



Debates

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Wednesday, 21 April 2021

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Wednesday, 21 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.

Correction to the record

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (10.01), by leave: Yesterday I asserted that Mr Davis had said in this place that he was 100 per cent against everything McDonald's. It seems that those words were not uttered, at least in this place, and I would like to correct the record as such for misrepresenting Mr Davis. I have apologised to Mr Davis personally.

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.

Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate—Part 1.5

Debate resumed from 20 April 2021.

MADAM SPEAKER: 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.

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism) (10.02): I understand that I am now closing the debate on this section of the budget. I thank members for

their contributions yesterday evening. They were insightful and demonstrated that, sometimes, the more things change the more they stay the same.

I will cover Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development priorities within this budget, and endeavour to keep my remarks to within 15 minutes, lest I be whipped into—

Ms Lee interjecting—

MR BARR: Indeed, yes—into resuming my seat. It goes without saying that the delivery of the 2020-21 budget was somewhat unusual, coming very late in the fiscal year and, of course, impacted by COVID and the territory election.

I would remind members, and particularly those who are quick in their commentary around delivery of election commitments, that this is the first of five budgets in this parliamentary term, and that the priorities outlined in detail in the parliamentary and governing agreement for the Tenth Legislative Assembly—and that include a range of actions to improve the wellbeing of Canberrans and our environment, with a particular focus on addressing climate change, protecting and creating jobs, and supporting Canberra's most vulnerable—will be delivered progressively over these five budgets.

The 2020-21 budget provides funding for many of these significant priorities, including the \$150 million Sustainable Household Scheme, \$100 million towards the Big Canberra Battery, \$50 million towards the Vulnerable Household Energy Support scheme, a program to encourage the shift to zero emissions vehicles and, of course, increased funding to strengthen housing and homelessness services.

The budget also reaffirms the government's commitment to key infrastructure projects, including light rail extension, the Canberra Hospital expansion, the new CIT campus in Woden, the rollout of the walk-in health centre network, and the construction and expansion of public schools across the city.

I now turn to the broader economic picture, which is very encouraging. In spite of some of the commentary from others last night, the ACT is in fact in a very good position. Our gross state product grew by 2.4 per cent in fiscal year 2019-20. That is the second highest growth rate of all jurisdictions in Australia, and we would be amongst a very small number in the world where our economy actually grew during the pandemic.

Since the territory budget released in February, I can advise the Assembly that the territory's state final demand was revised up, from growth of two per cent to 2.4 per cent in the September quarter 2020, and by a further 1.3 per cent in the December quarter. As a result, I can advise that the territory's gross state product growth in the current fiscal year, 2020-21, is likely to outperform our budget time estimate of two per cent.

Economic growth is being supported by incredibly strong household consumption, dwelling investment and, pleasingly, a faster recovery in private business investment than we had previously expected.

In the retail economy, retail turnover, which makes up around 30 per cent of household consumption, grew in nominal terms by nearly 15 per cent—14.9 per cent over the year to February—an increase of 8.6 per cent over the year to December that was reflected in the budget. It was even stronger retail expenditure than we anticipated at budget time. Since the budget's release, household consumption in the ACT increased by 4.2 per cent in volume terms in the December quarter, and significant growth in areas outside the retail industry was also observed.

To put some context around this, I have delved a little bit deeper into the retail trade figures and can advise the Assembly that, across the measured sectors in the ABS data over the year, food retailing is up 7.6 per cent in the ACT; household goods are up a whopping 27.8 per cent; clothing, footwear and personal accessory retail are up 26½ per cent; department stores are up nearly 14 per cent; and other retailing is up 16½ per cent. For a sector that did take a big hit in the middle of the pandemic, cafes, restaurants and takeaway food services are now up 12 per cent over the year.

What this is showing is a substitution effect. The money that households were spending on overseas travel, for example, has been redirected into expenditure in the domestic economy. Record low interest rates have also freed up a lot of cash for households whose incomes have not been affected by the pandemic, and that is the majority of households within the ACT, although there still remain some sectors of the economy where the economic rebound has been slower, not as strong or yet to happen, because they are still significantly impacted by COVID-19 measures. That sector is principally the internationally tradeable services sector—international tourism and international education services being the primary examples there.

On the dwelling investment and building approval side—the housing market—clearly, record low interest rates are fuelling an asset price bubble. That is basic economics. It is happening all over Australia, and indeed in many places around the world. The recovery in this sector has been faster than the government anticipated. What we are seeing, though, is a significant flow of investment into this sector. Dwelling investment increased 3.3 per cent in the December quarter, 1.5 per cent higher over the calendar year. That was driven by very strong growth in alterations and additions—renovations.

What has happened is that Canberra households have poured tens of millions of dollars into improving their properties. One of the other features that is flowing very strongly into the increase in house prices is that houses are bigger and better than they were because hundreds of millions of dollars are being poured into them through renovation projects.

The quality of Canberra housing, which was already the highest in the nation, has got even better as a result of households shifting their consumption away from internationally tradeable services like overseas holidays and spending it on their home. That is why retail outlets like Bunnings and others have had the most extraordinary 12 months of trading, often in their business's history, and it is why we are seeing such an extraordinary demand on the renovation sector within the ACT. I am pleased to say that we have seen building approvals more than double over the year, which is

going to support an onward, upward trajectory for dwelling investment, rolling into fiscal year 2021-22.

Perhaps the most important thing to see is that private business investment has picked up. This has been a major problem for Australia, outside the mining sector. Clearly, the mining sector is not an influential sector within the territory economy. We look to private business investment as the way that our economy will grow beyond this current fiscal stimulus period, fuelled both by commonwealth and by ACT government policy settings.

In the December quarter private business investment increased by 6.3 per cent. This is good because it leads to the creation of more jobs outside the public sector. That is a story that I want to report to the Assembly this morning that is again encouraging. Pre pandemic, the ACT had more job vacancies than we had unemployed people. That situation obviously changed at the peak of the pandemic, when unemployment increased and job vacancies reduced. We have now seen, over the year, a near 23 per cent increase in job vacancies. According to the ABS data for February this year, total job vacancies now sit at 8,200 in the ACT—8,200 vacant jobs.

It is an important number to remember, Madam Speaker: 8,200. Right now, that equates to the number of unemployed people in the territory. We have 8,200 job vacancies and we have 8,200 unemployed people. So we are heading back to the situation we were in before, when we had more vacancies than unemployed people.

Obviously, this puts some pressure on certain industry sectors to find skilled staff. I refer members to the comments by Minister Steel in relation to the take-up of a wide variety of training opportunities over the course of the last 12 months, which will go to match those unemployed people, and people who are looking to change jobs, with the vacancies that we have in our economy.

It is also important in that it tells a broader story about the labour market recovery for the ACT. Over the month to March this year, according to the ABS weekly payroll jobs and wages data, total employee jobs increased by half a per cent in the ACT to now be 4.4 per cent above the levels that we saw at this time last year.

The really important story here—and I know members have asked for commentary in relation to gender perspectives in economic data—is that I can advise the Assembly that female employee jobs have shown a stronger recovery than male employee jobs. By the week ending 27 March 2021, the number of women in employment in the ACT, and indeed in Australia, is now higher than the levels of a year ago. It is now male employee jobs that remain below their pre-pandemic levels.

If we look at particular industry sectors, accommodation and food services is still the most heavily affected industry across the COVID period, both here in the ACT and in Australia. Employee jobs in this industry are still lower than they were pre pandemic.

Looking through a demographic lens, the ABS data shows that employment is up for all age groups, except those aged 15 to 19 and 20 to 29. Our challenge, even though we have the lowest youth unemployment rate in Australia, we have the lowest level of

underemployment in Australia, we have the lowest level of unemployment in Australia, and we have a recovery now beyond where we were before in female employment, is that the economic policy task now is young people under 30 and men.

That is not to say that we take our eye off women's employment and employment levels for people over 30, but the only cohorts now who have not recovered to their pre-COVID situation are young people and men. We need to look, as we frame economic policy for the next 12 months and look towards our goal of full employment—which we are getting very close to, with an unemployment rate of 3.4 per cent, 8,200 job vacancies and 8,200 people unemployed—at what programs we need to put in place to support those areas of our labour market that are still experiencing difficulty recovering from the pandemic.

Of course, these figures do change from month to month, so we will not reach absolute conclusions based on one month's data. But looking at a year's worth of data is now showing that the recovery in employment for women has occurred. That is a great outcome, because a year ago we were targeting our economic policy interventions to support a recovery in female employment. We have seen it, and it is fantastic to see.

Moving to some of the broader assessments of the territory economy, I quote David Robertson, the Bendigo bank Head of Economic and Market Research, who said:

The ACT economy has again demonstrated strong economic growth with good results across most indicators for the first quarter of 2021 ...

Jobs ... are back to pre-pandemic levels and the ACT has the lowest unemployment nationally ...

Underemployment in the ACT is 5 per cent, compared with 8.5 per cent nationally ...

Job advertisements are up 23 per cent year-on-year in the ACT; however, this is still a particularly challenging environment for industries exposed to international travel like the hospitality and arts and entertainment sectors.

Hence the announcement today from Minister Cheyne of further support for the arts sector. Mr Robertson continued:

With help from low-interest rates, business and consumer confidence levels are at a record 10-year high, and the ACT property market is looking at gains of 10 per cent, year-on-year, if not more ...

One of the reasons for that, the principal reason, is record low interest rates. The second reason that we are seeing property values increase is the massive investment in the houses themselves. Again, vendors seek to recoup that investment. If you build a bigger house, a better quality house, you expect a higher sales price. That is the reality of the market.

As I advised, and will continue to advise the Assembly, the ACT is now the only Australian state or territory to have a AAA credit rating. Mr Robertson said:

The ACT is in a strong fiscal position, and with a state final demand of around 4 to 5 per cent, things are looking promising.

That is true, and it perhaps belies some of the commentary that we heard last night.

Turning now to economic development, what will the government do to continue this momentum, to support jobs growth in our economy and to get to 250,000 jobs in the territory by 2025? There are a range of measures to support the recovery of our tourism sector—investment in marketing, in COVID-safe tourism co-investment programs, cooperative marketing funds and supporting the recovery of the aviation sector. I welcome the entry into our market of Rex Airlines.

In tertiary education, we have provided our universities with payroll tax deferrals of up to \$10 million to ease cashflow pressures. With Study Canberra, we are working in conjunction with the universities, through the Summer Connections program, to keep those students who are here, internationally and domestically from other parts of Australia, engaged.

We have our Future Jobs Fund, designed to support the universities and key growth industry areas. We have applied research partnerships and projects that will boost productivity as well as save and create jobs in Canberra as we recover from the impacts of COVID-19.

Through the Priority Investment Program, we have supported funding for a range of important projects that support the space industry, our university sector, renewable energy, cybersecurity and agritech. We are seeing significant growth in these industry sectors.

The government has supported, through the space industry programs, the establishment of the Quantum Optical Ground Station at Mount Stromlo. We have enabled free access for national space industry SMEs, start-ups and researchers to the largest space flight test facilities in Australia at the ANU. We have established the Australian national space mission design facility at UNSW Canberra, to bring together industry, agencies and the research sector. We have supported an industry research consortium to establish and demonstrate space-based quantum crypto communications, and we have supported a number of spin-off companies out of our universities, including Skykraft, to collaborate with multinational space companies to develop and launch smallsat constellations for space-based global services and capability—of course, developing capability within our economy for global export.

Through the defence industry work, we are working closely with the Australian Industry and Defence Network, CBRIN, AustCyber's Canberra node in the Australian Space Agency, the Centre for Defence Industry Capability and the Department of Defence to build local capability. There will be a Team Canberra exhibition at the Land Forces 2021 event in Brisbane in the middle of the year.

Earlier this month, Minister Cheyne announced, on behalf of the government, a commitment to the Canberra Cyber Hub, capitalising on opportunities that this

high-growth sector offers our economy. The work on establishing the hub will be led by former UNSW Canberra Rector Dr Michael Frater. The focus of the hub will be on four key objectives: to grow Canberra's cybersecurity education pathways; to accelerate SME growth connections and to attract investment; to promote the ACT's research capabilities; and to showcase Canberra's cybersecurity capabilities. The government's investment also supports collaboration across the sector with the CBR Innovation Network to support the hub to accelerate opportunities for small and medium enterprises.

These sectors that we have touched on, including renewable energy, are ones with tremendous potential for multibillion-dollar growth within Australia. The ACT is very well placed to leverage these opportunities, commonwealth government procurement, multinational investment, and the skills and talents we have within our existing public sector research institutions, the universities and the CBR Innovation Network. It is an exciting time in these industry sectors. The ACT government will continue to be a partner with the universities and our R&D sector to grow this area of our economy.

I will close on that note, Madam Speaker. I advise members that, of course, a detailed response to the issues raised by the various Assembly committees is provided in the government response. I draw people's attention particularly to the economic analysis of the ACT government's COVID stimulus packages. In particular, when you take out the commonwealth government and its share of the ACT economy, you see that, of the balance of the ACT's gross state product, the ACT government's investment in economic growth and economic stimulus during the COVID period is nearly double that of any other Australian jurisdiction.

I commend this chapter of the budget to the Assembly and acknowledge the work of the many ministers in this portfolio in bringing together a coherent economic development strategy for the ACT. Things are looking good, Madam Speaker, for our COVID recovery, and we need to build on this momentum.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate—Part 1.6

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (10.23): It is my absolute pleasure to be jousting with Minister Steel for the first time in an appropriation debate as the shadow minister for transport. I acknowledge that we are having this appropriation debate in the week that celebrates the second birthday of the commencement of the light rail service. I would genuinely note that the building of the light rail line and the establishment of Capital Metro is certainly one of the great political achievements of the Labor-Greens government.

Despite that, as we move forward into the 21st century as a city, I think that one of our great failures as a city continues to be the ability to convince more Canberrans to get out of their cars and onto public transport. Anyone who believes that we could solve that malaise by simply building a tram down Northbourne Avenue, it seems, is sadly mistaken. We are a hell of a long way from where we need to be in regard to public transport patronage in the ACT. The Canberra Liberals are committed to light

rail. We are broadly committed to an integrated public transport system that services all of Canberra with safe, reliable, efficient and accessible services, and I am not sure that is what we have got at the moment.

During my time in the Assembly, I have watched with dismay as this government has trashed and dismantled so many of the popular bus routes, particularly in outlying suburbs. I know that my colleague Ms Lawder would agree with me that our ongoing constituent engagement in Tuggeranong, in particular, has resulted in dozens of conversations with suburban people who have ceased using the bus because it no longer services their needs. It is no surprise that the most recent data suggests that bus travel in and out of Tuggeranong, Woden and Belconnen is down since the establishment of the tram, and that is irrespective of any COVID effect.

Of course, while all of this is playing out, the minister insists that light rail is hitting the spot. A lot of the rhetoric in recent weeks has come from a recently released survey of tram use from Transport Canberra. The media broadly reported the comments from Minister Steel without really delving all that deeply into them. This was a Transport Canberra survey of light rail users, so these are people using the tram. Of course, the survey suggested that they were all using the tram—that 100 per cent of light rail passengers are using the tram, and that is great.

Mr Steel's media release associated with those survey results indicates that light rail patronage is back to within 75 per cent of pre-COVID levels, and that is great. I also note that it appears we have had a bounce back in this city a little faster than in some other cities. But I am still not sure that these are numbers that we should be getting all that excited about. The most recent quarterly figures show that our daily average boardings number—this is for light rail—is less than 8,000. Given that most of the journeys are return, that would suggest we are talking about 4,000 Canberrans each day. Granted, I am working on a seven-day figure here; if we were working on a five-day figure, those numbers would go up to just shy of 10,000. But let us work on a seven-day figure. It is just shy of 8,000; so we are talking about 4,000 Canberrans each day.

You need to consider, Madam Speaker, that many of those passengers would have been riding the bus if the tram was not there. And let's be optimistic about this. Let's take an indicator from the Transport Canberra patronage survey, which showed that 70 per cent were more likely to use public transport now that light rail was in operation. They were more likely. It did not suggest that they would not be using public transport if the light rail was not there; it was just that they were more likely. From that figure, I think we can extrapolate that potentially 2,000 of those current 4,000 passengers per day would have caught the bus anyway. At the end of the day, we are talking about 2,000 people.

I would acknowledge that the figure is growing. I would acknowledge that, when we get the new quarterly figures for the quarter that has just gone, they will be somewhat higher, particularly because of the seasonal ups and downs of public transport usage, which traditionally shows February as the most used month in terms of public transport. But when you consider what we have done in terms of the spend and all of

the changes, and the fact that, at this stage of the game, we are talking about 2,000 people each day, I think the city deserves more bang for its buck.

This is Canberra. We should be aiming high, and I know that the minister aims high. There was a time when Canberra, as a city, was winning this battle. Mr Steel would be well aware of these historic facts, but in the 70s and 80s we were leading the nation on so many measures when it came to public transport; we were killing it. It was all being achieved at that stage by commuters in Belconnen, Woden and Tuggeranong taking feeder buses from their local neighbourhoods to town centres, then transferring to intertown express services. In 1985 our per capita usage rate was the second highest in the nation, only behind Melbourne. We had raised per capita patronage to 96 trips per annum, which is a figure that we would die for now.

That is ancient history now, but it remains, Madam Speaker, as proof that if you get the network right, it is more than possible to convince Canberrans to leave their car at home or even sell one of them. The 1970s and 80s showed us that a low-density city could become less car dependent in a relatively short period of time.

The Canberra Liberals are committed to light rail, but we are also committed to Canberrans getting value for money, and I am not sure that we are getting that at the moment. It is difficult to argue with most of the stated 2020-21 strategic objectives. “Improving customer experience with public transport and driving an increase in patronage”: at the end of the day, with most of this, we are on the same page, in terms of the end result. Some of the targets seem a little low. I would give as an example operating efficiency, where the directorate has a target of reducing operating costs per network kilometre by one per cent each year from the 2019-20 targets.

The budget statement concedes that the establishment of cashless travel will be a big driver in operating efficiency. Of course, we are still dragging our feet on that front, and I am still at a loss to understand the extraordinary delays in this whole process—the establishment of a new ticketing system for Canberra’s network. This has been promised to the Canberra public for a long time, and history would show that it is perhaps unlikely to be delivered by its most recent promised deadline of 2023. I sincerely hope that I am proven wrong on that front. I am severely frustrated, as is the bulk of the Canberra public, at the minister’s insistence on hiding behind the confidentiality deed and dodging his responsibility in dealing at all with this issue publicly.

Strategic objective No 3 in the budget papers is “to drive innovation and a sense of excitement about public transport”. All I would say, Madam Speaker, is that if you are looking for a minister to create a sense of excitement about anything, Mr Steel would be my go-to man. We will be monitoring the level of excitement created by Mr Steel, and I am sure that it will exceed expectations.

Of course, it is not possible to speak about Transport Canberra without making mention of the ongoing headaches around weekend timetables. They are still a fair distance from where we need to be, and that is despite an extraordinary effort to recruit more staff. There is an elephant in the room here that the government really

need to address to prove that they are here to genuinely serve the people of Canberra and not just their union mates.

Before I hear—and I can see the smirk coming already—the worn-out, tired, old rhetoric from Mr Steel saying that we evil Liberals are going to privatise everything, I would point out that only one party here in this Assembly has privatised any aspect of our public transport, and it is not us; it is ACT Labor, along with the Greens, with Capital Metro, or Canberra Metro.

In the transport space, my criticism is much more about ongoing policy direction rather than specific items of appropriation. Most of the spending lines are for nuts and bolts, practical items, about which there can be no argument. The budget statements outline a series of strategic objectives, and much of the spending here is simply to fulfil those objectives. As such, it is difficult for us as an opposition to pick apart the spending, line by line, as our disagreement with government is at a much wider policy direction level.

We will continue to hold the government to account in regard to targets and overall service delivery in the ACT because that is what Canberrans pay us to do. We, as a city, deserve much more than we are getting at present.

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (10.33): The Greens understand the challenge that COVID-19 presented to the city, and we appreciate Transport Canberra and City Services and its hardworking staff for stepping up in so many areas. We are glad to see the first budget under the new parliamentary and governing agreement, which is setting us on the path towards building a better normal

The ACT Greens also believe strongly in public transport; we agree with Mr Parton on that. We believe that all transport in the ACT, including our freight, should be as environmentally sustainable as possible, and we really want to see a rapid transition to zero emission technologies.

We were pleased to see in our recent budget that we have progress on our Woden bus depot. We are glad that we are moving towards a 100 per cent zero emissions bus fleet by 2040, and we would be open to an earlier target, if that is in line with technology and other factors. We know that other jurisdictions have set 2030 targets for their zero emissions bus fleets, so it is certainly something to look into.

We are also hoping for a 100 per cent zero emissions fleet in other government operations, like electric garbage trucks. These are now in use in the City of Fremantle, Yarra City Council and Adelaide. We have a kerbside collection contract coming up for renewal in 2023, so it is a good time to be looking at that and factoring that in. We have found that zero emissions vehicles are a great financial investment as well as an environmental one. They may cost more up front, but they bring big savings over their life because we do not have to pay for petrol or diesel.

We are glad that our bus fleet will soon be 100 per cent disability compliant. We would like to see an increase in on-time running and reliability, and we would like to

see some better servicing on weekends. But we are pleased to see that there has been a bit of progress in some of those areas.

We are pleased to see light rail doing so well. It has proved to be incredibly popular and reliable, and it has contributed strongly to getting Canberrans onto public transport. I grew up here in Canberra, and I know that a lot of my friends who love light rail simply did not catch the bus. I think it is actually opening up a new market for public transport. It was a major Greens initiative, and it took a lot of work to get it going, and we are pleased to see that it is rolling along now. I am personally keen to see it expand into my electorate of Ginninderra. I was really glad, when we made the suggestion to Mr Steel, the minister for transport, that he took it up. He is including a connection to Kippax in the feasibility study for light rail stage 3. A lot of people live in west Belconnen; that region is growing really fast, with Ginninderry. It is essential that we provide good public transport services in that area.

We are also pleased to see the continuation of the flexibus service, but we have made a few recommendations for improvement through our recent estimates process. I am happy to see that the ACT government have taken up some of those recommendations. We look forward to seeing what happens when they investigate a convenient app to book on-demand flexibus services alongside the existing options.

We are also pleased that we are exceeding targets set for bike lane and footpath construction, but we do not think that those targets are ambitious enough. We need a lot more investment in this area. We know that a lot of people will not ride or walk, or they will not feel safe doing it, unless they have a well-maintained network of separated paths, and there are still too many gaps. If we want 20 per cent of Canberrans using active transport, we need to spend 20 per cent of our roads capital and maintenance budget on that network of footpaths, shared paths and bike lanes.

I am pleased to hear about the efforts to improve the efficiency of inspections of the community path network, and I will be really keen to see what happens with the trial of e-bikes by ACT government officers looking at that network and checking conditions.

The government have set a target that 90 per cent of roads should be maintained in good condition. My estimates committee recently recommended that we need to set a similar target for our footpaths, shared paths and bike lanes. The ACT government have not quite accepted that, but they have said they will look at developing an appropriate indicator and they will look at acquiring the equipment they need to make sure they can carry it out. I am looking forward to seeing what happens on that in the next estimates.

I am pleased to see that the government is finally moving ahead with a food and organic waste processing facility. It is great news; it is the essential next step in our waste strategy. Not all organic waste can go into a home composting system and not everyone has access to composting. Organic waste in landfill is generating methane, which is a powerful climate change gas, so the facility is really good news.

We have quite a lot of work to do to make sure that we set up an easy to use system and to make sure that system is making a high-quality product that improves our land and soils. We do not want to make some of the mistakes I have seen in other council areas, so we need to make sure that we carry out that project really well. I am pleased to see that a trial is planned later this year in Belconnen, and I am looking forward to working with the minister, stakeholders and the community as we progress, to make sure that we get a really good system in place.

Having said that, we still have a lot of work to do to turn our linear economy into a circular economy. “Circular economy” has become a bit of a buzz term, and I do not use it in that way; I mean it genuinely. For everything that we make, produce and discard, we need to make sure that we have a recycling option for it at the end of life.

That means we need much better education, we need more innovation and we need more grants in the circular economy. We also need much better data about what we are producing and what we are discarding. We need that data to be open and transparent, and we need it to be published at least every two years. That is what we will use to show where we are progressing and where we are falling behind. Without it, we simply do not know what we are doing.

There is a lot of national work to do on product stewardship, package labelling and standardising across jurisdictions. I understand that this is really slow work, and the ACT has limited control in that national sphere. I am keen to see it progress and I am really happy to help to contribute in any way that I can.

I am pleased to see another local Greens initiative rolled out—the plastics phase-out legislation. It is great to see a little bit of hope that, when we keep going and persist in a certain tricky area, we can come up with a solution. It is good to see how much consultation has been included in that rollout. I think we will end up with a really good result.

Before I move on from city services, I want to note the work that TCCS and PCS do. We have land managers working in different directorates and they are all sort of working in the same field. I think they would benefit from a little bit more coordination and strategic direction. I feel that we could get much better results with a little bit of gentle cultural change.

I hear from a lot of environmental land managers about how mowing and planting can be done in a better way if we use more local knowledge, and if we focus more on creating habitat. I feel that we can get much better outcomes and create better neighbourhoods if we make a few subtle changes in that regard.

This is a good budget, and we welcome future budgets where the ACT government focuses on city services. We would also like to see a bit more insourcing, in line with our parliamentary and governing agreement commitments.

Transport Canberra and City Services were really stretched over the last year. They had a lot of additional pressures with COVID, the bushfires, hail and all of the

disasters that we have seen. We are pleased to see things moving in the right direction, and we are grateful for all of the hard work by so many staff who have kept this city running through all of that. We will continue to advocate for the best city services for Canberrans.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (10.41): I am pleased to stand today to speak on the 2020-21 appropriation bill. I do this with some sense of familiarity, because under this Labor-Greens government not much changes for city services. We see more money committed here and there under ambiguous titles. It makes it difficult to compare year with year. We have road and community infrastructure. We have road safety improvements. Things change all the time.

What does not change is that this city services portfolio is intensely personal for constituents, residents, Canberrans. As soon as people back their car out of the driveway, walk to the bus stop or take the dog around the block, they encounter things in the city services portfolio that they would like to see better done.

The most common things raised with me when I am out and about in my electorate are not light rail, the hospital expansion or climate change but the everyday city services issues that really annoy people. It is about footpaths, potholes, streetlights and dogs. Those are the things that people get quite annoyed about. People ask me where their hard-earned money is going if it is not going towards the basic municipal services in their neighbourhood. That is what the budget is all about.

I can tell residents where their money is not going. It is not going to the Lawrence Wackett Crescent and Tharwa Drive intersection in Theodore, where residents have witnessed accidents and asked for traffic lights to be installed. It is not going to extending Dunoon Street to the Hindmarsh Drive and Palmer Street intersection so that O'Malley residents are not banked up in hundreds of metres of traffic each weekday morning at Tyagarah Street each time someone tries to turn right.

It is not going towards installing a pedestrian crossing outside Black Mountain School. It is not going to installing parking bollards at Melba shops in Ginninderra, although there have been numerous break-ins at these shops in past years. It is not going towards duplicating Gungahlin Drive from Clarrie Hermes Drive and Horse Park Drive to the intersection with Gundaroo Drive near the Gungahlin Lakes Club to reduce the traffic congestion in that area. It is not going to fixing Beltana Road in Pialligo, an issue brought up continuously by Kurrajong members for over five years now. Business owners and residents continue to be disadvantaged because this Labor-Greens government have put this in the too-hard basket.

It is not going to redesigning and improving the northern car park at Cooleman Ridge in Murrumbidgee. Like my Liberals and Greens colleagues, I was pleased that the minister finally decided to listen to his own electorate's wishes and stop the destruction of the local green space in that area, but that does not give the government a get-out-of-jail-free card because there still needs to be a parking solution found for residents. Even better, they need to address the shopping centre issues in Molonglo that have contributed to the greater demand for parking in Weston Creek.

It is not going to upgrading the intersection of Baldwin Drive and Maribyrnong Avenue to stop the right-hand lane becoming congested, overflowing into the mainstream traffic and blocking one of the lanes. It is not going to installing a footpath along Mackellar Crescent in Cook, a street that has never had any footpath, though residents have lived there for over 50 years. This is not an age-friendly city approach.

It is not going to upgrading the Mortimer Lewis Drive traffic lights at the southern end, where the road meets Drakeford Drive in Greenway, an upgrade that constituents in my electorate of Brindabella have been requesting for years. There has been additional construction in that area of Greenway recently, and residents have very real safety and traffic concerns about the area. It is not going to improvements in road safety in Callaway Crescent in Gordon, where some residents have had cars plough into their front yards.

Nor is it necessarily going towards the removal of abandoned vehicles. The budget papers showed a 61 per cent achievement against the target when this minister had promised that there would be an improvement in the removal of abandoned vehicles. There were supposedly legislative changes to ensure that this could take place.

Another interesting part of the discussion in the budget hearings concerned playgrounds. During the hearings, I noted a sponsored post from the ACT government which said, "Want to find out what's in the 2020-21 ACT budget for Tuggeranong?" It included a graphic, a tile, that said, "We are upgrading playgrounds." If you clicked on that link, there was no information about playgrounds included in that paid advertising for the ACT government's budget. When I asked the minister about this during the hearings, he was unable to provide a list of playgrounds in Tuggeranong that would be upgraded, although he came back with a list of playgrounds after taking that on notice.

I feel that was quite deceptive advertising. Why would that be? Why would they advertise upgrading playgrounds? Because they know how important that is to residents. Residents are constantly requesting playground upgrades, improvements and maintenance. The government has used this as a drawcard for people to click on the link. When people clicked on it, there was no information about playgrounds available for residents to see.

I could go on with many other items, but one thing that has been high on the agenda over the past few months has been mowing. We have heard about the greater levels of rainfall and that this makes it hard to mow. It is hard not just to do mowing but to do burning off when it is really wet. I will read some extracts from a *Canberra Times* editorial. It says:

To a small extent, the recent wet weather mitigates the Government's tardiness; one can neither do much mowing, nor burning off, when it rains.

It goes on to say:

One would have expected those lessons to have been learned ... our government must cut the grass.

