



Debates

WEEKLY HANSARD

Legislative Assembly for the ACT

TENTH ASSEMBLY

22 APRIL 2021

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Thursday, 22 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.

Absence of Clerk

Mr Deputy Speaker informed the Assembly that, due to the absence of the Clerk, the Deputy Clerk would act as Clerk.

ACT Integrity Commissioner—appointment

MS BURCH (Brindabella) (10.02): I seek leave to move a motion concerning the appointment of the ACT Integrity Commissioner.

Leave granted.

MS BURCH: I move:

That this Assembly, pursuant to subsection 25(3)(b) of the Integrity Commission Act 2018, approves the appointment of the Honourable F Michael Adams QC as the ACT Integrity Commissioner.

I wish to advise that, following a recruitment process conducted in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Integrity Commission Act and the Integrity Commissioner selection criteria and process determination of 2021, I propose to appoint the Hon Michael Adams QC to this position.

Justice Adams has had a long and distinguished legal career. He was appointed Queen's Counsel in 1988, was chairperson of the New South Wales Law Reform Commission between 1996 and 2006, and was appointed as Justice of the New South Wales Supreme Court in 1998. He became the head of the New South Wales Law Enforcement Conduct Commission in 2017. As members will be aware, he has been acting as the ACT Integrity Commissioner since January this year.

I am delighted that Justice Adams has agreed to this appointment. In proposing the appointment, I have undertaken the prescribed consultations with party leaders and

relevant Assembly committees and have also satisfied myself that Justice Adams is suitable and eligible for this appointment.

I want to place on record my sincere thanks to the appointment advisory panel, consisting of Tom Rogers, the Australian Electoral Commissioner, as chair; Mr Philip Walker SC; and Ms Jaala Hinchcliffe, the Integrity Commissioner and head of the Australian Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity. They offered their time and experience to carefully consider applicants for the position and make the recommendation.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: As the Integrity Commission Act, at subsection 25(3)(b), requires the approval of a two-thirds majority of the Assembly, I ask the Deputy Clerk to proceed to a vote.

Question put:

That the motion be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 23

Noes 0

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

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

Committees—standing Amendment to resolution

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (10.06): I move:

That the Assembly amends the resolution of establishment for general purpose standing committees of the Tenth Assembly of 2 December 2020 by:

- (1) inserting at Table to the Resolution at 6. Public Accounts—Areas of Responsibility, the words: “Treasury including taxation and revenue”; and
- (2) in Table to the Resolution at 3. Economy and Gender and Economic Equality—Areas of Responsibility, omitting the words: “Treasury including taxation and revenue”.

The Standing Committee on Economy and Gender and Economic Equality—the EGEE committee—wrote to the manager of government business on 9 April 2021 to advise about the motion we are talking about today.

The EGEE committee has been in conversation with the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, the PAC, to consider and discuss matters relating to its responsibilities and those of the PAC as specified in the resolution of establishment for general purpose standing committees of the Tenth Assembly. These matters specifically related to Treasury responsibilities, including revenue and taxation, which currently reside with the EGEE committee.

The Ninth Assembly decided to split the responsibilities of the PAC on 13 December 2016 by transferring some of its portfolio responsibilities, including Treasury, to the economic development committee. In response to the matter being raised by MLAs on 26 October 2017, most of the responsibilities previously transferred, including Treasury, were restored to the PAC.

There are historical, procedural, practice, oversight and scrutiny grounds that support reassigning the responsibility for Treasury matters to the PAC. Accordingly, as an outcome of discussion on this matter, the EGEE committee and PAC have agreed to propose for the Assembly’s consideration an amendment to the resolution of establishment, the amendment being to reassign the responsibilities of Treasury, including taxation and revenue, from the EGEE committee to the PAC.

I understand that Mrs Kikkert, as chair of PAC, will also speak to this motion. I commend the motion to the Assembly.

MRS KIKKERT (Ginninderra) (10.09): As Chair of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, I wish to convey to the Assembly the committee’s support for this motion to amend the resolution establishing the standing committees of the Tenth Assembly.

The Ninth Assembly was the first time longstanding PAC responsibilities had been split between two committees, with the non-Auditor-General aspects of PAC responsibilities initially allocated to the then Standing Committee on Economic Development and Tourism. However, within a year, the resolution was amended, and many of these responsibilities were returned to PAC.

The attempt at a similar delineation of responsibilities, this time between the Standing Committee on Economy and Gender and Economic Equality and the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, at the commencement of this Assembly, has also proved problematic. Of particular note has been the recent budget estimates process, which highlighted the ineffectiveness of having two committees undertake the same scrutiny role.

Whilst it is acknowledged that this amendment will probably result in an increased workload, the members of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts are committed to ensuring that its roles and responsibilities align as much as possible with the

structure and operation of public accounts committees within other commonwealth parliamentary jurisdictions.

I would like to thank members of the Standing Committee on Economy and Gender and Economic Equality and my colleagues on the Standing Committee on Public Accounts for their collegiate approach to reaching this decision. I support the motion as it stands.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Administration and Procedure—Standing Committee Statement by chair

MS BURCH (Brindabella) (10.11): : Pursuant to standing order 246A, I wish to make a statement on behalf of the Standing Committee on Administration and Procedure. On Thursday, 8 April 2021, the Standing Committee on Administration and Procedure resolved to undertake a review of the committee support function within the Office of the Legislative Assembly. The committee considers that an effective committee support function requires consistency, collaboration, flexibility, and the capacity to meet the needs of the Assembly under various circumstances.

The committee noted recommendations 24 and 25 of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts report *Annual and financial reports 2019-2020; Appropriation Bill 2020-2021 and Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2020-2021*, relating to additional staffing and support for Assembly committees.

The review will be conducted by Dr Rosemary Laing, a former Clerk of the Australian Senate, one of Australia's leading experts on parliamentary practice, procedure and administration. Dr Laing will assess and report on:

1. the adequacy of the Office's current arrangements for supporting Assembly committees to undertake committee inquiries (including complex inquiries) and perform their core legislative, representative, scrutiny and community participation functions;
2. options or proposals relating to any additional steps that might be taken, training or resources applied, to optimise the Office's capacity to provide a committee support function that meets the needs of Assembly committees and their members flexibly and collaboratively over the short and longer terms and under a variety of circumstances; and
3. any other matter that Dr Laing considers is relevant.

Dr Laing will invite submissions from MLAs, current and former; management and staff of the office; former committee staff; and users of the Assembly committee system. She will report to the committee by the end of August 2021.

The committee acknowledged and supported the statutory independence and authority of the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly in relation to the management of, and staffing decisions relating to, the Office of the Legislative Assembly. The committee

also observed that the Clerk is the pre-eminent source of procedural advice and support for all Assembly committees and that committee secretaries exercise their functions by virtue of the Clerk's statutory and parliamentary authority.

The committee wished to emphasise that any of the processes that are underway to assess the work value or other matters within the committee support function will continue under the direction of the Clerk and that nothing in the review being undertaken by Dr Laing will prevent the Clerk from exercising his management powers in connection with such processes.

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.

Community Services Directorate—Part 1.8

Debate resumed from 21 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.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Families and Community Services and Minister for Health) (10.14): It may be a relief to members to know that I missed most of the debate on this yesterday because I was in a health ministers teleconference, so I will not be rising to the bait that I am sure was thrown in our direction in relation to the budget for the Community Services Directorate. Instead, I will simply be talking about what is in the budget and how important it is, how it builds on our achievements to date.

I wish particularly to highlight some of the measures in the 2020-21 budget that are targeted at addressing the needs and priorities of the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. Our government is, has been and remains committed to working in partnership with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. We know that it is through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination that we will achieve real progress in the ACT.

That is why, in our election platform, ACT Labor committed to establishing a \$20 million healing and reconciliation fund to be administered in partnership with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. The 2020-21 budget includes \$317,000 which will support the initial work to establish the governance structure and

administration processes of the fund. This work will be undertaken through a co-design process with the community to ensure that self-determination is baked into the structure of the fund.

We have also heard loud and clear that exploring a treaty process with the traditional owners of the ACT, the Ngunnawal people, is a priority for the community. This funding will support the facilitation of discussions with and between traditional custodians on what a treaty process might mean to them and what it could look like in the ACT.

The experience of other jurisdictions and other nations shows that treaty or agreement making is a complex process. Into the future the healing and reconciliation fund will provide the resources to support Ngunnawal traditional custodians to consider and progress a treaty process.

Strengthening the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector is a priority reform under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap and a further priority for our local community.

Another key purpose of the healing and reconciliation fund will be to support local initiatives that build community-controlled sectors and increase the proportion of services delivered by community-controlled organisations.

Projects supported by the fund will include the establishment of a Ngunnawal language centre and the return of Boomanulla Oval and Yarramundi Cultural Centre to community control. The work in relation to Yarramundi Cultural Centre is currently underway. I have had the opportunity to meet with the consultants, Thirriwirri, who are undertaking that consultation with the community as we speak.

Additional to the healing and reconciliation fund, the budget commits \$425,000 towards detailed design work for the new purpose-built facility for Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation, advancing ACT Labor's \$10 million election commitment to complete this important project in partnership with Gugan Gulwan.

The budget is also committing almost \$4.9 million to continue to implement the recommendations of the Our Booris, Our Way review, the wholly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander co-designed and led review into the circumstances of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people involved in the child protection system. This will include ongoing funding for improved frontline services, including family group conferencing and family finding, as well as work to embed the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child placement principle within decision-making. This initiative will also support the continued operation of the review's independent implementation oversight committee.

All governments have a unique responsibility to do what we can to correct the issues born of colonisation, issues caused by generations of mistreatment, dispossession and racism. There is absolutely no doubt that the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in child protection is one of these

issues. This budget brings the total resources committed to implementing the 28 Our Booris, Our Way recommendations to more than \$15.7 million.

As we talked about earlier, and as the Chief Minister talked about in his introduction and response to the estimates hearings report, this budget is effectively the second budget process that was conducted in this year and therefore a more limited process than might otherwise have been seen. But it builds on the 2020-21 supply bill that was handed down prior to the 2020 election. I have had the opportunity to talk to the community sector about how these two things relate and to remind them that there was a significant focus on community services in the supply bill and this will not be forgotten as we move into the 2021-22 budget process.

Some of the things that we are building on through this budget, and will be building on in the next budget, include the following. It goes back to the need to improve supports for families of children and young people in the child protection system. The supply bill committed to the implementation of the therapeutic care court in the ACT Childrens Court, now called the care and protection intensive list. That is just kicking off. It is an important process for our continued journey to build a more restorative child protection system.

We also committed to funding to support the next stage of A Step Up for Our Kids, the development of our next out of home care strategy, and how we are going to deliver out of home care services in what is always a complex environment, and one where evidence is continuing to emerge constantly.

We provided significant stimulus funding through the Community Support Package and the Children, Young People and their Families Package. That included some continued funding for the Safe & Connected Youth Project, which is being undertaken in partnership with the sector. Work is currently underway to refurbish a house to provide residential respite support based on the Ruby's model from South Australia, with \$1 million contributed from the screwdriver-ready project. That work is well underway.

Finally, I want to quickly touch on the sustainability of funding for the community sector, in my role as Minister for Families and Community Services. The 2020-21 supply bill committed funding to the ERO—equal remuneration order—supplement for an additional three years, to provide equivalent funding into the base funding for eligible community organisations from November 2021 where the equal remuneration order funding has been paid to date. This will support the community sector to continue to provide high-quality services to the ACT community and remunerate staff fairly, allowing community organisations to deliver quality services and focus on supporting Canberrans most in need.

This commitment by the ACT government will prevent significant job losses or reduction in services, with 41 organisations receiving the supplementary funding through the Children, Youth and Family Services Program, the Children's Services Program, the Community Development program, and the homelessness service coordinated by Housing ACT. Contracts that are due to expire in June 2021 will be

extended at current funding amounts, supplemented to account for the ERO, until 30 June 2022.

This is enabling a strategic collaborative and measured approach to service redesign, service delivery outcomes, and the design of procurement and retendering processes that are fit for purpose. Most importantly, it is enabling us to undertake work in partnership with the community sector on the sustainability of community sector funding to understand the drivers of demand for community services and what our funding is looking like; and to work on a commissioning for social impact model together, co-designing services and co-designing the way they are procured, in partnership with the community sector—doing that on a subsector basis, but also as a whole of community sector, understanding that we need to enhance our partnership model between the ACT government and the community sector, recognising the incredibly important services that the community sector provides and that sometimes it is only the community sector that can build those relationships with consumers and only the community sector that can deliver those services. I look forward to continuing the work with ACTCOSS and our other community sector partners on that sustainability review as we work towards a commissioning project that is genuinely a partnership between government and the community sector.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Superannuation Provision Account—Part 1.9

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate—Part 1.10

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Manager of Government Business, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Industrial Relations and Workplace Safety, Minister for Planning and Land Management and Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (10.24): Thank you for the opportunity to speak today and share some of the important work the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate is doing this financial year.

As part of administering the planning system, the directorate is undertaking the ACT planning system review and reform project. This project recognises that Canberra's population is expected to increase by more than 40 per cent over the next 20 years. The people of Canberra have told us that we need a planning system that is clear and easy to use, while facilitating growth and maintaining our valued character. The ACT planning system review and reform project will deliver outstanding contemporary, high-quality planning and development outcomes that meet, and perhaps exceed, those expectations. It will encourage improved spatial and built outcomes across the territory.

Last year, as part of the project, we released a series of papers which set the course of the future planning system. The key thrust of the project is to improve the processes and controls to help facilitate high-quality developments that enhance the character of the area; better link strategic and statutory planning through the development of

improved spatial planning with district-level planning; and improve the design quality of places and developments to improve community amenity when delivering mixed-use development and attractive, affordable, sustainable new estates.

Through this work, we will encourage investment in new buildings. We will facilitate a conversation about how we can best manage population growth in our city, adaptively re-use our landmark buildings, and extend the lifespan of and reinvent key buildings. Canberra will maintain its iconic character while we create new places and spaces.

The ACT Parks and Conservation Service is within my land management portfolio. I would like to report on some of the exciting initiatives being funded and delivered this financial year. Of great interest to the community is the implementation of our fire and flood recovery program following the 2020 Orroral Valley bushfire. Funding to support the recovery program has been sought from various sources, including through an insurance claim, the commonwealth bushfire recovery program and direct funding from the ACT government.

In the 2020-21 financial year, the ACT government has directly invested \$1.066 million in the infrastructure replacement program, which includes the repair and replacement of walking trails and the replacement of damaged signage. An additional \$215,000 has been invested in sediment erosion control work, primarily in the upper Cotter catchment. A further \$90,000 is being invested in feral animal control, to enable the environment to recover.

The government is also delivering environmental offset commitments. We will continue to protect native species and their habitats. To add to strategic assessment sites in west Belconnen and Gungahlin, Nadjung Mada Nature Reserve will be established. This work will support the government's Indicative Land Release Program, providing places to live, work and visit for future Canberrans. An additional \$199,000 has been committed in the current financial year to support these initiatives and deliver the environmental biodiversity offset commitments required to enable future land releases in Kenny and west Belconnen.

\$800,000 has been committed to replace the Parks and Conservation Service's emergency service radios. The new radios are compliant with, and will utilise, the territory radio network managed by the ACT Emergency Services Agency. This critical communications system will assist in Parks and Conservation Service operations on a day-to-day basis, as well as during emergencies.

During the first year of the pandemic, the Parks and Conservation Service was able to contribute to the valuable and important Jobs for Canberrans program. The directorate employed 32 staff under this program, with most employed in park ranger and general service officer positions. The program not only provided jobs for people in a time of crisis but also greatly assisted the Parks and Conservation Service with the delivery of their works program.

The initiatives I have described today provide an indication of the many projects that are being delivered within the land and planning portfolios. This is not everything that

has been happening; the directorate has been extremely busy. All these works and projects collectively contribute to planning and caring for our wonderful bush capital. They make sure we are building on the important history of the traditional custodians and leaving it in great shape for future generations.

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (10.29): We are pleased to see that the ACT planning system review and reform project is a priority in this budget. Planning is incredibly important. It regulates our space, and it impacts on the way we relate to each other and to our natural environment. In estimates recently, my planning, transport and city services committee recommended that the ACT government put forward specific proposals for a revised planning system. This will let the ACT community consider, respond and contribute.

There is a lot of community concern about this planning review, but not many details have been provided yet. People really want to engage—there is so much expertise here in Canberra—and I welcome and encourage upcoming opportunities for the public to do so. We need consultation on the detail as well as on the big picture. And we need that to happen before the legislation is released. Once the law has been drafted, people feel that it is too late. That means we need targeted and deliberative consultation right now. Some of the key stakeholders also need the chance to provide input. The conservation council, the Environmental Defenders Office and the community councils all have a wealth of experience, and we need to capture that.

In their response to recommendations made from estimates committee hearings, the government have stated that community and industry engagement will be undertaken on some elements of the system. I look forward to seeing that quite soon. We are pleased that we are meeting our target that 70 per cent of new development be within Canberra's existing urban footprint. We cannot keep sprawling forever. This is something I am watching closely, to ensure that we protect our greenfield areas and our threatened biodiversity.

We need to get much better ecological outcomes for our plants and wildlife. Canberra should be an urban biodiversity sanctuary for our region. Billions of animals died in the recent climate-induced bushfires, and we need to protect what habitat we have left. With this in mind, I look forward to seeing the results of the western edge study, to see how much of this beautiful greenfield area can be protected. This area has strong environmental values; preserving it is essential, particularly given that we are in a climate emergency.

Part of ensuring that we have well-cared-for nature reserves is providing funding and support for ParkCare, Landcare and catchment groups. They do much of the work to ensure that our trees are planted and our weeds are removed. They protect our species and our waterways, and they just keep an eye on things on the ground to see what is going wrong.

