazing social and health benefits of nature. During COVID the volunteers grieved when they could not get out to gather and grow things together and we all realised how precious these ultra-local spots are.

We also need to get better at sharing our space. We are really lucky in Canberra, compared to other cities, because we have green spaces and we have mountains and parks, and we need to protect them. We have room for our walkers and mountain bikers, our birdwatchers and the preservation of nature, so long as we share properly. We also need to share with the native plants and animals who belong here. Tools like NatureMapr show a wealth of wildlife, from orchids to peacock spiders to superb parrots, and we need to make sure that we keep those for future generations.

I am really pleased to see that we have a greater uptake of traditional and Ngunnawal practices. We have six new Ngunnawal rangers now and are hoping for another four next budget. We are seeing an increasing acceptance of cool cultural burns and traditional techniques that really look after the land and water, and there are great programs like Kickstart that show the cross benefits in terms of health and education when we embed traditional knowledge in our lives.

Last week I attended an ACT for Bees event with Minister Vassarotti. We learned about pollinator corridors in our suburbs. It was great to hear from Cormac Farrell about how to plant a bee garden and why we need habitat right through Canberra. Our bees do not travel very far. Depending on the species, they may only cover a few hundred metres. The bees in your garden fertilising your tomatoes are hyper-local. If you want a tomato harvest, you and your neighbours need to plant for the bees in your patch.

Yesterday I attended a natural resource management plan consultation and I heard from some local Landcare experts like Rosemary Blemings. There is so much expertise here in Canberra, but we are still lacking that strategic coordination and the sufficient resources to bring it all together.

This role is a great privilege, but it is also a great responsibility. I really hope our land and waterways will be here long after me. I would really like my daughter, and her daughter after that, to learn to care for it better than I did when I was growing up.

Mental health—veterans

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra—Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Minister for the Arts, Minister for Business and Better Regulation, Minister for Human Rights and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (6.41): Finally, finally, the federal government has listened. Finally, the federal government has listened to hundreds and thousands of voices who have all been calling for one thing: a royal commission into defence and veteran suicide. Nothing less. Finally, this has been achieved.

Many of us hope that this will be a beginning: a beginning where veterans' voices and experiences will be heard and understood, a beginning where issues and truths will be uncovered and addressed, a beginning to save lives—the lives of those who have already sacrificed so much on behalf of their country—and a beginning that is overdue.

But it also closes one chapter, a chapter of intense, difficult, tireless campaigning by so many—by too many, because it should not have had to take a campaign. The facts spoke for themselves. The stories spoke for themselves. The lives and the lives lost, spoke for themselves. It should not have had to take a campaign, but it did, and central to that campaign was Julie-Ann Finney, whose son, Dave, a proud veteran and a Canberran, committed suicide in February 2019.

I was the very first politician that Julie-Ann spoke to, following Dave's death. She gave me permission to speak in the Assembly that April about Dave, to speak about his extraordinary life and his extraordinary contribution. We met in person a few weeks later, when she came to lay a wreath for Dave at the War Memorial, ahead of Anzac Day, and to be there at the dawn service. Julie-Ann made clear to me in our first conversation and later when we met that she wanted a royal commission, nothing less. She said she would not let herself grieve until a royal commission was announced. And every single day over two painful years she has held true to that commitment, working tirelessly for her son and for all veterans.

She demanded better at enormous personal cost, enduring the most extraordinary of personal attacks, which I spoke about in the last sitting that recently occurred. But not once did she waiver; not once did she falter. Quite genuinely, Julie-Ann is the most determined person I have ever met. Her strength and commitment gave others the confidence and valued space they needed to speak up because they were finally being heard. Most importantly, she gave a voice to those who are no longer with us. Her motivation was simple—to honour her son, David Stafford Finney, and to ensure that no other mother goes through the pain that she has.

And while the royal commission is now happening and that first campaign has closed and this first chapter has ended, as Julie-Ann describes it, this is day one of a victory and it is day one of the next fight. I want to honour Julie-Ann and all she has done and will do for future people, future veterans and the veterans right now who are suffering. I thank Julie-Ann for her courage and her dedication. I do not think we will ever quite understand just how much this is going to change lives and how much it will save lives.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 6.46 pm.