This editorial in the *Canberra Times* was from 9 January 2012, nearly 10 years ago. This government has not learned its lesson, despite there being issues about mowing year after year.

In 2006 the *Canberra Times* reported more rain than the long-term average. In 2007 the *Canberra Times* reported double the December average rain. In 2011 the *Canberra Times* said, “We have never seen a season like it.” In 2012 a *Canberra Times* editorial said, “The 2011-12 summer was the 14th wettest on record.” In 2014 the *Canberra Weekly* reported “the significant growth this season of the grass”. In 2020 the *RiotACT* reported on “years of drought followed by this year’s big wet” and said, “the recent wet weather means longer grass”, from Mr Gentleman.

This is not a new problem. In the city services portfolio, we see an erosion of services over time, followed by an injection of funds to make it look as though the government is doing something. We never seem to get back to where we were originally. How many more years of these mowing backlogs are we going to see?

Residents are concerned about fire safety. They are concerned about snakes. They are concerned about the proliferation of weeds from the seeds that get spread around, not to mention the visual amenity of their neighbourhoods, which look really tatty and neglected when this government fails to cut the grass.

How many more budget debates will we have before the government starts listening to, and addressing, the concerns of residents? (*Second speaking period taken.*) It would be nice for the government to address residents’ concerns. It would be nice if they had a more integrated approach so that, when reports are made via Access Canberra, via the Fix My Street portal, residents get a real response about when something is going to be addressed. For years we have heard excuses from this government about why it is not happening—about two different systems and therefore there being a failure to complete the feedback loop to residents.

When someone reports something on Fix My Street, they do not understand why it is incumbent on them to continue to check whether the issue has been fixed and to lodge another request if it has not been fixed. I am quite a frequent user of Fix My Street myself. I find it frustrating when I have to keep reporting the same issue over and over again, even though Fix My Street seems to regard it as a closed issue.

It would be great if the government did more about abandoned local shops. This is another key reason why residents get upset. If you are lucky enough to have local shops, there are also neglected shops and shops that look run down.

How many more of these issues are we going to encounter before this government starts taking city services seriously? How many more years of complaints will we have about basic local services. This government should be addressing these municipal issues. It should be one of the very first steps for the government to address. I look forward to the day when this may begin to be the case.

MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi) (10.53): I wish to echo and support everything my colleague Ms Clay has said in terms of the TCCS budget but bring my special emphasis to a matter that is quite close to my heart: trees. We want to create a city that looks after and expands our beautiful urban trees and green space that make Canberra the bush capital. This vision for a 21st century green city is one that integrates ecosystems into our urban environment. By establishing a network of neighbourhood forests as part of our 30 per cent tree canopy target, we can protect and grow one of the things that make this city great.

An approach to urban trees will make Canberra a biodiversity sanctuary, providing a home for plants and animals being impacted by climate change, habitat loss, bushfires and urban sprawl. The way we are developing our city is not sustainable. It is a losing battle if we plant a million saplings while developers can still cut down hundreds of thousands of massive mature trees that provide essential shade, habitat and food for the people and animals that call Canberra home.

The Greens welcome the commitment to 25,000 trees over the next four years to help grow Canberra's urban forest. This is a good start, but it is nowhere near enough to reach the 30 per cent canopy cover target by 2045. The government's Urban Forest Strategy states that to reach this target we need to plant over 450,000 trees on public land over the next 25 years. If we continue at the rate of 25,000 per four years, we will only reach a third of that number.

I would also like to stress the importance of equity of access to tree canopy cover. Some parts of this city have more than six times the tree cover of other parts. We need to ensure that tree-poor areas of the city are prioritised for tree plantings, as they are the worst affected by the heat island effect and changes in temperature from climate change.

Our trees are under threat due to climate change, old age and redevelopment. Street and park trees in our established suburbs are in decline by about 3,000 per year. To help reach our 30 per cent canopy target, changes to our planning and development system, as well as improved management of our existing urban open spaces, are required. These will include changing the Tree Protection Act and planning system to make it harder for developers to cut down mature canopy trees during development. It will also include making room for green space and trees in development by expanding the Living Infrastructure Plan to cover more residential developments like mixed-use zones, more space for street and park trees in new suburbs, and more tree canopy in local shops and town centres. We also need to look at amending the planning and development systems to incentivise builders to plant more rooftop and vertical gardens.

Biodiversity is key to a healthy environment. We need to build ecosystems, not monocultures, to ensure that our urban trees are resilient to climate change; provide shade to cool our city; and provide food and habitat for birds and other animals wanting to call Canberra home. We want to build a city sanctuary for wildlife.

To ensure that this can be achieved, we need to improve our management practices in our urban open spaces and around our neighbourhood forests by protecting trees with habitat hollows for wildlife habitat; varying public space maintenance guidelines to adapt to the tree locations; protecting young saplings that have self-seeded from our remnant trees in public spaces and open parks; strategically placing fallen logs to support bugs, birds and reptiles; and protecting the area surrounding remnant mature trees by creating mini-ecosystem pockets with grass and shrub plantings and fallen logs. This may be collocated with nature play in appropriate areas. As well as improving biodiversity and amenity, it also reduces the mowing requirements and costs that my colleague Ms Lawder was concerned about. In closing, I will say it again: “Let’s hear it for trees.”

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee—Minister for Skills, Minister for Transport and City Services and Special Minister of State) (10.57): It is a pleasure to rise to speak on another budget as the Minister for Transport and City Services. This area is responsible for many of the services and much of the infrastructure that Canberrans interact with on a day-to-day basis. It is a privilege to work in such a varied portfolio and be in touch with so many Canberrans about the things that are important to them at the local level, whether that is trees, footpaths, roads, waste, animals, libraries, public transport or cemeteries—and so much more.

Because of the breadth of this portfolio, Transport Canberra and City Services receives one of the largest shares of investment through the ACT budget—in the 2021-22 budget investing more than \$780 million in delivering transport and city services for Canberrans.

I cannot do justice to the breadth of the portfolio in a short time, but I would like to draw out a few highlights which speak to our government’s priorities for Canberra and how we are investing in jobs today while building for the city’s future. The budget demonstrates our government’s commitment to investing in infrastructure across Canberra to create and protect local jobs. Through this budget we have been fast-tracking feasibility and design work on projects across Canberra to develop a pipeline of shovel-ready proposals for the coming years.

Design work is progressing for the new Sulwood Drive shared path; upgrades to Campbell, Duffy and Kaleen local shops, with consultation open; open space improvements at Telopea Park; and pedestrian and traffic improvements to the Beltana Road precinct in Pialligo. It is rubbish for the opposition to suggest that there is no work happening on that road. Feasibility studies will also be undertaken to assess improvements to the intersections of Streeton Drive with Heysen Street and Namatjira Drive in Weston.

We are also investing in a range of local infrastructure projects through the second phase of the Australian government’s Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Program, including new shade sails and fencing at playgrounds; a new half pipe at Belconnen skate park; and a boost to road maintenance and pothole repair. There is also the ACT government’s investment in surge capacity for mowing during what has been a very wet season—not unprecedented, but certainly very wet.

These are the kinds of projects that protect and create local jobs while improving amenity and livability across Canberra's suburbs. We recognise that this kind of local government investment is an important up-front driver of Canberra's economic recovery now and for the months to come.

In addition to fast-tracking small works, the ACT government is getting on with delivering our significant infrastructure pipeline through the budget. I will have the chance to focus on light rail in speaking on Major Projects Canberra later in the debate, but it would be remiss of me not to mention that this budget continues the work we are doing to deliver stage 2 to Woden, something that we are committed to.

Building light rail to Woden will help to create reliable and comfortable transport with a transport spine, north to south, that better connects our major town centres. It will make it easier to get between them and improve our integrated transport network, connected with buses. It will give Canberrans more options for when and how they travel so that we can all do our part to help reduce Canberra's emissions and climate change. And it will support investment in vibrant places along the route for people to live, work and socialise in as our city continues to grow.

Through the light rail survey, we have heard that we are seeing more people who are choosing to use public transport for the first time. Forty-three per cent of people who have been surveyed said that they had not used public transport before—buses—before using light rail. That is a fantastic result and demonstrates the real power of light rail—certainly the first stage. We hope that can be extended through the second stage. That is what we call a bang for our buck. That sort of comment from the opposition just demonstrates that they are not really committed to light rail.

Light rail stage 1 came in under budget; we got a very good price for it. It is delivering higher than expected results in terms of patronage—to the extent that, just prior to the pandemic starting in the first three weeks of term 1 of 2020, we saw a 10.26 per cent increase in the number of people using public transport across the board, light rail and buses. It demonstrated the powerful effect that light rail was having and also the effect of the extra rapid buses throughout Canberra in driving public transport growth.

Patronage has come down during the pandemic, as it has in every single city around the world, as a result of public health directions that were in place, and are still in place, asking people not to use public transport during peak times. We are working on recovery, and that is why we are committed to the Transport Canberra Recovery Plan.

Light rail is not the only important item of transport infrastructure on our agenda. Through the budget we are continuing to progress design and construction on upgrades to the Monaro Highway, with the preliminary sketch plans for the Lanyon Drive interchange, part of the Monaro Highway upgrade, expected to be released for public consultation towards the middle of this year.

Through co-funding with the Australian government, we are also undertaking a feasibility study and developing preliminary sketch plans for options to improve

capacity and safety along Parkes Way, which constantly features in the commentary on road traffic every morning on the radio.

We are also undertaking a corridor study to determine ways of improving the commute for people travelling from Canberra's south-east—Tuggeranong Parkway onto Parkes Way—looking at future capacity improvements associated with the Molonglo Valley development and ongoing growth there.

Construction on the duplication of the newly named Gundaroo Drive between Ginninderra Drive and the Barton Highway is now well underway. To futureproof this road for future development south of the Barton Highway, in this year's budget we have invested in the installation of a new signalised intersection between Gundaroo Drive and Owen Dixon Drive. This upgrade will be delivered as part of the duplication which is expected to be completed around 2023.

We know how fast the Molonglo Valley is growing. That is why we are investing in the transport infrastructure to support it. The new John Gorton Drive bridge over the Molonglo River is progressing well, following the approval of the development application earlier this year, with the project to include intersection access to the new future Molonglo commercial centre, on-road cycle lanes and an off-road shared path. We are looking forward to detailed design getting underway.

We are making important and strategic investments in our bus network to support the transition to a zero emissions fleet. This year's budget starts the work of electrifying the Woden bus depot to enable the charging of electric buses. We have committed to procuring 90 battery electric buses to upgrade our fleet and phase out the most polluting vehicles over the next three years. This investment in the depot is an important enabling project that will see the new zero emissions buses fit seamlessly into our fleet with the charging capability that is required to support them.

On the subject of buses, it is worth highlighting something our government did not do in this year's budget or those that preceded it. When COVID-19 hit, we saw public transport patronage collapse, compared to passenger numbers the year before. This was, as I mentioned, a trend that was seen around the country. What we did during the pandemic was expand services, and I am really proud that we did that. A number of cities cut them; that was not the right thing to do. We needed that extra capacity to make sure that people could socially distance themselves as much as possible.

During the pandemic, we increased services by 700 services across the network. We also increased frequency on morning light rail services from six minutes to five minutes, a commitment we made prior to the pandemic that we saw through. That reflects the huge number of people using light rail.

We recognise that reliable, accessible public transport is critical for many people across Canberra, including essential workers and, during the pandemic, people who needed to move around the city. Safe, reliable, accessible public transport is an essential public service, and we believe in properly investing in it. Through the Zero-Emission Transition Plan, which outlines the future fleet growth and the future development of depots, we will continue to invest in public transport in years to come.

Our investments in public transport are an important part of our agenda to make Canberra a more sustainable city. But we are also tackling this in other important ways. An area in my portfolio that relates to emissions is waste and recycling. It is all about developing a circular economy in which we recycle things and re-use them as many times as possible, tackling the throwaway consumer culture that sees too much waste end up in landfill. We are doing that in a range of ways. The Plastic Reduction Bill has passed through the Assembly and we are in the education phase with businesses around the phase-out of single-use plastics.

One of the most important initiatives from this budget that supports this agenda is our decision to bring forward the rollout of bulky waste services to all Canberra households by the middle of the year. That has a real focus on recycling, which has seen take-up rates in terms of the amount recovered from landfill of 30.8 per cent. When benchmarked with other cities, that is very high. We look forward to continuing the rollout. It will be to Belconnen first—bookings have been open for collections there—and will be available to the rest of the city by July. Every Canberra household will then be able to book one free collection a year of up to two cubic metres of bulky waste. This service is making an important contribution towards diverting waste from landfill, as well as supporting Canberrans in the community through organisations like Vinnies, the Salvos and GIVIT, connecting items that are needed with people who need them.

There is much more great work going on across Transport Canberra and City Services through the budget. Our government is very grateful to the hardworking teams across the directorate who are delivering it. There are our bus drivers. There are our grass mowers, who we have added extra capacity for; we really appreciate the extra work they have been doing to make sure that our city looks good. There are our waste management teams and people who do the important policy and service design work that sits behind many of our infrastructure projects. It is a busy and dynamic directorate, and I want to thank every member of it for their daily commitment to delivering better transport and city services for Canberrans.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Justice and Community Safety Directorate—Part 1.7

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Manager of Government Business, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Industrial Relations and Workplace Safety, Minister for Planning and Land Management and Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (11.09): I want to commence by expressing my thanks to, and the government's appreciation of, all the staff that work in emergency, policing and corrective services for their continued efforts in keeping the ACT community safe.

As Minister for Police and Emergency Services, I am pleased to support the 2020-21 budget, which contains a number of initiatives that will enhance emergency services and policing capabilities for the ACT. In the 2020-21 budget, we have provisioned a significant boost in funding for ACT emergency services. New initiatives supported include \$42.1 million over a four-year period for increased firefighting capacity to

ensure that the ACT Fire & Rescue operational response capability are able to meet the increased demand for their services.

An additional \$45.2 million of capital funding will be provided to design and construct a joint ACT Fire & Rescue and ACT Ambulance Service station at Clunies Ross Street, Acton. The new Acton station construction is expected to be completed in 2023. Given its location, the new station is expected to be one of the busiest stations and help to improve emergency response times.

An investment of \$14.8 million over four years will strengthen first response capability for acute mental health episodes in order to provide in situ mental health assessment treatment and care through the PACER response team. The PACER service is based on an integrated service model that brings together police, paramedics and mental health clinicians to support the safe assessment and treatment of people experiencing acute mental health episodes. The total investment includes \$3.9 million provided to ACT Health for their services relating to this initiative.

There is \$2.2 million over two years, commencing in 2020-21, to undertake further investigations into the existence of poly-fluoroalkyl substances, PFAS, at eight current Emergency Services Agency sites and the site of the former Charnwood fire station. This critical work is required to ensure the safety of government sites and workplaces. Some \$0.6 million of capital funding will be spent to strengthen critical ICT systems and spatial awareness infrastructure used by frontline staff of the Emergency Services Agency in the delivery of emergency services to the ACT community.

On ACT Policing, this budget builds on the significant investment in the 2019-20 ACT budget for the Police Services Model. There is \$2.4 million in 2020-21 for ACT Policing to continue the COVID-19 response through the next phase of the pandemic in 2020-21. This initiative will ensure that the workforce is best placed to respond to the health emergency and public safety compliance requirements. \$0.9 million has been provided to ACT Policing for costs associated with combating the 2019-20 bushfire crisis and for the implementation of initiatives to keep members of the community safe during the COVID-19 pandemic, including providing personal protection equipment for police officers and additional cleaning and intercoms at police stations.

\$0.7 million will be spent to undertake two feasibility studies to consider strategic accommodation options for the Winchester Police Centre at Belconnen and the ACT Policing Gungahlin presence, currently located at the JESC in Gungahlin. \$0.7 million was provided in 2020-21 to support the increase in funding required for the provision of on-call forensic medical services available to ACT Policing. Additional funding will support services such as the medical assessment of people in custody; coronial and criminal investigations, including documenting evidence of injuries from assaults for victims of violent crimes; attending death scenes to assist in the coronial process; and providing expert evidence for court.

Early in 2020-21, \$0.3 million was provided to fund a feasibility study to find a viable solution for ACT Policing's traffic operations centre, TOC. On the basis of this study,

the government agreed to fund the relocation of the ACT Policing traffic operations centre to a fit-for-purpose facility which will better meet the business and operational needs of ACT Policing. The cost of this initiative has been withheld to secure value for money when the government approaches the market.

This appropriation bill also provides funding to strengthen ACT Corrective Services' capacity to provide a safe and secure environment for detainees, staff and visitors at the Alexander Maconochie Centre, and to enhance the delivery of offender rehabilitation programs, including \$0.9 million in 2020-21 to continue addressing the immediate need of providing culturally appropriate holistic health and wellbeing services to members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population at the AMC.

There is \$0.6 million in capital and \$0.2 million in recurrent funding in 2020-21 for additional contraband detection equipment at the AMC to improve operational safety and security for both staff and detainees. In addition, there is \$5.6 million over two years from 2020-21 to address soil rectification issues on the site of the AMC reintegration centre project.

Through these strategic investments, the government aims to make the experience of imprisonment one that reinforces the potential for rehabilitation and betterment in the lives of those who have been incarcerated. I am hopeful and believe that, through this bill and these strategic investments, the government will enhance overall community safety and the wellbeing of all Canberrans. I commend this budget to the Assembly.

MR HANSON (Murrumbidgee) (11.15): I rise to talk about the police element of this budget and the concerns the Canberra Liberals have with police funding generally. This was a matter of debate in the Assembly yesterday, but it is important that I put it on the record as part of this debate as well.

In the context of this budget, I look at previous budgets and what has been going on over a series of years. No one budget should be looked at in isolation, particularly when you have an organisation as complex and as large as ACT Policing. I want to refer back to 2013, when this minister voted for the budget to support police cuts. I quote from the ABC from 7 June 2013:

The Australian Federal Police Association (AFPA) says a cut of more than \$15 million from ACT Policing's budget could lead to job cuts.

The savings over four years are part of a Government efficiency drive affecting all ACT directorates.

But AFPA chief executive officer Dennis Gellatly has accused the Government of cutting funding to the police budget by stealth.

It says the cuts throw doubt on the Government's commitment to reducing crime rates and responding to incidents.

"It's really concerning that the funding cuts appear to have been disguised amongst general savings deep down in the budget papers, without specifically referring to ACT Policing" he said.

“If the savings of some \$15.3 million can’t be achieved from trimming the cost of administering and equipping ACT Policing then the very real fear is that police numbers may suffer.”

It continues:

“It’s our concern that the compounding effect of those savings will start to bite in years three and four,” he said.

“The magnitude of that dollar saving equates roughly to about 40 to 45 staff.”

In response, in that article back in 2013, I stated that I believed police numbers would be cut because of budget savings. That is what has happened. As we talked about yesterday, when you look at the *Report on Government Services* from the Productivity Commission, you see that we have 10 fewer police—frontline operational sworn officers—than we did at that time. In 2012 we had 706; we now have 696, according to the RoGS data. That is also a per capita decrease, because we have had population growth. Per capita it has gone from 231 down to 206 per 100,000.

Back in 2013 the Australian Federal Police Association and the opposition said, “If you implement these cuts, then, as they flow through in the years to come, that is going to mean a reduction in police.” We see in both real numbers and per capita numbers that the decisions of this government, not just in this budget but in successive budgets, have led to a cut in our frontline police officers.

I refer to an article from the *Canberra Times* headed “Fears local police positions will go as funding cuts begin to bite”:

The ACT government has been urged to reinstate \$15 million in savings to the territory’s police force, amid growing fears that positions will be cut in coming months.

The \$15.36 million is being stripped from ACT Policing’s budget over four years from 2013-14.

The decisions that were made back then, supported by Mr Gentleman and his colleagues in the Labor Party and the Greens, are reverberating. They are reverberating to the point where we now have a police force that is simply stretched too thin.

Yesterday I went through some of the detail of what that means to police officers on the ground. What they and their association are saying is that they are at breaking point. They do not have enough resources to get on and do their job.

We have seen the effect on clearance rates. Crime clearance rates for a whole bunch of really serious offences are the lowest in the country, at the 30-day mark for things like sexual assault and other forms of assault—armed robbery and unarmed robbery. They are the lowest clearance rates in Australia.

I also made the point, and we still hear calls from the community, that we need more policing numbers. We hear it all the time. I quoted yesterday from the president of the Weston Creek Community Council, who has been calling for years for more police.

If you look at the record, you can see that this is not a new phenomenon. As I said, going back to 2012 and 2013, this is a systemic problem that has arisen out of this government's failure to adequately resource ACT Policing, which means that they are stretched too thin. The warning signs are there. The warnings are coming. They came from the previous AFPA secretary, the current AFPA secretary and members of our community. I will continue to litigate this case, as I have since 2012-13. I will continue to make the case that we need to keep pace with resourcing.

As I said yesterday, the minister can argue that it is okay that we have the lowest number of police in Australia per capita because we are different from New South Wales or we are different from Victoria. He can make that argument. I do not agree with him, but I accept that there is an argument there. What I cannot accept is the actual reduction in police in the ACT, despite our growing population. How is that defensible? We have the police union, their association, crying out because police members are at breaking point. This government—members who have been in this place and who voted for this budget today and voted for previous budgets of this government—is successively cutting the numbers of our police and making their life more and more difficult. As we have seen, response times and clearance rates do not fall where they should be. Community safety is jeopardised as a result of that.

This was the subject of the motion yesterday. I was disappointed that it did not receive support, particularly for the call for a new station in Molonglo Valley. I am disappointed that the local members of Murrumbidgee did not support that. It is clear that that is part of the infrastructure that is needed, part of the resourcing that is needed, in this new area of Canberra.

That station, hopefully, will form part of the strategic review that is now being considered by ACT Policing—as will, no doubt, the capacity of other stations, like the Gungahlin station, which was the subject of a question without notice yesterday. We know it is not fit for purpose because of increased numbers and the requirement to meet the needs of the much larger, and still growing, Gungahlin region. We will continue to argue for increased police resources. We will continue to argue for appropriate facilities to be provided to police so that they can do their job.

We have had some wins over the years with regard to keeping our community safe. Back in 2010—interestingly enough, with the support of the Greens—I was able to get random roadside drug testing introduced in the ACT, despite the opposition of the government of the day, the Labor Party government of the day. However, we have not been successful with some proposals—for example, the calls for anti-consorting laws which would have prevented the bikie war that we have seen break out across Canberra. Indeed, we have seen tragedies occur in recent times.

Despite these being viewed as tired arguments by the police minister, as I said yesterday, we are not tired of making them. We will be tireless in our pursuit of supporting our police and making sure our community is kept safe.

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (11.25): The ACT Greens understand that free or low-cost legal services are essential to ensuring access to justice for those in the community who are experiencing disadvantage. These services have been so important during COVID. They have helped out-of-work people negotiate with their landlords; they have supported people applying for income support payments through Centrelink; and they have provided much-needed legal support for people experiencing or at risk of domestic violence, which we know increased during COVID.

I am glad to see a budget priority for continuing legal and court support for vulnerable young people and for families affected by domestic and family violence. This is great. I am pleased to see that Legal Aid ACT and community legal centres received increased funding during the COVID period, given the increased need experienced during the pandemic. What is clear to me, though, is that legal need is not decreasing despite the one-off COVID grant ending. I urge the government to consider an increase in funding, particularly core funding to legal services, so that they can continue to meet ongoing legal need and so they can plan their services properly.

I sit on the justice and community safety committee and I really hope that the government accepts recommendation 19 and implements it. That recommendation calls for the ACT government to engage with Legal Aid ACT and community legal centres to identify the current scale of unmet need for these services and to quantify the additional funding they would need to address the need that is out there.

The ACT Intermediary Program is a program within the ACT Human Rights Commission. That program actively assists vulnerable witnesses to communicate with police whilst giving evidence. It was developed as a result of a recommendation of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse that found that vulnerable witnesses face extraordinarily significant communication barriers when giving evidence. An intermediary is a skilled professional who has been trained to facilitate this communication. Some of the reasons vulnerable witnesses have difficulties communicating are language delays, mental health issues, trauma, cognitive issues or simply because they are so young. This program commenced in January 2020. The demand for this innovative program is really high. I encourage the ACT government to look into its expansion to ensure that the most vulnerable in our community have the best chance to make their voices heard.

We Greens are very supportive of justice reinvestment. And we understand that we will not get a safer community by building more prisons, by building more police stations or by putting more people in prison. By the time someone gets to that stage of the justice system, the system has already failed. We make better communities by supporting people and preventing the underlying causes of crime. We do that by investing in community-based programs like housing, social supports and family centred programs.

We Greens are committed to investing significant resources in justice reinvestment programs in the ACT over the next four years. So I was really pleased to hear in estimates recently that the police force and the senior decision-makers are also supportive of this community approach. They did not want more cops on the beat;

they wanted more PACER and more Coffee with a Cop. We look forward to seeing justice reinvestment as a priority in the next budget.

I also want to mention the bushfires and smoke from 2019 and 2020. Those fires saw air quality in the ACT unlike anything we have ever seen here before. In fact, we had the worst air quality in the world while fires raged in New South Wales. Thirty-one people died from the effects of that smoke. Those were just the short-term deaths; we do not yet have any idea what the long-term impacts are of that event. And we do not know how often we are likely to experience that again. The justice and community safety committee also recommended, we heard in estimates recently, that the ACT government prepare a whole-of-government management plan for future smoke events and for incidents affecting air quality. We would like that plan to be presented to the Assembly by the last sitting day in 2021. I look forward to seeing that management plan and seeing the additional resources needed to manage it. Climate change is here, and we need to make sure we are prepared to manage its impacts.

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (11.30): What are the essential services that the community expects from its government? It is unfortunate that Mr Gentleman is not present in the chamber during this time. Health certainly ranks high, as do education, welfare and security—security for the community and for their neighbourhoods.

Where is the government's priority for the community's security? I am frequently out in the shopping centres and doorknocking—talking to citizens, in my electorate particularly. Security and policing frequently arise as concerns for them, including issues with hoons in the streets and safety while walking in the evening and at night. These are concerns that people experience, and they do not feel supported by this government with respect to them. Policing numbers, as has been mentioned, have effectively been reduced by stealth, and the community is not getting this priority security and protection that it deserves.

I would like to mention a few other items of interest from the budget papers and reports. It is a bit of a puzzle to me that on the new oversight committee for the Alexander Maconochie Centre is a former police officer. Why is there not an experienced correctional services officer, which is the key function of that centre? The government has promised an additional 99 firefighters by 2024-25 to ensure that ACT Fire & Rescue operational response capacity meets increased demands. We will be making sure this target is met, if not improved.

The number of convicted offenders not completing their community service work orders has increased dramatically. It is a worthwhile scheme that is not working. I urge the government to review its implementation. It was mentioned yesterday that the ACT is in desperate need of a dedicated coroner. I am sure if the government was listening to the legal advocacy organisations in the territory—the Law Society, the Bar Association and the legal aid providers—they would hear similar voices.

Police, as I have mentioned, are desperately underfunded across the ACT. We must increase the number of frontline police officers. We need better policing services that are accessible—and accessible as immediately as possible—to members of the community. I support, as well, the justice reinvestment strategy, and, as I have

mentioned, the community service orders, but these regimes need to be reviewed and improved. As I have mentioned, personal security in your neighbourhood, in your home, at your shopping centres and in your parks, is something of primary concern to the members of the community who I am speaking with. It is a shame it is not such a concern to this government. Thank you.

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) (11.34): I am pleased to speak, quite briefly, in support of this appropriation in relation to my human rights portfolio. Funding in this budget will further protect and promote fundamental human rights by providing critical support to victims of crime. The ACT government will provide more resources so that victims of crime can receive the support they need to recover. This includes \$1 million over two years, commencing in this financial year, for more resources to administer the new Victims of Crime Financial Assistance Scheme, as well as outstanding claims under the old court-based Victims of Crime Financial Assistance Scheme. These are additional resources which will improve the claims experience for scheme participants and ensure that the scheme continues to provide timely and such critical support to victims of crime.

There is also another \$300,000 in this budget to bolster therapeutic support for victims of crime. This initiative ensures that victims of family violence and other violent crimes can access therapeutic support aimed at minimising the traumatic impacts of crime, and it assists victims and their families to actively pursue recovery. The additional funding for these initiatives will enable Victim Support ACT to provide services to promote victims' recovery and participation in the social, economic and cultural life of our community. This is something that has always been important, but its importance has been underlined and driven home to us this year more than ever before. I commend this appropriation to the Assembly.

MRS KIKKERT (Ginninderra) (11.35): I rise today to speak on the state of our correctional system. Many of the things I will say will likely be no surprise to anyone listening. The sorry state of the Alexander Maconochie Centre has been well known to most Canberrans for many years. For anyone who needs a catch-up, I will summarise the issues that have plagued the prison in recent years—staff shortages; women being taken from their specially designed accommodation and placed in a secure male part of the prison; a rise in assaults against staff; the highest cost per inmate in the country; 11 years of overtime worked in five years; a riot; and frequent fires. And the list goes on.

Many of these happened under the watch of the previous minister, Mr Rattenbury, who, his successor insists, did “a fantastic job”. His mouth says “fantastic job”, but his action says “run and hide”. Instead of rolling up his sleeves and cleaning up Mr Rattenbury's mess, Minister Gentleman has decided, at the cost of \$2,000 a day, to outsource future planning of the prison to an oversight committee. This move highlights Labor's and the Greens' inability to fix the prison over the years that they have governed. Clearly, they have finally surrendered and accepted their incompetence. The minister has not tasked the oversight committee with one specific assignment but has given it a broad range of issues to look into. From the routine to

the critical, from rostering to the implementation of inspector recommendations, the minister has outsourced his responsibilities. What does it say about a minister's competence when he appoints a \$2,000-a-day consultant to oversee something as routine as staffing and rostering?

Yesterday, Minister Gentleman stood up in this chamber and accused the Canberra Liberals of having no respect for our public service. He said that they are there to take care of us and our city when we need them the most. He then claimed that the Liberals had attempted to smear public servants during question time because we supposedly have no respect for their work. He said that we should be ashamed, apparently. This performance by the Minister for Corrections clearly shows, however, the hypocrisy of this government. Those opposite claim that they are for workers' rights, but a very different reality lurks at the very centre of Mr Gentleman's ministerial responsibility. The minister and his government have, over the past five years, allowed overtime hours for the corrections officers who are taking care of our prison to nearly quadruple, from 8,295 hours in 2016-17 to 30,138 hours last year, costing taxpayers an extra \$7 million.