I have been privileged to have joined many of these groups over the last few months, working with the Friends of Mount Painter, Friends of Aranda Bushland, south Belconnen Landcare and Friends of Gossan Hill. I am hoping to visit every group

across Canberra during my term. I recommend that every MLA gets out to visit their local group.

I am pleased that ParkCare and the catchment groups have received much-needed funding through the ACT environment grants program and other funding streams. But we still do not have ongoing recurrent funding. That is really essential. You cannot get staff or plan your project if you do not know when the money will run out. If you have ever done land care, or even grown a garden, you know that you cannot do it one year and give up the next. You need to plant and weed and manage the land and water consistently every single year if you are going to give proper care.

My planning, transport and city services committee recently recommended that the Parks and Conservation Service and Transport Canberra and City Services work more closely together and take ongoing advice from the ParkCare groups to consider how to put in more native plantings in our urban areas and how to make better habitat and reduce the need for mowing. I am really pleased that the government have agreed to this recommendation. Those groups on the ground are doing the work and they know best what resources they need in their local areas.

I am glad to see the expansion of the Ngunnawal ranger program; it is a really important recognition of the value of traditional custodians taking care of country. As we move further into a changed climate and see our environment degrade, it will be more important that we listen to those who understand this land. If we are going to preserve it for future generations, we need to respect the expertise of those who have cared for it for tens of thousands of generations already.

I am pleased that the government is providing ongoing employment for six Ngunnawal ranger positions. They will focus on natural resource management, land, fire, water, wildlife and ecological management. We ACT Greens are hoping that an additional four Ngunnawal rangers will be added next year. We also want to see that their work expands to incorporate cultural land and water management practices like cool cultural burns in the ACT. I was pleased to hear that some trials of cool cultural burns have happened; it will be great to see these developing. Using these practices will give us better habitat and land management, as well as enshrining greater recognition of and respect for the skills and knowledge of First Nations peoples.

We also need to better coordinate our existing resources. We work with whole ecosystems, not silos. Instead of having different agencies and groups working on their patch without communicating, we need a whole-ecosystem approach to our land management. All the organisations involved in working on the land—Parks and Conservation Service rangers, City Services rangers, Landcare ACT, ParkCare and the catchment groups and volunteers—should be helped to work together to protect, maintain and improve. We look forward to seeing this as a priority, with specific funding, in the coming years.

Invasive species and climate change are two of the biggest threats to biodiversity, food security and our livelihoods. We are pleased that implementing better biosecurity invasive species management programs is a key priority in this budget. We would like to see some more targeted education and management programs to address the

negative impacts of weeds and pests. And we would like to see some more ongoing funding for strategic management programs, particularly at some of those special ecological sites and hotspots that we know are out there.

I note that the four-year Indicative Land Release Program is being prepared as part of this budget. I am looking forward to seeing the detail of this program, including an explanation as to how it fits into our existing 70 per cent infill target. I urge the SLA to take into account sustainability requirements for all land releases in all locations. We need to ensure that our block sizes allow enough space to meet the 30 per cent tree canopy coverage target and the 30 per cent permeability targets.

We need to make sure that our cycle and footpath connections encourage active travel. We need to make sure that our developments are built in such a way that they have a low energy footprint and allow people to maintain a comfortable life while the climate heats up and we are likely to get more and more natural disasters. We also need to make sure that we do not connect gas to any new developments anywhere. My planning, transport and city services committee recently made all these recommendations.

I note that in the government's response they drew attention to the importance of draft variation 369 to the Territory Plan, which is our living infrastructure in residential zones plan. That is the one that sets our targets for tree canopy coverage. We are really looking forward to the outcomes of that consultation.

We are pleased that the government is supporting the development of a long-term plan for the phase-out of gas in the ACT. We are looking forward to new legislation to prevent future gas connections in residential greenfield and urban infill developments.

There are a lot of challenges in managing our environment sustainably. I am glad this progressive government is taking a proactive approach. I am keen to see more resources, some recurrent funding and some better coordination in future budgets.

MS CASTLEY (Yerrabi) (10.37): The Canberra Liberals are ambitious for our territory's environment and future. As I said in my first speech, Yerrabi residents and families, and all Canberrans, want politicians to be honest, to listen and to fix problems. That includes action to improve our environment—action such as keeping our parks, reserves and waterways clean, providing good facilities so that families can enjoy being outdoors, with enough public barbecues and park benches, protecting our environment, and reducing carbon emissions, with sensible policies that do not break the bank.

In my role as shadow environment minister, I hear from time to time that people living in Canberra's inner north are the ones most concerned and passionate about the environment. The way I see it is that the wonderful residents in my electorate of Yerrabi care just as much about our environment as Canberrans in other parts. In some respects you could argue that they have unique concerns, such as low canopy cover in our newer suburbs and continued high-rise development that does little to enhance our natural environment and beautify our streetscapes.

The environment is an issue that we are all passionate about, as Canberra is the place we call home. The environment should be a particular concern for all 25 members in this place, given that we have been elected as caretakers of the territory.

While the recent budget offered little for Canberra's vital small business sector, as I pointed out on Tuesday, there were several big-ticket items that the government says will improve our environment. I refer to measures such as \$150 million for zero interest loans for rooftop solar panels and zero emissions vehicles, \$100 million for the Big Battery scheme, and \$50 million to improve energy efficiency in our public housing. While the government trumpets these spends, I want to highlight a number of areas where the government has dropped the ball on its environmental record.

Given the government's constant green talk, it is hard to understand why Greens leader Shane Rattenbury has snubbed Canberrans by failing to commission a major climate change review when legislation demanded that it be done by last October. Mr Rattenbury's response to me at estimates about why he had not commissioned a review of the Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act 2010, which was passed in the Assembly on 26 October 2010 and requires a review after five and 10 years, was simply that "we need to get onto it". Still we have heard nothing except that the directorate is examining how it can be done.

These are important climate change laws that the Labor government introduced. The Greens leader was a member of the Assembly when the legislation was passed, but the government has yet to even announce the review. One can only wonder why, but it certainly does raise concerns about the government's genuine commitment to climate change action.

Another concern is that the government's funding for Canberra's army of environmental volunteers has dried up. Despite the environment minister, Ms Vassarotti, waxing lyrical about the value of environmental volunteers, funding for volunteer action will dry up after this financial year.

Budget statements E reveals that \$475,000 will be spent on environmental volunteers in 2020-21, but no money has been allocated for 2021-22, 2022-23 or 2023-24. The budget describes volunteer activation as "getting more people more active in caring for nature". That is something that we all support. So much for Labor and the Greens valuing the knowledge and expertise of the thousands of Canberrans who do volunteer so many hours as land managers and stewards of our environment. Minister Vassarotti told estimates:

... in the parliamentary and governing agreement there is a strong commitment to environmental volunteers ... We are not quite there yet ... it is about us working with our government colleagues in terms of ... stability, and recognising what is required in order to deliver that value to the territory.

The minister's statement is of concern, given that the parliamentary agreement notes the importance of environmental volunteers, but they were left high and dry in the budget.

While some Canberrans may believe that having six Greens members in government will guarantee a more environmentally active government, I am still not convinced. In the last sitting week, I questioned why Greens MLA Mr Braddock felt the need to move a motion drawing his government's attention to its own commitment to increase Canberra's tree canopy. As Mr Braddock noted, the Labor-Greens parliamentary agreement lists as a key priority continuing work towards reaching a 30 per cent urban tree canopy. Does Mr Braddock have so little faith and confidence in his government honouring its election commitments that he needs an Assembly motion to hold them to account?

We know not to invest too much in the Labor-Greens parliamentary agreement, not to mention their election commitments that were not included in the agreement. These commitments, such as much-needed funding for our community catchment groups that the Canberra Liberals campaigned for, are subject to budget considerations, we are told.

In relation to our tree canopy, Canberra is losing 3,000 trees each year. Parks and reserves are poorly maintained, and nature strips are often weed infested. As I said earlier, many streets in Canberra's newer suburbs are almost treeless, with communities deprived of much-needed green space. Canberrans are rightly proud of their bush capital status, but we cannot take this for granted.

The Canberra Liberals went to the last election with a strong environment policy, including planting one million trees to increase our urban tree canopy, to provide guaranteed green space, improve our parks and reserves, and reduce emissions. The Canberra Liberals understand the importance of achieving at least a 30 per cent urban tree canopy sooner rather than later, and want to emphasise the tripartisan support for this worthy environmental goal.

Before concluding, I wish to raise one more issue about government wasting precious environmental dollars. I speak of the \$600,000 wasted on a failed scheme to release eastern bettongs into the wild, with all 67 bettongs and their young perishing. I have called on the environment minister, Ms Vassarotti, to rule out any more expensive bettong trials because, as I said at the outset, Canberrans do want and strongly support action to protect our environment and reduce carbon emissions, but they demand and deserve sensible policies that do not break the bank—not wasteful, hare-brained schemes.

MR DAVIS (Brindabella) (10.44): In stark contrast to my colleague, I am really impressed and excited to see the green stink all over this budget, particularly in the context of environment and water. You would know, as a fellow member for Brindabella, Madam Speaker, and it has been put to me, that we represent more trees than we do people. I am really excited to be a Greens member for Brindabella, to see so much new spending and so many new, exciting initiatives in this budget to protect our beautiful environment.

One of the issues that I am particularly excited to highlight, Madam Speaker, is the \$250,000 commitment to the floating wetlands project in Lake Tuggeranong. No

doubt you will be aware that the blue-green algae situation and the state of Lake Tuggeranong have been of concern for our shared constituents for a while now, and I am particularly excited to see this new funding.

I had the pleasure of joining Minister Rattenbury on the shores of Lake Tuggeranong to see the unfolding of the brand-new project. I met some of the community members and neighbours on the shores of Greenway who were very excited to see the lake clean-up project underway. Unlike my colleagues to my right, arbitrary targets like one million trees are not something that these ministers need to reach targets. In fact, as Minister Vassarotti highlighted to the house earlier this week, we are getting on with the job of increasing our tree canopy year on year. We are planting more trees. We are bringing down urban heat banks. We are making it cleaner, greener and more covered to live in Canberra. And the numbers bear that out, which is incredibly exciting.

I would like to endorse the amount of new spending in this budget, particularly in my electorate of Brindabella. As a Greens member for Brindabella, no doubt the environmental and water spending will always be something that tickles me pink and has me excited; so I am very glad to see that.

I would like to note for the house that, a few weeks ago, the minister for water challenged me to pull my finger out, get out with our beautiful community groups in Tuggeranong and do some planting. I would like to flag that the good people of the Friends of Tuggeranong Hill invited me to one of their planting projects. Needless to say, Madam Speaker—you have met me—it was a culture shock, but I very much enjoyed it. I use this opportunity to highlight for all members that you should get out and get your hands dirty.

The minister is right. The best way to fully understand what we are doing out there is to talk to those ParkCare volunteers, to talk to people who are actually getting out on the weekend and using the grants that have become available in this budget, and finding opportunities to improve the environment, water and land management in their suburbs. They are the experts, and they told me, as recently as last weekend, that they are delighted by the new spending. They are excited to see further opportunities to improve their volunteer work. I am really excited to support them in their efforts as they apply for new funding as a result of this budget.

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (10.47): I will make some preliminary remarks, to start my presentation. Firstly, I am thrilled and a little bit daunted to have been given responsibility for planning and land management as one of my shadow portfolios. I am at the end of my second-week anniversary in this role and learning lots. In particular, I am being informed by my community as I go out to the shops and to door fronts.

It was interesting to hear Mr Gentleman refer to the wonderful bush capital. I wonder whether that was something he focused on in his previous term as planning minister or whether it is something that suddenly appeared to him as being worthy of promotion.

I would like to endorse many of the comments by my fellow Ginninderra MLA Ms Clay on listening to the community, because I think that MLAs in this room need to remember why we are here. We are here to serve our community. We are here to listen to what their needs and interests are. As elected officials, it is our responsibility to take those interests and concerns seriously and to see how we can make each of our electorates and this great city the place that they want to live in and enjoy with their families, going forward into the future.

In my opinion, the territory's planning system is not working. We do not have the balance right. I recognise that there is a need to meet the huge growth in demand for housing and retain the essence of what it means to live in Australia's bush capital. It is worth reminding this Assembly that this city is the capital of one of the greatest countries in the world, in my opinion, if not the greatest. It is worthy of being promoted as a centre for industry, and smart industries in particular, a centre for smart planning, a centre for livability and for community, and a place where people come first. The bush capital is something we are known for internationally, and I think we should be advancing that with our planning decisions.

Green space should be preserved for many reasons, including the importance of plant life as a relatively cheap and effective way of addressing climate change. It is also nice to go down to the oval with your family, to play a game and walk the dog. We should not easily lose these community open spaces.

What are some of the issues or improvements that I would like to see in residential planning? Regarding medium density, we need a sensible approach to low rise and medium density in existing RZ2 zones. It is very disappointing to see RZ1 zones, by stealth, being converted into RZ2 zones with attractive tags like "demonstration housing". It is simply a sham way of extending RZ2 zones into existing RZ1.

We need to move away from the trend towards high-density towers which create massive heat banks and parking issues. We need a long-term strategy to deliver good, workable transport and active travel networks. I have been told that a goal of having a medium to large block, with more room for a yard, is very 1950s. But according to the Winton report, the vast majority of Canberrans prefer to live in a standalone home with a bit of yard for their children or their own activities. This is achievable.

With respect to streetscapes, we need to avoid the narrow streets in a lot of the newer areas. They are dangerous and cramped. Just drive through them, if you do not believe my words. Drive through Lawson, in my electorate of Ginninderra, and other newer areas of Canberra. The inadequate parking provisions mean that cars parked on both sides of the street barely leave an avenue for normal traffic, let alone, in some areas, emergency vehicles.

Building quality comes up time and again as I talk to my constituents. This is something I will be working on with my colleague Mark Parton, the shadow minister for sustainable building and construction.

We need better connected transport networks. Good transport networks are an integral part of planning for the future of Canberra that we are currently lacking, especially

with the growth in innovative transport options like e-scooters. Despite all the talk of active travel, the government has no long-term plan to deliver a connected cycle network for the whole of Canberra. We also need to avoid really glaring mistakes like the electrical towers in Holt, which have produced a gross disadvantage for existing land and home owners in west Belconnen.

What would I bring to the planning portfolio? Firstly, I would bring ears to listen to my community and to see what outcomes they would like to see in the electorate of Ginninderra. I think there is a place for exploration of what we would like to see Canberra look like in 50 years, to draw together the best and brightest minds in urban planning, environmental protection and climate change strategy. We should have the best minds come here, while acknowledging that we are close to borders in some areas, and say what could be done to preserve the character of this bush capital and meet these other priorities.

Obviously, I am new to the role, and I welcome input and ideas from all Canberrans, including members of this Assembly. My door is open.

On the more micro level, as members would be aware, I am very interested in the proposed development at Kippax Fair. I have a survey running at the moment to test the feelings of the community about the proposed sale and development—in particular, the development onto the oval. I wonder, as many do as they talk with me, whether there are options other than taking away a significant green space.

I am really excited, as I said in my opening remarks, to have the responsibility in this shadow capacity for planning and land management. I will be prompting the government towards good ideas and good outcomes to make this bush capital a place that we can all be proud of.

MS VASSAROTTI (Kurrajong—Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, Minister for Homelessness and Housing Services and Minister for Sustainable Building and Construction) (10.55): I rise in support of the appropriation bill, including a range of new measures that the government is pursuing to substantially lift the quality and sustainability of the design and construction of new buildings, repair landscapes and protect our environment and heritage. These measures will help us to meet the objectives that the government has committed to in the parliamentary and governing agreement.

In relation to sustainable building and construction, while Canberrans are committed to climate action, many of our buildings are lagging. Too often we have seen new apartments that do not meet community expectation. While there has been significant reform in this area, there is more work to be done.

In the 2020-21 budget, the government has committed \$800,000 to a second stage of building quality reforms to improve the ACT's building regulatory system and lift practices across the construction industry. Under this stage the government will accelerate work to address the issues of licensing and accountability for people designing, building, certifying and contracting for off-the-plan.

We will consider insurance and other protections for clients and building owners, implement a residential building dispute resolution scheme and make improvements to the ACT Security of Payment Scheme. As well as these reforms, the government has invested in establishing an expert team of publicly funded building certifiers within the ACT public service to deliver confidence to homebuyers that their new homes are free from serious defects.

I now turn to environment and heritage. It is great to hear that there is tri-party support for the environment, but we need to look beyond the rhetoric that suggests that the government is not doing very much in terms of the environment, and particularly in terms of supporting our environmental volunteers. I would like to expand on a few of the ways in which we are supporting environmental volunteers and repairing the land to make Canberra an urban biodiversity haven.

In this budget the government will continue to support the hardworking, valuable, local environment volunteer based groups. We know that the contribution made by these community groups is staggering. It ranges from removing weeds to caring for injured wildlife, and delivering citizen science programs like FrogWatch and Waterwatch.

In this budget the ACT government is supporting environmental volunteers, particularly the three ACT regional catchment management groups, who have each been granted \$125,000 in the 2020-21 financial year—this year's budget. ACT Wildlife have been granted \$100,000 to continue their crucial work in rescuing and rehabilitating sick and injured wildlife.

Additional funding has also been made available to the community through the environmental grants program. \$200,000 is available under the ACT rural resilience grants for projects that address pest animals and weeds on rural lands. Another \$200,000 is available through the ACT environment grants funding and \$100,000 through the nature in the city grants. This enables localised and dedicated care from the environmental volunteers who truly understand and love their neighbourhoods. We are not leaving our environmental volunteers high and dry.

We are also investing in implementing invasive species management programs to protect Canberra's biodiversity. Invasive species are one of the biggest causes of biodiversity loss and, with climate change, we can expect that they will get worse. Following the significant invasive weed growth resulting from the La Nina weather patterns that we experienced in Canberra over the spring-summer period, the government is investing an additional \$626,000 this year to manage invasive species in the region.