Minister Gentleman and his government allowed this to happen even though an independent report from a few years ago said that there were not enough staff to cover a full roster. How did the minister respond to this known understaffing issue?—by overworking existing staff with ever-increasing overtime. Everyone in this chamber knows that prolonged overtime negatively impacts both physical and mental health. When there are not enough staff to cover a full roster, people cannot take the leave they need and deserve. And when there are not enough staff, existing staff can even miss out on training that is essential for them to safely perform in their roles.

Yesterday, Minister Gentleman tried to assure us that, according to a survey, ACT government employees are feeling safe and well. Conveniently, the minister forgot to mention the staff survey conducted at the AMC, where the majority of corrections officers reported that they do not feel that they have adequate training in self-care, such as dealing with stress. In a highly stressful work environment this should be offered as a no-brainer from the very beginning. In addition, the inspector's report from November last year highlights that correctional officers who responded to riot-related fires were not up to date with their training. And why not? As noted in the report, at least two of the officers had their essential training cancelled because of—guess what!—staffing issues.

That is the reality of this government and this minister. We have his word that he is the defender of the territory's public servants, and then we have the way he runs a prison. He is overworking corrections officers so much that they cannot even attend potentially life-saving training. The hypocrisy could not be clearer. I know who should be ashamed. It is not the Canberra Liberals here; it is Minister Gentleman and his tribe, the Labor-Green coalition.

What does it say about a government's fiscal responsibility when it budgets \$30 million for a new reintegration centre and then puts it on hold soon afterwards? I was initially surprised by this decision, but in hindsight it is very much in keeping with the government's track record when it comes to the AMC, and indeed many

other aspects of the ACT. Hospitals, roads, public housing, emergency services, police numbers and community services providers are all co-victims of this Labor-Greens coalition, with constant underfunding in favour of their own pet projects.

One exception to the government's dismal track record on underspending is the almost \$7 million it has paid out in overtime to hardworking corrections officers. To give a more specific example of underfunding, back in 2001, when the AMC was still in the design phase, the government received a report by Rengain that predicted that, by 2021, inmate numbers would reach 445. They received alternative forecasted prison population numbers from Mr John Walker, who predicted a high of 348 detainees by 2021, and from Treasury, which forecasted detainee numbers at 242 by 2021. Acting on this advice, the government wrote a functional brief in 2005 for the AMC that stated that the prison would have 175 beds for sentenced prisoners, 139 beds for remandees to be kept in separate facilities, and a 60-bed transitional release centre. That is a total of 374 beds. Guess how many beds the AMC had when it opened in 2008? It had 300. The transitional release centre was not even built. It has since been completed, and guess how many beds it has out of the 60 originally planned? It has 15.

As the directorate itself has acknowledged, the government has made it so difficult and confusing for detainees to access the transitional release centre that only 12 of them were able to use it last financial year. I guess that is one way of dealing with an intentional shortage of beds. So, right from the outset, the Labor government determined to underfund the construction of the prison, and this has led to many of the problems we see so frequently highlighted in the media. In that light, it should not be surprising that the reintegration centre has been put on hold.

If the minister is not planning to build the reintegration centre, I suggest he consider that the money go towards the construction of a separate women's facility. In a 2005 functional brief, the accommodation needs of women at the prison were quite clearly outlined. The women's area of the prison was designed with these considerations in mind. Aspects such as a hairdressing facility, cottage-style living, a quiet space, an adjacent children's playground, an outdoor hardcourt, a walking track, reading rooms, a videoconferencing suite, a small kitchen, gardens and a cafe were all included.

What do they have instead? For their living arrangements they have secure cells instead of bedrooms. For a walking track they get a fenced-in path where they are subject to catcalls and verbal abuse from nearby male detainees. This is unacceptable. When the women were first moved there it was said that they would have better access to health programs, education, employment and recreation, yet the consistent message I have received from stakeholders is that this is not the case. (*Second speaking period taken.*) The government claimed that these things would better in 2017. With the exception of the bakery, things do not seem to have got better for them, as can be seen in the 2018 and 2019 inspector reviews.

To the detriment of the women, things improved somewhat for certain groups of male detainees, who found themselves moved into the much more welcoming and comfortable cottages originally intended for the women. They have tennis courts,

gardens, walking tracks and their own kitchens and lounge rooms. Having seen both the women's accommodation and their former cottages, it is clear to me that one area is very superior to the other. Strangely, the decision to supplant the women from their comfortable cottages and give the cottages to the men came from the leader of the Greens—the same Greens who are supposed to be famed, far and wide, for their strong feminist zeal and for fighting for gender equality, though I think by now the ACT Greens are beginning to become more well-known in the Canberra community for their spineless lip-service.

The same Greens who promised, during the election, to disrupt the current patriarchal system, lined up behind Greens Minister Rattenbury, the ultimate supplanter of women at the AMC. If a women's caucus across the aisle is looking at priority women's issues or to disrupt the current patriarchal system, they should break ranks with the male-led Greens and Labor parties and come join the female-led Liberal party in improving the lot of women at the AMC.

I also note that the budget spoke of an industrial building at the reintegration centre for the purpose of enhancing employment opportunities for detainees when they are released. This sounds as if it would have been an excellent idea if properly administered and planned. The government likes to brag, from time to time, about a high level of employment at the AMC. At face value they are correct; there is a relatively high level of employment among detainees. What they leave out is that many of the employment opportunities are not exactly rehabilitative or likely to upskill detainees. Of the roughly 35 employment positions for detainees at the AMC, 15 are primarily dedicated to cleaning, sweeping and emptying bins.

While these positions are necessary and are undoubtedly good skills and habits to have, they do not go very far in upskilling detainees so that they are more competitive in the workforce upon release. They also do not go far in reducing boredom amongst detainees, which can lead to problems down the line. Whether or not the reintegration centre is ever built, enhanced employment opportunities for inmates—opportunities that are engaging for the mind and body and which allow for upskilling in a competitive job market—are a must. Anything less is a gross disservice to the inmates and a mark of shame against this government, which may as well be asking for recidivist detainees.

I would like to close with a couple of quotes. The first is in relation to women in the prison:

Women adapt to prison very differently to men. The loss of control over place, space and time affects women prisoners' sense of self and personal identity differently to the way the same losses affect men. ... For women, control over environment and space are even more important because of the tendency of women to internalise emotional and psychological stress, which increases their risk of self-harm.

In their cottages, the women had a much greater degree of control over the environment than they have now. I understand that, in a changing prison environment, plans can change and undesirable interim circumstances can arise, but plans need to change once again. The women cannot be left where they are any longer. The increase

of the risk of self-harm cannot be ignored. In relation to our prison industries, I would like to quote from former MLA Mary Porter, who in turn was quoting the namesake of the prison, Alexander Maconochie.

My experience leads me to say there is no man utterly incorrigible. Treat him as a man, and not as a dog. You cannot recover a man except by doing justice to the manly qualities, which he may have about him, and giving him an interest in developing them.

Let us follow the advice of Alexander Maconochie and help our detainees to develop better qualities during their time in the prison and rehabilitate them, as he would want, and as we all want. It is time for the prison to live up to the reputation of its namesake.

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee—Minister for Skills, Minister for Transport and City Services and Special Minister of State) (11.51): I rise to speak briefly on items that relate to the Special Minister of State portfolio. Our government is focused on making it simpler and easier to access government services, particularly through the improved use of digital systems that mean people only have to give us their information once.

That is why I am very pleased to speak in relation to a few different measures that the ACT government is introducing. But I particularly want to highlight the work that has been going on to upgrade the security, information and event management system to improve the government's ability to respond to future cyber incidents, given the increase in cyberattacks. As noted in the Australian Cyber Security Centre's annual report, uplifting the whole-of-government cybersecurity practices is a necessary investment. This new system will incorporate security intelligence from the Australian Cyber Security Centre, ensuring a quicker response to threats. I will speak further about the portfolio in the budget debate.

MR MILLIGAN (Yerrabi) (11.52): Never before in our living memory has the role of our frontline staff been so important. This goes not only to our health workers in their vital role managing the COVID-19 response but to our emergency services personnel, our police, our defence force and, even as we saw during the height of this pandemic, the various essential services provided by the retail sector and others who kept us safe and fed during this crisis.

The last 12 months really have allowed us to reflect on what matters and, as politicians, should have highlighted for us what is important in terms of the use of taxpayers' money. This is why the Canberra Liberals welcome the funding for the preliminary design and preparations for two new shared fire and ambulance stations—one in the Molonglo Valley and the other in the city—and \$2.2 million for the new elevated area appliance currently under order to replace the existing unit.

The new Molonglo and Acton stations are in response to increased populations in these growth areas. This is a good start and acknowledges Canberra's growth rate, particularly in the need for the city's emergency response capability to grow in new or renewed development areas. But, sadly, my electorate of Yerrabi has again missed out, with our ageing emergency station in Gungahlin being no longer fit for purpose. I, along with my colleague Leanne Castley, will continue to advocate hard for an

upgrade of this facility to support our still growing area and for more investment across the existing network. I note that the enterprise bargaining agreement is planned to result in an additional 99 firefighters by 2025 to ensure that ACT Fire & Rescue has the operational response capability to meet increased demand.

I am happy to see an acknowledgement of the amazing work of our emergency services personnel. They have faced an enormously trying year, responding to the bushfires, COVID-19 and the Canberra hailstorm. So much was thrown at them and they continued to rise to the challenge. As the shadow for the emergency services portfolio I will advocate hard to ensure that all emergency services get the resources and support they need to keep us all safe whilst maintaining their own mental health and wellbeing.

MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi) (11.55): The ACT Greens believe everyone has a right to live in a safe and peaceful community, free from crime and fear of violence. To meet this goal requires interagency coordination to address the social and economic circumstances that increase people's risk of committing a crime or becoming a victim of crime. Some examples of this interagency cooperation in the ACT government include the very successful and innovative intermediary program run by the Human Rights Commission. We hope this program will be given expanded funding in the future to provide this fantastic service.

Another example of interagency coordination is the PACER program, where police work hand in hand with mental health professionals to help those going through a mental health crisis. 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 to 2024.

The Greens believe victims of both civil and criminal wrongs should receive the necessary social and professional support to facilitate their recovery, so we welcome the inclusion of additional staff to administer the victims of Crime Financial Assistance Scheme. These additional resources will help to ensure that the scheme continues to provide critical support to the victims of crime in a timely manner while a review of the administration of the scheme is finalised.

Restorative practices also are an essential element to a holistic justice system. We also welcome the continued funding of the restorative justice program and look forward to its expansion. Investment is needed into programs for people exiting detention to support their transition back into the community and to reduce rates of reoffending, as well as programs to address drug and alcohol addiction and mental health through access to rehabilitation centres and mental health services.

We had the opportunity to discuss the size and composition of ACT Policing yesterday in this Assembly, and I do not wish to re-prosecute those arguments today. I will, however, note that 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. This means we need to think about changing the character and capabilities of the police force.

I note that our emergency services have performed extremely well in the face of challenges over the past year. We need to ensure that the lessons from the Orroral Valley fire are fully learnt and that the systematic changes and communications improvements between the ACT services and federal agencies are bedded down.

On behalf of the ACT Greens, I say thank you to all those who help keep Canberrans safe, particularly given the recent challenges in the form of fire, hail and pandemic. Your tireless devotion is to be applauded and recognised.

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 Housing ACT—vacant property

MS LEE: My question is to the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development. Minister, the public housing complex on Lowanna Street, Braddon, which has 10 one- and two-bedroom apartments and cost \$2.6 million to build, has sat empty for over five years. It is in disrepair and uninhabitable. Minister, with Canberra facing a critical shortage of public housing, why did your government leave these apartments in disrepair for so long?

MS BERRY: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. Yes, it is unfortunate that these dwellings have been empty for so long. Unfortunately, they were not safe for occupation. The last tenant was moved out of those dwellings in 2017. There was a fairly complicated legal process that Housing ACT undertook with the builder of that particular housing complex. We have now reached an outcome, following, as I said, prolonged, lengthy and complicated legal processes. We are now in a position where the development applications are going in for that dwelling to be demolished and new dwellings to be built on that site.

MS LEE: Minister, when you say you have reached an outcome, do you mean that there has been a legal settlement? If so, what was the nature of that settlement?

MS BERRY: Yes, there has been a settlement. I am not sure what advice I can provide the Assembly on that, but I will take advice on what detail I can provide. If I can provide it, I will definitely bring it back to the Assembly.

MR PARTON: Minister, how much will it cost Canberra taxpayers to demolish and rebuild on that site? And what will be the size of the replacement complex and when will it be completed?

MS BERRY: There will be 10 class C dwellings built on that site. I do not have a time frame for when they will be completed. The contract negotiations will consider the price for that. Once that is known, I can provide that information.

Housing—affordability

MRS JONES: My question is to the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development. The latest Domain rental report showed that Canberra remains the most expensive capital city in Australia to rent a home. The report found that Canberrans are paying up to \$150 more per week than renters in other states. Minister, after 20 years of government, why is Canberra the most expensive capital in which to rent a home?

MR BARR: I will take this question, as I think it is all-encompassing of a range of economic factors beyond just that which is occurring within public housing in the ACT. I thank Mrs Jones for the question. We have seen across Australia, in fact, a very significant increase in rents in most major cities, with a couple of exceptions—one being Melbourne, which obviously suffered a significant COVID-related impact in terms of population overall and demand. We are seeing in other markets—Canberra, Hobart and Darwin, for example—smaller capital cities proving to be very popular. When it comes to people moving here as a result of our strong labour market and also the relatively high levels of incomes within the ACT, those certainly contribute to the market settling price, which, as I am sure everyone is aware, is the intersection of supply and demand.

What we will see in the latter part of this year is the normal settlement patterns in the ACT. There is a peak of demand in the first quarter of each calendar year, and then an easing of demand and an increase in supply over the nine months that follow. The government is very conscious of the need to augment supply in the rental market, so we are actively pursuing a range of large-scale build-to-rent projects that would add hundreds, and potentially thousands, of additional rental dwellings into the market, but with a smaller number of institutional owners. We are not pursuing 2,000 mum-and-dad investors here; we are pursuing a handful of large investors to add hundreds and hundreds of additional rentals into the marketplace. It is a program that the Deputy Chief Minister and I are working on. We look forward to rolling it out in the years ahead. (*Time expired*)

MRS JONES: I have a supplementary question. Minister, do you acknowledge, given that we are the most expensive, that there is currently a rental crisis in Canberra?

MR BARR: We currently have a very low vacancy rate, and that is a reflection of people's desire to live in this city. It is also a reflection of higher incomes—

Mrs Jones: Of supply.

MR BARR: And it is a reflection of supply. So we are looking to significantly augment supply, and the quickest way to do that is not one property at a time, through mum-and-dad investor models. It is through large-scale, institutional, build-to-rent projects. We have seen a couple of them already delivered by the private sector; I think one in Gungahlin. One is mooted in Manuka, but we are talking about much larger scale institutional investors. I have met with Mirvac and with the super funds. We have a big program ahead. To make the model work you need 200 to 300

properties per investment, so we are looking at big, big investments to expand Canberra's rental properties. We have about 40,000 dwellings rented in this city out of 180,000, so between one in five and one in four properties are rental. What we need to see is hundreds and hundreds more, and that will be delivered most efficiently and permanently as build-to-rent products and permanently in the rental market through this larger-scale model. That is what we are pursuing.

MR PARTON: I have a supplementary question. Chief Minister, given that the build-to-rent dwellings would be many months if not years away, what immediate action will your government take to help vulnerable Canberrans find a home during this rental crisis?

MR BARR: We are already augmenting supply through a range of projects, in public, in community and in social housing, as well as a range of tax incentives that have been debated in this place. People would be aware that I have recently extended the number of properties that are eligible for the tax-free status in terms of land tax if landlords will rent them at below market rent. So then we get the perfect test. We are going to get the perfect test of whether taxation is barrier, because if you want to pay no land tax you can do that, you just have to rent your property at below market rent. So if tax is the barrier, we're about to find out, and we should be swamped. But we haven't been to date, and I don't think we will be, because tax is not the barrier.

Planning—Gungahlin town centre

MR BRADDOCK: My question is to the minister for planning. Minister, why has land zoned for community facilities in Gungahlin been cut in draft variation 364 from six hectares to 3.8 hectares?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Mr Braddock for his question. It is important to reflect, of course, on the work that has been done on planning for the Gungahlin town centre and the demand for different styles of residential in that area. What we have done in draft variation 364 is to look at refreshing the town centre plan and to see what we can do for the residents of Gungahlin into the future.

Of course, that variation, while having interim effect, is sitting with the committee at the moment. I will be looking to see what the planning committee does, the inquiry it holds and the recommendations it makes, to see whether we need to modify 364.

MR BRADDOCK: Why does draft variation 364 propose to cut community facility zoned land when the Gungahlin community recreation needs study is currently underway?

MR GENTLEMAN: As I said, we have done the initial work. The planning committee is doing their work as well. I will certainly look at the commentary that occurs through their inquiry. We have looked overall at the mix of land that is needed for Gungahlin. There has been some request for more commercial land, for example, and more residential land as well. We need to apply the appropriate densities and facility land that could be available for the future of Gungahlin.

MR DAVIS: Minister, why does DV364 cut office space from 100,000 square metres to 65,000 square metres?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Mr Davis for his question. It does that, as I said, because we have looked at the study for Gungahlin previously as a refresh. We have looked at what might be needed for the future—with input, of course, from residents of Gungahlin and those that wish to operate or reside there in the future. It is a living document. While it has interim effect, it is before the committee, and I look forward to the committee's recommendations.

Housing—new housing strategy

MR HANSON: My question is to the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development. Minister, in a recent article a former Labor Chief Minister—

A member: Which one?

MR HANSON: It was Jon Stanhope—suggested your government has demolished people's housing hopes by decisions taken to:

- *reduce the stock of public housing;*
- *emasculate the community housing sector;*
- *abandon any serious commitment to affordable housing*
- *and to knowingly price the working class and low and moderate-income households out of the detached housing market.*

He went on to say that your policies were contrary to core Labor values.

To make matters worse, residential housing availability is at a crisis point and the detached public housing stock appears to be declining. Minister, why have you let this situation happen?

MS BERRY: Of course Mr Stanhope is known for his views and for sharing them with the wider community. Whether or not I agree with those views is the question. I have not read the article so I will take Mr Hanson's word for quoting Mr Stanhope's views in this regard. But I would say that growing public housing is a Labor value and it is a value that is being met by this ACT government. We still retain the highest public housing per capita in the country.

We have had a significant growth and renewal program to date and that will continue over the next five years, with a \$1 billion investment in public housing over this 10-year period—one of the highest in the country. We have said repeatedly in this place—the Chief Minister and I—that, if every state and territory across the country invested in the same way that the ACT government does in public housing renewal and growth, we would have significantly fewer people experiencing homelessness or rough sleeping across the whole country. This not something the ACT can do on its own.

I also reject the comments that Mr Hanson made with regard to the housing supply and the type of housing supply. Housing is built to meet the needs of tenants and that includes single room dwellings but also freestanding properties. That is the work that Housing ACT does as part of its housing renewal and growth work in the ACT.

MR HANSON: Minister, what are you doing to give relief to the people who are utilising and requiring detached public housing?

MS BERRY: I am making sure that more detached public housing is being built.

MR PARTON: A supplementary. Minister, what will you do to realign your housing policies with core Labor values?

MS BERRY: I refer Mr Parton to my previous answer that the growth of public housing in the ACT is a core Labor value and something that the ACT government is delivering on and continues delivering on. We continue to maintain the highest public housing per capita in the country and we are renewing to a point in 2025 where we will have renewed 20 per cent of our housing property in the ACT, making it much more sustainable, much easier to maintain and much more affordable to heat and cool for public housing tenants. It will better meet their needs, regardless of where they want to live and the type of housing that they want to live in.

Parks and Conservation Service—bushfire recovery work

MR PETTERSSON: My question is to the Minister for Planning and Land Management: can you please update the Assembly on bushfire recovery in Namadgi National Park?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Mr Pettersson for his interest in bushfire recovery. The Orroral Valley fire of last year burnt through 88,000 hectares or about 80 per cent of Namadgi National Park. The early challenge was to ensure that sensitive environments were stabilised as quickly possible, and this proved prudent given the heavy rains that followed the fire.

We have asked the Canberra community for patience as we closed the park to the public in order to give the park some time to heal, with the help of human hands. Recovery work was able to progress faster than originally participated thanks to a combination of favourable weather conditions and the hard work of the recovery team, Roads ACT and various volunteer groups from within the community. Our teams have worked hard to make the park safe for the community to get back in the park well ahead of the schedule, with a focus on critical issues with infrastructure and along the public roads into the park as well.

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, what areas of the park have reopened?

MR GENTLEMAN: I point out that the park's reopening well ahead of schedule could not have been possible without the investment of time and resources from the government. I am pleased to inform Mr Pettersson and the Assembly that most of

Namadgi has reopened to public once again. Those areas include Mount Tennant and the Australian Alps Walking Track, Honeysuckle Ridge including the campground, Booroomba Rocks, Orroral Valley, Nursery Swamp, the geodetic dome, the tracking station and the Bimberi wilderness area. There are some areas that we need to be careful of. As you approach in your vehicle some of the roads are still a bit loose.

The first weekend of opening saw over 600 people through the visitor centre, and carparks throughout the park were full, with the Mount Tennant walking track proving particularly popular with walkers. Many Canberrans will be heading into Namadgi for the first time since the bushfires in January 2020. They will notice that the park is still recovering, and the safety hazards I have mentioned brought about by the fires have not completely gone away. So before heading out to the park I ask they revisit our safety information and familiarise themselves with what they need to pack. They can drop into the visitor centre of course and stock up with water and nourishment and get the latest news from our friendly parks and conservation staff.

DR PATERSON: How is the government improving other parks and reserves in the ACT?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Dr Paterson for her question. We know Canberrans love living in the bush capital and expect the government to look after it as well. So work is underway on the Canberra Nature Park management plan which will guide the management of 39 parks and reserves that make up the expansive Canberra Nature Park. The government is also providing support to Parks and Conservation Service staff with upgrades for vehicle and depot radios. This will ensure that PCS staff are able to be out in the bush doing their important work and looking after our parks and reserves.

While Namadgi is once again open to the public, the job of recovery and repair is not over, and the government will continue to support this recovery work. The Parks and Conservation Service estimate recovery work will continue for at least another two years. The service is also managing feral animal control in Namadgi National Park. The need to keep feral animals such as horses, pigs and rabbits at bay will be as important as ever to aid recovery in the park and create the health and resilience that we need in that environment.

Planning—vacant shops

MR DAVIS: My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services. Minister, many Canberrans have raised their concerns with me about a number of vacant and seemingly abandoned shopping centres in their suburbs. Clift Crescent in Richardson and Livingston Avenue in Kambah are just two that come to mind. Minister, what is the government doing to address the growing list of vacant and seemingly abandoned suburban shopping centres?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question. This is something that does not fit into just my portfolio, but I am happy to address the elements of it that fit into the area of Transport Canberra and city services. I understand, and the government understands, the importance and value that the community place on their local

shopping centres. They are important community hubs. The ACT government has been involved in upgrading a range of older shopping centres, particularly.

There are a variety of different models around Canberra. Some shopping centre buildings are owned by multiple tenants, sometimes as separate tenancies and other times in a unit title arrangement. There are a variety of different ways that centres operate and will lease out their premises.

The ACT government's focus has been on investing in and maintaining the land around shopping centres, the public spaces. Where we have undertaken upgrades of local shopping centres, it often supports local businesses who own their own premises or are leasing out premises. It supports them in what they do. We have seen that at local shopping centres as far back as the Chifley upgrades, when the government made upgrades to the playground and amenities there. We have seen a fantastic model arise that has now been replicated at a number of local shopping centres throughout Canberra. Fraser shops are a good example of where the government more recently undertook upgrades. There were a number of tenancies there that were not leased out, but more life has come back to that shopping centre. We hope in the further upgrades we are undertaking at Kippax, Duffy and Campbell that the upgrades will support local businesses as well.

It is up to the owners of those shopping centres to tenant their shops. (*Time expired.*)

MR DAVIS: My supplementary question actually goes to those owners. What can the government do to obligate owners of these suburban shopping centres to maintain and upgrade their space in line with community expectations? Has the government considered any penalties or inducements for landlords to ensure that these spaces are let?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question. That is outside my portfolio responsibilities. I might take it on notice.

Yes, the government has considered a range of ways to encourage landlords to tenant shopping centres. In relation to development applications, I think there is a requirement for them to build and tenant within a certain period of time, although that was extended during the pandemic for new builds. We have considered those as well as the lease clauses and the like. But that has to take into account a range of different factors, including constitutional factors under the self-government act in relation to property rights and so forth.

It is not usually the government's role to interfere in the private enjoyment of property; that is just the reality of it. Also, we are not engaged in the business of running supermarkets. That is the sort of thing you see in North Korea, where there are no items on the supermarket shelves. It is not a role that Australian governments have typically played.

However, I will come back to you with more detail. Other ministers may be able to contribute to answering that question.

MS CLAY: Minister, does the government have a plan for the shopping centre at Mackellar, which has stayed undeveloped for almost a decade?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. I will take that on notice. I do not think it strictly fits into my portfolio area.

Housing ACT—eligibility

MR PARTON: My question is to one of the housing ministers. It is written here as the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development. I sense that it may be—

MADAM SPEAKER: Ask the question, Mr Parton.

MR PARTON: The government sets income thresholds and eligibility rules for public housing.

Ms Vassarotti: Sorry, what was the question?

MR PARTON: I think I'm with you now. The government sets income thresholds and eligibility rules for public housing. Constituents have contacted me and raised concerns about public housing tenants who appear to no longer be eligible for that public housing dwelling. Minister, how exactly does this government monitor that public housing tenants remain eligible to live in public housing?

MS VASSAROTTI: I thank the member for the question. It is a really important question because we do want to ensure that everyone has a decent home in which to live, and the role that public housing plays is really important for that, particularly for people that are vulnerable and people in need. Certainly, we know that, currently, 99 per cent of people that get allocated public housing are those in the most need. That really speaks to the eligibility criteria.

On the question around how eligibility is maintained: that assessment is done when people are being assessed for public housing. The issues around income eligibility get assessed on an ongoing basis, to ensure that they are being appropriately managed in relation to whether or not they hit income thresholds or whether they should be treated as a market renter.

MR PARTON: Minister, what happens if a public housing tenant's income exceeds the eligibility threshold? What happens to that tenant?

MS VASSAROTTI: I thank the member for the supplementary question. With the issue of eligibility as to income, there are a range of processes that are gone through by Housing ACT. Generally, there is a discussion in terms of setting income thresholds. There is also a program that works with tenants that may be better served in other market rentals. That is a discussion that happens with tenants.

MS LEE: Minister, how do you ensure that the public housing tenants are the same people that are on the lease?

MS VASSAROTTI: Thank you for the question. The issue of supporting our tenants is a really important issue. Tenant liaison officers and housing managers work with tenants. There are regular inspections that happen, looking at both the physical elements of the property and supporting tenants to maintain their tenancy. As part of that process, a discussion happens with tenants that are a part of the property. If there are any changes to tenancy arrangements, that is discussed with housing managers.

Arts—funding

MS CLAY: My question is to the Minister for Arts. ACT artists, especially musicians and performers, are really struggling to make ends meet due to COVID. Making a living from playing gigs became almost impossible when most of those gigs dried up. Wages and vacancies are down in the arts sector and there is no recovery yet in the arts. I was really pleased, Minister Cheyne, to see your announcement providing \$750,000 in funding for arts venues, and I was glad that some of that funding is tied to funding artists themselves. The Greens included a direct Jobs for Artists program in the parliamentary and government agreement, to build arts careers and provide some long-term strategic support for Canberra's creative industries. Is this funding announcement part of a direct funding for artists model?

MS CHEYNE: I thank Ms Clay for the question and for her interest in and, indeed, her advocacy for and her commitment to the arts in the ACT. We are really pleased with the announcement today of the Amp It Up fund. I think one of the really important things to note is that we want to support artists' careers. We want to support the viability and the sustainability of artists' careers, and that includes ensuring there are places and spaces that are also sustainable and viable where artists can perform and put on their work, but also that those venues can be attracting not just local talent but interstate talent as well, because that brings with it other benefits too.

This is not an announcement about direct support for artists; this is an announcement about funding live music venues through that, with up to 100 per cent of the funding that venues can apply for going to artists. That is for venues to then pay the artists that they are programming.

MS CLAY: Minister, what proportion of the government's total arts budget directly funds artists?

MS CHEYNE: Thank you for the question. I will get that exact figure for Ms Clay, but we do spend about \$10 million in grants for arts and artists every single year. In addition, last year there was more than \$7.6 million total in COVID-19 support for the Canberra arts sector. But I will determine that exact proportion for Ms Clay and respond soon.

DR PATERSON: Minister, could you give some more detail about how Amp It Up will work?

MS CHEYNE: I thank Dr Paterson for her own interest in the arts and, indeed, this announcement that we were very proud to make today. Amp It Up is \$700,000 of

direct injection to live music venues and, with that, the live music community. The live music venues can apply for grants of at least \$5,000 and up to \$60,000. Up to 100 per cent of the funded amount can be spent on artists and the programming of artists as well as technicians, and 50 per cent of funding can be spent on the marketing and promotion of that. This fund will be available from 1 June to 30 November, sometimes a quieter time in Canberra, particularly in the dead of winter, so we really want to emphasise that marketing aspect of it, too, because we want people through the doors. We want new people through the doors of these live music venues.

This coincides with venues being able to apply to increase their capacity to have exemptions for what is currently in place with one person per 2 square metres. So for particular events, working with the office of the Chief Health Officer, venues can maximise or optimise these opportunities with this funding. We are working with MusicACT to do this, and MusicACT will be hosting an industry information session on 30 April at 4 pm at Sideway.