Let us spend a moment on the extraordinary claim of a "hare-brained scheme" around bettongs. I invite the shadow minister for the environment to contact my office to get access to the significant information that has been provided around the research that has come from this very important research program. This government is committed to research, science and evidence-based environmental management. We will absolutely continue environmental research to ensure that we are responding in an

evidence-based way, and we make no apologies for that. There is significant information about some of the outcomes from this particular program, and we would be happy to share that with the shadow spokesperson.

Finally, we are also investing in protecting and promoting Canberra's heritage. The ACT Heritage database and website are in need of updating to protect our heritage assets. I am happy that \$60,000 has been allocated in this financial year to kickstart this process.

The Heritage Festival, now in its 38th year, is an iconic and popular event that we continue to support. This year more than 160 diverse events have been taking place over the Canberra region. Given that the festival raises the awareness of the ongoing need to conserve our natural, historic and First Nations heritage, we are extremely proud to continue to support this.

I am also proud to support the ACT branch of the National Trust, with \$75,000 allocated in the 2020-21 financial year to support their important work in fostering the knowledge of, and conserving, places and objects that are significant to our heritage.

There are many more projects that I could talk about if I had more time, but I hope this has provided a snapshot of the activities that exemplify how we are improving our environment, the standard of our buildings and the general wellbeing of our community.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (11.02): I am pleased to speak reasonably briefly on the Appropriation Bill 2020-2021, as many of my colleagues have already covered off the major points. What I am, of course, interested in is the effect on my electorate of Brindabella. We are very lucky in Brindabella. We have Namadgi National Park and the Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve—a very large area which is very beautiful, attractive and usable for our residents, and residents from all over Canberra.

One of the things I am most interested in, and I have been interested in over the last eight years that I have been in this Assembly, and before that, is the water quality issues in Lake Tuggeranong. Just like me, residents of Tuggeranong care very deeply about their lake. They see it as the jewel in the crown of Tuggeranong. Whilst many of our lakes, ponds and waterways were man-made and designed to capture sediment on the way through, there is also very much an amenity aspect to the lake, especially with Lake Tuggeranong, which is right in the middle of our town centre, and accessible by everyone. All through the week, you see people walking their dogs, with their families, cycling, and very much utilising the area around Lake Tuggeranong.

Residents want to be proud of the lake, but for years now we have had terrible algal blooms and poor water quality plaguing the area. We have had beaches closed due to the blue-green algae and other bacterial blooms in the area. Greenway residents especially have experienced the smell from the blue-green algae. In fact, in January this year a resident phoned me to say they would have to leave their house for the day because the smell was intolerable and giving them headaches.

We have been pouring money into our lakes for years to try to combat this issue, and many of the projects have taken place in Tuggeranong, either at Lake Tuggeranong or in the waterways leading to Lake Tuggeranong, in the Healthy Waterways projects. During the hearings I tried to get an idea of the outcomes—not the specific outputs. We can all see that there are rain gardens and wetlands, and that things have changed. And these are good results. But what has been the outcome in terms of water quality?

Since 2014, when these projects began, what improvement has there been in Lake Tuggeranong? What improvement have residents of Tuggeranong seen in their lakes? I think that there should be an independent assessment of what has been built, and the effectiveness of the funds spent, so that further assets that may be built could be more useful and effective in achieving significant improvement in water quality. I am not criticising the process used to deliver the projects. I am not criticising the construction of the projects. There was an excellent job done. I am just not yet convinced that the results meet the business case that was put forward, and may not pass a cost-benefit analysis.

A particular project that took place in the lake included some pens that held water that different treatments were applied to. Unfortunately, this experiment has been left to decay and disintegrate on our lake. I have asked about this. I asked about this during the hearings. I asked about this during the most recent sitting week. I have still had no reply as to how long we are going to leave these bits of plastic, these bits of metal, to disintegrate on our lake. I visit it every week when I kayak on Lake Tuggeranong. Luckily for me, the lake is still open for secondary contact. It is closed, of course, to primary contact—so there is no swimming, for example—but secondary contact is still allowed, even though there is some terrible blue-green algae there at present.

Despite the tens of millions of dollars spent, we still have poor water quality. We still have regular stinky algal blooms. Tuggeranong residents still suffer. I am pleased to see more money being invested to try to address the issue, and I am hopeful that we will see some results this time for the money that is being spent to try to improve the water quality in Lake Tuggeranong.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong—Attorney-General, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Gaming and Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction) (11.08): I am pleased to rise to support this element of the budget, including a range of new measures that the government is pursuing to meet the territory's world-leading climate change targets. These measures will help to ensure that we continue on the journey that the community has embarked on and meet the objectives that the government has set out in the parliamentary and governing agreement.

As most Canberrans know, 2020 was a milestone year for the ACT in terms of greenhouse gas reductions. We achieved two very significant targets, and each achievement signals how we need to keep moving forward. Ms Castley will be pleased to hear this, because she spoke about the fact that the community wants action, and this is genuine action.

First, the ACT reached its legislated target of a 40 per cent reduction in greenhouse emissions relative to 1990. In fact, we overachieved this target, but this greater

achievement is tinged with some sadness. Due to the way COVID-19 impacted the ACT, transport emissions in 2020 fell significantly, leading us to achieve around a 45 per cent emissions reduction.

We know that, as we recover, these transport emissions may well rise again. It does seem likely, because 2020 was, as we all know, an exceptional year. It is important to note that whilst there was a 45 per cent reduction, it probably is not a true 45 per cent reduction. I think the true figure is around 40 per cent, which was the goal. We now know that transport emissions account for around 60 per cent of our total emissions, so we are sharpening our focus on reducing emissions in this sector. We will continue to promote public transport and active travel and have a range of measures in place to support this.

A key part of our response in this car-friendly city is also to promote the uptake of zero emission vehicles. The ACT has been a leader in this area and continues the transition of its own fleet. We now have more than 100 zero emission vehicles in the ACT government fleet, and this is growing, along with the charging infrastructure to support them. This leadership has been important in learning and demonstration, but now we need to grow our success in the private sector and with individuals with their vehicle choices across the city.

In this budget the government is supporting increased uptake of zero emission vehicles through both financial incentives and infrastructure support, along with strategic planning for future uptake. From May, new and used zero emission vehicles will be eligible for a two-year registration fee exemption. This strengthens the already generous financial support offered to those taking up these new technologies.

The ACT continues to have the highest, most generous subsidies in Australia to encourage people to take up zero emission vehicles. If we can get the commonwealth government to take a similar policy initiative to the one the ACT is taking, we could really accelerate the take-up of these vehicles in Australia.

The budget includes \$2.7 million in funding to provide an additional 50 public charging stations to encourage those thinking about purchasing electric vehicles to feel more confident in their choice. This funding will also support the development of a master plan for electric vehicle charging and analysis to set a target for 2030 for new ACT zero emission vehicle sales. Together with the introduction of a fleet advisory service, these measures are designed to create a supportive ecosystem for zero emission vehicles.

Canberra is arguably the electric vehicle capital of Australia, with more EVs per capita than any other capital city. The measures being put in place by the government will help to solidify this position by addressing price range anxiety, information shortages and investment certainty.

The second key milestone achieved in 2020—and I am talking about real action—was reaching our 100 per cent renewable electricity target. With this achieved, more attention is focused on how to move away from natural gas use. Natural gas accounts

for around 22 per cent of ACT emissions and will need to be eliminated by 2045 to reach our zero emissions goals.

\$855,000 in funding has been allocated for analysis to help determine the best path for the ACT to follow to achieve this aim. This will include detailed assessment of the capacities of the electricity and gas grids, the potential for fuel switching, the role of hydrogen and biogas, the role of distributed energy and batteries, and the integration of electric vehicles into the grid, among others. This will help to ensure that the ACT is well informed as it develops its gas transition plan, as agreed by 2024 as part of the climate change strategy.

As we reach our milestones, we need to ensure that all parts of the community are able to participate in this journey and that we support those in the community who need it. \$50 million is provided to support vulnerable households to upgrade the efficiency of their properties and invest in energy-saving new energy technologies. This includes public housing, poorly performing rental properties and low-income owner-occupiers.

This measure will support the introduction of minimum energy performance requirements for rental properties, which we expect to introduce later this year, to commence in 2023. Assisting those most vulnerable in society does not just save energy and emissions; it allows people to live more comfortable and dignified lives, as every Canberran deserves.

In a 2020 survey of renters, more than 40 per cent said they were unable to keep their homes comfortably warm in winter. This is a travesty. This can lead to poor health, employment and education outcomes. This is not just a part of our climate change response; it is our duty to those who are struggling. That is why something like minimum performance standards for rental properties is such an important initiative.

The last measure that I will discuss specifically is the \$5 million for upgrades to community clubs to make them more sustainable. I spoke briefly about this yesterday. By investing in more efficient energy technologies, these important community hubs will be able to provide even more services to the community while reducing operating costs and cutting their emissions and/or their energy use. This will help to improve their long-term financial viability, and it is an important part of creating a sustainable future for clubs. Through these upgrades, we also have an opportunity to ensure that these clubs are appropriate places to provide community shelter when there are fires, heatwaves or potentially other community hazards.

There are a number of other measures supporting our climate change response in this budget. There has already been discussion of the \$150 million sustainable household loan scheme, and the \$100 million Canberra Big Battery. I know that the Chief Minister will speak enthusiastically about those.

All of these new measures join a range of steps that the government has already taken as part of the climate change strategy, both to reduce emissions and to prepare for the changes to our climate that are inevitable. The government will continue to find the steps needed to achieve our 2045 zero emissions target, including those in this budget.

There will be some setbacks and we will learn as we go. These are challenging areas. The nature of being one of the leading jurisdictions is that the road map is not always clear. There is not someone who has done it before. We are happy to work some of these things out. We are helping others learn how to do these things. That is the nature of being a frontrunner. It is something that we embrace, and our community embraces, as part of helping this country, and potentially others, to tackle the very real threat of climate change.

I will turn briefly to water, because I know this is a significant issue of interest to some members. Water security and water quality are critical for the health and wellbeing of all Canberrans. Clean and secure water for drinking, agriculture, biodiversity and greening the city requires action to protect our water supply catchments and to reduce nutrients entering our waterways, along with actions to improve water efficiency.

Long-term nature-based solutions are needed to mitigate the impacts of a changing climate and the subsequent impacts on our water security. We have only to look back over the last couple of years to see the impacts of drought and floods. These types of events will become more commonplace and their effects more pronounced. The actions we take today to secure water and protect catchments will influence all life in Canberra and our surrounding region for decades to come.

The ACT government has strengthened its resolve to future-proof our region and will consider the best administrative arrangements to provide a holistic and coordinated approach to water programs and policies to make sure all the parts of government are coordinated, moving in the same direction and reinforcing each other's work.

We cannot allow ourselves to become complacent because our storage is currently full. It is great that water storage levels in the ACT are currently at 100 per cent. But this is only one aspect of water security. Permanent water conservation measures will remain in force and the government is continuing to examine measures to improve water use efficiency. In partnership with the commonwealth government, we are continuing to identify a suite of water efficiency measures that are aimed at reducing our demand and returning up to seven gigalitres to the Murray–Darling system for environmental flows. This work will be critical for long-term water security.

In addition, I am pleased that we are continuing to undertake important work to reduce nutrients entering our waterways, and a couple of members have raised this issue today. ACT Healthy Waterways began in 2014 as a \$93.5 million joint initiative of the Australian and ACT governments to protect and improve long-term water quality in the ACT and the Murrumbidgee River system by reducing the levels of gross pollutants, sediments and nutrients entering ACT lakes and waterways.

This has been a both successful and popular program across the territory. It has seen the introduction of a series of urban ponds, rain gardens and various other features that not only are serving an important functional purpose but are actually excellent spots to improve biodiversity and recreation. They are very popular in the communities that they have been built in.

The project was extended in the 2019-20 mid-year budget, where \$1 million was committed to continue research into waste to combat outbreaks of algal blooms in the lake, fix a malfunctioning gross pollutant trap and trial new infrastructure to prevent nutrient pollution from entering stormwater during large storms. An additional \$1.538 million has been committed by the government in this budget to complete some remaining capital works and to fund experimental floating wetlands in Lake Tuggeranong, which Mr Davis spoke about. An extension of the ACT Healthy Waterways program, the Clean Catchments, Clean Waterways program, will seek additional funding in the 2021-22 budget.

Ms Lawder will be pleased to hear that the Healthy Waterways assets intercept approximately 1,900 tonnes of pollutants from entering our waterways, including 1,885 tonnes of sediments, 14 tonnes of nitrogen and 2.5 tonnes of phosphorus. Ms Lawder also asked about the independent review. She may have noticed that a couple of weeks ago Minister Vassarotti and I announced that we have commissioned the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment to undertake a review of the ACT's urban waterways that will include the three main lakes and also the various streams and other water bodies across the city.

This is a follow-on from the review commissioned 10 years ago as a result of a motion that I moved in this Assembly to have the commissioner do the first urban lakes and waterways study. It is an entirely appropriate time to have that second review, both in light of it being 10 years since the first but also the significant work done in that intervening period to assess the current state of the lakes and waterways and to look at the measures that have been taken, to learn from those and provide recommendations for future actions.

I very much look forward to the outcome of that investigation by the commissioner. The report 10 years ago was seminal in setting new directions, and this second report will be an important moment for us to reflect on how much we have achieved and what the next steps need to be.

Other extensive work is going on: the government has commissioned the University of Canberra to look extensively at Lake Tuggeranong, recognising the particular problems of that water body, to identify the specific sources of pollution in the Tuggeranong catchment so that we can further get a handle on the situation in Lake Tuggeranong.

In terms of the mesocosms, the plastic and metal structures Ms Lawder referred to, they were left in the lake this year because there were aspirations to undertake further research, but they will be removed in the near future. The team are onto that now. We have just seen two examples of members of the opposition ill-informedly attacking scientific research. Those mesocosms are there for a very specific reason—to look at the measures that can be taken in Lake Tuggeranong. I am sorry Ms Lawder finds them a little unsightly. I have seen them; they are only a couple of metres wide in a large lake body.

Opposition members interjecting—

MR RATTENBURY: They were left there in the prospect of further scientific research. The work is now finished and they will be removed. The fact that they are unsightly is an extraordinary observation. And Ms Castley referring to the bettong experiment as a wasteful harebrained scheme is frankly insulting to the researchers and the scientists who prepared that project.

Minister Vassarotti has spoken about this, and I encourage Ms Castley to take up her offer—she should go and meet the scientists who worked on this, the ecologists who thought that they had the right project to help reintroduce on the mainland what would otherwise be an extinct species. It did not quite work out as they hoped, but to describe it as harebrained is simply insulting to the hardworking ecologists, scientists, and researchers in this city. I encourage members to research a little more before they make these kinds of observations. It does not do this place any credit to hear those sorts of descriptions.

I assure Ms Castley that a review of the Climate Act will commence soon. I will have announcements, because we are not meant to walk in here and make those kinds of announcements, but I will provide the details of that very shortly to both the community and this place.

I finally touch on the issue of ambition and action. One of the more insightful moments of the election campaign took place at an environment forum at St Margaret's Uniting Church in my good electorate of Kurrajong, where myself, a member of the Labor Party, and Ms Lee were invited to speak about our respective party's environment policies. The questioning was conducted by students of Dickson College who were doing a journalism or current affairs course. They were pleased to hear of the opposition's proposal for a million trees and they politely and neutrally asked Ms Lee what science had been used to develop that target. Ms Lee gave a broad-sweeping answer and a student very politely said, "Thank you, Ms Lee, for that answer, but I would like to return to my actual question: what was the scientific basis behind choosing a million trees?" Once again Ms Lee gave a broad-sweeping answer and the student ever so politely—I think that he was feeling a little awkward by this point—for a third time asked what the scientific basis was for choosing a million trees. He gave up after that because it was getting awkward for both him and the entire audience, but there was never an answer to the research and planning basis for why a million trees was chosen.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MR RATTENBURY: So I encourage members not only not to interject, because it is against the standing orders, but also to be a little more thoughtful and considered when it comes to having a scientific and evidence base for their policy positions.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Housing ACT—Part 1.11

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (11.26): We all know that appropriation bills are the vital sustenance of government for delivering programs and services to support the

territory's community. Appropriations are largely taken from the proceeds of taxation, government fees, charges, and fines. Prominent sources for this appropriation are, of course, residential rates and land taxes that we pay, with many in the community sensing that these have reached or even surpassed unbearable and unreasonable levels.

An important principle of democratic governance is at play here and it is based on a fundamental deal between the community and the government. That is what this is about. On one side the community is unavoidably obligated to pay its mandated liabilities either willingly or otherwise, and on the other side our government has an obligation to spend these billions, effectively, sensibly and efficiently.

It is often a strong temptation of government to allocate funds for frivolous purposes based on misinformed ideology or in order to prop up compromised policy platforms. But I can say that the appropriation for Housing ACT is most certainly for a sound and sensible purpose. I know that is something the ministers and I agree with. There is absolutely nothing frivolous about putting a roof over the heads of those otherwise unable to do so themselves.

In 2019-20 around 21,500 people were the beneficiaries of the Housing ACT appropriation. Interestingly, the \$55 million for this year's appropriation for controlled recurrent payments is a bit over a million less than last year. Also of interest is that capital injections into Housing ACT's balance sheet rises from \$34 million in 2019-20 to \$83 million in 2020-21 for housing renewal programs. So, on the surface, it would seem that provision of new housing is pushing ahead and parallel with the reduction in recurrent expenditure which supports the existing housing stock and existing residents.

So let's have a look at what the \$55 million controlled recurrent payment will get for the public housing sector. Housing ACT has set a number of priorities for 2020-21, including a set of human-centred principles to be implemented across all functions of the business. The agency also says that it is committed to excellence and the highest ethical standards in dealing with its clients. We would all agree that these are highly desirable aspirations, and I have no doubt that Housing ACT is working its hardest to meet these goals.

This agency's job is not an enviable one by any means—trying to cope with almost 2,800 people on the waiting list on the one hand and what seems like a reduction in its housing stock on the other. What seems to be missing from Housing ACT's priorities and objectives is something that assures residents of public housing that they will be provided with a property that is free of health and safety risks and is capable of being lived in. That is probably quite important.

The closest thing I can see to this obligation is strategic objective 2, which says, among other things, that Housing ACT will provide access to safe, affordable and sustainable housing. I really wish that an assurance of a living environment free of health and safety risks was a critical plank in this agency's priorities and performance benchmarks and I genuinely urge consideration of that change as we move forward. But we know for a fact that this is not the case. You only need to check the annual report to see that almost 42 per cent of complaints relate to maintenance and property

condition issues. This is not simply some abstract statistic; I can guarantee from firsthand experience instances of terrible neglect with people compelled to live in houses that are blatantly uninhabitable.

I stress that this is not the fault of Housing ACT, who are doing their best with the money that they have. Rather, we need to look at the decision-makers who said that \$55 million was okay for 2020-21, knowing full well that they were prepared to tolerate or accept some margin of tenants living in unsafe conditions or in dwellings that are clearly not fit for purpose. I cannot remove myself from that conclusion, even after the debate of yesterday, that we are prepared to tolerate and accept this level of people living in houses that are clearly not fit for purpose. I do not think that is good enough.

The government cannot say that they are unaware of these terrible problems. I am sure that the ministers receive a steady flow of pleas for help over unsafe or unhealthy housing conditions. So, to this extent, the performance goals and priorities set for this appropriation are most inadequate. Surely this government needs to have an honest dialogue with its delivery agent—that is, Housing ACT—to determine a realistic funding requirement without passing on its responsibility to its contractor to fix the problem. And, in regard to contractors, we must remember that governments cannot ever outsource their fundamental obligation to govern properly.

Going back to the capital injections for a moment, we can see that the budget has more than doubled compared to the 2019-20 figure. If I understand the metrics for the public housing renewal program correctly, we are going to spend \$600 million over the next five years to grow public housing stock by a net 200 dwellings or an average of about 40 per annum. Getting to this additional 200 dwellings involves a multi-pronged strategy: firstly, some 1,000 dwellings will be sold or demolished, and 360 dwellings will be sourced from the indicative land release program. That amounts to an average of 72 dwelling equivalents per year. On top of that another 140 dwellings will be purchased from the private housing market.

Going back to the indicative land release program for a moment, the Housing ACT annual report says that it will be the source of 360 dwellings over the next five years. You would think that, given the chronic shortage of low-cost and public housing, surely the government can do better than this. That will never be because we all know that any increase in the land release program will compromise land sales revenue. We would love to see more dwellings go into this program but it is not going to happen. When you are dealing with a cash-strapped government, it is all about land sales.

In the face of a steadily increasing waiting list for public housing and, as we are seeing at the moment, record pressure on rents and housing prices, we could very well be headed for something of a major train crash. Surely there must be a better way of spending this \$600 million to achieve more effective results. Effective solutions are feasible, as proven by the policies we took to the electorate last October and to this chamber earlier in the year in relation to community housing providers; policies that were roundly endorsed by ACTCOSS, ACT Shelter and community housing providers. Our policies were welcomed by the advocacy groups and they remain a valid strategy.

Do not forget, this government owns and operates the policy and supply levers that can readily fix this problem. It is not just this side of the chamber that sees the pressing need for a solution. As I just mentioned, ACTCOSS have called for a steep increase in public housing. A former Chief Minister from the Labor side whose name I will not mention again—he is a bit like Voldemort in here—is pretty much in despair over this Greens-Labor government’s failure in this space. Observations made by the former Chief Minister that the community housing sector has been emasculated and the working class priced out of the detached housing market should not be taken lightly by either side of this chamber.

In conclusion, the appropriation bill is failing the public housing sector, failing the community and seemingly failing the Labor Party’s very own core beliefs. This sorry situation prevails despite a raft of housing summits, think tanks, planning strategies and stakeholder consultations. We have to ask ourselves whether this appropriation provides value for money for Canberrans. I do not think so. I think that it is time for a short, sharp, rethink about the failures inherent in this appropriation bill.

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) (11.36): I welcome the opportunity to speak on the government’s ongoing support for public housing in the ACT and talk about some of the budget items that go towards supporting public housing and managing the government’s most valuable asset of 11,000 public housing properties that provide safe and secure housing to over 20,000 Canberrans.

In my portfolio responsibilities the 2020-21 budget includes funding for two identified positions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff within the Community Services Directorate. These will be dedicated to the establishment of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled housing organisation to support housing access for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The recruitment processes for these positions is well underway and will be an important first step in meeting the government’s commitment to help support the establishment of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled housing organisation in Canberra.

Working with Minister Vassarotti, the 2020-21 budget began delivering on the parliamentary and governing agreement to expand the capacity of specialist homelessness services with \$18 million over four years. The first tranche will see \$2.6 million to support the expansion of the early morning centre to a seven-day-a-week service; increased emergency support and accommodation funding for OneLink; additional funding for ACT Shelter to provide systemic advocacy to the housing and services sector; continued funding for Mackillop House and Winter Lodge services that were established in partnership with CatholicCare and Argyle Housing in response to COVID-19; and expansion of Axial Housing’s successful Housing First model. The new services that commenced during COVID were the silver lining of last year when the government and the community sector worked together to establish and fund these projects as quickly as possible. I am glad to see them continuing to support the Canberra community.

Through the 2020-21 budget the ACT government will continue our plan to grow and renew public housing, investing \$160 million over six years to continue the program to better meet the needs of current and future housing tenants. This plan supports the work under the ACT Housing strategy and its goal to strengthen social housing assistance by delivering safe and affordable housing to support Canberrans who need a home, a place that allows them to have hopes and aspirations for a happy life.

Last year I announced the expansion of Growing and Renewing Public Housing, which provides longer term economic stimulus through the allocation of an additional \$32 million in land and \$20 million to expand the program for a sixth year, boosting the growth target to 260 properties and a renewal of 1,000 homes. The parliamentary and governing agreement has committed to a further expansion of the Growing and Renewing Public Housing program to deliver an additional 140 new public housing dwellings.

The ACT government is also progressing the construction of a second Common Ground accommodation complex in Dickson to provide permanent supportive housing and affordable rental for people experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness. The Common Ground Dickson development will include 40 residential units with a mix of one-, two- and three-bedroom dwellings, as well as communal areas, community spaces, on-site support services and the provision for a social enterprise business.

Construction commenced in October 2020 by Richard Crookes Constructions and it is progressing well. The basement structure and ground floor slab are complete, and work is progressing on the first floor suspended slab. It is anticipated that construction will be completed by late 2021, and I cannot wait to meet the individuals who will soon call Dickson Common Ground home.

We are working across government on projects to support the service and accommodation needs of low-income and disadvantaged people, including long-term support, mental health accommodation, and supported accommodation options for the Justice Housing program and important programs that tackle the drivers of homelessness, particularly for those people exiting institutions.

The ACT government is progressing the construction of a third dedicated culturally appropriate accommodation building for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons in Dickson. That will build on the success of two previous developments, working closely with the elected body.

The Energy Efficiency Improvement Scheme will see energy efficient heaters and hot water systems installed in Housing ACT properties to assist with the living expenses of Canberrans most in need of support and will assist in reducing use of gas appliances.

I remind the Assembly that the ACT has the highest per capita rate of public housing in the country and we will continue to maintain that. Our expenditure on public housing is one of the highest with \$1 billion over 10 years to expand and renew our public housing stock.

The continued lack of interest from the federal coalition government in addressing homelessness continues to be a challenge not just for us but for the whole country. I invite Mr Parton, who is calling for increased funding in the homelessness and housing space, to join with me and call on the federal government to waive the ACT government's historic housing loan repayments as they did in Tasmania. That would mean an additional \$15 million invested in Public Housing ACT.

I encourage the Canberra Liberals to join with me on that call. I have been asking for that loan waiver for a number of years. There is no reason why the ACT government should be treated any differently from the Tasmanian government in that space, and that waiver would make a difference in providing more housing in the ACT.

I am incredibly proud of the work that the Housing ACT team does to deliver public housing and put clients at the centre of everything they do. These initiatives, funded through the government's budget, will help to deliver that.

MS VASSAROTTI (Kurrajong—Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, Minister for Homelessness and Housing Services and Minister for Sustainable Building and Construction) (11.43): The majority of my comments on specialist homelessness services were made during the debate on the Community Services Directorate, but I want to make some additional brief comments. The ACT government and Housing ACT has continued to provide safe, affordable and appropriate housing to meet the needs of low-income and disadvantaged individuals and families across Canberra. They have maintained this service throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, which was no easy task. In what had been a face-to-face service, this was particularly important, given that three out of every 10 tenancies included an older person who was more vulnerable to COVID-19. I thank Housing ACT staff for this work.

Throughout 2019-2020, 99 per cent of all new allocations to public housing were to those in greatest need. The total portfolio of 11,654 properties underpins Canberra's human services system and is assisting 21,174 people. In the past year, more than any other, we know the importance of having a safe and secure home, and I commend the work of Housing ACT and the continued investment in this area.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Major Projects Canberra—Part 1.12

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) (11.44): I rise on behalf of Minister Steel who has responsibility for Major Projects Canberra. Since the last budget the government has created Major Projects Canberra as a stand-alone agency. Under Minister Steel's stewardship of the Major Projects, we are delivering two of our city's most significant projects: building on the next stage of Canberra's light rail network and delivering the new CIT campus in the Woden town centre.

Stage 2A of the light rail network from the city to Commonwealth Park has been assessed and approved by the commonwealth through the parliamentary and preliminary documentation referral pathway under the EPBC act. The next steps are to obtain the required planning approvals, including a territory development approval and the National Capital Authority works approval, and then commence the procurement and construction for the project.

The first major physical works to be undertaken will be the raising of London Circuit to form a level intersection with Commonwealth Avenue, an important enabling investment delivered through this budget. We are working towards construction contracts being signed for these works later in 2021, depending on the commonwealth planning approval processes and procurement processes. We are delivering this as a separate package of works to the main build of stage 2A to enable local industry to participate in the delivery of this important project.

As well as getting work underway on raising London Circuit and procuring a construction partner for stage 2A, we are also looking at the other end of the route and planning for the infrastructure that we need when it gets to Woden. We are building a brand new, light rail-ready transport interchange at Woden to be integrated with the new CIT campus. The development application for the interchange is currently being considered by the independent ACT Planning and Land Authority, following extensive pre-DA consultation with the local community and an extended public notification period. Once the DA is approved, construction on the interchange will commence early in the second half of this year.

This budget has also provided the resources to undertake a feasibility study on the viability of extending light rail to Mawson as part of the work on light rail stage 2. We are keen to understand the feasibility and benefits associated with taking light rail further south as parts of the Woden Valley continue to grow and densify. This work will complement work underway within Transport Canberra and City Services to assess the feasibility of introducing express light rail services during peak hours.

The work Major Projects Canberra is delivering at Woden is about much more than new transport infrastructure. Our government is also getting on with delivering a new state-of-the-art Canberra Institute of Technology campus right in the heart of the Woden town centre. This purpose-built campus will support 6,500 vocational education and training students a year, with the campus having a focus on in-demand future skills, like cyber, health care and IT. It will incorporate smart campus technology, linking a digitally enabled building with digital learning and management systems to better deliver teaching and learning experiences.

Major Projects Canberra are working very closely with CIT to design this new campus and to ensure that it meets the needs of future students as well as the Woden community. It has been great to see the strong involvement by Woden residents in the early design consultation, and this is already driving really productive conversations about issues like green space, traffic connectivity and how the campus connects with the rest of the Woden town centre.

We have given Major Projects Canberra a big work plan to deliver through this budget and our ongoing investments in other important projects, like the Canberra Hospital expansion. That is because we understand the importance of investing now to meet Canberra's needs as we grow and continue to create more jobs for Canberrans as our economy bounces back after COVID.

Major Projects Canberra was established as an infrastructure delivery agency. Minister Steel is leading important work, ensuring that the government is getting on with the job of delivering our priority projects in light rail and the Woden CIT campus. I look forward to continuing to support this work.

MS VASSAROTTI (Kurrajong—Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, Minister for Homelessness and Housing Services and Minister for Sustainable Building and Construction) (11.49): The safety of our community is of the utmost importance and has guided our approach to the handling of potentially combustible cladding on buildings in Canberra. The government continues to develop its cladding rectification scheme, which consists of two parts. The ACT government program will rectify potential combustible cladding on a variety of ACT government-owned buildings, and the private sector program will support owners to rectify potentially combustible cladding on privately owned apartment buildings.

In 2020-21, \$2.7 million in funding was made available to further investigate 21 identified ACT government buildings and undertake the engineering design work necessary for their rectification. That funding was also used to begin the rectification work on the first 11 of these buildings. Planning and engineering design is continuing for the 10 remaining ACT government buildings. The work on all 21 buildings is expected to be substantially completed in 2022.

A variety of different ACT government buildings are involved in the program of works. Major Projects Canberra is working very closely with all relevant areas across the ACT government to complete these works as soon as possible. I am pleased to note that the rectification works have proceeded very well to date, and I expect that will continue.

Regarding privately owned buildings, the ACT government announced last year that it will develop a concessional loan scheme to support eligible private owners to respond to potential cladding issues. The scheme recognises the practical challenges faced by certain building owners to address this issue without assistance. In its first phase the private building scheme will support eligible property owners to undertake fire risk assessment of their property.

The scheme continues to be actively developed after stakeholder engagement earlier this year. Major Projects Canberra and Treasury are working to finalise the exact technical and concessional loans arrangement for the program. I look forward to announcing further details as part of the 2021-22 budget process.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Canberra Institute of Technology—Part 1.13

MR HANSON (Murrumbidgee) (11.52): In responding to the appropriation for CIT, at the outset I acknowledge the efforts of CIT, its teachers and staff and especially the students who faced up to and managed the challenges of the past year. Well done!

Looking to the future, I recognise the challenges faced by CIT over the past year and the opportunities that exist and that are arising in the vocational education sector. At these times, more than ever, the community needs creative, trained and enthusiastic new professionals joining the ACT workforce from CIT. It is these graduates' innovative approaches and agile minds which will find new ways to deliver services that the ACT needs to continue to prosper in a world ever changed by COVID. In a world already full of disrupted technologies, COVID has added an urgency to prepare agile young minds to find and adapt new ways of doing things and CIT is at the cutting edge of their training.

I acknowledge the efforts made by CIT for its diploma of nursing students over the past year. The nursing diploma course prepares students for roles in hospitals, aged care, primary health and mental health. CIT was proactive in ensuring that these students were available for the extra staff demands in the health sector.

I look forward to seeing the reconfiguration of CIT identified by the CEO and wish the board inspiration in the challenging task in developing and implementing its Strategic Compass 2025: CIT futures. CIT will need to be adaptive and agile in what will be an ever-changing vocational teaching environment. With the challenges and opportunities ahead for CIT acknowledged, there are some areas that are showing concerning trends that will need to be addressed.

COVID has had a disproportionate effect on young people and their training opportunities. The commonwealth has provided one-off extra urgent funding in this area, which has been used to great effect by CIT. However, there is no guarantee that these sorts of funding will continue; and CIT need to continue to plan for potential funding shortfalls and its impact on youth training.

I am also concerned by the current decline in domestic students from outside our region and international students. CIT will need to develop innovative strategies to attract international students and obtain its market share of these students for the ACT once the COVID crisis is over.

I am also disturbed by the current five per cent decline in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students at CIT. The government champions the special needs of Indigenous Canberrans, and CIT is a critical pathway to opportunity for young Indigenous Canberrans. The decline in CIT Indigenous students is concerning.

The decision to close Woden CIT a few years ago was because it was then to be surplus to needs, and we were informed that the campus accommodated only 125 students and eight staff. I will be certainly interested to see how the plans for the new Woden CIT evolve. What impact does the lack of student accommodation have on those strategies? One of the underlying city-wide issues that impact on the ability of CIT to attract and retain new students is the cost of student accommodation. This will

be one of the challenges ahead for CIT in the development of its Strategic Compass 2025.

The broad comments that I have made concerning CIT largely hold true for the CIT commercial arm, CIT Solutions. The future opportunities for CIT Solutions will require innovation and imagination. CIT Solutions has recognised that it needs now to find low-risk, high-yield students who are smart kids.

Noting CIT's successes, its challenges and the shortcomings that I have identified, I do look forward to seeing progress being made by the CIT and whilst it is a challenging environment it is also one full of opportunity.

MR DAVIS (Brindabella) (11.56): I rise today to speak on behalf of the ACT Greens as our spokesperson for education. The ACT Greens know that a publicly owned, high quality and accessible CIT is fundamental to building the better normal that we championed emerging from the pandemic.

We signed the Australian Education Union pledge during the election, and we made it clear that we believe that the best protections and support for CIT and its staff would be through the ACT Education Directorate. We would like to see future budgets and government planning consider vocational education as part of the broader education landscape in the ACT.

Like all higher education in Canberra and across Australia, CIT was hit hard over the last 12 months from a loss of local and international student intake. As the publicly owned and managed provider of choice for vocational education and training in the ACT, it is the responsibility of government to ensure that CIT is funded at levels that allow it to meet the vocational education and training needs of the ACT community as we emerge from the pandemic.

I am encouraged to see that CIT is a key player in the ACT's take-up of the JobTrainer program and was a participant in the ACT government jobs for Canberrans program. I thank the CIT for providing fee-free training to over 110 students across the retail, tourism and healthcare sectors on infection control and for ensuring a continuity of service to your students over the last 12 months.