Housing ACT—vacant property

MS LAWDER: My question is to the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development. The Community Services Directorate 2019-20 annual report said that Housing ACT's ongoing property costs, including maintenance, were significantly higher than its current revenue. Also, it was recently reported that 403 public housing properties were sitting empty and that the public housing waiting list was almost 2,800 people. Minister, why have you allowed Housing ACT's finances to deteriorate into this sorry state?

MS BERRY: Ms Lawder has the question wrong with regard to housing expenditure last year. As a result of a number of things that happened last year—COVID was one of them; a hailstorm was another—maintenance costs increased last year. So, what Housing ACT, with its total facilities management program, was doing, was responding to the needs of tenants. That is appropriate.

MS LAWDER: I have a supplementary question. Minister, of the reported 403 public housing properties that were vacant, how many were vacant due to lack of maintenance and maintenance funding?

MS BERRY: Of the 400 properties that were vacant, 65 are ready for allocation to tenants. So they are going through the process of being allocated to tenants who might be eligible, making sure that those housing properties meet the needs of each of those individual people. Of the 400 properties, 117 are receiving significant maintenance—things like new kitchen upgrades, bathrooms and the like—which means that some of those properties are not fit for purpose right now, but they are going through a maintenance program. There is another group of properties that are on the renewal or growth program for Housing ACT. They are either being prepared for sale or prepared to be demolished, with new homes built on those sites.

MR PARTON: I have a supplementary question. Minister, as of today, Wednesday, 21 April, how many public housing properties are vacant?

MS BERRY: That number is not linear. It moves and changes frequently as allocations occur, as houses are sold or as they are demolished or built across the ACT community. I would have to go and get that information for today, but generally it is around that targeted mark of around 400. You need to have some vacancies in your housing stock to allow for allocations, relocations, demolishing, upgrades and sales. That 400 is around the figure that Housing ACT targets for each year, making sure that they meet 96 per cent to 97 per cent occupancy within housing dwellings, but having some flexibility so that we can meet tenants' needs as their lifestyles and circumstances change. That is an important part of Housing ACT's work in managing stock and allocations.

Public housing—disruptive behaviour

MRS KIKKERT: My question is to the Minister for Homelessness and Housing Services. Minister, no doubt you receive numerous reports about antisocial behaviour in public housing—reports of assaults, intimidation and people being too terrified to walk out of their front door. Minister, how many times have you visited public housing since becoming the minister?

MS VASSAROTTI: I thank the member for her question. We think it is really important that everyone has access to a good amenity, and all of our tenants—as are all tenants across the ACT—are subject to the Residential Tenancies Act. We absolutely take antisocial behaviour really seriously and respond to it.

In terms of the number of times I have been to public housing since I have been the minister, I would have to take that on notice. I have certainly visited public housing tenancies, but I am unable, without referring to my diary, to provide—

Mr Parton: Just give us a ballpark.

MS VASSAROTTI: Sorry?

MADAM SPEAKER: You do not need to respond to interjections.

MS VASSAROTTI: I do not know. I will have to look at my diary, because it is something that I have been doing a bit of. I will need to take it on notice.

MRS KIKKERT: Minister, have you spoken to ACT police or other authorities about this antisocial behaviour?

MS VASSAROTTI: I thank the member for her supplementary question. Certainly, Housing ACT work very regularly on responding to the issues of tenants, whether it be the issues of tenants or tenants as neighbours. Certainly, some of the issues that are faced by tenants in relation to antisocial behaviour involve non-residents as well, as is the case across the ACT community. Through Housing ACT, there is strong engagement about issues as they arise, on a regular basis.

MR PARTON: Minister, what specifically are you doing about this problem, regarding antisocial behaviour in public housing complexes?

MS VASSAROTTI: I thank the member for the question. The issue of antisocial behaviour is a clear issue that sits under the Residential Tenancies Act. It is an issue that is taken very seriously. I engage regularly with Housing ACT around issues that are brought to our attention. They are issues that we know about. We do not talk about individual cases because of privacy issues. I can absolutely assure members in this Assembly that responsibilities around antisocial behaviour are taken very seriously and are actively discussed with me and the directorate.

Environment—single-use plastics

DR PATERSON: Minister, can you please update the Assembly on the government's plan to phase out single-use plastics?

MR STEEL: I thank Dr Paterson for her question. The phase-out of single-use plastics is an important part of the ACT government's approach to responsibly managing our environment. As a result of the passage of the Plastic Reduction Bill, which is now an act, the phase-out will start from 1 July, to ban the sale, supply and distribution of single-use plastic cutlery, stirrers and expanded polystyrene food and beverage containers.

Over the past several years, we have been consulting with the community, including business. We have formed a plastic reduction taskforce, which has members from the Australian Food and Grocery Council; Australian Packaging Covenant Organisation; Conservation Council ACT Region; Australian Hotels Association; Australian Retailers Association; Waste Management and Resource Recovery Association; National Retail Association; Restaurant and Catering Industry Association; Canberra Business Chamber; Public Health Association of Australia; and disability advocates, including members of the Disability Reference Group and Advocacy for Inclusion. I also want to note that we also had the late Sue Salhouse advising us as we moved on the transition to more sustainable alternatives.

As we progress to the phase-out on 1 July, we hope that businesses will well and truly start to make a transition by working through any existing stocks of plastics that they may have and finding sustainable alternatives. Yesterday I announced that education activities are well underway and being ramped up. We will be engaging face to face with over 700 businesses, particularly in the hospitality and retail sectors, in the lead-up to the ban in July.

An important message is that bioplastics are banned under the legislation because they cannot be recycled easily in the ACT. We do not have a large-scale composting facility and there have been concerns about contamination interstate. (*Time expired.*)

DR PATERSON: Minister, how is the government engaging with businesses to ensure they are aware of the upcoming changes?

MR STEEL: I thank Dr Paterson for her supplementary. We have been undertaking face-to-face engagement with Canberra's businesses across 19 main food and retail hubs. We have partnered with the National Retail Association, the NRA, to deliver tailored education on what the bans will mean for businesses and how to transition. That has been well received by businesses thus far. Most of them understand that the legislation is in place and that they need to make this transition. Many understood many months and years ago when we started this journey. Of course, this is happening right around the country—interstate as well.

It is excellent to see so many businesses already making the switch or in the process of doing so. We have known from the start of this process that many businesses are very supportive of taking this approach to supporting the environment by banning these plastic products, but they wanted the government to make sure that there is an even regulatory playing field. That is what we are doing.

The ACT is unique in that it is the first jurisdiction to prepare a regulation impact statement on the products to be banned, undertaking a thorough analysis of alternatives available for businesses. What we have found through that process is that many of the sustainable products are actually cheaper than the plastic that people were using. That is why many businesses have already made the switch. But many other businesses will benefit. That is the case with the expanded polystyrene packaging and stirrers. For other products, it will be slightly more expensive, but it will be up to businesses to engage with their packaging suppliers and make sure that they get a supply of sustainable goods.

Of course, we want to also reduce the need to use some of those items. That will be a conversation with consumers. We also hope to engage with consumers as part of this process, at the point of sale, so that they are supporting businesses that are making the switch in July.

MS CLAY: Minister, will all replacements for our single-use plastics be recycled in our kerbside recycling bins?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. It is really case by case. It depends on the alternatives. The variety of alternatives have been explored through the regulation impact statement and will continue to be explored. We want the business sector and the packaging industry to innovate and create new alternatives that are not currently available and better alternatives that can be recycled through our materials recovery facilities and, through them, go on to be remanufactured and turned into other products.

For example, if we are making clear what the alternatives are in the marketing material that is part of the education campaign with businesses, for the single-use cutlery there are single-use alternatives that are made out of bamboo and there are alternatives made out of wood.

But it is not just about substitution. Ultimately, the waste hierarchy has as its first principle to try and avoid the need to use these products. Part of the education with

businesses is that they can help to reduce their costs by encouraging consumers to not use single-use products, whether they be made out of plastic or any other material in the first place. If you are at work, you can bring your takeaway food back and use a metal fork or spoon and then wash it and use it again. We want that sort of behaviour to be taking place.

It will be different for each different product. Of course, we want to make sure that we are moving to alternatives that can be recycled. That was part of the discussion that environment ministers had when we met last week. We all committed to transition away from a minimum of eight different products, with the commonwealth government also taking a role in phasing out the EPS products that are associated with consumer goods packaging and making sure that there is appropriate labelling so that they can be recycled.

Housing ACT—maintenance

MR CAIN: My question is to the Minister for Homelessness and Housing Services: as you would be aware, I recently wrote to you about an ACT Housing property that is infested with rats. ACT Housing attempted to deal with the issue by removing some rubbish from the property. However, this did not improve the situation. How has this issue been allowed to continue after you have been informed about it?

MS VASSAROTTI: Thank you to the member for the question. As people would be aware, we would not be able to speak about an individual circumstance due to privacy issues. But I can certainly talk to some of the key approaches that are taken by Housing ACT to make sure that people are meeting their obligations under the Residential Tenancies Act.

Housing staff work very closely with tenants in terms of particular issues and provide practical supports where they can in relation to the provision of things such as skips and pest control if required. Some of the issues that come through are those struggles tenants face particularly with hoarding and squalor. Particular strategies are put in place by Housing ACT to support people that are working through some really complex mental health issues.

MR CAIN: Minister, how many other properties in the ACT Housing portfolio are infested with rats?

MS VASSAROTTI: Thank you to the member for the supplementary question. We do not provide commentary around individual properties. This is not information that we would be able to provide in this forum.

MR PARTON: Minister, how can you ensure that tenants are looking after their properties in a way that means they do not impact heavily on those people around them?

MS VASSAROTTI: There is a really strong engagement process with individual residents that happens through the housing managers. We also have put in place some specialist workers, such as housing practitioners, that aim to work specifically with

tenants dealing with complex issues to provide a holistic and people centred process to the issues they might be dealing with. Specific tools are provided under the Residential Tenancies Act to support the management of properties, including notices to remedy, and they are used as one tool with the support of the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal, where appropriate. There are certainly a range of strategies that are put in place to support tenants.

Gungahlin—community and recreation needs

MR MILLIGAN: My question is to the Minister for Sport and Recreation. Minister, in January this year the government launched another study to probe Gungahlin's community and recreation needs. SGS Economics and Planning will do a desktop audit of existing and proposed facilities in Gungahlin and bordering suburbs as well as a community engagement program and gap analysis. Meanwhile the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate is developing a new benchmark tool to measure facility demand, and other agencies will also be conducting investigations. How many more reports does this government need before sports facilities are actually built?

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Gentleman, are you taking the question?

MR GENTLEMAN: Madam Speaker, that is a question for EPSDD and the work that they have been doing on looking at facilities right across the territory—particularly as we look at greenfield sites, to ensure that we can provide a good mix of sporting facilities, community facility zones and residential.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, why was the benchmark tool not developed years ago as part of other feasibility studies?

MR GENTLEMAN: Benchmark tools are used frequently to deliver certain aspects of planning across the ACT, and new tools can be devised to provide the necessary outcomes that we are looking for into the future. That is why we develop new tools. Of course, IT brings us the opportunity to develop those tools and use them for the benefit of the community.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, will this benchmark tool delay the study that was commissioned in January?

MR GENTLEMAN: I certainly hope not. I would hope that the IT that we use gives us the opportunity to do studies quicker. It will depend on the input from the ACT community and the work that the directorate does.

Casey—community recreation park

MS CASTLEY: My question is to the Minister for Sport and Recreation. In 2012 the government made an election promise to build the Casey community recreation park. Casey was developed with a planned community recreation park, but the promised park has not been built. The space allocated for the park remains vacant and the DA has expired. Minister, why has the park, promised in 2012, not been built?

MS BERRY: The decisions by the government at the time, during that election—I know that the Casey community has continued to advocate for that site. Those kinds of recreational facilities are important to all communities across the ACT.

Mr Hanson: It was a fib, was it? Were they hoodwinked?

MS BERRY: I have a point of order. Mr Hanson just interjected and suggested that the government was fibbing and that we hoodwinked the community. I ask whether that was parliamentary language.

MADAM SPEAKER: As we all know, Mr Hanson is a serial interjector, so I suggest that you ignore him. I would not say that “hoodwinked” is unparliamentary, but I ask all members to be very mindful of the language they use. My advice would be to ignore him.

MS BERRY: I will do my very best. It is very difficult when he is sitting within arm’s length of me, but I will do my very best to ignore interjections. He does have quite a loud voice.

On the question of the park in Casey and the commitments made by the government at the time, I will check on some of the background because I was not a minister at the time. I think it was the responsibility of another minister in this place. I will check on how those decisions came about.

MS CASTLEY: I have a supplementary question. When will the community receive further information as to the current status of this development?

MS BERRY: I will take that question on notice.

MR MILLIGAN: I have a supplementary question. Minister, will you be making a solid commitment to the election promises made in 2012 any time this year?

MS BERRY: I am not going to be announcing government policy.

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members, allow the minister to answer the question.

MS BERRY: The question was about whether I would make an announcement later this year. I have already said in my previous answers that I would take the detail of the question on notice. I will do that and inform the Assembly.

Arts—Canberra Theatre Centre

MS ORR: My question is to the Minister for Arts. How has the government supported the Canberra Theatre Centre during the pandemic?

MS CHEYNE: I thank Ms Orr for the question and her interest and advocacy for the arts and Canberra Theatre Centre. In this financial year the ACT government has provided total additional funding of \$3½ million to the Cultural Facilities Corporation, which manages the Canberra Theatre Centre, to enable the organisation to continue its operations despite a major downturn in income due to COVID-19.

A major component of this funding counteracted the significant decline in theatre revenue. Of this amount, \$2½ million was provided through the August 2020 economic and fiscal update and a further \$1 million is being provided through the 2020-21 ACT budget. This funding has been critical for the Canberra Theatre Centre to continue presenting works to audiences, albeit in a COVID-safe way.

One great initiative was the CTC At Home program, which engaged a number of local artists and paid them to deliver a variety of programs that showcases their works and discussed arts sector issues. This resulted in the presentation of more than 50 live streams across eight weeks totalling over 149,000 views—a pretty fantastic result.

MS ORR: Minister, what does the recent lifting of restrictions for cinemas and theatres mean for the Canberra Theatre Centre?

MS CHEYNE: I thank Ms Orr for the supplementary question. The recent lifting of restrictions for cinemas and theatres is a great step forward for the COVID recovery of the Canberra Theatre Centre. It gives confidence to the theatre to pursue shows and other bookings for the venues, it gives touring agents and companies the confidence to present a work in Canberra and have the ability to sell every single ticket possible, and it sends a signal to the public that the Canberra Theatre Centre is well and truly back and open for business. This increase from 75 per cent to 100 per cent capacity has allowed the Canberra Theatre Centre to release an extra 34,000 tickets for its program this year.

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, what announcements were made at the recent program update at the Canberra Theatre Centre?

MS CHEYNE: I thank Mr Pettersson for the question and his interest. Several new shows have been added to the Canberra Theatre's 2021 program, including the likes of satirical play *White Pearl* and a revised production of *The Seven Stages of Grieving* by Deborah Mailman and Wesley Enoch. Perhaps most exciting is the announcement of the world premiere of *The Dismissal* later in 2021, a new Sydney Theatre Company musical production exploring—you'll be surprised—the dismissal of the late great Prime Minister Gough Whitlam by the Governor-General in 1975.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, not again.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: You are warned now.

MS CHEYNE: Another exciting addition is the announcement of New Territory, a new program which supports the development and presentation of original performance works from ACT artists. In the first year Canberra Theatre will be inviting up to three teams of artists into the building, offering rent-free use of space, providing full artist fees and giving access to the expertise of theatre staff in a series of residencies designed to show the region and the rest of the country just what is possible in the ACT.

Mr Barr: Madam Speaker, further questions can be placed on the notice paper.

Supplementary answers to questions without notice

Public housing—disruptive behaviour

MS VASSAROTTI: I want to confirm the number of formal visits I have had to public housing. I have checked my diary and there have been four formal visits to public housing complexes over the period. In addition, I have met with tenants in the Assembly as well as attending, just last week with Minister Berry, the Tenants Consultancy Group. It is a great delight to be out in the community getting to speak to tenants on a regular basis.

Housing ACT—vacant property

MS BERRY: Madam Speaker, with your leave, I ask Mr Parton whether details on vacant properties as of 6 April is satisfactory?

Mr Parton: Yes.

MS BERRY: As of 6 April, 117 properties, as I said, had been identified for sale or redevelopment; 224 were undergoing maintenance, repair and improvements; and 65 were ready to be allocated. We are going through that process of showing tenants and signing leases et cetera.

I also can provide some information to the chamber on Lowanna. There were multiple parties that the ACT government initiated proceedings against in relation to the development at Lowanna Street. Through mediation, the asset certifiers of the development were required to pay \$525,000 and the building engineer was required to pay \$45,000 to the ACT government. Proceedings with Bellerive Pty Ltd were unable to be completed, with the party becoming insolvent prior to any settlement or agreement being reached.

Arts—funding

MS CHEYNE: In response to Ms Clay's question about direct funding to artists, Arts Activities funding is the primary direct support provided by the ACT government to artists, with the total allocation for Arts Activities and the Screen Arts Fund being just over \$1 million dollars this financial year. Artists have also been supported through

COVID-19 support funding with over \$1.2 million through HOMEFRONT and rent relief.

Funding of over \$8 million is allocated annually to arts organisations, community outreach funding, pop-up funding and special initiatives. While that, on the surface, is not directly to artists, that funding assists artists and flows directly through to artists in a variety of different ways. It is not easy to quantify but, for example, you could imagine that by allowing arts organisations to flourish they can put on exhibitions, artists can show work, tickets can be sold and that work can be purchased. So all of that ultimately goes to directly supporting artists.

Public housing—maintenance

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (3.02): I move:

That this Assembly

(1) notes:

- (a) the importance of public housing residents' reasonable entitlement to a dwelling that is structurally safe to live in;
- (b) the Government's obligation to provide public housing dwellings that are free of risks to the health and safety of their residents;
- (c) the Government requires its public housing maintenance contractor to comply with rigorous standards for rectification of health and safety risks;
- (d) in 2019-20, Housing ACT reported it had received more than 1,100 complaints related to maintenance and property condition issues, amounting to almost 42 percent of all complaints;
- (e) many residents advise that neglect of their dwellings creates stress and fears for their safety particularly where they are living in dangerous or intimidating neighbourhoods;
- (f) public housing tenants say they feel helpless and are being ignored when they seek help on fixing the poor condition of their dwellings; and
- (g) significant numbers of public housing tenants are reaching out to their local members for help on remediating critical health and safety issues;

(2) further notes the Government:

- (a) is allocating more than \$650 million capital expenditure on new construction and public housing renewals, but at the same time, forcing some residents to live in unsatisfactory conditions; and
- (b) has an ethical and social obligation to ensure its public housing tenants are living in safe and health compliant dwellings; and

(3) calls on the Government as a matter of urgency to:

- (a) undertake a stocktake of its public housing to determine the condition of each dwelling;
- (b) commit to a program to determine the actions and work required to rectify all dwellings that are in breach of, or below health and safety standards;

- (c) allocate sufficient funds to have all significant maintenance requests including for health and safety defects resolved no later than 31 August 2021;
- (d) ensure the provisions and performance benchmarks in the facilities maintenance contract for public housing are enforced; and
- (e) report back to this Assembly before mid-October on progress made in resolving maintenance backlog impacting on tenants' health and safety.

As the shadow minister for housing in the ACT, it is very clear from a quick read of my email inbox that things are crook in Tallarook. I genuinely regret that I have to bring a motion like this to the chamber; I do not think that should be the case. At its core this motion is about basic human rights; at its core this is about giving families and individuals the ability to live their lives in dwellings that do not threaten their health and safety.

When you think about it that way, it is amazing that we are even debating it. I am bringing on this motion because some public housing tenants are being ignored or neglected well beyond reasonable standards. I understand that Housing ACT's maintenance contractor has around 12,000 properties to look after in addition to being responsible for the Bimberi Youth Justice Centre and the long stay park at Symonston. It is a big job.

In announcing the new contract with Programmed, the minister reflected on the extensive consultations that led to this contract, which included talking to tenants, industry and community housing organisations. The minister was getting a steady stream of representations from me and no doubt from other MLAs also, and I am sure the minister had a pretty good picture of what was working and what was not working.

When the minister announced the new public housing maintenance contract in July of 2018, I was certainly full of hope that the rate of complaints that I would receive about neglect of maintenance in public housing would dry up. But they have not. In recent times some quite worrying instances have been brought to my attention, and I will highlight some of the examples shortly.

This motion is not complex by any means. It contains pretty much one simple request of government and one simple message only—that is, to inform itself of the extent to which public housing tenants are living in unacceptable conditions and to get those properties fixed as a matter of urgency. How could anyone possibly argue with that? The government portrays itself as a compassionate government, a government sensitive to the needs of a diversity of cultures and a government that cares for people in varying economic and social circumstances. It is a government that takes forensic interests in the rights, powers, and discretion of landlords in the private sector in the interests of what it sees as a fair go for tenants, and in this regard over the last few years there has been a raft of legislative amendments to expand tenant rights and restrict the discretion of landlords.

But when it comes to this government's stewardship in its role as a landlord itself, all of a sudden those lofty standards it expects private landlords to uphold do not seem to

matter. It seems that Housing ACT can just do whatever it likes. The provision of public housing is a social welfare service to accommodate people who are unable to access a place to live in the private sector and who, in many cases, can only afford a fraction of market level rent. But this does not mean that we should treat public housing tenants as second class citizens or with contempt when it comes to ensuring they have a place that is fit for purpose and free of health and safety risks.

Based on the hundreds of conversations I have had with tenants on the ground and on the dozens of site visits that I have undertaken, I am seeing public housing tenants treated with absolute contempt by this government. This Labor-Greens government clearly sees public housing tenants as second-class citizens. That sounds like a really strong thing to say, but I cannot remove myself from that conclusion, based on the many, many conversations I have had.

So the question is: what exactly is the government's obligation to its tenants? Surely, there is a moral and ethical obligation on the government as a landlord to ensure tenants are not living in something structurally unsafe or infested with some sort of contamination that makes the place a health risk or genuinely unliveable? But we have evidence to the contrary.

The minister at least gives the appearance of taking these matters seriously. Housing ACT and its parent directorate wrote a very rigorous contract that is very specific in protecting tenants' rights to a healthy and safe living environment. For example, the contract describes responsive repairs and maintenance as repairs that need to be undertaken as a matter of priority where there are possible impacts on health, safety, welfare and amenity of the tenant.

Other contractual provisions are quite time specific when it comes to health and safety risks. For example, urgent issues regarding immediate risks are to be fixed within four hours. Priority repairs are to be resolved by 6 pm the next day. Repairs that are not urgent but could develop into a health or security risk must be resolved within five calendar days and less urgent items must be fixed within 20 calendar days. Now this is just not happening. We all know it is not happening, and that is the reason I have brought this motion to the chamber.

Housing ACT's own data suggests there is a bit of a problem, and perhaps more than just a bit. According to the last annual report 2,700 complaints of all types were lodged with Housing ACT. Of these, a little over 1,100 related to maintenance or property conditions, and that equals 42 per cent of total complaints. There were also another 350 complaints on tenant-responsible maintenance. Here we should acknowledge there are some things the tenant ought to reasonably do for themselves. But 42 per cent of complaints relating to maintenance suggests that something must be amiss.

I will give some examples of where people have come to my office for help. I saw this case firsthand in Tuggeranong: the ceiling of a property had collapsed due to water damage; the lighting cut out whenever it rained; the kitchen, bathroom and laundry were in a very poor condition; and the hot water system had failed. When requests for help were lodged, responsiveness appeared less than satisfactory and the family was

left in a severe state of distress and frustration, believing it was simply too hard to get anything done. Eventually there has been some movement there, but I was contacted again by that resident in the last 48 hours and we are still a long way from having things sorted.

In another case, a couple in the Woden area were forced to move out of their house due to severe mould infestation, while a tenant in the inner south had skin conditions exacerbated by lack of maintenance to remedy a similar health problem. Another resident in Tuggeranong complained of a severe mould infestation in the bathroom that has prevailed for quite some time. I have seen it for myself and I was blown away. In Belconnen, a tenant suffered major storm damage due to faulty installation of guttering, also causing electrical problems. Another case in the Woden area—failure to repair locks in a complex was associated with an assault and, as you can understand, deep fear among elderly tenants. Interestingly, the tenant was advised the contractor could do nothing because funding had been exhausted. This is what people are being told on the ground: “Oh, we can’t fix that because funding has been exhausted.” A similar issue with locks was recently highlighted in relation to Condamine Court. Again in Belconnen a tenant has reached out to me complaining his cooking appliances had failed and for a number of weeks he has not been able to prepare food.

I could go on and on, but I hope this gives members a bit of a picture of the feedback that we are getting, and I suspect others in the room are receiving similar feedback. The Housing ACT annual report gives a clue as to where the problem might be in referring to its financial deficit and financial risks. The agency said its ongoing operating revenue capacity is not keeping up with the disproportionate property costs of its operation. I do note that in answer to a question without notice Ms Berry gave a response regarding some additional funding that was apparently spent on maintenance in the calendar year of 2020. But if it is additional funding, why has it been taken away from the following calendar year? That is the big question I have.

Staying on this perspective for a moment, the public housing repair contract says that the Commissioner for Social Housing may in its absolute discretion direct reimbursable services to be performed despite the services budget having been exhausted. This is stated in section 5.42, dealing with the services budget. Members might wish to read this for themselves.

There is clearly a serious problem with public housing maintenance. If this were a problem with private sector landlords, my Greens colleagues would have formed a conga line a mile long to fix the problem immediately. But the government is dealing with public tenants, who do not seem to matter all that much in the scheme of things, and it is happy to callously disregard their circumstances. Perhaps it could show some compassion and rethink the appropriation it is debating this week and fix the problem. It is probably a little late for that.

All we are asking for in this motion is a priority effort to get on top of a significant problem for some tenants. It is absolutely unfair to make those who are impacted by health and safety risks endure them when the government has the means to fix them. If the deadline in the motion is untenable, well, pick another date. But I do not believe that we should leave it for an unacceptably long time. I also suggest the minister avoid

the temptation to sheet this problem home to the contractor, unless there is some systemic management problem there. We must remember it is the role of a responsible government to look after its tenants, and that obligation cannot be buck passed to a contractual matter.

We will have amendments from the minister. I am quite pleased in part with the vibe of some of those amendments, and I commend Ms Berry and her staff for engaging with me on them. I look forward to hearing from the minister and other members on this and getting to the all-important climactic vote at the end of it.

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) (3.13): I thank Mr Parton for bringing forward this motion today. I move:

Omit all words after “(1) notes:” and substitute:

- “ (a) the importance of all tenants’, public and private, reasonable entitlement to a dwelling that is structurally safe to live in;
- (b) a landlord’s obligation to provide dwellings that are free of risks to the health and safety of their residents;
- (c) the Government requires its public housing maintenance contractor to comply with rigorous standards for rectification of health and safety risks; and
- (d) in 2019-20, Housing ACT reported it had received more than 1100 complaints related to maintenance and property condition issues, amounting to almost 42 percent of all complaints;

(2) notes:

- (a) the ACT Government is investing over \$1 billion over 10 years to grow and renew public housing to provide more homes and meet the needs of tenants;
- (b) the ACT Government invests over \$40 million every year to maintain public housing properties;
- (c) the ACT Government spent an additional \$8.9 million in public housing maintenance and energy efficiency upgrades and to support local jobs through COVID-19; and
- (d) all landlords have an ethical and social obligation to ensure tenants are living in safe and health compliant dwellings; and

(3) calls on the ACT Government to:

- (a) continue the stocktake of public housing dwellings to determine the condition and future of each dwelling;
- (b) reaffirm its commitment that all public housing dwellings meet health and safety standards;
- (c) explore options to provide further support to local industry through public housing maintenance and upgrades;

- (d) continue to ensure the provisions and performance benchmarks in the facilities maintenance contract for public housing are enforced; and
- (e) report back to this Assembly by the last sitting week in October on progress of the growth and renewal program and public housing stock.”

Mr Assistant Speaker, in responding to Mr Parton’s motion I am going to begin by discussing the ACT government’s housing renewal program. It is an important part of this story, because it means that at the end of 2025 there will be a 20 per cent renewal in public housing stock in the ACT. The ACT has some of the oldest public housing stock in the country. This renewal program is about ensuring that those maintenance requirements in older public housing are relieved by having newer, easier to maintain public housing. It is part of a longer and more detailed story about how the ACT government builds homes that best suit the needs of tenants in the ACT, but it also relieves that pressure on some of the older houses which are more difficult to maintain. Anybody who lives in an older home or a rental can definitely attest to that.

We have clearly demonstrated our commitment with the significant investment that the ACT government has made in public housing. Over the next five years the ACT government is investing more than half a billion dollars to build 1,400 new, modern, efficient properties, including 400 extra homes for those in need. This program includes direct budget investment of over \$150 million. This is per capita. It is the biggest investment of public housing in the country. As I said, it will see almost a quarter of our public housing stock renewed. Over \$1.2 billion has been invested in public housing from 2014 to 2025. This investment builds on the success of previous public housing renewal programs, which saw the replacement of 1,288 ageing and no longer fit for purpose properties in higher concentrations with more efficient homes in smaller developments spread across our great city.

Right now we have around 500 new properties in various stages of the development pipeline. This includes those currently being designed, with the Planning and Land Authority for approvals, out for procurement and/or under construction. When Housing ACT looks at sites to redevelop, it targets the older, more inefficient homes that no longer meet the needs of our tenants and, as I described, are no longer practical to upgrade. Property condition assessments are occurring right now to assess the state of every public housing property to determine what works would need to be done for the future of the dwelling, whether to retain and upgrade, demolish and rebuild, or renew and redevelop.

When a determination is made that a property is no longer able to be upgraded, our tenants are supported by the housing managers and a really dedicated team of tenant relocation officers to find them a new home that meets their needs. These officers do incredible work. They work very closely with tenants to determine their housing needs and find an appropriate place that they can call home. I have been able to meet so many tenants who have been part of this relocation process. Although some are reluctant at first, understandably—many of these tenants have been in their homes for many years and moving is a big change for anyone, including our public housing tenants—they have spoken highly of the work that Housing ACT does, as well as the amazing support of these relocation officers.