On a local note, I note that over the last few weeks I have met with the landlord of the Tuggeranong Innovation Centre who I understand is continuing to negotiate with the minister on the expansion of CIT services in Tuggeranong in particular. I understand that there is a raft of available space. Those negotiations are continuing, and I look forward to working with the government and continuing to agitate on the needs of my electors in Brindabella having greater access to face-to-face vocational education closer to home.

Vocational education has always played a fundamental role in tackling economic and social inequality in Canberra by providing opportunities for people to get a world-class education. That remains true now more than ever.

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) (11.59): I rise to speak briefly on behalf of Minister Steel who has responsibility for CIT in his capacity as Minister for Skills. The past year has shown us that serious disruptions to our economy and labour market can happen suddenly, leaving many people displaced from their jobs. When that happens, it is vitally important that we have a strong public vocation and training provider which can meet the people's needs for reskilling and upskilling to help get us back to work. That is exactly the role that CIT has played over the past year and the reason the contribution that this budget has invested in them to make for our community and our economy.

In the last year a major focus for CIT has been the delivery of the majority of local places through the national JobTrainer program established to support the COVID pandemic response. Through a joint investment with the Australian government, we have invested over \$16 million on the JobTrainer program. CIT has already filled all 800 fully qualified places as of the start of this study year. It is now focusing on encouraging enrolments in online courses and pre-employment bootcamps.

While JobTrainer is targeted at young people and job seekers, it has been great to see such diversity in those enrolling to study. For example, women make up 55 per cent of total enrolments, which will help continue to strengthen women's economic participation across Canberra as these students move from training into work.

As I have already touched on in discussing the appropriation to Major Projects Canberra, CIT is getting ready for the move to the new campus that our government is custom building for them at the Woden town centre. This is not, of course, just going to mean a change of address. CIT is taking this opportunity to make important changes to its teaching and learning. I will have more to say about this work in the months to come but it is exciting to see CIT embracing the opportunities of digitally enabled education and working hard to ensure its offers align with the needs of students and industry today.

CIT sits at the heart of Canberra's skills and training ecosystem and through our investments in their courses, facilities and support services, our government will continue to support the vital role that they play. This is another area where Minister Steel is working hard to deliver skills and jobs for Canberra while ensuring growth in Woden.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

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

Leave of absence

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

That leave of absence be granted to Mr Steel for this day due to illness.

Sitting suspended from 12.02 to 2 pm.

Ministerial arrangements

MS BERRY (Ginninderra—Deputy Chief Minister, Minister for Early Childhood Development, Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, Minister for Housing and Suburban Development, Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, Minister for Sport and Recreation and Minister for Women) (2.00): As members will know, the Chief Minister, Minister Rattenbury and Minister Steel will not be in question time today. I will be taking all the questions for the Chief Minister. I will also be taking questions in the skills and Special Minister of State areas of Minister Steel's portfolios. Minister Gentleman will cover Transport Canberra and City Services. Minister Gentleman will also take questions in the water, energy and emissions reduction area of Minister Rattenbury's portfolios; Minister Cheyne will cover Attorney-General, consumer affairs and gaming matters.

Questions without notice

Energy—cost

MS LEE: My question is to the Chief Minister, to be taken by the Deputy Chief Minister. During the election, the Chief Minister and Minister Rattenbury promised Canberrans that under a newly elected Labor-Greens government the average annual electricity bill would fall by \$43. We now learn that prices will rise on average by \$5.50 a week, an increase of almost \$300 a year. Minister, why is it that the party led by you said one thing before the election and is now breaking that promise?

MS BERRY: I have to suggest that the electricity increases are by electricity providers. Of course, it is a concern for the ACT community when electricity prices rise. The overall long-term plan and approach for the ACT government is to ensure more affordable electricity prices for everybody in our community by shifting away from fossil fuel generated electricity towards more environmentally friendly and sustainable electricity sources, which the ACT government is doing and will continue to do.

If there is more advice that I can provide to the Assembly following the question today, I will take some of that on notice and provide that if possible.

MS LEE: Minister, why have your government's policies failed to provide cheaper electricity costs as you promised?

MS BERRY: More efficient electricity services across a number of places in the ACT—including our energy efficiency programs, particularly in public housing, to ensure that public housing tenants can have more affordable access to more sustainable and more affordable appliances within their homes, particularly around removing older unsustainable gas heating appliances and replacing them with electric heaters—show that the ACT government is committed to ensuring that electricity within our community is more affordable, particularly focusing on those people who need that support most.

MR PARTON: Minister, how do you expect struggling Canberrans to afford these electricity price increases? Do you suggest they simply stop ordering sparkling water at restaurants? That was Barr.

MS BERRY: I understand Mr Parton is talking about something else there. As I referred to in my previous answer, the ACT government is making sure that electricity is more affordable, particularly for those people who are vulnerable in our community.

Planning—supermarkets

MRS JONES: My question is to the Minister for Planning and Land Management. I refer to a *Canberra Times* article of 12 April 2021 revealing that the ACT government may push to reverse a planning decision which reduced the size of supermarkets allowed for local shops and contributed to issues at Coombs and other centres. Your government's 2015 decision reduced the size of shops permitted on CZ4 land to 1,000 square metres while there remained a maximum of 1,500 square metres for stores on CZ5 land, favouring the larger shopping centres over the smaller independents. Minister, when will the changes to the 1,500 square metres come into effect?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Mrs Jones for the question. It is an important question as we look at the effects of that particular decision back in 2015. We have seen that, I think, play out in some of the local shopping centres across the ACT. The original decision of course was to encourage local participation in supermarket policy and supermarket delivery across the ACT. But, as we have seen, it has not worked as expected. So it is appropriate we review that. We have started that process. I expect to see some Territory Plan variation amendments coming very shortly. I would imagine we will have that done, hopefully, by the end of the next few months.

MRS JONES: Minister, will you allow a change at the already built Coombs shopping centre to allow it internally to be expanded to fit a 1,500-square-metre shopping centre?

MR GENTLEMAN: Yes, it will be part of this process. We will certainly look at those shopping centres that do exist within the particular commercial zones to see if we can assist those owners to build larger shopping centres where appropriate and therefore encourage more tenancies for those areas.

MR BRADDOCK: Minister, will that also apply to the shops at Giralang, which have been vacant for 16 years?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Mr Braddock for the question. It is of course a matter for Giralang residents, and they have shown their concern over many years now. This is why I made the call to bring that through as a development application approval. Yes, Giralang will be part of that process and we will work as best we can to ensure that the owners of these shopping centres can bring the tenancies that they require.

Schools—St Bede’s Primary School

MR HANSON: My question is to the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs. Minister, although no decisions have been made, the future of St Bede’s Catholic Primary School in Red Hill is uncertain and there are reports that it may close in the next few years. Whilst the Catholic Education Office has said that, should that eventuate, any students would be offered places at Catholic schools elsewhere in the inner south and in Woden, some families may wish to remain in the inner south at public schools. Minister, what actions will you take, or have you taken, to support St Bede’s to remain open?

MS BERRY: Matters regarding the future operations of Catholic schools in the ACT are matters for the Catholic Education Office. However, I do understand that our school communities, regardless of whether they are in private or public government-run schools, are very connected within their schools and that school communities do want to make sure that their schools remain open. That is the case at St Bede’s, as well. I saw that there were several hundred people that attended their town hall meeting. I met with the St Bede’s parents before that town hall meeting just to reassure them on positions in schools for their students—should it be a decision by the Catholic Education Office to close that school, those students would have a place in their local public school. We will continue to work with those parents, reassuring them that they will have a place should they need it, should that be the decision of the Catholic Education Office. I have also offered to meet with the Catholic Education Office and the St Bede’s parent communities just to understand the decision making of the Catholic Education Office and how we can support those individuals.

MR HANSON: I have a supplementary question. Minister, what discussions have you had to date? I know you have said you will meet, but what discussions have you had to date, if any, about St Bede’s with the CEO and about funding for Catholic schools more generally?

MS BERRY: I have met with the school parents, as I said, this week. I was informed at the same time the board of St Bede’s was informed, by the Catholic Education Office that they were considering the future of that school. Catholic schools are funded based on the Gonski needs-based model implemented in legislation by the federal coalition government. The ACT government meets its requirements as far as funding for Catholic education in the ACT. The funding goes to the Catholic Education Office and then the Catholic Education Office allocates that funding to each individual Catholic school. The ACT government is not part of that decision making. As I said, those are decisions for the Catholic Education Office. Under the last two elections, the ACT government has also committed to \$15 million of infrastructure support funding for non-government schools, based on needs. So, we meet our requirements under the SRS funding model legislated by the federal government. We are the minority funder of non-government schools with the federal government being the majority funder.

I also understand that Catholic schools have received several millions of dollars in additional funding from the federal government to support them during the transition

to the SRS funding model. I do not know how much money that is, because it went to the Catholic Education Office, and how they allocate those funds is up to them.

MS LEE: I have a supplementary question. Minister, what work and modelling have you done to ensure that the local government schools have the capacity to take new students if St Bede's were to close?

MS BERRY: Fortunately, the Catholic Education Office has given the school community some breathing space until 2023 before they decide on the future for that school. So it might be the case that the school community can change the decision making of the Catholic Education Office and that it will remain open. In the meantime, however, we will make sure that we pay special attention to the ACT government schools in that area to ensure that there is space for students should that be required. I have made a commitment to that school community that, if it is a decision by the Catholic Education Office to close that school, those students will be welcomed into their public schools.

Mental health—services

MR DAVIS: My question is to the Minister for Mental Health. Minister, what is the ACT government doing to deliver on the ACT Greens election commitment to support people being able to access mental health services closer to home, particularly in my electorate of Brindabella?

MS DAVIDSON: Thank you for the question. There are a range of things that we are working on that will help people on the south side in particular. There is a step-up, step-down facility that will be new for south Canberra, which will be opening very soon. The step-up, step-down facility will provide people with a place where they can step up to more intensive mental health care without having to become an inpatient in the AMHU. This also gives people an opportunity to step down and transition back into community care after a period of time as an inpatient. I am looking forward to that facility opening soon.

We also committed in the February budget to increasing funding for the PACER service to seven days a week. There was an additional \$720,000 to expand the Police, Ambulance and Clinician Emergency Response service. We have found that this has been a very effective way of providing people with access to care without having to be admitted to hospital or go to the emergency department.

We are also working on a co-design process to deliver safe haven cafes in Canberra, which will provide people with a warm and welcoming environment in which to seek help if they are experiencing distress without having to go to the usual acute care services like the emergency department.

The combination of all of these services will, hopefully, provide more options for people who are on the south side and provide options that are closer to where people live.

MR DAVIS: Minister, why has it taken so long to get the first safe haven cafe open?

MS DAVIDSON: That is a very valid question. The safe haven cafe process is going through a co-design. When we do a co-design, it means that we are working with people who have lived experience, and that process can take longer and it can mean that sometimes you have to look at a few solutions, see what can be implemented and perhaps go back to the conversation and look at alternatives, if the first choices are not going to work out as planned.

What we will achieve in the end is a better solution, and we are getting very close to opening the very first safe haven cafe. That will provide people with that warm, welcoming environment where they can seek help if they are experiencing distress. The safe haven cafe co-design has been led by an experienced co-design consultant. The feedback that I have been hearing from people involved in the process is that they have found it to be very positive, and that the initial work, particularly in establishing the relationships and understanding what the problem that they are trying to solve is, has been very valuable. From what I can see, it has been a really good example of how to do that co-design work.

MS CLAY: Minister, what is the ACT government doing to help young people to manage the heightened stresses they have experienced with the events of the last few years, like the bushfires and the pandemic?

MS DAVIDSON: Thank you for the question. Yes, we have a range of services available for young people. It starts with an awareness and an understanding of mental health, managing stress and building resilience. The Youth Aware of Mental Health program that has been running in our schools has been very important in helping with that work. So far 2,843 year 9 students across public, Catholic and independent schools in the ACT have participated in that program. The feedback from the students and their families has been very positive in terms of equipping those students to understand mental wellbeing, when to seek help and how to do that, and how to support friends who might be experiencing that.

We also have funding in the February budget for the adolescent mental health outreach service. This provides outreach mental health services to young people who might be most at risk of missing out on accessing the services due to barriers that make it harder for them to access other mental health services.

We fund a range of community-delivered mental health programs, including education and awareness through Mental Illness Education ACT, counselling and mentoring through Menslink, and there is a youth wellbeing outreach program run by CatholicCare which is very effective in helping young people who are experiencing complex situations.

With all of these different things on offer, it can be hard for people to navigate them, so we are also working on our youth navigation portal with the Office for Mental Health and Wellbeing. That will help young people to understand how the system works, where they can go for help and what to do next.

Schools—Gungahlin

MS CASTLEY: My question is to the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs. Two years ago the *Canberra Times* reported that the ACT government would begin planning for a new college in Canberra's north, with the 2019-20 budget allocating \$600,000 for a feasibility study. The newspaper also reported that transportable buildings were being trucked into Gungahlin College to cope with demand. In the recent budget there was \$760,000 to plan for a new college on Canberra's north side. Minister, what happened to the \$600,000 feasibility study into a new college in Canberra's north from two years ago? Where is it and will you table it today?

MS BERRY: Work has been occurring in the north of Canberra, particularly in Gungahlin, to understand the needs of that community and where a new college or an expanded campus across the colleges that exist on that site, like Dickson and Gungahlin College, could meet the needs of the Gungahlin school community. I can, once work has been completed on that project, provide that information back to the Assembly. Of course, the Gungahlin community will be very interested to hear about those expansions and how they will meet the needs of their young people.

MS CASTLEY: A supplementary. Given the recent budget does include money for new and bigger schools in Gungahlin and school students become college students, why have you not announced a new college for Canberra's north yet?

MS BERRY: Because the ACT government is working with our existing schools to make sure that we meet the needs of school students within that area. One of the things that we understand about college students is that they are much more mobile than high school or primary school students. They can often get around the city much more easily than primary and kindergarten students can. We have opportunities now to consider how that expansion of the college system in the north of Canberra might occur, particularly with the light rail now in place for two years. That will make a difference to how students can get around our city and access schools that best meet their needs.

MR HANSON: Minister, why are so many students across the ACT taught in demountable classrooms, some of which have been around for decades, and others which are now taking up valuable open space in schools?

MS BERRY: Every state and territory across the country manages the ebbs and flows of demographic changes across suburbs by putting in transportable classrooms so that they can be moved if required or, once they have finished being used as classrooms, used for other teaching facilities like art rooms or community spaces. This is not just a way of managing our school capacity that is confined to the ACT; the whole country works in a similar way.

I guess the difference for the ACT is that we have a much better understanding of our demographic changes through the work that the Education Directorate does with demographers at the Australian National University to properly understand the growth and changes across our city and to make sure that all of our schools meet the needs of

their local school communities and that every family and school student has a place at their local school.

ACT Fire & Rescue—funding

MS ORR: My question is to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. How is the government investing in ACT Fire & Rescue to ensure we have a skilled and resilient workforce into the future?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Ms Orr for her interest in keeping the Canberra community safe. The ACT government understands the importance of investing in our firefighters and maintaining a skilled and resilient Fire & Rescue workforce. We are committed to developing leaders at every level, growing expertise and fostering innovation while continuing to focus on the health and wellbeing of our firefighters.

Our investment in the ACT Fire & Rescue enterprise agreement will see: even more firefighters recruited, new equipment and improved facilities, to ensure our firefighters can continue to protect our growing city. It is focused on building a modernised fire service and meeting the needs of firefighters including investments in recruitment, health, wellbeing and safety initiatives and skills and training incentives. The ACT Fire & Rescue enterprise agreement will ensure that our firefighters continue to be well resourced, well trained, well protected and well supported.

A signed agreement reflects the ACT government's understanding of the importance of investing in the future of the urban fire service and is consistent with the government's priority on community safety and support when it matters.

MS ORR: How many additional firefighters is the government recruiting to maintain community safety?

MR GENTLEMAN: The government has committed to funding more highly trained and skilled emergency services personnel, and as part of the ACT Fire & Rescue enterprise agreement the Emergency Services Agency intends to recruit 180 firefighters, including 99 additional positions, over the next five years. This includes staff required for the new Acton and Molonglo stations, crewing of the new aerial pumper, staff to cover attrition, and an increase to the relief ratio.

Two recruit colleges will be run per year over the next five years. I am pleased to report that the first cohort of recruits for 2021 commenced in February. This class is currently going through 20 weeks of rigorous training in both theoretical and practical applications before their final assessments and graduation in June this year. I wish the new recruits well in their training and all the best for their future careers. Their addition to the ranks of ACT Fire & Rescue will ensure that Canberra remains a safe and well-protected city into the future.

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, how does the ACT Fire & Rescue enterprise agreement build on the government's strong record of investment in the branch?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Mr Pettersson for his interest in the staff at Fire & Rescue. The government values and supports the work of all its emergency services personnel and we have a proven record of increased investment in our emergency services. For our urban firefighters this has been demonstrated over many years, including: \$270,000 in the 2018-19 budget to provide new protective helmets for ACT Fire & Rescue; \$2 million in the 2018-19 budget for a new aerial pumper; \$2.2 million in the 2019-20 budget for a replacement for the existing aerial platform; \$2.3 million announced in January 2019 to roll out our next generation structural firefighting protective clothing for all ACT Fire & Rescue firefighters; \$939,000 in the 2019-20 budget to investigate new fire and ambulance stations in the city centre and in the Molonglo Valley; and \$45 million announced in August 2020 for the design and construction of the new joint fire and ambulance station at Acton.

The government has also allocated various funding amounts over many years for recruit colleges, providing for more firefighters to protect and support the Canberra community, as well as the commitment to building a new fire and ambulance station in the Molonglo Valley. The new stations in Acton and Molonglo will provide well designed state-of-the-art and fit-for-purpose facilities that are strategically located to allow for faster response times, which has a direct impact, of course, on community safety. The government will continue to build on our strong record of investment in our emergency services.