I cannot let it go by without correcting the record on Mr Parton's allegations about where the ACT government stands with regard to supporting public housing tenants. I think we need to just reflect on the last term of the government and the Public Housing Renewal Program that I was responsible for during that term. I take everybody back to the conversation that occurred when new public housing was being proposed to be built in different parts of the ACT where there were lower numbers of public housing. The Canberra Liberals vocally opposed it. I vocally defended every single public housing tenant in the ACT.

I have publicly been on the side of public housing tenants and building public housing all across our city, within every suburb, to make sure that public housing tenants have the same choices about where they want to live across this city, whether that is a home in the suburbs right on the edge of our city or in the city closer to health care, schools or family—whatever their needs are. They are entitled, and they deserve, to choose where they want to live, just like the rest of us. I take particular personal offence at Mr Parton's suggestion that I was not very publicly on the side of public housing tenants in the ACT.

Given the high ratio of public housing in Canberra, I understand that of course all MLAs will receive correspondence from tenants when they are experiencing issues around a range of matters concerning Housing ACT or the neighbourhoods that they live in. In this instance I have always encouraged members to please provide those details to my office, or to Ms Vassarotti's office, if it is around tenant allocation or tenant management, so that we can work with the tenant and contact Housing ACT or Programmed to ensure that the issues can be resolved.

Mr Parton suggested he has had several hundred representations from tenants in the last couple of months. I checked with my office to see how many representations I had had from Mr Parton. Since the start of this year I have had 23 representations. All of those matters, as Mr Parton has said, are being addressed and I have responded to him. As I have said to him in the past, I am happy to talk confidentially in more detail about those individual tenants, but I will not discuss personal matters in this place. I am happy to talk more generally about some of the issues that those people are experiencing that they have raised with him so that he can be assured that Housing ACT and Programmed are working with that tenant appropriately and making sure that they are getting their needs addressed.

Housing ACT manages a portfolio of around 11,700 properties with a value of \$5.4 billion. Housing ACT, like any other landlord, operates under the Residential Tenancies Act. This legislation is very clear when it comes to maintenance and the upkeep of properties and applies to both public and private landlords. Over the 2019-20 financial year, Housing spent approximately \$52 million in repairs and upgrades to its portfolio through its total facilities manager, which is an increase from previous years. This equated to more than 77,000 work orders and included 783 upgrades to properties. The additional spending on repairs and maintenance was in response to significant natural events in early 2020 and a higher number of requests for maintenance and higher than anticipated vacant properties.

When Programmed is notified of a repair that needs to be done, the works are assigned a priority category which is an appropriate time frame for the different kinds of works to be carried out. Depending on the nature, this would be as little as four hours or as long as 20 calendar days. If the repair is more complex and an investigation is required, this will be arranged to scope the required works to repair and the time frame for them to be undertaken. Programmed works closely with tenants to ensure appointments are as convenient as possible and the repairs are undertaken as soon as possible.

The ACT government sets the bar very high for the performance of the total facilities manager, Programmed. The 70 or so subcontractors who employ 350-plus local Canberrans that deliver maintenance to our tenants have time frame targets for certain jobs. For example, if it is an emergency or an urgent repair, it needs to be done within four hours. I acknowledge and thank Mr Parton for noticing that the contract has very high expectations of Programmed. Housing ACT makes sure that is enforced. Part of that enforcement is ensuring that tenants are treated with respect by both Programmed and Housing ACT.

An important recognition within the total facilities management contract is that social inclusion has been a priority for the ACT government and it encourages participation across specific cohorts of the ACT community. This includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, people with a disability, young persons and Housing ACT tenants.

As at 30 June 2020, 305 people from these cohort groups have been employed under the contract with Programmed, which is 22 per cent above the target of 250. Programmed have also undertaken a number of social inclusion activities during 2019-20, which includes the youth interchange program, Kippax Trade Start training and the family connection program, which has provided more skills and outreach to specific groups within our community.

Housing ACT has committed to providing a quality service for its tenants and works closely with Programmed. The number of Programmed-managed first-level complaints that related to maintenance in the 2019-20 financial year was 666, representing less than one per cent of the total work orders that were completed in this time frame. Housing ACT received 104 second-level complaints regarding maintenance in the same period. Whilst the complaints are handled individually, they are also used as forms of feedback to improve outcomes for tenants.

Mr Assistant Speaker, I accept that there are a lot of numbers here and we are talking about human beings. When I get correspondence from MLAs in this place, I am able to dig deeper within that data and understand from Housing ACT the individual needs of that tenant and make sure that those tenant's needs are being met. It is not a matter of just a tick and flick for me. I listen to the stories and the experiences of tenants to make sure that Programmed are providing those services as appropriately required under the contract and that Housing ACT are investing in making sure that Housing ACT workers are being the social landlords that we aspire them all to be as well.

Four of Housing ACT's multi-unit complexes will also be upgraded through these programs of upgrades, with external painting at two complexes and replacing balconies at another and major roof upgrades at a fourth. They will also see new reverse cycle heating and cooling and highly efficient electric hot water system upgrades in 1,300 homes. At least 250 properties will receive upgrades to their kitchens, bathrooms or laundries, as well as roof replacements to some stand-alone dwellings. This public housing maintenance stimulus which occurred throughout COVID and is continuing this year was really successful and well received by tenants. I will report back to the Assembly on this program at a later date, as I have asked Housing ACT to explore opportunities to further provide local stimulus through public housing maintenance.

Again, I thank Mr Parton for bringing this motion to the Assembly. It is important that we continue to keep a close eye on the Programmed Total Facilities Management contract to ensure that it is meeting the requirements that are there in the contract to obviously do the maintenance and upgrades within our public housing dwellings but to do that respectfully with our tenants. Some of them have very complex and complicated lives and need extra support both from Housing ACT and Programmed. I commend my amendment to the Assembly.

MRS KIKKERT (Ginninderra) (3.27): I thank Mr Parton for bringing this urgent motion before the Assembly today. One of the first complaints I received after being elected in 2016 concerned maintenance of a public housing property in my electorate. The residents were facing many of the specific issues listed in Mr Parton's motion, and the longstanding problems were not only affecting the household but had also spread to impact surrounding neighbours. Over the past four and a half years, I have had no shortage of complaints from residents of public housing about lack of maintenance.

In addition to complaints made by public housing residents about maintenance, I have also received complaints about vacant public housing properties. Just the other week, I wrote to the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development concerning two properties that have remained vacant for weeks and even months, despite appearing to be in good condition. It may very well be the case that these properties have significant maintenance issues that need to be resolved before new residents can move in. However, some time has passed, and I have not received any updates. Neither have my constituents, who all reside nearby and are eager to see these homes occupied again. The good people who live in this particular neighbourhood are conscious of the fact that there is a long waiting list of Canberrans who are desperate for housing, and it naturally does not sit well with them to see these properties seemingly abandoned.

Recently, I received a complaint from another public housing resident, who has been waiting for weeks for essential maintenance on her property. The bathroom regularly floods when it rains and even just when the shower is used. This is an unacceptable standard of living in the nation's capital. No-one should have to wait weeks for such urgent repairs. As we all know, the longer the wait, the more costly the repairs will be as the property continues to deteriorate.

We can do better than this—much better. If any other landlord in this territory treated its tenants in this way, those opposite would be the first to name them, shame them and drag them to court. The ACT government should be ashamed for having become what may well be the territory's shonkiest landlord. I heartily support Mr Parton's motion today and commend it to the Assembly.

MS VASSAROTTI (Kurrajong—Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, Minister for Homelessness and Housing Services and Minister for Sustainable Building and Construction) (3.30): I rise to speak in support of Minister Berry's amendment to the motion. I thank Mr Parton for his motion and his interest in the wellbeing and safety of tenants residing in Housing ACT properties. It is something that I also have a deep interest in and would suggest that it is the opposite of being callous. Everyone in the ACT has the right to a decent home and the role that Housing ACT plays in providing homes for people in the ACT is one that cannot be overstated.

As outlined in the comments made by Minister Berry, Housing ACT takes its responsibilities as a landlord really seriously and strives to be a model landlord. She outlined the government's responsibilities under the Residential Tenancies Act and noted that it is managing more than 11,000 properties and more than 21,000 tenancies. In this, ensuring timely and appropriate maintenance occurs is an important and key part of the job. While I recognise that this is a job that is essentially about managing assets, these are assets that impact on people's lives. It is important that we recognise that a faulty stove, a leaky roof and other issues significantly impact on people's lives and wellbeing. This means we need to make sure we get it right.

Recognising the total management contract with Programmed is a major contract for the ACT government, and while significant internal contract management and review occurs, we welcome external review. There was a recent audit undertaken by the Auditor-General that did just that. The audit found that Housing ACT has established a strong and effective governance system over the contract which, as we have heard today, includes some very stringent requirements. This is underpinned by a comprehensive performance management system. Notwithstanding the achievements, the audit has identified some aspects of management that can be improved. These include a continual focus on financial management and the opportunity to improve the already effective governance structure.

The audit identified that significant work had already been done to address these findings. It also made one recommendation, which is to review the role of the senior contract manager, specifically with regard to competing responsibilities and accountabilities that occur when managing a contract of this size and complexity. This recommendation was not made due to a specific instance that the Auditor-General came across; rather, it was made to ensure that the competing priorities do not result in an issue at some further stage. The directorate has commenced and continues to implement a range of ongoing actions that respond positively to the report's recommendation and findings. The government response to the report will be tabled in the Assembly in coming months.

Directly engaging with tenants is a key way that we understand the experience of tenants. It provides another opportunity to reflect on key issues and identify whether systemic issues are emerging in relation to the experience of engaging with the contractor around repairs and maintenance. A key mechanism for this is the tenant consultative group, which enables a representative group of tenants to raise issues and provide feedback on all aspects of Housing ACT. As referenced in the previous session, I was pleased to meet with members of the tenant consultancy group last week. Both Minister Berry and I attended a regular meeting of the group and heard from tenants about what was working well and areas where there could be improvements. This session was extremely useful and, once again, demonstrates the significant contribution Housing ACT tenants are making to their community. Complaints that we have talked about in previous interventions are an important mechanism, not only to respond to the individual issues but also to identify trends and groups of issues that may require a systemic response.

We have talked about some of the key performance measures that are contained within the contract in relation to repairs and maintenance. Customer satisfaction surveys are another way to collect data on the issues of maintenance as well as call centre satisfaction. This data is a really important driver for continuous improvement of services. Programmed are continually looking for ways to receive this information. Tenants who call the Programmed contact centre are asked to hold on and complete a short survey, and feedback is sought via text and email after jobs are completed. In addition, a sample of completed jobs is selected and followed up with the tenants as another way of finding out areas of improvements. These are all in addition to the thousands of audits undertaken each year that scrutinise the quality of work that is done.

Housing ACT is committed to providing a quality service and working closely with Programmed to ensure that there are robust customer satisfaction collection methodologies in place. In managing such a significant contract, we recognise the need to work with our contracted provider to ensure that there is excellence in performance, as well as ensuring there are further outcomes delivered through the contract. Housing ACT has, as Minister Berry outlined, unapologetically set the bar very high for the performance of Programmed.

As outlined by Minister Berry, Housing ACT has a commitment to the ACT government's social inclusion policy and strategy by improving opportunities and outcomes from tenancy. This contract and the Total Facilities Management model are seen as an important vehicle for promoting social outcomes for tenants as well as leveraging opportunities for a wider range of disadvantaged cohorts.

Programmed has achieved and continues to exceed targets set for employment of identified cohorts. These include public housing tenants, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people with a disability, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, especially new arrivals and refugees, and young people, especially those exiting justice systems or care programs. Programmed is currently exceeding the target by 22 per cent.

The ACT government recognises the realities of managing a portfolio of residential properties that includes ageing stock. That is one of the reasons it has committed \$1 billion to the growth and renewal program. Housing ACT regularly audits the status of stock and works with tenants residing in properties that may be appropriate to include in the renewal program. As we work through this program, this will see tenants provided with more modern homes that meet their needs. This will be particularly important for vulnerable tenants, including those who are ageing. This will change the nature of the needs of tenants in relation to repairs and maintenance and will deliver on outcomes such as delivering more sustainable homes for our tenants, making them more comfortable and cheaper to heat and cool.

Again, I thank Mr Parton and the opposition for their interest in this important issue and the motion that really looks to the safety and wellbeing of Housing ACT tenants. As the minister for housing services, I share this interest. I am working hard every day with my colleague Minister Berry to ensure Housing ACT residents are in homes that are safe, comfortable and sustainable. I know that staff within Housing ACT are committed to this too and are ensuring that the repairs and maintenance issues are responded to in a timely manner. I thank them for the work that they are doing in managing a challenging contract that sees a large volume of requests generated each year.

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (3.38): In closing, I would love to support the amendment, but I cannot. When Minister Berry amends a motion of mine, historically, I expect it to be a full knockdown and rebuild, Mr Assistant Speaker, but in this case it is more like a renovation. I certainly give credit to that, but I just do not think it is a renovation that improves the property. It crosses the threshold whereby I can live with it. I think the motion is much stronger in its original form. In her act of not completely gutting my motion, Ms Berry has, to her credit, in part admitted that there is a bit of a problem here. I am not convinced that these problems will be fixed by the government in a timely manner. I think that there is a deeper problem going on here that has not fully played out in public.

The biggest single reason that I cannot support the amendment is that the minister has removed (3)(b), which calls on the government to:

commit to a program to determine the actions and work required to rectify all dwellings that are in breach of, or below health and safety standards;

How is it that we can be in the chamber even debating that? Yet indeed it has been removed! That particular clause has been removed and that is just not acceptable to me. And I can tell you that it will not be acceptable to those tenants who are currently living in substandard circumstances and are on many occasions risking their health and safety.

To her credit, Ms Berry has replaced that clause with something that sort of goes two-thirds of the way there. That is, the amendment calls on the government to:

reaffirm its commitment that all public housing dwellings meet health and safety standards;

What that says to me is, “We are just going to keep on doing it the way we have been doing it: there is nothing to see here; move along.” I cannot support the amendment, because I am not confident this government is going to fix these problems.

Let us go back to this so-called additional spending in the COVID year, because I am still confused about this. According to Ms Berry—and this is, again, in her amendment—this totals \$8.9 million. What is not clear is whether this money was over and above the total maintenance contract or whether it was borrowed from money that would have been spent in this calendar year, leading up to the end of the financial year. That does line up, in part, with answers that I received to these questions in the recent estimates and annual reports hearings. Officials told me that they had overspent in 2020 and that there were a number of subcontractors who were not getting work in 2021. To me, that sounds like we have dragged money from calendar year 2021 into 2020 and it has been spent. I am just not sure that we can characterise that as additional money.

I got a call on this matter this morning from a subcontractor, who I will not name. You can understand that he does not want to be named. It is because he is worried that he will be penalised. Let us call him Peter. Peter told me that prior to January, as a Programmed subcontractor, he was getting 50 to 60 jobs per month. Since January he has had three minor jobs total. He has fallen off a cliff—50 to 60 jobs per month to less than one per month. What on earth is going on there, Mr Assistant Speaker? Peter told my office this morning that Programmed had told him that funds had been diverted to higher priorities but that normal workloads should resume for subcontractors in June or July.

This does not line up with the evidence that we got in the hearings. I was told in the hearings by officials that, in relation to the subcontractors who were contacting me, it was perhaps an indication that their work was substandard. This bloke has been working in this game for more than 20 years. This does not line up to me at all. Peter—that is not his real name—invested \$30,000 in materials late last year for jobs that never eventuated. He has had to lay off three contract staff. I guess, most importantly, the work that this contractor would normally be doing now very clearly is not being done. It is not being done because (a) we know Peter is not doing it and (b) the level of contact that we are getting from tenants who say, “This isn’t being fixed,” lines up with that rhetoric.

I appreciate that this is a very tough and complex job. I endorse the words—I almost sound as though I am doing this begrudgingly—of the minister regarding the renewal of properties and how, for the most part, this leads to much better maintenance outcomes. I get that, but I cannot support the amendment because I am just not of the belief that these problems are going to be fixed.

Question put:

That the amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 15

Noes 8

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

Amendment agreed to.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

Health—dementia

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (3.49): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) there is a need for improved design and infrastructure to meet the needs of individuals with dementia in Canberra;
- (b) having “dementia-friendly design” (as recommended by Dementia Australia) of venues and infrastructure will decrease the risk of social isolation for older individuals;
- (c) social inclusion is an integral part of improving mental health in older Canberrans;
- (d) access to places that provide social opportunities such as our national institutions and tourist locations should be open to everyone;
- (e) there are currently no set standards for physical environments to ensure that they allow for people with dementia to engage safely and as independently as possible with these built environments; and
- (f) the Federal Government committed an additional \$132.2 million to Dementia Australia in December 2020 in response to the Aged Care Royal Commission’s recommendations on COVID-19; and

(2) calls on the ACT Government to:

- (a) investigate how to make Canberra a more dementia friendly city;
- (b) formally incorporate these findings into the Age-Friendly City Plan 2020-2024 and outline a timeframe for when the implementation process must be completed by; and
- (c) report these findings and table the updated Age-Friendly City Plan 2020-2024 to the Assembly by the end of September 2021. (Notice given 19 April 2021.

I am proud to bring forth this motion in the Legislative Assembly today, because dementia is a harrowing, debilitating disease that too many people suffer from. If anyone suffers from it, it is too many. It is a term used to cover a range of different conditions that may be similar. They are characterised by a gradual impairment of brain function. Changes due to dementia can affect your behaviour, memory, speech, thought, mobility and personality. Health and functional ability can decline as the disease progresses in a person.

The early signs of dementia are very subtle and vague and may not be immediately obvious to people. Some common symptoms may include progressive and frequent memory loss, confusion, personality change, apathy and withdrawal, and a loss of ability to perform everyday tasks. Dementia is the second leading cause of death in Australia, with coronary heart disease being the leading cause. Dementia is the leading cause of death in women.

In 2021 there were an estimated 472,000 Australians living with dementia. Without some sort of medical breakthrough, the number of people with dementia is expected to increase to over a million by 2058. Currently, an estimated 250 people are joining the population with dementia every day. That is a further 250 people diagnosed with dementia every day. An average of 16 people died per day where dementia was the underlying cause of death.

We do not talk enough about dementia, Mr Assistant Speaker. There is still a bit of a stigma about it, because people seem like they are no longer the same person. They can appear angry. They can appear deceptive. They might not seem like the same person, but they still are. We need to talk more about dementia. It is here. It is our families. It is our friends. It may be our parents, our grandparents, our neighbours or our neighbours' parents or grandparents. It is in our community.

We are lucky that we are seeing more aged-care and retirement places with dementia-specific facilities. I do not want to upset anyone, but I do not mean those places where people with dementia may be sat in a chair in front of a TV all day and pretty much left there. Many places are emerging that are best practice examples of dementia care. This is what we must encourage in our community. Of course, not every person with dementia wants to live in aged care or a retirement home. Many people want to stay at home with their loved ones.

Just as importantly, their loved ones want the person with dementia to stay at home with them. They want to give them the love and care that they may have been sharing with them for 50 years or more—or less, in some cases. They are trying their best to stay at home. It is only natural that people with dementia will want to live as normal a life as possible. Depending on the individual and the stage of their dementia, they may have many days where their health, behaviour and thought processes are as they had always been. They may have the occasional bad day. Sadly, as the condition progresses those bad days can increase in frequency.

For those people, especially those still living at home, we need to make Canberra as dementia friendly as possible so that people can live independently and that family

members and carers can take their loved ones out and about in our beautiful city as much as possible. That brings me to the age-friendly city plan. I do not feel that people with dementia, their families or carers have been sufficiently consulted and included in the production and creation of the age-friendly city plan. But we have the opportunity here today—a genuine opportunity—to address that.

Back in 2019, the then Minister for Seniors and Veterans, Gordon Ramsay, spoke to the tabling of the document *Age-Friendly Canberra—A Vision for our City*. This document aimed to discuss and outline the principles that would guide the next steps for an age-friendly Canberra. It had 12 principles under four pillars, if you like, which included: involved, connected and valued; safe, secure and free from abuse; information services and support which embrace diversity; and a city for all ages. There is not enough in this document or the more recent plan relating to dementia and dementia-friendly design. Dementia-friendly design does not have to be complicated. It does not have to be expensive, although at times it might be. As with most design work, building it in at the outset is usually cheaper than having to retrofit something.

Just last week I went to the National Press Club to hear an address by Professor Graeme Samuel, the chairperson of Dementia Australia. He talked about the significance of simple changes to improve the experience for people with dementia. For example, depth perception is something that people with dementia often have an issue with. Something as simple as changing the pattern on the carpet can help people living with dementia to not feel like they are about to walk into a hole in the carpet. It could be more about lighting. Patterned carpet, apart from having a depth perception issue—dark coloured carpet especially—can also give rise to hallucinations in people with dementia. It is very real for them that they see spiders, insects, snakes or holes in patterned carpet. This is an example where it might not cost much to have dementia-friendly design, because if you are going to carpet anyway, it is only a matter of choosing the best type of carpet.

Coloured lighting on ramps is another issue, or painted steps, that might improve visibility. Recently I had a constituent contact me about an issue in CMAG, just across the square from us; they pointed out their difficulty in taking one of their loved ones who is living with dementia. One of the ramps that was painted in a very dark colour made their loved one with dementia extremely afraid and agitated because of the depth perception issue.

These are the types of things that I would like to see addressed so that people living with dementia in our community can continue to go out and about and enjoy things. They enjoy visits to the park and a plant nursery. They enjoy going to a coffee shop, a gallery or museum. Some small things that we can do will improve their experience enormously, as opposed to making them fearful, upset and possibly angry.

Another example that was given to me is about dementia training for some of our front-line staff. I can give you two examples of this: one a good example, and one a not so good example. One constituent living with dementia uses the bus quite a bit. On good days this is no issue. She goes to visit her family member. She is quite familiar with the route to get to the family member's house. One day she became quite agitated and concerned that the bus was going the wrong way. The bus driver

stopped and let her off pretty much in the middle of nowhere, so she then had to find a way to get home. The opposite of that was that on another occasion when a similar thing happened the bus driver went out of their way to drop this person with dementia where they needed to be. Those are two very similar instances with quite different results for the people concerned.

A little bit of awareness training would be really useful for some of our front-line staff. That may be at some of our Access Canberra places. Bus drivers are another good example. These things are not too tricky to implement. We are talking about other residents of Canberra, our friends and our family, who deserve to be treated with dignity and respect as well. These small actions can make such a difference to vulnerable members of our community. I really look forward to hearing the contributions to this motion from my colleagues today, which has the capacity to make quite a difference for people in our community living with dementia and improve social inclusion and participation for all Canberrans. I very much hope my motion is supported today.

MS DAVIDSON (Murrumbidgee—Assistant Minister for Seniors, Veterans, Families and Community Services, Minister for Disability, Minister for Justice Health and Minister for Mental Health) (4.01): I rise to speak to the motion put forward by Ms Lawder and to speak to the amendment circulating in my name. I thank Ms Lawder for raising this important issue with the Assembly.

The ACT government is committed to ensuring that all Canberrans, including those with dementia, are supported to remain socially included and active, valued members of the community. We know that a big part of this is ensuring that our infrastructure and design meets the needs of people with dementia. As you would all be aware, dementia is not something experienced just by older people; however, it is more common among older people. As Ms Lawder noted, the early symptoms may not be immediately obvious.

Perhaps, then, it is more progressive and inclusive to talk about universal design and ensuring that Canberra is a universally designed city. Universal design creates a more inclusive world by ensuring that an environment can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people. The principles of universal design can be applied to products, buildings and open spaces, as well as learning programs, services, policies and all kinds of practices. Universal design is also part of conversations about sustainability, resilience, health and wellbeing. If an environment is accessible, usable, convenient and a pleasure to use, everyone benefits—from our younger citizens to our oldest.

Making Canberra a more dementia friendly and universally designed, inclusive city is broader and more comprehensive than the actions listed in any one plan. However, I do welcome the opposition raising the importance of the Age-Friendly City Plan 2020-2024, and its role in supporting the inclusion of those living with dementia in particular. I would like to take this opportunity to highlight the good work done by my former Greens colleague, Amanda Bresnan, who first raised the issue of age-friendly suburbs as far back as 2008. I note that her initial work has been built upon over time, with the need for further age-friendly improvements in our shopping centres and

suburbs included in the 2016 to 2020 parliamentary agreement, and the continuing roll out of more age-friendly suburbs over time.

I am pleased to update members that the Age-Friendly City Plan already includes actions to work towards enhancing Canberra as a dementia-friendly city. Extensive consultation was held to inform the plan in order for it to reflect community sentiment and the views of older Canberrans. This consultation included consultation forums, which helped community members, peak bodies and other sector stakeholders to draw out the key issues that older people face in staying healthy, active and engaged with their communities, and how older people would like these barriers to be addressed.

The plan facilitates collaboration across ACT directorates—which is just one of my absolute favourite things to be working on in this government—to progress a range of targeted actions for older Canberrans to enhance social inclusion, access to services, public transport and age-friendly urban planning, and to address age discrimination and elder abuse. As an example, the age-friendly suburbs program is continuing for the next four years to deliver pathways and related infrastructure that provide better access for older people, as well as other pathway users who may have specific mobility needs.

Another example is the senior grants program, which provides \$80,000 annually for innovative projects which enable older Canberrans, including those with dementia, to actively participate in community life. The plan was also informed by the Dementia-Friendly Rotorua project and the Age-Friendly Manchester program. Representatives from Dementia Australia, the national peak body for people impacted by dementia in Australia, participated in the consultation forum. Under the plan, pilot projects will commence. They involve the creation of dementia-friendly spaces and events across Canberra. For example, Access Canberra ensures that when new service centres are designed, the needs of all customers are catered for, including older Canberrans and those affected by dementia. The Belconnen Service Centre will be relocated in the middle of 2021, and Access Canberra will undertake community engagement to seek input in relation to the design of the new service centre.

While it has not been possible to progress dementia-friendly events over the last 12 months, due to the impact of COVID-19, it is expected that these events will be able to be progressed over the next year, dependent on the trajectory of the pandemic. So, in addition to the actions targeted directly towards those living with dementia, the plan also contains a number of actions to enhance accessibility and the inclusion of all older Canberrans, including those with dementia.

The Seniors Grants program has been finetuned to further support activities which occur in local outdoor community spaces, resulting in grant funding being provided to COTA ACT for pop-up events in parks across Canberra that facilitate a range of physical, creative and cognitive activities designed for seniors. This grant program has recently provided funding to ArtSound for the Canberra seniors' memories project, to Canberra Dance Theatre for their seniors' participation in dance and artistic activity program, and to Yeddung Mura Aboriginal Corporation for their healthy ageing program.

Dementia is identified as a risk factor for elder abuse, and the Age-Friendly City Plan also contains a number of actions to increase the extent to which older Canberrans are able to live safe, secure and free from abuse. Just this week, the passage of the Crimes (Offences Against Vulnerable People) Legislation Amendment Act 2020 means that elder abuse will be a criminal offence, sending a strong message to the community that it is unacceptable, and providing additional protections to those people who are most at risk.

In addition to actions identified in the plan, in July 2020 the ACT's first specialist dementia care unit opened at Uniting Eabrai in Weston. The facility is funded by the commonwealth government, under the specialist dementia care program. It is delivered in partnership between Uniting Eabrai and Canberra Health Services, with administrative oversight of the National Partnership Agreement provided by the ACT Health Directorate. I also note the parliamentary agreement's inclusion, in Appendix 4, of the support for the neighbourhood to secure land for Canberra's first dementia care village—something for us to work towards. Ms Lawder also raised the issue of the mental health of older Canberrans and the fact that social inclusion is an integral part of improving mental health in older Canberrans. I could not agree more.

In addition to the actions in the Age-Friendly City Plan, there is an initiative currently underway to develop a whole-of-government resource to support improvements to the ACT government's communications and engagements with older Canberrans. This is also why we have a Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing, who provide key advice to government on matters of importance to older Canberrans. Extensive consultation has been undertaken for the development of the Older Person's Mental Health Strategy and Implementation Plan, including valuable feedback from the Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing.

We are committed to progressing Canberra as an inclusive city in which everyone is valued and enabled to take an active role. Being dementia-friendly is part of the creation of an inclusive city. We will learn from and build on the work that has already been progressed as part of the Age-Friendly City Plan, to act on the shared responsibility across government and community to build an inclusive city and a better normal for all of us, including people with dementia. So I support the call for the ACT government to investigate how to make Canberra a more dementia-friendly city, and my amendments to the motion will ensure that these findings will be progressed with the Age-Friendly City Plan and be recorded in the Assembly.

I move the amendment to the motion:

“Omit (2) (b) and (c) and substitute:

- “(b) progress these findings within the Age-Friendly City Plan 2020-2024 actions; and
- (c) report these findings as part of regular annual reporting on the Age-Friendly City Plan 2020-2024.”

MRS KIKKERT (Ginninderra) (4.09): I thank Ms Lawder for bringing this very important motion before the Assembly today. I note that according to ABS data,

dementia has become the leading cause of death in Canberra, accounting for nearly 10 per cent of residents who passed away during 2019. If we applied the data from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare to the Tenth Assembly, at least two of us who have been elected will develop dementia during our lifetimes.

Clearly a good government will take this motion seriously. Dementia is not a normal part of ageing, but it does primarily affect older people, with symptoms most commonly appearing after the age of 65. This motion, therefore, has special significance for senior Canberrans, many of whom reside in my electorate of Ginninderra. The Belconnen district currently has eight purpose-built retirement communities and aged care homes. I am also familiar with several streets and neighbourhoods that are predominantly populated by older Canberrans who have essentially created their own senior living communities. Dementia affects not just those who have it, but also those who love and care for them. I suspect that nearly all of us personally know someone in one of these categories. It therefore simply makes good sense to actively consider how to make Canberra a more dementia-friendly city and to incorporate what works into city planning.