Schools—maintenance

MR PARTON: My question is to the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs. Minister, many ACT schools cannot do important maintenance and upgrades, because of delays due to testing and removing toxic materials. A common complaint of students and parents is the poor state of school toilets. Given that many students do not use their school toilets, because of disrepair, because of poor lighting or simply because they are filthy, what do you say to the parents of these children, who, I am told, often return home soiled?

MS BERRY: Through COVID and through this year, I have to acknowledge the work of our school communities, particularly the school cleaners now directly employed by the ACT government, who have spent a significant amount of time cleaning their schools and also making sure that their schools are cleaner than ever, because of the additional cleaners who were engaged across our school communities, making sure that our school communities were safe.

If there are concerns that Mr Parton has received from members of school communities in his electorate, I would ask that he forward them on to my office, although I have not heard in my office about issues with regard to children returning home because they were not using the toilets at their school.

I also reject that our schools are not able to use facilities to conduct education for their students and make sure that teachers have safe workplaces due to the work that is being done in those schools to make sure that they are safe—work that is guided by the experts, guided by scientific backing around how those materials are managed and

how they are removed, if that is required. Again, all of that work is based on the advice of experts. Every investigation that occurs during that process is checked by WorkSafe, tested by Robson and given clearance to ensure that our school communities are safe.

MR PARTON: Minister, is it true that there is only one company approved to test for hazardous materials before maintenance work can begin and is that why there are such long delays?

MS BERRY: I do not agree with the premise of the question. I do not know that there are delays; I have not had any delays identified to me.

As to testing, I am not quite sure what testing Mr Parton is talking about. Previously, testing occurred in New South Wales. We now have the facilities in the ACT to do that testing. Reports on the results of tests come back much more quickly than they ever did before. As to whether there is only one organisation that can conduct that testing in the ACT, I do not believe that is the case.

MR HANSON: Minister, why are so many schools in such a poor state of repair after 20 years of ACT Labor government?

MS BERRY: They are not.

Planning—community consultation

MS CLAY: My question is to the Minister for Planning and Land Management. The parliamentary and governing agreement talks about completing the current planning review in consultation with Canberrans and improving community consultation and involvement in the development of Canberra. I have attended several community meetings in the last few months, including recently at the Belconnen Community Council and at the Kingston Foreshore, and the community is very worried about this review and the lack of details we have been given so far in the consultation. There has been consultation about the general direction that review is taking and there has been a survey, but as yet no-one has been given any details of what the new planning system might look like. When and how will the community be consulted on the substantive details of the future planning and development in Canberra?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Ms Clay for the question. The ACT planning system review and reform project is well underway. It is initially based on a range of feedback that the community has provided about our planning system; I think we have all heard that. The paper that the government released last year is a reflection on how we can of course improve our planning system, and the government has heard very strongly over many years that the current system is not delivering what the community expects. Officials have looked at representation on development applications, submissions to Territory Plan variations, submissions to committee inquiries and recommendations from committee inquiries as well. There is quite a range of feedback that we have had about the planning system over years. That has provided, I think, a very clear picture of where we need to go and what we can do to

improve. So I am looking forward to more formal ongoing consultation as the review progresses.

The next phase of consultation will focus on the district level planning, and this will start next month. So there will be a mixture of targeted workshops and online engagement as well. Consultation will involve conversations with industry and with the community, and I look forward to hearing what our community has to say about what they would like to see in their local area.

MS CLAY: When will key stakeholders like the Environmental Defenders Office, the Conservation Council and the local community councils have a chance to comment on the details of this new planning system and on the draft legislation?

MR GENTLEMAN: That will start, as I said, next month. But I will say that EPSTD have been working through this project for quite a while. They have been talking to various stakeholder groups in this process. Those engagements have begun, but the more formal part, as I mentioned, will start next month. We are looking forward to feedback from industry and community representatives through, of course, the environment and planning forums as well. Officials have also carefully reviewed comments on development applications, Territory Plan variations and committee inquiries to identify any trends and issues that the community has with the planning system.

MR PARTON: Minister, having conceded, as you did in your first answer, that the current planning system has been a failure, would you concede that the current drawn-out review process is also a complete failure?

MR GENTLEMAN: Certainly not. It has been very engaged, I think, with the community, and what we are looking at is something that I think Mr Parton reflected on during the election campaign last year where he would like to see a completely different city. He wants to see urban sprawl right across the ACT, not an efficient economic city. He wants to see low-rise buildings go across into Kowen Forest, across the Murrumbidgee into rural areas. It is very clear what the Canberra Liberals would like to see. What we are delivering is what the Canberra community has asked for, and we will engage with them to deliver what they have asked.

Multicultural affairs—legislation

MR PETTERSSON: My question is to the Minister for Multicultural Affairs. Minister, can you please outline the rationale for the proposed Multicultural Recognition Act.

MS CHEYNE: I thank Mr Pettersson for the question. As members know, the ACT is proudly—

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Please ignore interjections. Indeed, ignore Mr Hanson as best you can.

MS CHEYNE: As members know, the ACT is proudly a multicultural and inclusive community. With one in four Canberrans born overseas, our community's diversity is one of its greatest strengths. The contributions of our multicultural communities are felt in every corner of the territory—from community celebrations and major events like the national multicultural festival to the richness we experience every day in the language, history, music, food and cultures shared and celebrated in the ACT.

So, as a city and as a people we are committed to multiculturalism. But we know that multiculturalism is a shared responsibility. We have committed to delivering the Multicultural Recognition Act. It is in the parliamentary and governing agreement and it is one of my high priorities as Minister for Multicultural Affairs. The development of the act signifies and formalises in legislation the value that we as a community place on multiculturalism in the ACT. This act will create a multicultural charter to codify key principles of a successful multicultural society. It will enshrine into law the Multicultural Advisory Council and it will provide reporting mechanisms to ensure accountability to these principles. This legislation will be proudly owned by the entire ACT community.

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, can you please update the Assembly on the progress of developing the Multicultural Recognition Act.

MS CHEYNE: I am pleased to inform the Assembly that the discussion paper for the act was released earlier this week. The discussion paper will be supported by an extensive consultation process because it is important that we hear from Canberrans on how this legislation should be crafted to best achieve its aims. We expect consultation to continue for a number of weeks, and a listening report to be released towards the middle of this year. The second half of this year will be spent drafting the bill, before I have the privilege of bringing it before the Assembly at the end of the year.

DR PATERSON: Minister, could you please detail the consultation process for the Multicultural Recognition Act discussion paper and how the government is ensuring that multicultural communities can access the discussion paper?

MS CHEYNE: I thank Dr Paterson for the supplementary question. The views of all Canberrans on this important piece of work are not only valued but critical to its success. With the release of the discussion paper on Monday of this week, we are actively consulting with the community on a number of key elements. We are seeking views on what should be included in the multicultural charter, which will describe the key principles that support the policy of multiculturalism. We are asking Canberrans what multiculturalism means to them and what principles and values they feel best reflect multiculturalism in our community. And we are asking people for input on the proposed role and make-up of the Multicultural Advisory Council.

To help facilitate this, the government is holding five in-person community forums to seek feedback on the discussion paper between now and the end of May, in addition to an online survey on the YourSay website. And, crucially, to ensure a diverse and accurate consultation with the ACT's many multicultural communities, the discussion

paper fact sheet has been translated into 14 different languages. These fact sheets will be critical as we reach out to the many multicultural community groups and organisations in the ACT for their invaluable views and inputs. The government is eager to hear the views of the Canberra community as a whole, and I look forward to bringing this important new law to the Assembly later this year.

Canberra—growth

MRS KIKKERT: My question is to the Minister for the Environment. A recent RiotACT item entitled “Canberrans flock to Goulburn in search of cheaper land” reported that hundreds of couples, families and singles are fleeing Canberra to live in Goulburn, meaning possibly thousands of new commutes every day, with the resulting environmental impact. Minister, why are hundreds of people leaving Canberra and moving to Goulburn but continuing to commute on a daily basis to Canberra?

MADAM SPEAKER: Ms Vassarotti.

MR GENTLEMAN: Madam Speaker, that is not a question for the Minister for the Environment; it is about a trend in land sales, I think.

MADAM SPEAKER: You are responding to this question, Mr Gentleman?

MR GENTLEMAN: Yes, that is my intention.

If we look at the growth of Canberra over the last number of years, you would not say that people are fleeing the ACT. We have growth of 4,000 to 8,000 people coming to the ACT every year. We see incredible demand for housing in the ACT and have seen more land sales over recent months than ever before.

In regard to the impact of travelling on the environment, we would much rather see people stay in the ACT. That is why we encourage them to do so.

MRS KIKKERT: My question is to the Minister for the Environment. Have you conducted any studies on the environmental impact of commuter traffic into Canberra from as far away as Goulburn?

MS VASSAROTTI: I thank the member for the question. I will take that on notice. I am not aware of it, and it potentially goes across a number of portfolios.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, what will you do to encourage people to stay in Canberra to reduce the considerable emission levels from the thousands of commuter kilometres each day by people coming into Canberra?

MS VASSAROTTI: I thank the member for the question. Taking this question from an environmental perspective, we can point to the amazing benefits we have for residents living in Canberra. We hear every day about how proud people are to live in Canberra, and we hear particularly how important our environment and access to our environment are.

Some of the things that people talk about in relation to the environmental amenity of our—

Mr Hanson: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, the supplementary was very much about the issues with people going from Canberra to Goulburn and the effect on the environment from that, not about people living in Canberra.

MADAM SPEAKER: The question was broadly about people moving into the surrounding region. I think Ms Vassarotti is on track. The question was: how do you encourage people to stay here? Ms Vassarotti is absolutely on track.

MS VASSAROTTI: I am absolutely responding to Ms Castley's question, which was about the benefits of living in Canberra and looking at the environmental benefits.

The other thing that we know is that Canberrans are really proud of the work the government is doing particularly around taking strong climate action. They are very, very proud of decisions that have been made around things like renewable energy.

There is a whole range of things that we are doing to encourage people to live in Canberra.

Government—community engagement

MR BRADDOCK: My question is to the minister for planning. Minister, thank you for having your representatives attend the last meeting of the Gungahlin Community Council. The council actually invited you personally to attend so that you can hear their concerns in person. Will you attend in person to hear their concerns?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Mr Braddock for the question and his interest in the Gungahlin community. I regularly engage with community representatives in a range of different ways.

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members, that is enough.

MR GENTLEMAN: We should also remember that we have 25 members in this place who were elected to represent their communities. I know that Ms Orr and Mr Pettersson regularly talk to me about planning matters in Gungahlin. I feel that they are strong elected advocates for the Gungahlin community. It is often more important, I think, for officials to attend some of these meetings, particularly when it comes to technical matters. In the past I have attended many Gungahlin meetings, and many meetings of other community councils right across the territory. I will use the colloquialism that I have probably had more community council meetings than Mr Braddock has had hot dinners. But I will continue to engage with the community—

Mr Braddock: A point of order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Resume your seat. There is a point of order.

Mr Braddock: I have been misrepresented, Madam Speaker. I can go back and check my records to see how many Gungahlin Community Council meetings I have attended, and I am happy to compare that with the record of the planning minister.

MADAM SPEAKER: I do not think there is a point of order. Please resume your seat.

Mrs Jones interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mrs Jones, you are getting too enthusiastic.

MR GENTLEMAN: I was not able to attend the last meeting due to diary requirements. However, if I receive another invitation, I will certainly have a look at it.

MR BRADDOCK: There is an open invitation for you, Minister, to attend Gungahlin Community Council meetings. When would you be able to attend?

MR GENTLEMAN: I will have a look at that when I get an invitation from the council.

MR CAIN: Minister, as part of your journey through Gungahlin with Mr Braddock, I would invite you to journey with me through Belconnen. Will you commit to doing so, and come and visit the disused and poorly maintained ovals in west Belconnen in particular?

MR GENTLEMAN: Madam Speaker, I spent my teen years in Belconnen. I know it very well. I moved to Higgins in 1969, when it was the last suburb, before we saw the Holt construction. It was a fantastic place to go, and I enjoyed my time there. Every time I visit Belconnen, I do enjoy it.

Mrs Jones: A point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: Please resume your seat. Mrs Jones?

Mrs Jones: Madam Speaker, the question was whether he will go with Mr Cain to Belconnen not whether he has lived in Belconnen. It is on relevance.

MADAM SPEAKER: There is no point of order, and I ask you please to stop your interjections.

Mrs Jones: Will you go with Mr Cain?

MADAM SPEAKER: Mrs Jones, I do not really want to warn you, but I shall soon. Mr Gentleman, do you want to continue?

MR GENTLEMAN: Madam Speaker, yes, I was in Belconnen long before Mr Cain came to Belconnen. I know it quite well. Certainly, I would be interested in visiting Belconnen again, as I do, almost every week, every now and again.

Arts—dementia-friendly access

MS LAWDER: My question is to the Minister for the Arts. Minister, on 2 March 2021, I wrote to you regarding the need for better accessibility at the Canberra Museum and Gallery for people living with dementia, in particular the need to improve a ramp that leads to one of the gallery spaces. On 8 April 2021, you responded, saying that the feedback provided will allow CMAG to work with an access expert to explore ways of overcoming the depth perception issue and improving the functionality of the ramp. Minister, can you advise exactly when people living with dementia, their carers and their families can expect to be able to access CMAG without the danger of this low visibility ramp?

MS CHEYNE: I thank Ms Lawder for the question, and I thank her for writing to me and bringing this issue to my attention and to CMAG's attention. I also note the very important debate that was had yesterday regarding what we can do right across the city to ensure that we are a dementia-friendly city, which we are committed to in the parliamentary and governing agreement.

I note that I responded to Ms Lawder, as she noted as well, on 8 April. I have since done another tour of CMAG, and I saw the ramp for myself. The latest advice that I have about that, noting that this is quite recent correspondence, in the last fortnight, is that CMAG is taking this issue very seriously and is looking at what it can do to improve this experience. When I have further details, I will report back to Ms Lawder and the Assembly.

MS LAWDER: A supplementary question. Minister, how many other ACT government art institutions are not dementia friendly?

MS CHEYNE: I thank Ms Lawder for the follow-up question. Generally, these institutions reflect the period that they were created or built in. I would have to take that question on notice to determine whether there are some other things that we can look at across our highly valued arts institutions. I am willing to take a deeper look and get back to Ms Lawder on some other improvements that might be able to be made, if they do, in fact, need to be made.

DR PATERSON: A supplementary. Minister, can you detail who is able to apply for the Amp It Up! grants?

Mrs Jones: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: what is the relationship to the question about dementia-friendly ramps at arts institutions?

DR PATERSON: It is to the Minister for the Arts.

Mrs Jones: Minister, the question—

MADAM SPEAKER: The reply could be relevant to some community organisations in relation to the grants.

Mrs Jones: I think telling the minister how to answer the question is not in your purview, is it?

MADAM SPEAKER: I beg your pardon, Mrs Jones?

Mrs Jones: The question that has been asked has to be relevant, I understand, to the original question or the supplementary, both of which were about ramps at ACT institutions. The answer Ms Cheyne gave does not mention anything about grants, so what is the relevance?

MADAM SPEAKER: I am going to give the minister the question to answer, because until she answers I do not know if there is relevance in the grants or not.

Mrs Jones: On the point of order, Madam Speaker—

MADAM SPEAKER: No.

Mrs Jones: Very simply, the answer to the question, to my understanding, has got nothing to do with whether or not the question is in order. It is about whether the question is in order, not whether the answer has relevance.

MADAM SPEAKER: I am going to rule it in order this time, Mrs Jones. Ms Cheyne.

MS CHEYNE: Thank you, Madam Speaker. For organisations that can apply for the Amp It Up! grants fund there will be guidelines released soon, if not already, on act.gov.au/livemusic. Venues across Canberra—largely we are targeting venues that are privately owned and operated, but it is open to venues—

Mr Hanson: Madam Speaker, on a point of order as to relevance: now that we have heard the bulk of the answer—

MADAM SPEAKER: Yes, I will agree, and I can reconsider.

Mr Hanson: the answer and the question are clearly not relevant to the original question.

MADAM SPEAKER: Yes. Unless you can go directly to relevance, I will ask you to sit down. Members, I thank you for your guidance. I am happy to reconsider, but I was assuming that there would be something in the answer to the purpose of the question.

Sport—Hawker tennis centre

MR CAIN: My question is to the Minister for Sport and Recreation: you recently responded to my query about the Hawker tennis centre, which has been derelict for

over a decade. You said the current owner is required to undertake a contamination assessment within two years of their development application approval, which was granted in 2020. What this really means is that the site could be languishing like this for many more years before any construction will commence. Meanwhile, as I have been hearing in my shopping centre and doorknocking visits, residents of Hawker walk and drive past this eyesore every day wondering when something will be done. Minister, what will you do to see the rapid transformation of this site for Hawker locals?

MS BERRY: I thank Mr Cain for the question, and I am aware of the site that he refers to. However, it is a privately owned site. If it meets the requirements that it needs to as far as testing is concerned and the site does not pose a health and safety risk to the community, then it is up to the owner of the site as to what they do with it next. However, what I can do, if possible, is to work out a way that officials could contact the owner of that site and see if there are any plans they have for that site that can be identified to provide to Mr Cain and to other members of the community. At this point in time, I am not aware of any plans that the owner has for that site, but they do need to meet their obligations and ensure that the site is kept safe so the community is not put at risk.

MR CAIN: Nonetheless, Minister, why is this government neglecting renewal of this site in Belconnen—and no doubt many others in Canberra suburbs, particularly in Ginninderra—but instead focusing on investment in the inner city region of Canberra?