Looking over Dementia Australia's checklist of recommendations for outdoor areas, I realised that I have been consistently advocating for many of the same things since my election in 2016. For example, public areas and parklands should be clean, well kept, and pleasant. Secondly, footpaths should be wide, level where possible, well maintained, and free of obstructions. Thirdly, street lighting should be adequate and evenly distributed. And, finally, bus shelters should be enclosed with adequate seating. These are the kinds of things that all Canberrans want and need.

For example, on behalf of residents in Cook and Macquarie I have recently been advocating for footpaths to be constructed in some of their streets. Many residents in these streets have lived in their homes for decades and now that they are older, and traffic has increased, they no longer feel safe sharing the street with cars. As they explain it, they cannot understand why, after years of paying their taxes, the ACT government would ignore them and their needs now. Dementia-friendly design is mostly just doing the sensible things that a genuinely good government should already be doing for the benefit of everyone. Adopting this approach will not only support individuals and their families; it will strengthen the wider community networks and encourage intergenerational connections as Canberrans have better opportunities to spend quality time with older family members, neighbours, and friends. It will make our neighbourhoods, parks, and streets safer and more accessible for everyone regardless of age or health. I commend this motion to the Assembly.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Families and Community Services and Minister for Health) (4.13): I rise to speak on Ms Lawder's motion and thank her for bringing it to the Assembly today. Labor members will be supporting Ms Davidson's amendment to that motion, which is a relatively minor amendment that captures the fact that the age-friendly city process is an ongoing one and reporting is also an ongoing process.

While Ms Lawder's motion is focused on the design and infrastructure of our city, I think that it would be a missed opportunity to not also briefly discuss the health and

wellbeing of our older Canberrans living with dementia in a broader context and acknowledge the challenges that we face as a community and that people with dementia and their families face on a daily basis. I refer also to the success of some of the work that we have been doing in this space.

The ACT government is committed to promoting healthy ageing—a key domain of our preventive health plan released in 2019 and the basis, of course, for the age-friendly city plan. We know that by better promoting healthy ageing through improving broad environmental and socio-economic determinants of health, we can prevent the onset of common chronic diseases, including dementia.

We have been successful in this space. 2019 ABS data shows that Canberra men have a life expectancy that is close to equal with Switzerland, the longest in the world, and women are equal fourth globally. While preventive health programs are important in delivering these results, we also know that our health screening and our care services are central to maintaining people's health and wellbeing.

Currently, more than 6,300 Canberrans are estimated to have dementia, and this is expected to triple over the coming four decades. This highlights the importance of the motion that Ms Lawder has brought forward today. We know that this is already placing pressure on our health system and our social support systems that deliver care that is designed to be safe, sensitive and calming for older Canberrans. The physical environment is an important part of that.

We know—Mrs Kikkert also talked about it—that dementia is the highest cause of disability and death for Australians over 65. For all age groups, it represented the third-leading cause for men and the leading cause for women in 2018. That is why our public health services have been adapting and expanding their services to better serve older Canberrans.

For example, every patient who is 65 years or older, following admission to Canberra Hospital, is offered a cognitive screening to assess any presentation of cognitive impairment, including delirium and dementia. This standardised practice is so important in order to intervene early. When a diagnosis is confirmed, our cognitive impairment policy is used for further investigations and follow-up as well. This is supported by a range of experts in the division of geriatrics, who run weekly memory assessment service clinics, and, of course, our fantastic allied health staff.

Throughout last year's election campaign, and front and centre in our investments in the 2020-21 budget, we committed to delivering care closer to home, which we know is so important in keeping people out of hospital. We also know that, where possible, this keeps people in familiar environments and supported by family and friends, helping their healing, and being even more important for people who are experiencing dementia.

I know, from some of the experiences that have been relayed to me by people whose family members with dementia have had to be admitted to hospital, either at Canberra Hospital or Calvary, how distressing that can be.

Members present would no doubt be aware of our award-winning GRACE program and the RADAR program, which deliver rapid assessment services outside the hospital in community and aged-care facilities, delivering care closer to home with amazing results, reducing the number of people who need to be admitted to hospital and making sure that they can get back home again as quickly as possible, if a hospital admission is required.

More broadly, better support for older Canberrans formed a key pillar of ACT Labor's health policy commitments during the last election. Building on and recognising the importance of Calvary and their expertise and innovation in the care of older people, ACT Labor committed to establishing a centre of excellence in the care of older people at Calvary Public Hospital in Bruce, building on their innovation in the GRACE program and the palliative care needs rounds that are also being delivered and are a fantastic innovation in working with aged care.

Outside our hospital system, the ACT government will—and Minister Davidson spoke about some of this—work on creating dementia-friendly ACT libraries and government service centres, as well as piloting other designated dementia-friendly spaces.

I want to take a moment to pick up on a key point in Ms Lawder's motion that she raised in this context; that is, aged-care services. I note that she flags the commonwealth government's increased investment in Dementia Australia, in December 2020. While this is, of course, a positive investment, the royal commission's damning final report shows that we still have much more to do.

The royal commission made specific findings related to dementia services. They included specific recommendations to completely overhaul the support pathways in aged-care services for people living with dementia, calling for new regulations on chemical and physical restraint, a workforce that is properly trained to manage the increased challenge posed by someone who has dementia and, key to this debate, developing national aged-care design principles and guidelines on accessible and dementia-friendly design for residential aged care.

Critically, on this last point, the royal commission also called for the commonwealth to provide funding for capital works to ensure that aged-care facilities meet this standard. I encourage Ms Lawder to put pressure on or to encourage her Liberal Party colleagues on the hill to ensure that the federal Liberal government delivers for older Canberrans and funds the sector appropriately to enact substantial sector reform, including in the physical environment, for people in aged care.

Of course, there are some local, innovative projects that would also benefit from true reform. One example is The Neighbourhood, Canberra, a proposal formed by a group of Canberrans to pursue plans for establishing a dementia village that is very closely aligned with the royal commission's recommendations. I was pleased to catch up with The Neighbourhood's members during Dementia Australia's memory walk and jog around Lake Burley Griffin in February this year, and to hear more about how their work is progressing.

To support their innovative work, the government is working with The Neighbourhood to find a suitable site in Canberra. In March this year, Deputy Chief Minister Berry met with the board of The Neighbourhood to hear about the project and to discuss options. At that meeting, Minister Berry connected the board with officials who will continue to engage and support The Neighbourhood with information about possible sites. The government will continue to support The Neighbourhood, engage with them as their proposal develops and help them to find a suitable location.

Finally, while talking about dementia, it would be remiss if I did not recognise the brilliant and dedicated families and carers who have loved ones below the age of 65 with dementia. This can impact on people even in their 30s. There are an estimated 400 people who have been diagnosed with younger onset dementia living in the ACT. Without a medical breakthrough, this is expected to grow to 780 by 2058.

The ACT government provides about \$270,000 per annum to Dementia Australia specifically to provide social support, counselling and advocacy, as well as support through the Community Assistance and Support Program. These people, the families and carers, should not be forgotten in this important debate. I know that none of my colleagues have done or would do that.

Improving our built environment and social supports is an important and ongoing body of work for the community and for government. It formed a pillar of our health policy platform for ACT Labor at the last election, but more needs to be done. More can always be done. Minister Davidson has talked about the work that is happening. I think that she put it very well when talking about the broader need for an inclusive community, universal design and universal access.

I have only touched on the surface of the range of services and the dedicated and brilliant workers that improve the lives of people living with dementia, and their carers and families that support them. I can only say thank you to those people. Thank you to Ms Lawder for bringing this motion to the Assembly. Thank you to Minister Davidson for outlining some of the work that is already going on, in relation to the age-friendly city plan. Thank you, most of all, to our dedicated health workers, and the families and carers who support people with dementia in our community.

MS VASSAROTTI (Kurrajong—Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, Minister for Homelessness and Housing Services and Minister for Sustainable Building and Construction) (4.22): I would like to thank Ms Lawder for bringing this really important motion to the Assembly and highlighting the work that we need to do to ensure that Canberra becomes a more dementia-friendly city. I speak in support of the motion and Minister Davidson's amendment to the motion.

This is a really important issue for our community—locally, nationally and internationally. Unless you have been directly impacted by supporting a loved one who is suffering from dementia, you are unlikely to understand the devastating individual impact of this fatal disease. This is not just an individual or family issue; it is a huge issue for our whole community.

The scale of the issue was not one that I was fully aware of until I undertook the role of CEO of the then Alzheimer's ACT, now part of Dementia Australia, for a period through 2017. While in this role I did become familiar with some of the rather overwhelming statistics that we have talked about—the second-leading cause of death across the board; for women, the leading cause of death; and the fact that there is no cure. At the time, there were more than 4,000 people in the ACT living with dementia, and this number is rising daily.

Given the complex presentation of dementia, we still have work to do on how we manage this issue. There is really strong evidence that we can design our city in ways that will make it easier for people. We know that being connected to the community can assist in slowing the progression of this terminal illness.

We also know that, in addition to the physical impacts of dementia, including memory loss, disorientation, in some cases higher levels of aggression and the lack of personal safety, people impacted by dementia also face stigma, social isolation and loneliness. There is great work happening in the community to explore new options and ways of supporting people to live in the community.

A couple of my Assembly colleagues have already noted the fantastic work that is happening by the community organisation The Neighbourhood, a group in our community that is keen to establish Canberra's first dementia care village. This model aims to use the very best evidence to move away from the model of secure wards in aged-care facilities and enable people with dementia to live in the community, in community-like settings that are safe and good for their wellbeing. I am really excited to see the progression of this project.

As well as looking at our public spaces, we need to ensure that our residential housing stock is being designed in a manner that responds to our ageing demographics and challenges on issues, such as our growing dementia disease burden. This is an issue that is not specifically spoken about in the motion but it is one that I thought was important to touch on in my role as Minister for Sustainable Building and Construction. Minister Davidson and Minister Stephen-Smith spoke about the importance of building in universal design. This means that we need to be building homes that are accessible for all people and that can easily and affordably be modified to support people to stay at home, even when they have mobility needs.

This is a need that we have recognised in the parliamentary and governing agreement, and it is one that I am committed to delivering. I am pleased to inform the Assembly, and the Canberra community, that this government has taken a strong and clear decision that, as a minimum, we will advocate for the National Construction Code to be amended in 2022 so that all future homes, townhouses and apartments will meet the threshold level of universal design, known as "silver" standard in the Livable Housing Australia design guidelines. I will be taking this position to the national building ministers meeting in late April, on behalf of the government.

With one in five people managing a disability, 20 per cent of the population projected to be over 65 in coming decades, and the increasing impact of diseases such as

dementia, this is an issue for all of us. We all have family and friends with mobility issues, and many of us have had either short-term or long-term mobility challenges.

Given this, I will be advocating that we move towards introducing this mandatory standard. This will mean that we will see all new homes that are being built with simple but important features, such as doors wide enough to accommodate wheelchairs and no entry steps, a bathroom on the ground floor, and structural reinforcements to allow the installation of features such as grip rails, if they are needed in the future.

These simple changes will add about one per cent to the initial cost of a home but they will save thousands of dollars in expensive retrofittings for homes in the future. Above all, it will mean that people are not forced out of their homes because they cannot be adapted to their needs.

We need to respond to the issues of accessibility, affordability and sustainability of our new housing stock in the ACT to support an age-friendly and dementia-friendly city. We need to support the industry around any changes and look at things such as implementation frameworks. We also need to signal now that we are committed to building homes that meet our needs as we age, and for those in the community with disability and diseases such as dementia.

We must do everything we can to ensure that homes that are being built now and will continue to be homes for decades to come, are responding to community needs and are futureproofed. I am really proud that our government will be taking a leading position on this issue nationally.

MR HANSON (Murrumbidgee) (4.28): I am delighted that Ms Lawder's very good motion is receiving such strong support across the Assembly; that is great. There is no question that this is an issue of real consequence affecting our community. The statistics that have been litigated by Ms Lawder and others are really quite frightening.

I stand today to add my perspective to this, because I am personally affected by a family member with dementia, and that is my dad. My dad was an air force pilot. He was a teacher. He was a very successful farmer. Beyond that, obviously, he was a husband, a dad and a mate. He got reasonably early onset dementia. The effects were undiagnosed for a while; then it became evident what the diagnosis was.

As a consequence, it was a really difficult time for the family, and particularly my mother, with respect to living with someone with dementia. Often, with the person with dementia, it is very sad, as they are affected terribly; but it is equally sad for their partner and children, as they have to manage what can be a difficult circumstance.

We would see that my father would want to go out, and would obviously want to participate in life, but as his cognitive ability declined, his ability to do so was more difficult. My mum would take him out where they lived and sometimes his behaviour would be difficult; there is no doubt about it. He was always very gentle. He always has been a very gentle man, a very kind man. He has never been violent, raised his voice or anything like that.

This can take many forms. My grandmother had dementia as well. You can get very difficult behaviours from people. It can be embarrassing and it can be difficult. You really do not have many options. You either stay at home, and that is not good, or you find that people end up in aged-care facilities, which are very limiting and constraining.

Trying to have a community that welcomes people with dementia, that understands people with dementia and how they are affected by it, that accepts that their behaviour sometimes will be a little bit abnormal and difficult, is a wonderful thing. It is something that, as a community, we have to embrace, understand and come to grips with.

There are a lot of people doing a lot of good work. I acknowledge the work that the government are doing; I applaud it. It is very necessary that they get on with it. I thank Ms Lawder, who is a strong advocate. We have had conversations about this going back quite some time. She has been working on this, and I hope that the cooperation in this space continues.

There are a lot of people in the community doing good work, and I would like to give a couple of plugs. Nicole Smith is a registered nurse who runs an organisation called Community Cafe. I have visited an aged-care facility that has been affected by COVID in what they can do. It gets a bunch of kids along, people with dementia and aged people, and it is about having music, joy and light. For a lot of people with dementia, they do not get a lot of that.

When you meet people who are passionate about aged care and people with dementia, you realise how singular that is. There are not a lot of people in our community that perhaps have that passion. It seems that, with aged care and seniors, dementia is not something that we necessarily talk about a lot, or that a lot of people are passionate about. It is good to see that people in our community—and a number of them have been acknowledged today—are doing that; it is fantastic.

I would like to recognise an old mate of mine, Greg Fraser, who has been associated with what was Alzheimer's ACT and is now part of Dementia Australia. He has been passionate about this for a long time. I am sure that all of us—and I can see that a lot of people are nodding—have been lobbied by Greg in one form or another, so it is good to see that there are a lot of people working together.

I just add that perspective. Members, my dad is now in a specific dementia ward in a facility in Queensland. He is very well cared for and very well looked after. It costs my family, my mother, an enormous amount of money for him to be there. It is difficult. There are not enough places in our community; we know that. It puts a lot of pressure on families. They are either in a facility that is not as good as it could be or they are at home when they should be in a facility, and those families are under pressure. If there is anything that we can do, in working together as a community and as an Assembly, I think it is a great thing.

I thank all of you for getting involved in this, and for speaking so passionately about an issue that is dear to my heart. I know that I am not alone here; many thousands of Canberrans equally share in this experience.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (4.34): I will speak to the amendment and close the debate. I would like to thank everyone for their contributions today. It is another example of a time when we all understand and acknowledge the importance of a particular issue and work together to get the best result for Canberrans. It does happen; it can happen. Perhaps it should happen more often than it actually does, but I am pleased that we have reached an agreement today. Hopefully, this will have a very positive outcome for us.

I reiterate that I feel that people living with dementia, their family and carers perhaps were not adequately recognised originally in the age-friendly plan when it was first created. I think that there are three dot points in the 19-page document that mention dementia.

We will be supporting Minister Davidson's amendment today, mostly because we are able to find, in the plan, that it will be reported on annually to the Assembly. I was concerned to make sure that it was written down somewhere that there would be an annual report to the Assembly about progress, including on these dementia matters. It is not because I do not trust the government—or perhaps occasionally I do not trust the government. We have had instances of reports not being released as they should have been. That is why I was very keen to make sure that there was something written down that said there would be an annual report.

We have seen some great examples of how people with dementia can be looked after in our community and in special accommodation. I am pleased that we had tripartisan support for The Neighbourhood Canberra. The Canberra Liberals also committed to that during the election campaign. Hopefully, that project will come to fruition. In my electorate of Brindabella there is what is known as Aspire by LDK, which is another great example of a facility for people living with dementia.

There is other great work out there as well. There is a bank chain, if that is the right term, here in Canberra, that have had specific dementia training from Dementia Australia on how staff in the bank can recognise and assist people with dementia. Another great example in the ACT is the dementia choir. Many constituents and the carers of people living with dementia rave about how wonderful this is. For many people living with dementia—I do not mean to make light of this—they might not remember what they had for breakfast, but they can probably remember songs that they sang 50 years ago. It is a wonderful experience for them and for anyone else who is listening.

Mr Hanson mentioned the dementia cafe. There are some fantastic things going on in our community. After today, given that our focus on making sure that people living with dementia, their families and carers will be very much focused on in the age-friendly city plan, I hope that we will see even more awareness, better facilities and standards for people living with dementia here in the ACT. They need to know

that we have their backs, and that we are committed to making Canberra even more accessible and inclusive, and doing whatever we can.

Minister Vassarotti talked about the sometimes devastating individual impact of dementia. My mum lives with dementia. She has vascular dementia as well as Alzheimer's. The last time I was able to visit her, earlier this year—she lives in Victoria—there were some days when she did not know whether I was her mother, her sister, her cousin or her daughter. Luckily, I know that she is my much-loved mother. Thank you, everyone, for your support.

Amendment agreed to.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

Appropriation Bill 2020-2021

Cognate bill:

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

Detail stage

Schedule 1—Appropriations—Proposed expenditure.

Justice and Community Safety Directorate—Part 1.7

Debate resumed.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong—Attorney-General, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Gaming and Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction) (4.39): I am very pleased to have this opportunity to speak in support of the Justice and Community Safety Directorate component of this year's appropriation bills. They build on progress and key commitments which improve the delivery of justice in Canberra, enhance the Public Trustee and Guardian's capacity to serve our community's most vulnerable and help our community clubs to diversify away from poker machine revenue. So there are a few elements of what is contained in the Justice and Community Safety elements of this year's budget.

As our city continues to grow, it is essential that we have a responsive, fair and accessible justice system. We also are very focused on community safety. I think that that is an important discussion to have and it is one that has been canvassed during this week in the Assembly. Certainly what you see in the way that the government has been working on community safety in recent years is a strong emphasis on preventative work and emphasis on justice investment, on a recognition that if we keep making those sorts of investments, we will ultimately make our entire community safer through a sustained investment in improving the lives of people, putting their lives back on track and breaking the cycle of criminal involvement.

Specifically, the budget includes measures to boost the operations of the ACT Courts and Tribunal; namely, \$2.3 million over four years to strengthen legal and court support for vulnerable young people and families affected by domestic and family

violence. This includes \$1.1 million to support our courts dealing with applications for family violence orders and \$1.3 million to fund Legal Aid's family violence unit, which is based at the court building. This funding is vital for our community in an area where timeliness and responsiveness are of paramount importance. In a situation of vulnerability such as when experiencing family violence, we need to make sure that the system is ready to care for that person, and that is what this funding will help to do.

We also see \$1 million this year, in 2020-21, for the Justice and Community Safety Directorate, Legal Aid and Community Services Directorate to develop and introduce a therapeutic care court for care and protection matters. The confiscated assets trust fund will contribute \$400,000 towards funding this initiative. A therapeutic care court aims to reduce the number of children in out of home care and to reunite families sooner by ensuring that parents get access to the therapeutic services that they need.

As we know, it is very important that children are given every opportunity to have continued family connection. Whether or not parents get adequate and attentive support can often make the difference in care and protection matters. This court helps shift things in the right direction and we believe that this investment will prove to be an effective intervention.

In this year's budget there is also \$600,000 provided for additional capacity in the Magistrates Court to quickly address the backlog of cases that developed as a result of reduced court activity during the COVID-19 pandemic. Half of this funding is provided from the confiscated assets trust fund. As members have previously noted in this chamber, the Magistrates Court has been under immense pressure recently, in large part due to the pandemic. These delays prolong the already stressful experience of being before the court. This funding will help to make sure that our court system is able to handle people's business in a more timely manner and ultimately improve the wellbeing of parties, the judiciary and court staff. As a proactive measure to assist court functioning, the budget includes \$448,000 over three years, commencing in 2021-22, to manage the anticipated increase in the court's workload resulting from the introduction of mobile device detection cameras as part of the ACT's road safety camera program.

This budget also provides an additional \$1.1 million in 2020-21 to JACS's legislation, policy and programs branch. This is vital to improve the stability and security of the workforce so that they can continue to deliver the government's legislative and justice program priorities. This is an incredibly high-volume workplace, handling, among many other things, the policy development for most of the legislation that comes before the Assembly. This funding will help ensure that we continue to get high quality legal policy work from a healthy workplace.

I certainly know many of the staff that work there and they do work on very complex policy matters. They are asked to work on a large number of things, not just the government's agenda but private members' bills where they come forward and a range of other matters. I am pleased that we are able to provide additional support to this part of government, which I think will improve the overall performance of the ACT government and the ACT Assembly.

The government will also spend \$1.1 million in 2020-21 across a number of government agencies to support the commonwealth redress scheme, with funding to support eligible survivors of abuse in government institutions. This scheme is clearly of great importance to the wellbeing of those Canberrans who need this support.

Finally, this budget also invests in initiatives to limit the harm of gaming in our community. \$3.8 million in 2020-21 has allowed us to extend the gaming machine authorisation surrender incentive to June 2021. Under this incentive all gaming machine licensees have the opportunity to access a cash payment of \$15,000 per authorisation surrendered, with the payment required to be used towards staff employment, diversification activities and initiatives, and energy and water efficiency measures. Licensees have until June 2021 to access this incentive.

There is also \$1.8 million allocated over four years to help fund a new community clubs ministerial advisory council focused on the long-term sustainability of the clubs. This funding includes technical advice to inform the development of policy and legislation so that we can successfully introduce \$5 bet limits and \$100 load-up limits on electronic gaming machines. I expect a staged rollout of the new limits will commence by the end of 2022.

I am really looking forward to the commencement of the work of this ministerial advisory council. We have received some really good nominations. I expect to be able to confirm the details of that in the coming weeks and then the committee to get underway with its work. We really want this group to work in a collaborative manner, to be a robust discussion forum where we look at the challenging issues facing the sustainability of clubs and look at how we are going to ensure that they are still vibrant community venues in two decades time.

I am conscious that many of the clubs are already under financial pressure. The government has also set clear policy ambitions to reduce gaming harm in our community and we need to make sure that we work collaboratively to meet those challenges in a way that is good for the future of clubs. These measures are designed to reduce gambling harm in our community while supporting a sustainable future. The social and economic impacts of gambling harm do ripple out across our community and we do have an obligation to protect those experiencing this harm.

As we introduce these measures, we will be working closely with the clubs and, through the advisory council, to deliver these in the most effective way that provides the best outcomes for the community. We will also be implementing the \$5 million upgrade fund to help clubs improve energy efficiency, reduce costs and provide quality space for community activities.

In terms of some of the questions that have been raised in the debate, I did note Mr Cain's comments about community security. I think, as I touched on earlier in my remarks, that the justice reinvestment agenda is a really important part of that. There is clear evidence in places that have taken this approach that by investing the money in the justice system at the early end in the provision of services, in the provision of therapeutic support and the like, we can make the whole community safer. I think that

this is a much better approach to take. It is a much more preventative approach to crime. I think it is much better to spend money in that way than to simply try and catch people at the end after they have committed an offence and process them through the court and put them in jail. We will continually seek to emphasise that area of investment and make sure that we are keeping our community as safe as possible.

Mrs Kikkert provided extensive commentary on the corrections system and, whilst that is Minister Gentleman's responsibility, I did want to share with the Assembly one element of history and context that Mrs Kikkert did not provide in her remarks. She spoke extensively about her disagreement with the location of the women in the Alexander Maconochie Centre. I think this is a really important discussion and one that I have certainly spent a lot of time thinking about. Mrs Kikkert, when she spoke glowingly of the accommodation that the women had been in previously, did not mention the fact that, through a significant increase in the female population in the AMC, there are, in fact, a significant number of women being housed permanently in the management unit of the AMC.

There are actually two places where women are being housed because of the increase in population; and that meant that they were both in what I consider to be unsuitable long-term accommodation for women. That also meant that that space could not be used as it was intended, which was for disciplinary holding for those male detainees who had breached the rules in the AMC. A really important part of managing a facility like that is having that ability to provide something like the management unit. So that meant that the government was forced to take a decision.

I will maintain that it was better to have the women in one place together and not have those people living in the management unit. Yes, and we do need to continue to take steps to change that; and there is planning going on. That is now Minister Gentleman's responsibility. I will not speak to that any further but I think it is important that that context is recorded in light of the lopsided observations made by Mrs Kikkert.

I also did note the comments made by Ms Lee during the CMTEDT line of the debate yesterday, where she spoke extensively about the justice portfolio. She spoke once again of the report on family violence measures, which we have debated in this place before, and she continued to put the view that it sat on the minister's desk for up to 12 months. I would take this opportunity to correct the record and point out to Ms Lee that I became the Attorney-General in early November. The final report was provided to government on 14 December; and it was made publicly available in February.

We have committed to dealing with the recommendations of that report. So Ms Lee's inaccurate comments, I think, are unfair. She knows that it is not the case, the way she described it, and I think it is important to reflect that in this discussion as well.

The Justice and Community Safety line of this budget is an important and broad element of the budget; and I do commend this element of the budget to the Assembly. I think there are important investments in here that do enhance our justice system in the ACT and will continue to contribute to improve community safety.

MR HANSON (Murrumbidgee) (4.52): I was not expecting to speak to this line item, but Mr Rattenbury wanted to dig into a bit of history, even though he is not the Minister for Corrections. I just want to make the point, because I was the shadow minister back in 2008 to 2012, about this whole idea of, “Oh my goodness, the numbers are more than we ever thought they would be; this is beyond our control. We didn’t know this was going to happen; therefore we have to put remandees in with sentenced prisoners and we have got to move women out of cottages and put them in inappropriate accommodation.” The reason for this is that the government did not deliver what it promised. It delivered something sooner than planned and cut costs because of cost blowouts. The reality is that in 2004 Mr Stanhope was the leader of the government and I will quote him.

Members interjecting—

They do not like me quoting Mr Stanhope, but he said that the Alexander Maconochie Centre would include a new 139-bed remand centre—that did not happen—to replace the Belconnen Remand Centre and the Symonston Temporary Remand Centre. He said:

It will include a 175-bed facility for sentenced prisoners and a 60-bed transitional release centre ...

That, in my estimation, is 374 beds. That is not what the AMC opened with. Mr Rattenbury is nodding his head. This Labor government promised something. You have the estimates numbers and I have got all the FOI documents if you want to have a look at them at your leisure later, Mr Deputy Speaker. The estimates showed that the prison needed to be about that big. It was to open with 374 beds and a separate remand centre, but did that happen? No. This Labor government, back in 2008, delivered something without a remand centre, way too soon. Now we are paying the price.

I just want to make it clear that when Labor members and Greens members come into this place and say, “We are staggered by these numbers,” Mr Rattenbury will nod his head again. This Labor government did not deliver what it promised. It delivered something way under that. As I am saying this, Mr Rattenbury is nodding. They delivered something less than was promised. Mr Corbell said that the prison would have capacity, in its delivered configuration, for 25 years without any modification. He said that in a committee hearing. He said, “This will have capacity for 25 years without modification.” We were misled in this place, by the then Labor government which promised something to this community. And because they fudged it and misled the community about what was going to happen—

Ms Cheyne: Point of order. Mr Hanson has just gone on a tirade of unparliamentary language, and I suggest that he withdraw it. “Fudging” and “misleading” is unparliamentary.

MR HANSON: If there is any confusion, I will withdraw the fact that the Assembly was misled. I would be happy to bring that back as a substantive motion. Actually

I did, previously, with Mr Corbell. You probably voted to support it, Mr Rattenbury. Shame on you. But I do not think that “misleading the community” is unparliamentary language, Mr Deputy Speaker. Clearly that is what happened.

I just want to make it clear on the record. When we see what is happening in the jail right now, it is entirely the fault and the responsibility of this government, who knew exactly what was needed and said on the record in this place, “This is what is needed in terms of beds.” This government said that there would be 374 beds and did not deliver that to the community.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Community Services Directorate—Part 1.8

MS BERRY (Ginninderra—Deputy Chief Minister, Minister for Early Childhood Development, Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, Minister for Housing and Suburban Development, Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, Minister for Sport and Recreation and Minister for Women) (4.56): I welcome the opportunity to speak on this part of the budget. There has been significant work done by the ACT government around these priority areas, ensuring that the safety and equality of women and girls is assured.

The government had provided an additional \$238,000 to support women in their construction and return to work expansion. The remaining \$133,000 is funding two new components of the expansion of the Women Return to Work program, in addition to grants of up to \$1,000. Women receiving the grants are provided with additional mentoring and wrap-around support through a relationships manager. This includes access to emergency food relief, free or subsidised work clothing, parenting programs, and domestic and family violence support. SPARK return to work workshops are run in both the north and south of Canberra, taking in 80 women. Workshops include advice on how to write a resume, how to prepare for a job interview, as well as how to speak confidently in public.

In the 2019-20 budget the government will also provide \$180,000 for women’s grants in the 2020-21 budget. This process is currently underway and is expected to include \$100,000 to support projects in the ACT Women’s Safety Grant category and \$80,000 to support projects in the participation grants category. In 2016, Women’s Centre for Health Matters launched its Safety Mapping Tool to help identify public spaces in the ACT where women felt unsafe. This tool was produced with the assistance of the ACT participations grant of \$25,000. Work to improve women’s safety informed by the tool is being led by TCCS, with officials in CSD monitoring closely. CSD will work with Women’s Centre for Health Matters and TCCS to support a joined-up approach to this work.

The family safety levy, which was established in 2016, provides opportunities to bring about change and improvement to responses to domestic and family violence. The 2020-21 budget invests \$24.4 million over four years for safer family initiatives. On this investment the levy is expected to contribute \$20.6 million. This funding will support a range of initiatives to strengthen the capacity of front-line services to

respond to domestic and family violence. It will improve coordination across government, build important partnerships within the community sector, and test promising new approaches. This is developing new and sustainable ways of working across government and the community to focus on intervening earlier, reducing barriers to access joined-up and integrated services and responding to diverse needs, as well as holding perpetrators to account.