MS BERRY: That is simply not true. The ACT government has invested in Belconnen in sports infrastructure over a number of years but, in particular, more recently the refurbishment of the Higgins sports ground with a new pavilion and two new sports fields as well as work on the irrigation system at Hawker to ensure that that field remains useable and does not flood. That sporting field is like a lot of the sports fields in the ACT—they are in areas of the ACT that were often flood plains and so managing the irrigation in those areas is important, but that investment has been made at Hawker. Further investments were committed to by the ACT government during the last election to upgrade lighting at the Hawker softball field.

Again, I remind Mr Cain that the particular site he refers to at Hawker is not an ACT government-owned or managed site; it is privately owned. However, I have just been informed that there is a development application that has been put in by the owner of that site.

MR MILLIGAN: How many other sites are there across the ACT that have been left to deteriorate like this one?

MS BERRY: As I said, this is a privately owned site, not a site managed or owned or maintained by the ACT government.

Sport—Gungahlin community facilities

MR MILLIGAN: My question is to the Minister for Sport and Recreation. Minister, Otium Planning Group was commissioned to deliver an ACT indoor sports facility

study in December 2015, but the government's response was not released until June 2019. A major project outcome was Gungahlin being identified through consultation with Capital Football as its preferred location for a dedicated football facility. The ACT government has commissioned \$20 million towards the Home of Football. Preliminary planning and design work for this facility was scheduled to commence in late 2019. Minister, what progress, if any, has been made on this project and when will the actual construction phase be commenced?

MS BERRY: That work is continuing. Due diligence work is continuing on the site to ensure that the plans for the Home of Football in Throsby can be delivered and delivered in a way that the community has expectations for, particularly given the work that the ACT government has done in partnership with Capital Football in ensuring that the Home of Football meets the needs of the football community.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, what is the reason for the delay in progressing this vital piece of sporting infrastructure?

MS BERRY: There is no delay.

MS CASTLEY: Will this facility be open for general public use?

MS BERRY: Yes, it will.

Domestic and family violence—COVID-19

DR PATERSON: My question is to the Minister for Women. Minister, how has COVID-19 impacted women in the ACT community?

MS BERRY: COVID-19 has led to an increase in particularly the complexity but also the number of people who have been seeking supports around domestic and family violence. The Australian Institute of Criminology, which in May 2020 surveyed 15,000 women, found that for more than half who experienced ongoing violence, the violence increased in frequency and severity compared to the six months before. We certainly saw that that was the case in the ACT from reports back from the support services sector and from our hospital systems. The report also found that a third of women experiencing violence since February said that it was the first time that their partner had been violent towards them.

Canberra's domestic and family violence services have committed to continue with their supports for those experiencing violence and interventions. And because sexual assault can be linked to the same harmful gender norms that cause domestic and family violence—and it does occur in intimate partner relationships—sexual assaults have presented their own unique challenges that need to be better understood and investigated, especially in light of the increases in domestic and family violence seen during the COVID-19 pandemic.

COVID-19 impacted women particularly with regard to more violent and more complex matters of domestic and family violence and sexual assaults than we have ever seen before.

DR PATERSON: Minister, what initiatives does the government have in place to support women during the pandemic?

MS BERRY: There was significant targeted support for low income households as part of the ACT's \$137 million stage 1 economic survival package. There was \$3 million in funding for the specialist homelessness and domestic and family violence sectors as well as an additional \$7 million for non-government organisation partners to meet increased service demand for emergency relief as part of the community support package.

With the national conversation around sexual violence and assault and how pervasive they are across our country and our community here in the ACT, I also announced a new Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Working Group to coordinate the community, the sector, unions and relevant stakeholders on responses to sexual assaults in the ACT. I was particularly heartened by the support and cooperation from all the political parties in the ACT Assembly for this important work.

MS ORR: Minister, what will be the priorities of the newly announced Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Working Group?

MS BERRY: It has been a momentous time over the last couple of months, with sexual assaults being the primary focus of conversations across our country and how pervasive sexual assault and violence have become. I have been having conversations with and listening to support service organisations—including the Victims of Crime Commissioner Heidi Yates AM, associate professor; a senior specialist in sexual health and forensic medicine, Vanita Parekh AM; the CEO of Women's Health Matters, Marcia Williams; and the CEO of the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre, Chrystina Stanford—to understand what needs to happen with regard to a sexual assault reform program in the ACT.

It was clear from my conversations with them that they are calling for a different approach for change. This working group will be inclusive, and it will be intersectional. It will set out pathways forward to give confidence to our— (*Time expired.*)

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

Supplementary answer to question without notice

Arts—funding

MS CHEYNE: Yesterday I was discussing the Amp It Up! fund. On reading and reviewing the *Hansard* transcript of question time, the way I phrased a portion of how that fund operates was a bit odd. To remove all doubt, the grants with Amp It Up! can be used for up to 100 per cent of costs associated with engaging artists and technicians and up to 50 per cent of marketing costs.

Paper

Madam Speaker presented the following paper:

Auditor-General Act 1996—Auditor-General’s Reports—2021—No 4/2021—
ACT Government’s vehicle emissions reduction activities, dated 21 April 2021.

Crimes (Stealthing) Amendment Bill 2021

Ms Lee, pursuant to notice, presented the bill and its explanatory statement.

Title read by Clerk.

MS LEE (Kurrajong-Leader of the Opposition) (3.02): I move:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

I am proud to stand in this chamber today to present this bill to outlaw the heinous act of stealthing. Stealthing is an appalling thing to do to any woman, any man, any person. It completely erodes the trust that a person can put in someone during the most vulnerable of moments. It is a violation of dignity and autonomy.

Some people listening might be wondering what stealthing is. It may be a term that they have never heard before. Stealthing is the non-consensual removal of a condom during sexual intercourse. A recent joint study by the Melbourne Sexual Health Centre and Monash University highlighted the prevalence of stealthing in our community. The report found that, of the thousands of respondents, a staggering one in three women and nearly one in five men who have sex with other men reported being victims of stealthing.

The study found that, just like reporting rates of other sexual offences, reporting of experiences with stealthing is very low. As few as one per cent of those who had been victims of stealthing indicated that they had reported it to police. Stealthing risks both physical and psychological health, including the transmission of sexually transmitted diseases and infections, unplanned pregnancies, depression, anxiety and, in some cases, post-traumatic stress disorder.

Stealthing can be a very traumatic thing to experience. It can take away a person’s self-determination, their agency, and leave them feeling completely and utterly vulnerable. In a confronting account on Triple J’s *Hack*, a victim of stealthing spoke out. They said that they felt violated and feared that they had contracted something life altering from someone who had completely broken their trust. They spoke about the self-loathing and their long struggle with mental health following the incident. They spoke about reaching out to a female co-worker who said that she had had a similar experience, but in this case it had resulted in four days of hospitalisation

The response to the *Hack* story was explosive. It became clear that, whilst many people did not know the name of it, many had sadly been the victims of it. Behind

those brave enough to speak up, I am sure there are many more who have experienced such trauma. As the issue of stealthing has been forced into the public eye, it has become apparent that our laws are not reflecting the reality. So many people in our community have been victims of stealthing, but most have no idea that such acts could be considered a negation of consent.

The fact that the reporting rate is so low is, at least in part, because of laws that are not clear about the legal implications of stealthing. It is our duty, Madam Speaker, as lawmakers, to empower all Canberrans to be able to come forward to police and to feel that they will be genuinely heard and to break down the fear and stigma of such violation and assure the community that the law is on their side.

We cannot wait for a case to go before our own courts here in the ACT before we act on stealthing. We must take action now. Stealthing is a relatively new area within criminal law, and it is unclear whether it is illegal in the ACT. If sex has been consented to on the condition that a condom be used and that condom is removed, fresh consent should be required.

I am only aware of one case of stealthing that has been brought before the courts in Australia. I understand that this case in Melbourne has been delayed due to the pandemic. However, there have been cases of convictions for stealthing in Switzerland, Canada and Germany. Just recently, over the last couple of weeks, a man was convicted of rape in New Zealand after he removed a condom during sex without the woman's consent. This conviction sets a new precedent of recognising stealthing in criminal law in New Zealand. With my bill, we too can make it clear that stealthing will and should be illegal in the ACT. This is an opportunity for the ACT to be at the forefront of these reforms and legislate proactively, instead of allowing more men and women to fall victim to such a heinous act.

My bill seeks to address this very issue. My bill amends the Crimes Act to expressly define stealthing as a factor that negates consent. My bill inserts new paragraph 67(1)(ga) to expressly state that consent is negated if the consent is caused by an intentional misrepresentation by the other person about the use of a condom. This new addition to the Crimes Act will ensure that where consent is given on the basis that a condom be used during sexual intercourse and the alleged offender either removes the condom or does not put on a condom at all and intentionally does not inform the other person then the other person's consent is taken to be negated. When consent is negated, the act of sex is a sexual assault.

In bringing forward this bill today, I have sought the views, feedback and expertise of numerous sections of our community—lawyers, from prosecution to defence, Legal Aid, the Women's Legal Centre, the Law Society and the Bar Association. I acknowledge the Bar Association's views that the current laws perhaps may and do cover stealthing. It is difficult to know, of course, because we have no precedent.

But what is clear is that our community is calling for more transparency, clarity and certainty that our laws accurately reflect what our society deems to be a heinous and unacceptable act. Our laws, particularly our criminal laws, should also be a deterrent for unacceptable behaviour. Making it clear and ensuring there is no doubt that the

specific act of stealthing is illegal and is an act that negates consent will go a long way to being that deterrent.

I also sought the views, feedback and expertise of the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre, the Victims of Crime Commissioner, through the Human Rights Commission, YWCA Canberra and the Women's Centre for Health Matters and I also notified Meridian ACT and Sexual Health and Family Planning. I thank these organisations not only for their engagement about my bill but also their ongoing commitment to community safety, particularly when it comes to sexual health and safety.

In bringing forward my bill today, I am not suggesting that this change alone is where we start and end. There is more that we can and must do in the enormously complex area of consent and sexual assault. I acknowledge the sexual assault prevention and response working group which was established during the last sitting period with tripartisan support. The expertise and experience of this working group and its dedication and commitment to making our city a safer one from all forms of sexual assault is to be commended. This bill is one step—an important step—but one step in reforms around consent and sexual assault. I have no doubt that it will form a part of the ongoing work of this working group.

Stealthing is the non-consensual removal of a condom during sex. The non-consensual removal of a condom during sex negates consent. And sex without consent is sexual assault. Sexual assault is a crime. My bill is about making our laws clearer. My bill is about making our community safer. My bill is about making our voice loud and clear, that yes means yes and no means no. My bill is about the ongoing education and awareness of our children, our teenagers and our community about consent. I commend my bill to the Assembly.

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

Health—endoscopy

MRS JONES (Murrumbidgee) (3.12): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) that the public waiting list for endoscopy has blown out to 7 200 people waiting;
- (b) media reporting that at least two people have developed cancer while waiting over a year to be seen; and
- (c) that endoscopy is an important and preventative measure for many with a history of ulcers and polyps and is vital in the fight against cancer in our community; and

(2) calls on the Government to:

- (a) demonstrate to the public precisely how the wait times for endoscopy will be reduced to a reasonable timeframe; and
- (b) report back to the Assembly by 24 June on exact progress.

Like so many Canberrans, I was shocked to learn last week of the unfortunate state of the endoscopy waitlist—7,200 people waiting. The *Canberra Times* broke the news to so many on the waiting list that they may well be patient No 6,998 and will be waiting for years for this important yet fairly quick and straightforward procedure. These are important procedures that we have been encouraging people to take seriously for their own health for years. Worse still, it was revealed that, while over 7,000 people were stuck on the waiting list, at least two have been reported as having developed cancer whilst waiting over a year to be seen. This should not have happened. This is an outrage.

For a government that has been in office for 20 years, you would think it could do a better job. But no. Labor and the Greens have overseen a significant deterioration of our health system. Our public hospitals are operating at full capacity. At times they are overflowing. People are in beds in hospital corridors and ambulances are put on bypass. Wait times for emergency department treatment and elective surgery are some of the longest in the country and have been so for years. Today's discussion on endoscopy is just the latest sad example of this government's failures. Endoscopy procedures are an important and preventative measure within our health system, particularly for those with a history of ulcers or polyps. These procedures are vital in the fight against cancer in our community.

What are these procedures and why would people need them? Colonoscopies are often recommended by doctors to assess symptoms of abdominal pain and rectal bleeding and examine for inflammatory bowel disease, such as Crohn's disease. They are used to examine colon polyps—small growths in the inner lining of the large intestine which can progress into cancer. They are so important for patients with a family history of colon cancer. These procedures are achieved by using a small fibre-optic video instrument, a colonoscope, which gives a far better view than X-rays, achieving more accurate information and results. Just as with gastroscopy or endoscopy, patients having a colonoscopy performed will be given a light anaesthetic which allows them to sleep for the short period of time it takes to complete the procedure. Once the patient is sedated, a small camera is inserted, again, displaying images on a video screen.

Bowel Cancer Australia explains that a colonoscopy is a quick and generally painless procedure that allows for full examination of the entire lining of the bowel. During the procedure the colonoscopist spends most of the time looking for changes to the normal landscape of the bowel lining and removes anything that looks suspicious, like growths called polyps. They are usually harmless, benign. They can be slightly raised, sessile, look like they are on a stalk like a cherry, pedunculated, or they can be flat. Adenomatous polyps, however, can become cancerous, malignant, and, if left undetected—what we are talking about here, while people are languishing on a waiting list—can develop into cancerous tumours.

Polyps can be detected and removed before they develop into bowel cancer during a colonoscopy, and bowel cancer, if present, can be diagnosed. The colonoscopy usually lasts around 30 minutes or less and is typically performed under a general anaesthetic. Colonoscopy is one of the most comprehensive methods to evaluate

abnormalities within the bowel, including cancer, inflammation, bleeding, polyps and adenomas, which are the precursor to bowel cancer.

A diagnostic colonoscopy is recommended if you experience symptoms suggestive of bowel cancer for two weeks or more or if you receive a positive faecal immunochemical test—FIT—result. If you have a genetic predisposition which increases your bowel cancer risk, such as familial adenomatous polyposis—FAP—or Lynch syndrome, you may require screening colonoscopies on a semi-regular basis. People are invited to speak to GPs for individual advice and referral to specialists. People taking their health into their own hands and taking responsibility for their cancer risk are waiting on the government’s waitlist.

Endoscopies and gastroscopies are a relatively simple and effective means of assessing symptoms such as upper abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting, reflux, difficulty swallowing and weight loss. They are done by inserting a small camera through the mouth to get a clear view of the oesophagus, stomach and small intestine. The procedure starts with a small amount of anaesthetic and allows the patient to go to sleep, as previously described. The images are, again, displayed on a video screen. This procedure is far more effective in detecting inflammation, ulcers or early cancer.

These procedures are also used to treat some conditions in order to prevent the need for invasive surgery, so they can be a cost-saving measure to the health system. Conditions include gastric polyps that need removing and bleeding lesions, and strictures can be stretched. Gastroscopy is also used to obtain biopsies when tumour or infection is suspected. Gastroscopies are often for people in a great deal of pain and can be life changing. I had the procedure many years ago and it changed my life. I no longer live in constant pain. The pain being treated often means that the burning of stomach lining can be stopped through lifestyle or medication. In turn, people can be free of stomach and intestinal cancer down the track.

Bowel screening tests, when they come back positive, need a colonoscopy to confirm the extent of the cancer and the treatment options. We as a community put so much emphasis on people getting these kinds of investigations done to save lives and avoid unnecessary pain and suffering. If it was your mother or father on the list—sibling, cousin or friend—the size of the current waitlist would frighten you. I am calling on the minister to demonstrate publicly precisely how the wait times for endoscopy will be reduced to a reasonable time frame and to report back to the Assembly by September on exact progress. It is not too much to ask. It is reasonable and measured.

I can tell the minister that Canberrans are getting fed up with the answers, “We are working on it; there are processes underway; something will happen soon,” which we have heard for many years. If it is true that two people have developed cancer whilst waiting for these procedures—and those are the cases that have been reported—then this government should hang its head in shame. What an absolute tragedy.

I also have to say that, since announcing this motion, I have been stopped by people in the street and messaged by people from all over Canberra to tell me that they too are on the waiting list. These are not people with high incomes. Some of them work within this very city block. They are waiting. They are fearful. They do not know

whether, by the time they get their procedure, they will have developed something deadly. The delays that this list is creating can be deadly.

I do not want to give up hope that things can improve in our health system. Other governments seem to be able to do this better. Why are we so different? I look forward to hearing what the minister has to say. It is right that she has a chance to explain, but gosh I hope the answer is not, “We are working on it,” because we have heard this explanation for more than a decade now. If the government was working on it, we would not have the longest wait times in Australia—over 7,000 people on the endoscopy waiting list—and tragically people developing cancer while waiting for the test and treatment that they need. I look forward to the minister’s comments and to concluding the debate.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Families and Community Services and Minister for Health) (3.22): I thank Mrs Jones for bringing this motion to the Assembly. It is an important issue in relation to the delivery of endoscopy procedures in the ACT public health system. As Mrs Jones has outlined in far greater detail than I was intending to do, and therefore I do not need to try to pronounce all those difficult words, endoscopies are a medical procedure that gives medical professionals a direct view of the body’s internal organs. This procedure generally uses a thin, flexible tube with a camera at the front to view particular areas of the body, depending on the referral.

The most well-known of these procedures are gastroscopy and colonoscopy, which are used to view, for gastroscopy, the stomach and oesophagus, and for colonoscopy, the bowel. I am advised, and I am sure anyone who has been through this procedure would know, including Mrs Jones, that endoscopies require significant preparation involving reduced diet, clear fluids and preparation to cleanse the gut. Because of this, it is not feasible to fill procedure appointments at short notice.