The ACT government continues to invest strongly in primary domestic and family violence responses in recognition of the important role they play to support people impacted by sexual, domestic and family violence. In 2020-21 the Domestic Violence Crisis Service and the Canberra Rape Crisis Service received nearly \$1.1 million in government support. The government also funded \$3.25 million in critical service responses, including services focusing on changing the behaviour of people who use violence, because women cannot be safe if we do not work with the people who are perpetrating violence. This has been a really great priority for the government to achieve and drive change to break the cycle of violence.

In 2020-21 the government invested over \$2.1 million in our future by working with families and the community to keep families together, looking to emerging research and services that are demonstrating success in changing behaviour, and better integrating and coordinating our domestic and family violence responses. Also, \$2.72 million has been committed over four years to deliver domestic and family violence training available for all public servants in the ACT, because change comes from developing a skilled and educated workforce equipped to recognise and respond to the needs of people experiencing domestic and family violence.

The flexibility of the next phase of the Safer Families initiatives allowed us to achieve even more than we outlined in the previous year's budget statement. The ACT government continues to build whole-of-government and community sector capacity through the joint development of a draft domestic and family violence risk assessment and management framework that is being tested across a number of sites prior to its finalisation.

Following a successful six-month pilot in 2018-19, the Family Safety Hub's three Health Justice Partnerships were extended to June 2021. The partnerships allow health professionals and lawyers to provide coordinated health and legal assistance that can prevent a significant crisis for individuals affected who are seeking that support. In partnership with the community sector, a set of practice standards for perpetrator interventions is being finalised. These standards improve safety for women and children by ensuring that programs for perpetrators operate in a way that keeps the focus on the safety of women and children and holds perpetrators to account whilst offering them effective opportunities to change.

Development of the Domestic and Family Violence Death Review commenced in 2020 and, once operational, this initiative will review all DFV related deaths in the ACT and advise on what is needed to prevent deaths and improve system-wide supports and services. It will work to establish a model for the Domestic and Family Violence Death Review process and that will continue, with legislation to establish the DFV Death Review to be progressed in 2021.

In partnership with the ACT Children and Young People Commissioner, the Family Safety Hub listened to young people talk about their experience of domestic and family violence, including their interactions with services that are designed to support them. Insights learnt from these young people have been published in a booklet and video. These insights have been shared with government and community service providers to help bring about the change that is needed. Work will continue in 2021 to further develop responses to these insights.

Since March 2020, the ACT Coordinator General for Family Safety and the Victims of Crime Commissioner have met regularly via roundtable with services in the domestic and family violence services sector. The DFV roundtables worked together in responding to the impacts of COVID-19 on local service delivery. The DFV roundtable also supports better information-sharing and coordination around emerging issues throughout the crisis. At the height of social restrictions a targeted communication campaign was run from May to August 2020. The campaign, which had two phases, advised that services were still open and ready to help those who were experiencing or using violence. This was in addition to the new dedicated COVID-19 website which helped to get the message out to the greater Canberra community that help was still out there and to reassure people that the restrictions did not stop them from asking for help.

As at November 2020, the ACT government had announced several additional investments to support Canberrans during the COVID-19 crisis. These included targeted support for low-income households as part of the ACT's \$137 million stage 1 economic survival package to support local businesses, families and the healthcare and community sectors and \$3 million in funding for specialist homelessness and domestic and family violence sectors to expand service capacity, as well as relieve additional pressure arising from COVID-19 so that supports were there for people facing homelessness and domestic violence. There was an additional funding of \$7 million for non-government organisation partners to meet increased service demand for emergency relief, as part of the community support package.

The additional funding for specialist homelessness services has already resulted in reduced unmet needs for clients seeking assistance for domestic and family violence, where we have seen a reduction in unmet demand of four per cent between 2018-19 and 2019-20, despite the increase in clients seeking assistance during this time. The ACT government also received funds from the commonwealth government under the National Partnership Domestic and Family Violence Responses for 2019-20 and 2020-21. The majority of funding has been allocated to services and initiatives to address critical needs within front-line services. This overview of some of the work and investments that the ACT government has committed is ensuring that gender equality is progressed and that women and girls in the ACT feel safe.

MR HANSON (Murrumbidgee) (5.06): I rise to talk about the veterans elements in this item, and I must say that I do so with a heavy heart and I do so with a different view than I had when we last spoke to a budget in this place. There is a history to this that will explain why the last time that I spoke to the ACT budget I did so supporting the government, with praise for the government and congratulations, and this time I do not do that.

The history to this, for members who may not be aware, is that in other jurisdictions there was an establishment of veterans affairs ministers and ministerial advisory councils on veterans affairs. On 24 April 2009, the then Leader of the Opposition and I called for that to occur in the ACT. The Canberra Liberals established the shadow minister for veterans affairs, called for a council, called for specific initiatives for veterans, and at that stage the Labor-Greens government refused those calls.

But some years later they did acknowledge that this was required. Every other jurisdiction by that stage had a minister for veterans affairs and they had established that. It was a bit clunky to start with, but, as I have said in this place before, when Mr Ramsay took the helm after the 2016 election he showed a real interest, got on with it and formed a real connection with veterans.

So it was a great disappointment to me and to veterans when, after the latest election, the minister for veterans affairs and seniors—and I know that it annoyed Ms Lawder and seniors groups—was just dropped from the administrative arrangements. What had been previously something that I think that this government had put an effort into, Mr Barr, as Chief Minister, just scrubbed it from the administrative arrangements.

We asked questions about that in this place. There was a lot of communication from veterans groups and from seniors groups and then, begrudgingly, Mr Barr, after we asked again in question time, finally established those arrangements. That was the first mistake. That was the first black mark and mistake by the Chief Minister, and what it did was cause suspicion within veterans groups. A lot of veterans I spoke to are very upset that the ministry had just been scrubbed like that

The second mistake was to appoint a Greens member to the position of veterans affairs minister. The reasons for this are that every veteran is a former or current serving defence member; you are someone that has served in the Army, the Navy or the Air Force. Many of us have been on operations and understand what cutting defence expenditure and capability means.

It is without question that that is the policy of the Greens, and if you go to their website there is a title in one of the documents that says, “CUT MILITARY SPENDING”. It states:

The Greens believe we should stop wasting money and redirect these funds where they are needed.

The Greens will reduce military spending. If you go through a whole bunch of press releases from the Greens, the Greens’ peace and disarmament spokesman said today:

... buying new military technology for future wars was “the worst way to spend \$200 billion” ...

It is a little unclear how much they want to cut out of defence but if spending it on defence is the worst way to spend \$200 billion, I assume that he wants to cut \$200 billion out of defence. And certainly that is the title of his press release.

There are many other examples. Senator Hanson-Young said that the Morrison government had locked in more than \$270 billion. She is upping the \$200 billion to \$270 billion that she wants to cut from new defence spending, despite the global pandemic and the crisis. What would you rather spend this money on? It is unclear exactly. There are a range of other statements and motions. Indeed, there is a motion from Senator Ludlam calling on \$730 million to be taken out of defence and spent on other things.

But there is a consequence to this that defence members and veterans understand. And history is littered with cases of militaries that were not prepared for conflict and went unprepared and, as a consequence, the people who suffered were soldiers, sailors and aviators; and they died as a consequence. Australia is not immune to this. We have been unprepared on occasions for conflicts; and our soldiers, sailors and airmen have died in conflicts as a consequence.

I would like to bring an example to this place of my own military service, where the money that we have spent on defence has saved lives. I will give you the example of Iraq and Afghanistan and the Bushmaster vehicle. The Bushmaster vehicle is a protected mobility vehicle. You may have seen one. There is one parked outside the War Memorial if you want to go and have a look. It is a protective vehicle. So it is designed to be able to move people around a battlefield and, if they get hit by IEDs or other weapon systems, those inside can survive.

I used to go along a road that had an IED threat on it. For whatever reason, at that stage the unit that I was in was in up-armoured Land Cruisers, which I was not particularly happy about. We then were protected by the battalion's Bushmasters. And I am very glad that we were. I put a lot of effort into making sure that the unit which replaced mine on rotation had its own Bushmasters, and they got them.

Despite all the times that Bushmasters were hit in Afghanistan and in Iraq, the number of soldiers who died in a Bushmaster is zero. There are many cases on it and there is a book that has been written about Bushmasters and the effect that they have. One of the examples it talks about was in 2008. A Bushmaster in Afghanistan struck an improvised explosive device, throwing a solidier seven metres into the air, only to hit the bonnet on the way down and summersault onto the ground. That was just one story. That man was Corporal Mark Donaldson who then went on to win a Victoria Cross, saving a local Afghan's life. You would no doubt be aware of that story. But many, many of those vehicles hit IEDs and the people in them went on to survive.

I raised the Bushmaster example because that was not the case with the British Army. The British Army had not invested, had not spent the money. Maybe they had listened to the Greens, because they sent their troops to war in Land Rovers, what you call Snatch Land Rovers. In total, 37 service personnel, at the time of this article written in 2017, had died in what became known as mobile coffins. In a written apology from the Defence Secretary, in a letter to the mother of one soldier, Sir Michael Fallon apologised for failures that could have saved lives. He wrote:

I would like to express directly to you my deepest sympathies and apologise for the delay, resulting in decisions taken at the time in bringing into service alternative protective vehicles that could have saved lives.

There is an article here as well which is just tragic, but you have got to multiply this by 37. The body of Corporal Sarah Bryant, the first female British soldier killed in Afghanistan, was buried in July this year at the Cumbria church where she had been married two years earlier. Bryant, an intelligence specialist, was killed, with three SAS reservists, when their Snatch Land Rover was blown apart by a Taliban bomb. She had spent less than five months at home with her husband during that time. Bryant was also one of the 34, at that time, British service personnel killed in lightly armoured Land Rovers, a vehicle marred in controversy for most of the time since its deployment to Iraq and Afghanistan. This is a quote:

The government's failure to replace it with a vehicle providing more protection from any forces is cavalier at best, criminal at worst".

(Second speaking period taken.) That is a real live example. I am aware of it because I served in Iraq. I travelled in the back of those vehicles. The battalion that I was co-located with had a number of incidents with IDSs where its soldiers were saved.

That is the sort of military capability built by Thales, here in Australia, that the Greens want to defund. And they want to defund defence. That is just one example. There are many other examples where that is the sort of military technology and capability that keeps soldiers alive. There are other examples which would keep sailors alive. There are other examples that would keep aviators alive.

It is impossible for defence members and veterans to have, on the one hand, a Greens veterans minister who says, "I care about you," knowing all the time that it is the Greens policy to rip the guts out of defence, to take away those sorts of capabilities that it so desperately would need to go to conflict so that when we do next go to war—and war is inevitable, and history will teach us that—they would go there unprotected and they would die, just as those 37 British servicemen and women died in Iraq and Afghanistan.

It is just not consistent with the rhetoric from the Greens to then have a minister, as part of her party, say one thing about defence capability and then another thing in terms of supporting veterans, all of whom are current serving or former serving defence members. That was their second mistake.

The third mistake was the motion that was brought into this place last sitting weeks. It was clearly a bit of a wedge. Instead of taking the opportunity as we had to say let us have a royal commission and a national commissioner, which would then address the desires of all veterans, Ms Davidson and this government decided, "No, no, we will just pick one and not the other." There is going to be a royal commission; and I welcome that. I think that is a good thing. But it seems to me that, from what I can read, against the wish of many, many, veterans, this minister still does not seem to support a national commissioner. If she does, why did she oppose the amendment that I put forward?

But worse than that—and this is an issue that came forward from many veterans who had listened to the speech—when Ms Cheyne got up to speak, she believed that Ms Davidson was a veteran. She said, “Ms Davidson speaks with power in her voice on this issue, on veteran suicide, because she is a veteran.” She has corrected the record, and I thank her for that. I thank her for correcting the record.

But Ms Davidson then speaking, following what Ms Cheyne had said, did not correct the record. She allowed that to stand. Veterans who were watching that debate were flabbergasted that Ms Cheyne had said, “She speaks with power in her voice because she is a minister and a veteran,” then Ms Davidson just let that rest. If I was speaking on an issue and one of my colleagues said, “Mr Hanson speaks with power in his voice because he was a doctor,” or “because he was a teacher”—and I was not, of course—I would immediately correct the record; and that is the form of this place. It is the form of this place to immediately make sure that those sorts of errors are corrected. I must say that I and veterans, when they heard that Ms Davidson had just let that rest and continued on with the motion, were disappointed.

So on three measures there have been things that have occurred that have led to an erosion certainly in the trust that I have but sadly in the trust that many veterans have in this government and particularly this minister’s commitment to veterans here in the ACT. I am disappointed. It seems that in some ways we are back to where we were in 2009 with a government, with a Chief Minister, that just did not even bother to have a veterans affairs minister until we had to demand it; with a minister who is trying to walk two sides of the street in terms of a party that wants to rip the guts out of defence, which would naturally expose service people to great risks, and someone who, I think, was very clumsy in speaking to the motion on veteran suicide, which was a sensitive issue that was not handled well.

I make those points. I will continue to fight for veterans as I always have. Sadly, my fight now, it would seem, will be with the government to make sure that they are actually doing the job that they should be doing rather than as it was, side by side with the government when the previous minister did what he did.

MADAM SPEAKER: Members, I draw your attention to standing order 52 where a member may not reflect adversely upon any vote of the Assembly except upon a motion that the vote be rescinded. You did skate somewhat close to that, Mr Hanson, but I let you continue. But I just bring it to your attention.

MRS KIKKERT (Ginninderra) (5.22): The last time we debated an appropriation bill I raised concerns about how the safer families levy is being spent. I addressed persistent failures within the territory’s child protection system and this government’s stubborn foot-dragging when it comes to reform. I also spoke about a lack of genuine consultation, and I concluded by expressing worry about how neglecting essential community services impacts the most vulnerable in our community. Two years later and nothing much has changed. A few fresh faces have joined the tired, old government on the opposite side of the chamber, but already their approaches look the same and their answers sound just as hollow.

Last year hurt—bushfires, hail and an ongoing pandemic. Often overlooked was a fourth disaster—a dramatic increase in the rates of domestic and family violence. COVID increased the amount of time everyone spent at home, and for some this meant more time living with an abuser with fewer opportunities for respite or escape. Victim Support ACT saw a 130 per cent increase in new family violence matters in June 2020 compared to the previous year.

The ACT government responded with a one-off injection of extra funding for specialist homelessness and domestic violence services. But this funding has proved to be a small patch on an already wide and ever-widening hole in our front-line services. For example, I know of at least one service that at any one time supports up to 80 children who have fled homes impacted by violence. For the past two years this service has been begging the ACT government for funding support to provide skilled trauma counsellors for these children. These requests have gone unfulfilled.

Just last week a diverse group of community services stakeholders met in my office. They unitedly raised their concerns about this government's spending priorities when it comes to the safer families levy. Everyone believes in prevention—I certainly do. And everyone believes it is important to train front-line workers. But diverting large portions of the safer families levy to the ACT Public Service when front-line service providers cannot adequately address the trauma of children who have fled violence is ignoring one of the most important facets of prevention.

Children fleeing violence are not the only ones I deeply worry about. This budget sees modest spending increases for child protection and youth justice but, as I noted two years ago, the central question is what exactly Canberrans are getting in return. Both areas are certainly ripe with major reforms, but four years after I first moved a motion calling on Labor and the Greens to introduce some form of external merits review for important child protection decisions, we learned in budget estimates hearings that they are now finally ready to put out a tender for a consultant to propose a design that may actually be implemented at some point in the future. As a major stakeholder pointed out last week, other Australian states implemented external review without outside assistance.

Setting that matter aside, why on earth has it taken four years to get to this point? It has been two years since the territory's Human Rights Commission issued a statement declaring that our child protection system is not human rights compliant without external merits review. But here we are two full years later still violating the basic human rights of children and families in this territory. How do those opposite sleep at night knowing this? I will tell you why—they simply do not have a caring bone in their bodies.

On that point, I find it revealing that ANU academic Valerie Braithwaite's paper published just last week in the *International Journal on Child Maltreatment* relies heavily on research conducted in the ACT to "explain resistance to reform in terms of longstanding institutional oppression". The paper points out that the needed reforms would reduce cost and improve outcomes for child protection authorities. Instead, we are left with a broken system characterised by what Braithwaite labels the consistent

silencing of families, children and workers. A government that silences families, children and workers is, as the paper makes clear, an oppressive tyrant. Canberra's child protection system is a reflection of their ignorance, and the only future they face as a result is misery.

Nevertheless, the expert advice from Braithwaite impacts this Labor-Greens coalition government. As part of estimates hearings, for example, I asked the minister about the process for placing young people in the territory's residential care homes. In her written response I was assured that the placement decision is made once an assessment of the child or young person's care needs and therapeutic needs have been identified, appropriate services coordinated and appropriate matching undertaken with other young people that may be residing in the same home.

Contrast her description with what the territory's independent Children and Young People Commissioner told me as part of an earlier hearing:

Young people are sometimes placed in a shared residence despite having significantly different needs, the outcome of which being that individual needs are not necessarily met. This can lead to situations in which individual children and young people may feel threatened, concerned, anxious and/or scared.

The commissioner went on to raise concerns about an emerging pattern of children as young as five years old whom this government is placing in homes not intended for little children. These are two very different assessments of what happens in the territory's out of home care system. The minister has given us an idealised version where everything works just fine. The commissioner, in contrast, has given us a glimpse into the reality of our out of home care system.

How do I know which account is real and which is just glib lip-service? I have spoken at length with people who have worked in these residential care homes, including former managers, and they have all raised with me even more harrowing reports than what the commissioner has described. To them the minister's words ring false, and the commissioner's response to my question clearly demonstrates that young people and even young children continue to be placed in homes that leave them with more trauma than when they first arrived.

As I noted earlier, the territory's youth justice system is another area that is ripe for reform. I took note therefore when the new assistant minister told us two months ago that she looked forward to the day when we no longer need youth detention facilities because we will have the support services and rehabilitation facilities able to meet the needs of young people, their families, and our community. This is a worthy goal. Unfortunately, I worry that the new minister may be out of her depth. I am aware that some genuinely forward-thinking governments have already successfully eliminated youth detention, so as part of estimates hearings I asked the assistant minister which of these the Labor-Greens coalition government is looking to as models. In her written response to me Minister Davidson did not name a single one.

I likewise asked for a time line for ending youth detention in the ACT. In response I was told that her statement was aspirational and that there is no specific time line for

this goal. As everyone in this room knows, an aspirational goal without a specific model or time line is really just a bunch of nice-sounding words.

No specific plan seems to be this government's approach to other important areas of youth justice. As part of estimates hearings I asked about the government's intention to establish this year a new residential property for young people on youth justice orders. (*Extension of time granted.*) This facility is to be staffed by youth workers from the detention centre; but the official visitors latest annual reports states that one of the main reasons why Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families are reluctant to use the existing Narrabundah House is because it is operated by detention centre staff.

I asked how the government would avoid replicating that problem with this new facility. In her written response, the assistant minister merely stated that it is better to place young people with their own families. Well, yes—but what exactly is her plan to make this residential facility a culturally safe space for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people who cannot be placed with family? It is anybody's guess. My solid guess is that there is no plan.

There likewise seems to be no plan regarding how to keep our detention centre adequately staffed. Following extensive lockdowns that resulted in young people being confined to their rooms up to 20 hours per day, the Muir report specifically called for a new workforce strategy that would keep the centre at its correct staffing level.

As part of estimates hearings I asked the assistant minister about this strategy and specifically how long it would take to achieve adequate staffing at the centre if it again goes through a cycle of staffing shortages. The response was that it would take 17 weeks. In other words, there is no workforce strategy outside of waiting for the next crisis to occur and then locking kids in their rooms for 17 weeks. Once again, the Labor-Greens' plan is to have no plan. Once again, vulnerable children, a disproportionate of them Indigenous Australians, will pay the price.

In Canberra, too often, it is Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders who pay the price for this government's ongoing failures. As Noel Pearson and others have pointed out, Indigenous Australians are the most incarcerated people on the planet, and here in the nation's capital we have the highest ratio of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in our prison. Our child protection system disproportionately affects First Nation families, and our detention centre has, in the words of the Official Visitor, an unreasonably high ratio of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people.

So much of this disadvantage is a consequence of not getting things right early enough. We have a government that claims to consult with and listen to the Indigenous community. But it is just words, again. Otherwise we would have a legislated entitlement to family-led decision-making in our child protection system. We would already have an external Merits Review. We would not have a residential home for young people that is culturally unsafe. We would not have the nation's highest rate of community-based justice orders unsuccessfully completed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth. We would have an independent review into systemic racism in our prison and so on.

In conclusion, the recent budget process has left many in the community services sector worried. For years Labor and the Greens have, together, failed to fund community services in a way that has kept pace with simple population growth, resulting in cuts to services at a time when those services are in greater demand than ever before.

This is fiscal madness. It is always cheaper to address issues in the early stages before they reach a crisis point. It is much better for people too. Far too many in our overflowing prison are those who failed to get the counselling that they needed when they experienced violence in their childhood homes—those allowed to repeatedly fail youth justice orders, those inappropriately placed in a wrong residential care setting, those whose families were not allowed to have a real say in child protection matters and so on.

Table 38 in the budget statement for Community Services shows a decrease in grants and purchased services of nearly \$14 million between 2022 and 2024. When I asked the assistant minister about this, she replied in writing that the government is currently undertaking a sustainability review to determine “what the funding for the sector should look like from 2022-23 onwards. This is why it shows a projected decrease”. Well, at least Labor and the Greens seem to have an actual plan this time—review funding under the guise of sustainability but clearly project a decrease in the meantime.

Is it any wonder why those who serve this city’s most vulnerable are worried? I can assure this Assembly that the group of stakeholders who met in my office last week are deeply concerned about this government’s approach to community services and whether they can even provide essential services, going forward. I share their concerns. Essential services are just that—essential. They need adequate funding and without this funding people suffer and our community struggles. This cannot and must not be our future. All Canberrans deserve more from this budget.

MR DAVIS (Brindabella) (5.38): I do not know if it is the last week of work that I have spent occupied in the sports and recreation space or if it is the last speaker who has invoked in my head my dad’s words on the first day I had in this job—play the ball and not the man. I am going to make every effort in my contribution to this debate to do just that. I am going to highlight the shortcomings that I identified in this budget and I am going to emphasise some of the great opportunities and great new spending.

I appreciate and I accept that investment made particularly in the Community Services Directorate is incredibly personal. The work done by the directorate and the people that work with and for the directorate provides support to some of the most vulnerable Canberrans, and that rightfully invokes strong emotion. But I remind all members to ensure that their contributions to the debate on community services and vulnerable Canberrans is done in a genuine and earnest spirit to improve outcomes rather than playing petty, nasty politics.

It is in that vein that I start by congratulating CSD on their resilience and their initiative responses to the serious social and cultural issues that the pandemic has brought in the last 12 months. The breadth and interceptions of the work undertaken by the Community Services Directorate—including on family safety, young people, women, domestic and family violence, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberrans and housing—was highlighted over these last 12 months. Supporting the community sector to provide support for Canberrans is a vital function of the directorate and it was particularly important throughout this financial year as our community rebuilds.

The ACT Greens understand that the community sector in the ACT provides an invaluable service to members of our community, particularly those doing it toughest. The ACT population is growing, and demand for community sector essential services is continually stretched through that growth. Yet funding levels remain almost static. Many of these organisations have existed on baseline funding that has not increased commensurate with population growth and increased demand. As the pandemic progresses, we will all feel the impacts on many levels, and it is clear that we cannot go back to pre-COVID-19 funding levels.

We know that more people are reaching out for support who have not reached out before. The pressure on community sector organisations and service providers is increasing by the day, with some services experiencing double or even triple previous demand levels. Short-term funding agreements and one-off grants create uncertainty and pressure for community service providers who need to just get on with delivering those services instead of worrying about whether they can continue to deliver their programs and keep staff.

The ACT Greens know that the ACT government must move forward toward long-term funding agreements to build trust and provide security of staffing and service provision for the community sector. Funding should be indexed to match population growth, able to meet demand, while ensuring that community sector workers can be paid above award wages without the need to do unpaid overtime to meet their workload and have security of employment. These are all issues which future budgets will need to address.

I take the opportunity to highlight one of the programs that has made a significant difference to the safety and wellbeing of our community since its establishment in 2019—the Safe and Connected Youth project. This project aims to provide temporary accommodation, respite, and support to young people at risk of homelessness and their families by reducing family conflict. This evidence-based approach has been led and championed by several key community organisations, including the Youth Coalition of the ACT, Northside and Woden community services, the Conflict Resolution Service and Marymead. Now managed by the Conflict Resolution Service, this project was funded a modest sum of \$470,000 to continue the therapeutic case work while the project is being evaluated.

Vital to ending youth homelessness is post-trauma support for young people who have experienced periods of homelessness to prevent them from becoming homeless again.

We look forward to seeing the evaluation and to supporting this project to be permanently adopted within the context of the broad work that the government is doing to prevent youth homelessness and family conflict.

The ACT Greens look forward to continuing to work within government and from the crossbench to ensure continued, increased and, most importantly, secured and future-proofed funding for community services in the ACT.

MR MILLIGAN (Yerrabi) (5.43): At least one in five Canberrans has reported having physical or mental disabilities, notwithstanding that the incidence of depression and anxiety raises that even higher, with some sources saying that it could be as many as one in four. Despite being relatively new to this portfolio, I have already seen the strong commitment from the sector in obtaining good outcomes for people with disability. Whether through the NDIS or more mainstream services, the passion throughout the community in this sector is evident.

I welcome the investment that the government is making in the disability justice strategy and also look forward to seeing the new national disability strategy when it is released later in the year. But strategies and plans can only go so far. To provide a good roadmap they set priorities and accountabilities, but we need to see more investment and support at the local level

I do not stand alone in calling on the ACT government to do more. ACTCOSS has publicly stated that there is little new spending in this budget directly targeting vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, including people with disability despite these people being amongst the most impacted by COVID-19. Advocacy for Inclusion has publicly noted that there is nothing new for people with disability or disability-specific services. They have said that the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted that vulnerabilities of government approaches towards our most at-risk communities including people with disabilities, so it is disappointing that their needs and the lessons learned are not reflected in the budget. They say more needs to be done to support people with disability at a community level. Many more organisations and groups and individuals feel the very same way.

I was disappointed to see that despite wishes from the community for increased local disability support during COVID-19, Canberrans living with disability, disability advocacy groups and disability services providers received next to nothing in the budget. This is especially concerning as many of these organisations and groups have requested an increase in funding only because they have seen a significant increase in demand. They made submissions to the ACT government in the hopes of being provided for in the budget and they have been let down. Organisations have been operating for a decade without any funding increases. These groups have to cut down on staffing despite increasing demands for support not only from our local communities but also from the ACT government themselves.

For too long the ACT government has played the blame game and pointed the finger at the federal government. Whilst all levels of government have a role, there is a significant responsibility at the state and territory level to deliver services to our community, and I do not think that this government is living up to that responsibility.

On the surface this budget seems to be doing more of the same—lots of talk and inclusion and strategies. My job will be to make sure that this government delivers on its promises.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (5.47): I rise to speak on the Appropriation Bill in relation to women and seniors. I start by acknowledging in this, as I have before, Minister Berry's genuine interest and passion about the welfare of women, especially in the current climate surrounding women and their safety. I thank members in the chamber for their tripartisanship in the last sitting when we had a number of motions relating to women.

Supporting women in the budget means providing funding for a range of community organisations that assist women, often in very difficult circumstances. Those organisations are doing a fantastic job. They range from Beryl Women, Canberra Rape Crisis Centre, the Domestic Violence Crisis Service, and Women's Centre for Health Matters. A whole range of different organisations do fantastic and very important work. I am very supportive of more funding for these types of organisations, most especially for front-line domestic violence and rape crisis services.

We have heard a lot recently about the grave threat to women from domestic and family violence. It is a stain on our society that we all need to do more to address, and it will take quite some time to achieve that change. I know that Minister Berry is passionate about this, which makes it even more disappointing when we heard recently about this government choosing to delay the release of the review into the Family Violence Act. It is an abhorrent betrayal of the victims and families of victims affected by family violence.

The more support and funding that the government can provide to these important organisations, the better. The government has its own role to play, including in areas such as public housing and homelessness prevention. We have talked in this place before about a poverty task force and the gendered impact of poverty. We have talked about the fact that there are 2,500 people on the public housing waiting list. Women were disproportionately affected early in the COVID-19 pandemic, and more needs to be done to look at that in the longer term.

I appreciate that this government is trying to support women, but there is always more that we can do. I look forward to working with Minister Berry in the future on what we can work on together.

Now onto seniors. The 2020-21 budget demonstrates once again that seniors do not figure much for this government. I have been flat out trying to find a page of budget initiatives relating to seniors. There is the administration of ACT Seniors Card, where the government funds the Seniors Card, but the operation of and the issuing of cards is done by COTA ACT.

As Mr Hanson pointed out, we have seen diminishing interest in the veterans portfolio. When so many people in the ACT are ageing and where so many of our residents are veterans and their families who have chosen to make Canberra home after they have

left the service, it is very disheartening when they are not appropriately recognised by this government.

As I said, 12½ per cent of Canberrans are aged over 65 according to the 2016 census data, and that is increasing all the time. It is also disappointing that the lack of attention to and interest in seniors in the ACT is reflected across the board. For example, if you go to the Community Services Directorate website and the page relating to seniors or ageing, the first thing that you see is information about a Minister for Seniors, who is no longer even in this place. It talks about the creation of the age-friendly cities plan from May 2020. Is that because since May 2020 this government has had nothing worthwhile to talk about for seniors? Why has there been no update on that page—the front page, if you like—for seniors, since May 2020? It may be in other places, but it is not a good look that this is the last thing.

The page also refers to Mr Ramsay. He did his best to counteract the general impression in the seniors community that this government does not like older Canberrans, but it has been said many times as far back as I remember to Mr Hargreaves and to Mr Barr, who is famously known for some antipathy towards older Canberrans.

There were issues last year with information for seniors. Seniors were very strongly affected by the COVID-19 shutdown. They were concerned about their health, so they stayed home as we all urged them to do. This could lead to social isolation for them. They were desperately seeking up-to-date information. Time after time I asked the minister about this, and I was told they were getting plenty of information.

It came to the point where I had to move a motion in this place asking for better information because we were getting the glossy brochure delivered to a letterbox. It would have a lovely photo and a little bit of information saying, “If you want more information if you’re a senior, go to this website.” Of course, as we all know, many older Canberrans—not all of them, by any means—do not use the internet or the website. They were crying out for better information. Finally, through the motion in the Assembly and through the work of fantastic organisations such as COTA ACT—which was also clamouring for more information for their members—the government understood that it was falling down in the provision of information to seniors during the COVID pandemic. It is true that the seniors I speak to feel undervalued and sometimes ignored by this Labor-Greens government.

Another area where that is apparent is in transport, with the Network 19 changes to the bus network. Many, many residents spoke to me, to Mr Parton and, I am sure, to all members of the Assembly about how negatively they were impacted. For example, in Wanniasa an older lady I spoke to would catch the bus from a bus stop pretty much outside her house to go to Wanniasa shops to do her groceries. That bus stop was removed; her bus was cancelled. She had to rely on a family member to take her to the shops or get a taxi. Yes, she could get the flexi-bus, but she felt that it had taken away her independence. Her story is just one example and is so reflective of how so many older Canberrans felt about the Network 19 changes.

Another area covered in age-friendly cities is walkways, pathways, footpaths and shared paths. Older Canberrans talk about this all the time. We all know that it applies not just to older Canberrans but to mothers with prams and people with mobility issues—the importance of well-maintained footpaths. When they suffer a fall, older people are, of course, far more likely to experience serious damage and it takes them longer to recover. That happens because, in some cases, the footpaths they were using were not properly maintained. This is the nation’s capital. We should all be absolutely proud of our capital, so why do we see this disrepair in our local suburbs?

In one example, someone reported to me a resident of Goodwin Monash who had fallen over a footpath in Monash just around a corner from their own home. I reported this on their behalf and not long after a footpath nearby was fixed. The footpath that was fixed was in worse shape than the one the woman fell on and broke her arm. I went back to the directorate to point out that they had, in this case, fixed the wrong footpath. (*Extension of time granted.*) The footpath where that woman fell and broke her arm, just around the corner from Goodwin Monash, is still not fixed to this day. As usual, seniors pay the price for this government’s neglect and incompetence. Another budget, another disappointment for seniors, who are getting used to being neglected and ignored and sidelined by this government.

MRS JONES (Murrumbidgee) (5.58): I am pleased to speak today on the budget line items for multicultural affairs. It seems to be a running theme of this debate, but I am a bit disappointed. As we debated this budget area, I was surprised that the Minister for Multicultural Affairs did not know a great deal about the biggest commitment of this government to the multicultural community during the election campaign last year. During the estimates questioning of the minister, my colleague Mr Cain raised the election commitment of building a facility to house large events for the multicultural community. He had barely begun his question when the minister cut him off and said:

Mr Cain, this is a matter for Major Projects Canberra.

He had said:

Minister, my question relates to the commitment to spend \$21 million on a new 10,000 square metre venue at EPIC.

We did not even get to hear the question before the minister was already trying to bat it off. She said:

Depending on your question, it may be better to direct your question there.

The chair stepped in and suggested that we hear the question before assuming that the minister could not answer it. But the minister was right: she could not answer it. The question was about what facilities would be in this place, what it would be able to do, how it would operate, and when it would be built. It was not the most complex question. Some might say it was practically a Dorothy Dixier. Unbelievably, the minister batted off these basic elements of the scope of the government’s commitment to Major Projects Canberra.

The hospital buildings are being delivered via Major Projects Canberra, aren't they, Chief Minister? You never see Minister Stephen-Smith come here and say, "I cannot answer basic questions about what is being delivered." The tram stage 2A is being delivered, I believe, by Major Projects Canberra. You do not see Mr Steel come in here and say that he cannot tell us what is being built or roughly when it is expected to be delivered. No-one has asked for the detailed design work or details of the contracting involved. I hope that when the minister is next asked, she will have worked these things out.

I have since found the following press article about the announcement of the centre published in the *CityNews*. I am pleased to be able to inform the minister about the centre. The *CityNews* said that as of 3 October 2020:

Labor's offering to spend \$21 million to build a new 10,000-square-metre indoor venue at EPIC in its quest for re-election this month.

Labor leader Andrew Barr says the venue would be the first, purpose-built facility in Canberra catering for large multicultural performances and private events such as weddings. It would also be available for regular EPIC users, including trade shows, business events, the farmers market, Summernats and the folk festival.

It would have a commercial kitchen and—

according to Mr Barr—

a community kitchen allowing for self-catered events.

That was the single biggest question that I was trying to clear up with the minister. The article continued:

It would accommodate (in non-pandemic times) around 1500 people for standing community events, and provide a seated option for up to 1000.

"If re-elected, ACT Labor will start the detailed design work and commence construction in the next term of government," Mr Barr says.

It seems that the facility is intended to have self-catering facilities.

The Minister for Multicultural Affairs needs to have read the election commitments from her own party in her own portfolio areas. What an absolute disgrace.

Maybe, in the minister's new process announced this week, she can make a special effort to listen to the various ethnic and religious groups intending to use this facility when they talk about their needs. She could keep a watching brief on how Major Projects Canberra is progressing and ask for regular updates. If the facility does not achieve all that is promised, groups will be very disappointed and have a right to be upset.

Let me put it clearly on the record. Some of the community needs for the facility are as follows. It should be self-catering. The venue should be prioritised for large ethnic and religious celebrations. Any booking system needs somehow to ensure that it is not full of bookings for other events and groups to the point where it is not available for big cultural events like Holi, Ramadan, Diwali, Navaratri—which, incidentally, goes for nine nights in a row—and so on. The venue must be able to cater to groups who want to have alcohol at their events, and not in a cost-prohibitive or profiteering way. In the same way, some events will be completely alcohol free, based on some groups' religious views and commitments. If the serving of alcohol appropriately, and in a non-profiteering way, is not achieved, some people will, as has been known to occur in Canberra already, drink outside the venue in the car park. This not helpful. Therefore, it should be integrated as part of the events, with responsible service of alcohol principles applied. The venue needs to be able to cater to very large crowds. I am pleased to see that when it was announced, it clearly was intended to.

These are the matters that the minister needs to be across. I will be asking her about it on every opportunity until the venue opens. I hope it will be a great success. It will certainly enhance the life of our city if it is and make those communities feel valued and accepted. I look forward to dancing all night at these events—maybe even singing a song or two along with some others, as is the custom at some of these events that I have been involved in.

I hope that the minister will now read her party's election commitments in detail and ensure that Major Projects Canberra delivers what was promised in a way that achieves these promised outcomes. I am amazed that I have to explain this to the minister, but here we are.

Regarding the multicultural recognition act, we can only hope that the minister's consultations with the multicultural community show her how important this facility and its delivery are, to make Canberra the best place for those originating from another country.

I also want to make note of the Multicultural Festival. This year the festival had to be cancelled. This was discussed in estimates in some detail. I look forward to the 2022 event. I hope it will be stronger. I hope there will be plenty of opportunity for community groups to make their needed income from the event so that the festival can be stronger than previous multicultural festivals and we can all enjoy the spectacle that it is. I look forward to hearing more about the plans for next year's festival. The festival has become a key part of the landscape in the ACT.

MS DAVIDSON (Murrumbidgee—Assistant Minister for Seniors, Veterans, Families and Community Services, Minister for Disability, Minister for Justice Health and Minister for Mental Health) (6.05): Madam Speaker, I have a few things to cover this evening and I would like to start with the technology upgrade fund. I am pleased to advise that the government's commitment to assist our community to upgrade its IT capacities and capability, with \$1.4 million invested over four years, has commenced implementation. A total of \$350,000 per year is allocated to a new grant program, with applications for the first year opening on 9 April and closing on 30 April. The

previous annual budgeted digital communities grant funding has also been added to the first year of the tech upgrade fund and, therefore, \$478,000 is available for distribution by June 2021.

The guidelines were prepared following the consultation with the community sector that clearly identified the range of needs by individuals and large organisations. I understand that there has been strong interest in this new initiative and I look forward to sharing with you some of the projects that will be funded. The fund aligns with the ACT's digital strategy and will enable organisations to purchase suitable IT equipment and software, access training and support, upgrade internet and cloud-based systems, access specialist services and help those in need to ensure that people on low incomes continue to have adequate access to IT equipment and services and that—

Mr Davis: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Davis.

Mr Davis: Can I ask you to draw attention to the fact that there has not been a moment yet when the minister has been speaking that she has been heard in silence. I am sitting on the other side of the chamber and I am finding it very difficult to follow along.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you. I ask members to halt their conversations and allow the minister to be heard. Thank you, Mr Davis.

MS DAVIDSON: This will ensure that people on low incomes continue to have adequate access to IT equipment and services and that community organisations are well resourced to support people in our community most in need. This delivers on both ACT Labor and ACT Greens election commitments to better support our community sector and reduce digital exclusion in the community, and it demonstrates our collaborative approach both to government and to working with the community to better support social inclusion, including online.

The government has been delivering on the commitments that it made to support the community across Canberra through the COVID-19 pandemic. The Canberra Relief Network, which was initially coordinated by UnitingCare Kippax from April 2020, was handed over to Canberra Region Community Services in September. They have been working with government to coordinate the distribution of food and essentials to individuals and families impacted by the pandemic. The 2020-21 funding package to Canberra Region Community Services is more than \$1.1 million. The government agreed to extend operations until 30 June 2021 and has agreed to pay the costs of the use of the Fitzroy Pavilion at EPIC for an additional \$52,000.

While the ACT moves into a recovery phase from the COVID pandemic and the COVID vaccine is rolled out, support and timely information for older Canberrans remain important to the ACT government. We have engaged with the older people in the community directly and through the Council on the Ageing ACT, the Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing and other key stakeholders for them to share information

to their members and networks. I thank the community and COTA ACT who provided vital feedback to the ACT government on concerns, issues and impacts around the vaccine.

The ACT government also continues to support older Canberrans through the provision of a range of subsidies, rebates, concessions and payment systems for pension cardholders, senior cardholders and people in older age brackets. We also continue to fund the administration of the seniors card through COTA ACT, which provides Canberrans over the age of 60 access to savings on a range of goods and services provided by government and participating businesses.

The age-friendly city plan for 2022-24 was launched in May 2020 to facilitate collaboration across ACT directorates to progress a range of targeted action to support older Canberrans. This includes enhancing social inclusion, access to services, public transport, age-friendly urban planning and addressing age discrimination and elder abuse. Significant progress has been made towards the actions identified in the plan in its first year. I talked about some of these earlier today. The Crimes (Offences Against Vulnerable People) Legislation Amendment Act 2020 has been introduced, which will see elder abuse made a criminal offence.

The Age Friendly Suburbs Program continues to make our neighbourhood safer and easier to get around for everyone, including people with mobility issues. This work will continue. The Community Services Directorate delivered the Celebrating Seniors initiative across October 2020 to encourage the community to re-establish activities and strengthen connections with older members of our community.

The ACT government continues its commitment to older Canberrans and promoting seniors as valued members of the ACT community through the Seniors Grants Program. A total of \$80,000 is available annually to fund innovative programs which enable older Canberrans to actively participate in community life and enhance their status in the ACT. Among the most recent recipients are projects such as playstations for seniors, an LGBTIQ elders dance program and an ACT intergenerational pen pal service.

The ACT government also recognises the significant population of veterans and their families residing in the ACT and continues its commitment to provide support through a variety of initiatives and programs. This includes the \$80,000 annual veterans grants program. Among the recent recipients are the South Canberra Veterans Shed, for the purchase of equipment; the Veterans Film Festival Inc, for film-making workshops; the Veterans Motorcycle Club, to support the veterans Coffee Bunker; and COTA ACT, for the connecting valley veterans program.

The ACT government also continues to support the ACT veterans employment strategy and the Ministerial Advisory Council for Veterans and their Families. I understand that I am not the person that Mr Hanson wants to see in the role of minister for veterans and their families, and I acknowledge that this is hard for him. But I want to assure Mr Hanson and the Canberra community that I am committed to ensuring that all of our ACT veterans and their families have access to the supports and services that they need. No matter what people think of me personally, in my time

working with Defence I did everything that I could to support serving personnel staying connected to their family and their community and protecting their health and wellbeing. It is something I am still doing now and will continue to do.

I would now like to turn our attention to youth justice and the Bimberi Youth Justice Centre. As a high-risk setting, services continue to be delivered to ensure the health and wellbeing of children, young people and staff at Bimberi Youth Justice Centre. The health and wellbeing of young people at Bimberi remain a priority during the COVID-19 public health emergency. Bimberi Youth Justice Centre continues to respond to the independent reviews following the major incident in August 2019 through infrastructure upgrades, specialist consultancy, system improvements and training.

The ACT government is committed to removing barriers so that people with disability have equal access to justice here in the ACT. I am pleased to be able to share with you some of the notable achievements of this year from the ACT disability justice strategy. Providing education to front-line workers in the justice system to increase their capacity to recognise disability and to respond by implementing reasonable adjustments is a key component of the strategy. To support this goal, organisations across the justice system have participated in training to learn how to develop accessible resources using easy English. This training will continue to occur, with high levels of interest for the next one in July.

I am very excited about the continued development of the community of practice of disability liaison workers across the justice system. The community of practice has been meeting regularly since the beginning of the year, with disability liaison officers in place at Legal Aid ACT and at the Alexander Maconochie Centre, along with representatives from other justice agencies. By the end of the financial year there will be six disability liaison officers working together to support our agencies and organisations to do better in their work with people with disability and also support individuals with disability to navigate the system. I want to take this opportunity to congratulate ACT Corrective Services on the development and launch of their disability action and inclusion plan, which was developed in consultation with the disability reference group.

Still within the work of the Office for Disability, I am pleased to advise that the Integrated Service Response Program has supported 221 people since it commenced in November 2018. The program provides critical support to people with disability who have complex needs and require intensive short-term case coordination to ensure that their immediate support needs can be met. Participants are typically people with disability who may not be eligible for a funding package from the NDIS due to their residency status or people whose support needs are not met by the NDIS. The program continues to receive an average of nine referrals a month and is working further with human services directorates to develop bespoke responses to ensure that participants are supported and community safety is upheld.

There are approximately 80,000 people with disability in the ACT. This represents an estimated 19.4 per cent of the total ACT population. People with disability experience higher levels of discrimination and disadvantage than other members of the Canberra

community. It is important to think about this in the context of the social model of disability. All of us in the Canberra community have a role to play in making our community safer, more accessible and more inclusive for all of us.

Advocacy services are critical in ensuring that people with disability are heard, have their rights upheld and can access the right services to support them to live a full life. The ACT government funds ACT Disability, Aged and Carer Advocacy Service and Advocacy for Inclusion to directly support people with disability to access the service they need and to achieve equitable outcomes.

Individual advocacy support is especially necessary given the issues that became apparent during the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability. Many of the interim recommendations by the royal commission point to the need for effective advocacy services and the support that they provide in keeping people with disability safe and their interests protected. Research and analysis led by the commonwealth government has also found that, contrary to initial policy assumptions and settings, demand for individual advocacy support has increased following the implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

The ACT also funds organisations to deliver systemic advocacy services. These include Carers ACT, National Disability Services, Women with Disabilities ACT and People with Disabilities ACT, who are now part of Advocacy for Inclusion. These organisations that focus on systemic advocacy play a vital role in improving the lives of people with disability and I thank them for their work.

I am committed to listening to and understanding the experiences and views of people with disability. I am committed to co-designing solutions with people with disability to ensure that we get things right from the beginning wherever possible. The disability reference group is one of the ACT government's key ways of hearing from people with disability and the sector on issues, challenges and opportunities within the Canberra community. The ACT government works closely with the reference group, who generously consider issues and provide us with advice on the ways in which we can make the ACT an even more inclusive and accessible community.

In 2019-20, the disability reference group worked towards reinvigorating the ACT's disability commitment, increasing the rate of employment of people with disability, better health outcomes for Canberrans with disability and reducing the disproportionate levels and often adverse outcomes of people with disability in the ACT justice system. I look forward to continuing to work with them to progress this. I will continue to work with the disability reference group, the ACT's advocacy organisations and the community to protect the human rights of people with disability and the choice, control and continuity for people with disability in making decisions about the services and supports that they access to achieve their own life goals.

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) (6.18): As Minister for Multicultural Affairs, I am pleased to briefly outline to the Assembly how this budget

supports the government's commitment to strengthening our multicultural communities and ensuring that Canberra remains an inclusive and respectful city that celebrates its diversity.

This budget supports the Office of Multicultural Affairs within the Community Services Directorate to continue implementing the government's agenda of social inclusion and community connection. During this financial year, we have been proud to continue the implementation of actions under the ACT multicultural framework 2015-20 Second Action Plan, including reviewing multicultural grants and finalising an independent review into language schools.

Importantly, this budget provides additional funding of another \$100,000 for the Refugee, Asylum Seekers and Humanitarian Program to support temporary visa holders and asylum seekers adversely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. This funding supports applications from what we know as the RASH Program committee members, for discretionary funding which supports their clients' accommodation and their basic living expenses up to \$2,000 per client at a time.

There is also the expansion of the English language program for refugees and asylum seekers, and assistance to refugees, asylum seekers and new migrants to enter the workforce through employment participation services. This funding continues important work to ensure that we are inclusive and welcoming and support our most vulnerable.

To briefly respond to Mrs Jones, I am not the responsible minister for delivering the venue that she spoke of. I understand that in the time since she spoke today this has been cleared up for her, even though we tried to do it at the time. I agree that it does not mean that I should not be engaged on the delivery of it; absolutely, I should, and I have been. My officials within CSD have, too. But it was quite unusual that she and her colleagues persisted in the way they did during the questioning in the hearing. Questions go to the minister responsible. That is the standard.

Mrs Jones, I hope, though, will be pleased that CSD has had preliminary scoping conversations with Venues Canberra to identify the needs of the ACT multicultural community and that there is a commitment to work with CSD to ensure that this new community facility meets the multicultural community needs. And, yes, there are catering facilities.

We are, of course, all disappointed that the Multicultural Festival could not go ahead this year, but planning is underway in earnest. Nominations for the community panel reference group are open, and they close later this month. I encourage all members in this place to talk with communities that they are engaged with and encourage them to submit applications for this, to ensure that we continue to have a very popular, well-loved and well-appreciated multicultural festival—keeping with the spirit that we have enjoyed over 24 festivals, as we head into the 25th anniversary year.

I am very excited about the development of the multicultural recognition act, the discussion paper for which we released on Monday, together with fact sheets available in 14 different languages. It is something that, as Mrs Jones should know, the

Multicultural Advisory Council has called for. I hope and trust that she and her colleagues will engage with and promote this important discussion because it is about the future of who we are as a community.

Finally, in commending this appropriation to the Assembly, I want to take the opportunity to warmly thank our multicultural communities for how they have responded to and led during the pandemic. Whether in partnership with government or off their own bat, our multicultural communities have provided such important connections and assistance during a difficult time. I can speak on behalf of all members of the government in saying how much we appreciate it. As we know so well, our diversity is our strength.

MS VASSAROTTI (Kurrajong—Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, Minister for Homelessness and Housing Services and Minister for Sustainable Building and Construction) (6.22): The ACT government is committed to creating a home for all by strengthening social housing, reducing homelessness and ensuring that our services are integrated, so that Canberrans have stable, secure and safe homes.

Over the next four years the ACT government will continue to address homelessness in our community. This includes critical investment of \$18 million to expand the capacity of specialist homelessness services. The challenges of the bushfires and the pandemic have resulted in an increase in both the number of people and the complexity of need in accessing homelessness services in the ACT. Through this time the ACT government has continued to provide specialist homelessness funding to assist people who have become homeless or who are at risk of becoming homeless.

The 2020-21 ACT budget commits \$2.6 million to expand the capacity of specialist homelessness services. A total of \$300,000 over the next two years will fund the expansion of the Early Morning Centre to a seven-day-a-week service, meaning that Canberrans at risk of experiencing homelessness will have weekend access to food, shelter, health and social services. As the health pandemic continues, this budget invests \$3 million in economic stimulus funding to support homelessness and domestic and family violence services to meet the increased demand due to the effects of COVID-19.

The ACT government has also stepped up to address the funding shortfalls from the federal government, providing \$700,000 to ACT Shelter to continue its systemic advocacy role in the territory over the next four years. This budget continues to fund COVID-19 homelessness responses, including the Winter Lodge, MacKillop House and Axial Housing First services. All of the services provide specialist homelessness support to people in need. I commend the support that these services have provided to our community. The Winter Lodge provided accommodation to 121 men from May to October 2020; MacKillop House accommodated 48 women, some with children; and Axial Housing successfully housed 29 rough sleepers.

This budget invests \$450,000 over two years for OneLink to increase the capacity to manage emergency accommodation and supports to assist Canberrans who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness. This includes the client support fund, which

allows OneLink to partner with services, provide innovative and flexible solutions to homelessness, and address service gaps, such as establishing a dedicated LGBTIQ+ accommodation and outreach support service. I commend OneLink for their work so far in supporting 59 householders, including 22 families, experiencing domestic and family violence as at 31 March 2021.

This budget continues to build on the ACT housing strategy as part of the ongoing commitment, since 2018, to reduce homelessness in Canberra. Far from just using words, this is a real, demonstrative commitment to reducing homelessness in the ACT.

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

Adjournment

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

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Mr Neville Layt—tribute

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (6.26): I rise today to remember one of the wonderful characters of our racing community who we sadly lost yesterday. I was genuinely devastated to hear this morning that we lost the great man Neville Layt yesterday. He passed away at Canberra Hospital with his loving wife, Barbara, by his side.

It is not going to be the same at the racetrack without Nifty. He was a link to a bygone era. There was nothing flash about Neville; he was just a pure down to earth racing bloke. From my dealings with him it was very clear to me that he was a gentle family man. I am sure that he was most comfortable when surrounded by the ones he loved in his home.

There were many challenges for Neville and his family along the way, challenges that would have destroyed many families. Tragically, Barb and Neville lost their son Jamie in 2002 in very tragic circumstances. I am sure that it even marred Neville's time in the racing game from that point. I know Barb did not go to the races for 10 years after Jamie's death.

I have known Neville for a little over a decade. He had a razor-sharp wit, a very cheeky grin. He sported a face that told a thousand stories without even opening his mouth. He was always very, very, black and white—if you asked him a question, he would tell you the answer; and if he thought you were a dill, he would just tell you straight up.

I still remember Neville telling me about this little chestnut filly he had that he was setting for the Black Opal, a race he had already won three years earlier. He was so full of praise for this filly that I could not help but think that he was overplaying his hand somewhat. He was not. The filly was Karuta Queen. History shows that Karuta Queen narrowly missed out on the Black Opal but she went on to win the Magic Millions.

I had the great pleasure of being the on-course broadcaster on a number of occasions when Karuta Queen ran here in Canberra and in Queanbeyan and, of course, she won all of them. Karuta Queen was a \$30,000 purchase that went on to win \$1.87 million, most of which was under the care of Neville Layt. As a four-year-old mare she was transferred to the stables of Peter Moody, but she failed to replicate the blistering form of her two- and three-year-old years. That was a real testament to Neville as a horse man.

My friend Neville Layt graced us with his presence on this planet for 76 years. His early involvement in the racing game was as a jockey. His father was a jockey, and he certainly looked like he should have been a jockey. I never saw him ride, but I would love to know what weight he rode at because, as my father would have said, this bloke would have to run around in the shower to get wet. There was nothing of him at all.

After a particularly bad broken leg he took up as a trainer in Queanbeyan. He was able to develop a very close and genuine connection with his horses, particularly the two-year-olds, and the tributes are flowing in from around the country. Joe Cleary, from Queanbeyan said, “He was a straight shooter. If he had to tell you to get stuffed, he would.” I am thinking he would probably choose another word. According to Joe, he was a bit of a father figure and he said it is going to be very, very, sad around the racecourse for a while. Leading Sydney rider Tommy Berry was also glowing in his praise of Neville.

Thoroughbred Park is racing this Friday and the club has renamed their opening race. The race sponsors, the Ginninderra Cricket Club, have allowed their race to become the Neville Layt Handicap. To make this even more special, this will be one of the final occasions that a horse races with Neville Layt as its official trainer. Never Astern will carry the Layt colours in the race named after Neville on Friday.

Furthermore, the races in Sydney on Saturday are at Royal Randwick and the AJC has named their opening race the Vale Neville Layt Highway Handicap, remembering that Nifty Neville trained the first ever Highway Handicap winner in Grand Proposal. So on Saturday afternoon at Randwick in a race named after him, the late Neville Layt will have his final runner go around under his name—Redicon is engaged in the opening event on Saturday.

My thoughts are with Barb and the whole family, including Adrian and Nadia. There are nine grandchildren, of which Neville was so very, very proud. Rest in peace, Neville Layt.

Yerrabi electorate—community engagement

MS ORR (Yerrabi) (6.31): I rise to update the Assembly on what has been happening in my electorate of Yerrabi since I last spoke in a sitting week. On Sunday, 11 April I had the pleasure of attending the Federation of Indian Associations ACT Harmony Day event. The event was celebrating harmony and inclusion of people from all different cultures and walks of life. There were many familiar faces there, with other Yerrabi MLAs attending, as well as Minister Stephen-Smith and Minister Rattenbury.

The event was also attended by our friends from federal parliament, Katy Gallagher, David Smith and Alicia Payne. Everyone came together to celebrate this wonderful occasion.

The day was marked with traditional songs and dances, delicious food, and a one of a kind atmosphere where everyone came together to respect one another. The theme was “Everyone belongs”, a theme I have worked in to my day-to-day responsibilities as an MLA. I want everyone, not only in my electorate but all of Canberra, to feel included and respected, regardless of background or any other aspect making one’s individuality. As I have said in the past, my electorate has some of the most linguistically and culturally diverse suburbs in the territory and I am proud to represent an area where this diversity is particularly celebrated. And I will continue to support events like this one.

I have been discussing planning and traffic in Yerrabi with my constituents to work with them to build a better town centre for all of us. The community is very engaged with the future of the town centre and the region in general. As always, the Canberra community cares deeply about the regions where we live, work, study, relax and raise our families.

On the theme of engaging with Yerrabi residents, I have held a number of pop-up stalls around Yerrabi, with more planned over the next couple of weeks. I have spoken to residents in Franklin and Palmerston, Gungahlin, Casey and had some great chats. I always enjoy meeting locals and having a chat one on one, hearing directly from them their views on what our community needs.

This is also a great opportunity to talk about the great work that the ACT government continues to do, with lots of interest in the projects happening around Yerrabi. I look forward to getting back out into my electorate after this sitting week and meeting those I represent. None of the great work which flows from the work undertaken in this place can happen without their support.

LGBTQI community—IDAHOBIT

MR DAVIS (Brindabella) (6.33): While it may be a month away, I rise today to speak of IDAHOBIT. If there is one thing the LGBTQIA+ community loves, it is an acronym, so it will be useful to inform the house of the meaning of the acronym for IDAHOBIT. It is the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia, which this year will be celebrated on Monday, 17 May.

Thirty-one years ago, on 17 May 1990, the World Health Organisation removed homosexuality from the classification of diseases and related health problems. That was only a year and a half before I was born. How far we have come in such a short time, Madam Speaker.

The International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia celebrates LGBTQIA+ people globally and raises awareness for the work still needed to combat discrimination. I have written to the Chief Minister and asked him to consider erecting

rainbow flags outside the Legislative Assembly on Monday, 17 May to show visibility and celebrate Canberra's sexuality and diverse community.

No doubt we are the most progressive legislature and the most progressive city in the country, Madam Speaker. That is demonstrated not only in the three out of four positive votes we saw for marriage equality, but in the very make-up of members in this legislature. I am proud to be one such member who brings their own flavour of diversity to this space.

I rise in particular to encourage LGBTQIA people—across Canberra, but in particular in my electorate of Brindabella—to please reach out to me as they start to conduct their planning for their own IDAHOBIT events. If you need a rainbow flag, let me know; I will get you one. If you need a guest speaker, I have never found a microphone I do not enjoy. If you are a young person who is interested in engaging with politics or civics and citizenship more broadly and you are dealing with the complexities of navigating this, let us say, robust space, please reach out. I want to do all I can to support Canberrans who want to one day be in this space, already planning their retirement now—well, four or five terms in the future, when we need to find another sassy gay boy to sit on the crossbenches in here.

Mr Parton: We have a different date in mind.

MR DAVIS: Do we, Mr Parton? I am sure that we had another date in mind, but I hope my continued work sees my date a bit further out than yours.

I am rising a month early, I know, in earnest, to encourage not just people in my electorate of Brindabella, but people right across Canberra who are looking at celebrating IDAHOBIT, to please reach out to my office. I want to make sure that IDAHOBIT is celebrated in every workplace, in every school, in every cul-de-sac, right across our community.

Visibility is one of the most powerful ways that we can combat prejudice and discrimination for any marginalised group. Simply bringing to the fore the things that make people unique, different and special, and highlighting them in parliaments, at parties, at music festivals and in workplaces, is the most powerful way to combat discrimination.

It goes right down to the words, doesn't it? Look at how each one of those words—transphobia, homophobia, biphobia—concludes. Phobia, by its very definition, is fear. Fear is always overcome by knowledge; by storytelling; by meeting people who are different from you, who have a different lived experience from you. You would be surprised how it can change people.

I have invited every member in this place to an IDAHOBIT event that I intend to host here in the reception room on IDAHOBIT. I hope everybody can make it. It will be an awesome way for you to meet a diversity of rainbow Canberrans, hear their stories and hear how they found navigating being a Canberran, whether it be in accessing services, entering the workplace or whatever it may be. It will further build on your

professional development and support all of you in being much better members in supporting the diversity within your electorates.

I encourage all of you to come along and join me. I promise you that there will be rainbow cupcakes. It would be completely unreasonable to host a queer event without some sort of rainbow food. Everybody will be able to come down and make sure that they get their fill, not just of knowledge and new friends, but of cupcakes, too.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 6.38 pm.