It is also important to note that, while endoscopy procedures are commonly day procedures, they do involve sedation with a level of risk and the potential for complications, just like surgical procedures. One such risk associated with colonoscopy is a perforated bowel and, while rare, this can be extremely serious and indeed life-changing. In the ACT these procedures are currently undertaken by our brilliant and dedicated public medical specialist gastroenterologists. They provide these services to ACT and New South Wales residents principally through Canberra Health Services. Endoscopy services at Calvary Public Hospital Bruce are provided through visiting medical officer arrangements. These specialists manage their own waitlists for public patients.

The CHS endoscopy unit is compliant with national guidelines surrounding the number of scopes that can be undertaken on a list at each session. An optimal endoscopy involves careful and detailed inspection to ensure no abnormalities are missed and, if any are found, they are safely dealt with endoscopically at that time. It also needs to be done with a level of skill to minimise the risk of any complications. In this context, I think it was rather glib of Mrs Jones in her comments to media earlier in the week to say, “These are the types of procedures we should be able to just pump through a lot of in a day.”

Nevertheless, Mrs Jones's motion brings the Assembly's attention to the important issue of waiting times for endoscopy procedures in the public system in the ACT, and we do have challenges in our system. Some of these challenges are unique to the ACT and some are national. Nationally, waiting times for endoscopy procedures are a challenge for all jurisdictions. This is due in part to the high number of referrals received through the national bowel screening program. Over the last few years these referrals have grown rapidly.

The latest AIHW report on participation in the national bowel screening program shows that, in 2017-18, the ACT had a participation rate of 45 per cent compared to the national average of 42 per cent. This is good news. In the ACT, this means we receive about 150 referrals per week through the national bowel screening program. This is in addition to routine referrals through GPs. The program is an excellent initiative, as Mrs Jones has said, but it does drive a significant increase in demand for colonoscopies. These referrals from the national bowel screening program are cases which need to be prioritised and this does have an impact on wait times for category 3 patients on the list. As per the national bowel screening registry, the average rate of cancer in the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program is about 0.7 to one per cent, and significant non-cancer polyp around three per cent. All jurisdictions are having to shift and adjust their infrastructure to account for the increasing referral numbers, and this has presented significant challenges across the country.

Another factor more recently has been the impact of COVID-19, which paused all but the most urgent endoscopy procedures in the second quarter of 2020. That is why additional scopes were specifically factored into our funding boost to catch up on elective surgery and procedures from 1 July 2020.

Locally, as members present would know, the public health system is part of the broader health system, and we also face unique challenges locally with accessibility and affordability of the private sector. Nationally, according to the commonwealth Department of Health, more than 80 per cent of both gastroscopies and colonoscopies have no gap when completed in the private system. However, in the ACT, the jurisdiction with the highest private health insurance coverage in the country, that number is just 42 per cent and 34 per cent of patients respectively for gastroscopies and colonoscopies who do not pay a gap. Just so no-one is in any doubt, no other jurisdiction is below 70 per cent. In addition, for those that do pay a gap, which for Canberrans is more than double the rate nationally, the ACT is the most expensive jurisdiction for both procedures.

In a policy reality where the commonwealth encourages private health insurance uptake through taxation policy and subsidies to reduce demand on the public health system, the high out-of-pocket cost reduces the likelihood of the use of private health insurance in the ACT. Ultimately, this puts further pressure on the public system as the only financially accessible option for many Canberrans.

However, there are elements that the ACT government can control. I am happy to say, Mrs Jones, but I know you will be disappointed to hear, that we are working on this. To address the impacts I have outlined, Canberra Health Services is proactively

recruiting, both nationally and internationally, more gastroenterologists to provide more public endoscopy services. Several initiatives have also been put in place to address wait times.

In the six months to the end of March 2021, across the system there were 1,085 patients who were overdue who received endoscopies. Nearly 700 of these procedures were funded as part of the \$30 million ACT government investment to reboot the health system following the nationwide shutdown of non-essential elective surgeries due to COVID-19. In addition, in the first six months of 2020-21 additional high risk patients requiring general anaesthetic for their endoscopies were focused on by Canberra Health Services in partnership with Calvary private hospital. Nearly 291 patients received 346 endoscopic procedures at Calvary private, with the rest performed at Canberra Hospital.

However, Canberra Health Services also recognised that more needed to be done to ensure that our waitlists are accurate, that we are able to grow our services and that we have a plan to sustainably deliver services into the future. During the last election ACT Labor was the only party that committed to expand endoscopy services at Canberra Health Services by committing to invest \$16 million to refurbish the endoscopy suites and, in turn, enable an additional 5,000 procedures per year to be delivered.

Mrs Jones's motion notes the number of patients currently on the waiting list. This is something that the ACT government is committed to reducing. It is important to note that, for those patients who were seen over the last three years, the median wait time has been 63 days. So, while very long wait times have been reported for some, that is a matter that is under exploration at the moment.

Our further response to this motion in September will provide the Assembly with more detail on how the government will reduce the number of people on the waitlist and will be informed by a full audit of the waiting list. This will provide greater clarity on the true extent of the waiting list and remove people who have, in fact, accessed services elsewhere in the intervening time. This audit was planned for last year but was interrupted by our response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Undertaking the audit and developing a sustainable long-term plan will take a little bit of time but will increase the public's confidence in our public health system.

Just in relation to those people who are on the waitlist, I have heard anecdotally that it is also sometimes the case that people remain on the waitlist after having received an endoscopy publicly because they are then due to receive a further endoscopy but the original referral time has not changed. There are a range of complications in the waitlist, and that is why we are undertaking the audit.

In addition, let me reassure the public that the ACT's health system will continue to ensure that any patient who is in need of urgent attention will receive treatment. Anyone who is waiting for an endoscopy and feels that their condition is deteriorating should contact their medical professional to seek advice about how to best manage their condition.

I recognise that Mrs Jones's motion raises important health issues. Labor will be supporting the motion today because—unlike Mrs Jones, who appears to have only just become aware that this is an issue—we already knew that there was more to do on endoscopy. Indeed, we had already committed to do more as part of our comprehensive health platform which we took to the last election. As has already been demonstrated in our first budget since the election, we do, and we will, deliver on our commitments. I look forward to updating the Assembly later this year on how this will be achieved as part of our broader work to continually improve and expand our already excellent health system.

MR DAVIS (Brindabella) (3.31): The ACT Greens will be supporting the motion from Mrs Jones today calling on the government to demonstrate their plan to reduce endoscopy wait times. The ACT Greens know that access to well-resourced, easy-to-navigate, quality secular health care is a fundamental human right and a pillar of our liberal democracy. In a society like ours, everyone who needs medical support should be able to access it when they need it, no matter what their income or their circumstances. Going into the last election the ACT Greens promised to reduce elective wait times. Transparency over the government's plan to do so is of the utmost importance to us and to the Canberra community.

The reports last week in the *Canberra Times* about our endoscopy wait times were alarming, and mirror concerns raised with me by constituents about the long wait times for elective procedures and the impact waiting has on a patient's physiological and psychological health.

It has been posed to me by a number of constituents in recent weeks that the term "elective surgery" fails to fully grasp and truly describe the profound impact of waiting for a procedure, often in pain and worry as your condition worsens. While this is the standard terminology, this motion serves to remind us that elective procedures are not a choice—they are an essential part of our healthcare system requiring strategic management to enable timely and affordable access to care.

There is a growing demand for endoscopies in our health system, partly as a result of the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program, which reduces illness and death from bowel cancer by helping to detect the early signs of this disease in people aged 50 to 74, using a free, simple test that can be done at home.

According to a 2017 study by the Cancer Council, screening for bowel cancer can reduce deaths from the disease by between 15 and 25 per cent. These tests sometimes lead to further investigation through endoscopy. At a population-wide level, this drives the demand on our health system.

The national screening program is an important part of the way we protect people from illness and death as a result of bowel cancer, but it relies upon our local public health system having the capacity to undertake those next steps.

It is clear that wait times for elective procedures are a significant issue facing Canberra Health Services and ACT Health. Across the country, public health systems

are preparing for and responding to the increasing demand on them to service an ageing population and battling the backlog of elective procedures that were delayed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

While this motion speaks directly to endoscopy wait times, on which there are particular pressures, we know there is much broader interest in the community in elective procedure wait times and the government's plan to reduce them.

During estimates and annual reports, the health and community wellbeing committee heard from the minister and the directorate about their progress on the plan to work through the category 2 and category 3 procedures that had been delayed due to federal government policy in the first half of 2020. The ACT government has invested \$30 million in the public health system for prevention, preparedness and recovery of services impacted by the COVID-19 shutdown, including elective surgery. This included undertaking over 650 additional endoscopy procedures that have been completed through public and private facilities. In our report tabled in this sitting, we have recommended that the ACT government continue to address and rectify the elective surgery waitlist that has occurred as a result of the suspension of surgery due to the pandemic.

More broadly, our elective procedure capacity is growing. The ACT has grown elective surgeries at double the national average for the five years up to 2018-19. In 2020-21 the ACT is aiming to deliver at least 16,000 elective surgeries, having delivered 14,015 in 2018-19. But it is clear that something more needs to be done. Canberra needs to continue to plan for and attract medical talent, given the lucrative offers in the private sector and career opportunities offered interstate. The fact that our public facilities need upgrading, and the demand for procedures evidences the need for new public facilities.

Part of the plan for increasing the ACT's health system offering is to build an elective surgery centre at the University of Canberra Hospital precinct. According to the government, this centre will deliver an additional 5,000 endoscopy procedures each year. In the meantime the government is working in partnership with private facilities to enable them to work through patients who remain on the waiting lists.

The issue of elective surgery waiting lists is complex and not easily solved, involving a multitude of different pressure points. But it is an issue that has a profound impact on our health system, and one that needs strategic long-term planning as well as a short- to medium-term response to deal with the current overwhelming pressures on our system.

Again I thank Mrs Jones for her motion, and I look forward to hearing the government's response in September.

MRS JONES (Murrumbidgee) (3.36), in reply: I thank both parties for their input to the debate and the Minister for Health for taking this matter seriously. In the period since announcing this motion, one of the people I was contacted by was a friend whose daughter has suspected Crohn's disease. She has been told to start eating foods

that make her body unhappy, but with no clear knowledge of exactly when that procedure will occur.

I also note that, although we have discussed the median wait times, that is cold comfort to somebody who has been waiting for years. There are no guarantees in this business. If somebody is categorised as a three, that does not mean something will not happen in the meantime. That is one of the reasons that I think it is so important that we focus on this.

I do not accept the assertion that I had no idea there was a problem in this area until it became a media article. We certainly did.

Ms Stephen-Smith interjecting—

MRS JONES: I had no idea it was that bad. I assumed it was bad, because we have a problem with our elective surgery wait times. It is not just that we have a problem; we have a problem relative to other hospital systems in Australia. We have worse outcomes in certain areas—in quite a few areas.

It is all very well and good to say, “People are taking the national bowel screening test and therefore there are a whole lot more people being put on the list.” But that is exactly what the system is meant to do. That is the system working. Don’t we plan for these things? Don’t we know that there is a national bowel screening project on board? I know it is on board and I am not an expert on everything to do with health. But I have seen the ads, and I have relatives that have taken the test. I know that it is a big community push. Therefore why do we wait until after we have a massive backlog to put the intense effort in to address what we probably could have known was coming?

We have also demonstrated during this debate that we can do more. The effects of COVID and the additional investment that was made show that we can use the private system to do public procedures. One of the great things about the COVID response has been all of the hospitals in Canberra working together. I know people who have had procedures through this additional effort in the private sector, not just in gastroscopy or endoscopy but in other areas too. They reported really good services in the private system, and even in the public hospital, on the Calvary campus on the north side.

I am really glad to hear that there is a plan for more investment. I just want to raise this and get the minister and the department thinking intensively about this particular concern. I was shocked when I read it because, while I know there is a problem across elective surgery, I was amazed by the exact volume.

Conditions deteriorate; people do not necessarily pick up on that. If you are in pain, or if you are in a lot of pain, sometimes it is a bit hard to measure, to be honest. I lived through most of my childhood in pain from a burning stomach. I did not even realise; I was just stressed. It is probably one of the reasons I sometimes still get stressed today. After my endoscopy I learned to live a bit differently, I take medications for

my stomach and my life is enormously improved. I was young when I did that. Doing that while young has probably changed the quality and length of my life.

My grandmother, at 50, as a very high level educator running the migrant English education system for the Tasmanian state government many years ago, came home one day and started vomiting blood. She had the same thing. It probably runs in the family. She had endoscopies through her life, so it is a procedure that I know a lot about, because of that family history.

I would like to see from this debate an outcome achieved by the time we get to September. That would make me really satisfied, and I would sing the government's praises if we are able to get it to a better place. It is a commitment and a promise that I make right here. If we have a proper response and a proper reduction in that waiting number, I will be so happy. I will not promise to dance a jig. That might scare some people around here, but I will certainly be singing your praises.

Let us not just see the median wait times come down; let us see that list come right down to a reasonable level, so that people can have hope restored that they will not develop nasty diseases whilst waiting for these procedures and so that we can restore a little bit of faith in this system, which in some instances performs very well but in other instances is letting people down.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Sport—community wellbeing

MR DAVIS (Brindabella) (3.42): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) acknowledges that:

- (a) sport and active recreation are essential parts of physical and mental wellbeing;
- (b) participation in sport and active recreation should be accessible to all ACT community members;
- (c) community sporting clubs play a vital role in building stronger and more resilient communities;
- (d) the contribution of volunteers to sport and recreational activities is significant and should be supported;
- (e) sport and recreation are important sources of employment and economic and social activity;
- (f) sporting events and activities should be undertaken in a way that considers, and minimises the impact on, the changing environment;
- (g) government funded peak sporting groups represent individual sports rather than community sport and recreation as a whole; and
- (h) the ACT Government's strategic long-term plan for sport and recreation "Active 2020" plan expires at the end of 2021; and

(2) calls on the ACT Government to:

- (a) as per the Parliamentary and Governing Agreement, explore options to recognise a sport and recreation industry peak body, to support the sector to respond to the challenges of COVID-19 and beyond. This body would liaise with government agencies on matters relevant to members including:
 - (i) planning and land use;
 - (ii) strategic needs-based funding;
 - (iii) major sporting events;
 - (iv) mass participation community sporting events; and
 - (v) the role of community sport during the COVID-19 recovery phase;
- (b) work collaboratively with this sport and recreation industry peak body, and all other sport and recreation groups in the ACT to develop a new long-term strategic plan for sport and recreation in the ACT;
- (c) develop a comprehensive facilities management plan for the ACT's indoor and outdoor sporting facilities to ensure that maintenance of existing facilities and establishment of new facilities meets community need;
- (d) act on the priority of addressing climate change impacts on ACT Government owned indoor and outdoor sporting facilities with particular efforts made to ensure heat-managed and smoke-free environments;
- (e) examine barriers of participation for Canberrans from low-income households, and report on existing mechanisms and possible steps to combat these barriers; and
- (f) report back to the Assembly no later than December 2021.

Mr Deputy Speaker, say what you mean, and mean what you say. In the ACT election campaign, the Greens took a comprehensive suite of policies to the electorate to support community sport, and I am very proud to stand here today sponsoring the second motion in my name that makes good on those promises.

During the election we made a commitment to the volunteers, the coaches, the players and the half-time orange cutters. We promised that we would provide clarity, certainty and stability to the sporting community by establishing a sports and recreation peak body and creating a long-term facilities management plan.

ACT community sport and recreation organisations do so much for our community. They are fundamental to our community's physical and mental health. Sport is a beloved weekend activity for young kids, a great way of blowing off steam for us adults, and an overall great excuse to get out and about.

When COVID-19 hit, sports and rec showed up for Canberrans, keeping us active and engaged to combat feelings of stress and isolation. It is time for us to show up for them and deliver a comprehensive, big-picture plan for the ACT community and support them to have their voice to government.

This motion also calls on the government to examine the barriers to participation for Canberrans from low income households and report on mechanisms and possible next steps to combat these barriers. Identifying where Canberrans are slipping through the cracks and not being given their due opportunity to play is the first big step towards ensuring that everyone can get on the field, the court, the rink or the ring.

My motion is a response to the feedback that we had from the community. It builds on the parliamentary and governing agreement and it fulfills the promises that the ACT Greens made to the community.

At the risk of tooting our own horn, I want to draw this Assembly's attention to, quite frankly, the mandate that we ACT Greens enjoy now that we have tripled our presence here in the Assembly. I draw attention to this because it indicates that a fair chunk of the community liked what we had to say in our comprehensive policy platform.

Our sports and recreation policy was closely informed by extensive consultation with community stakeholders, who overwhelmingly made it clear to us that they wanted a clear, long-term plan for sports and recreation in the ACT. It is no accident that the Greens came through with flying colours on the Coalition of Major Participation Sports election scorecard, satisfying all four key objectives with our election commitments.

A key concern for a lot of the stakeholders that I have spoken to over the last 18 months, and particularly the last six since my election to this place, is the feeling of a lack of transparency in sports funding. When sports bodies do not know when they are due for their next facility upgrade, it fosters an environment where individual groups feel forced to come cap in hand to ask for that funding. I also worry whether the successful funding of sports groups depends more on the strengths of their lobbying than on their needs.

A peak representative body for sport and recreation groups brings everybody to the table and it provides strategic and overarching advice to government. It creates an environment conducive to the cooperation that sporting organisations have exemplified.

In all of my conversations with stakeholders, it was extremely heartening to hear how often Canberra sports groups would consult to share their facilities and plans so that other groups would not have to duplicate unnecessary work, be it sharing advice for the development plans or coordinating the shared use of fields and sheds. They have made it clear to me that competition should be lively on the field but, to keep it that way, sporting groups really do band together and look after each other.

A peak body would formalise that strong spirit of solidarity among sporting groups and create the space for them to share knowledge and keep on-field competition as vibrant and vigorous as possible. Our sporty Canberran community can be reassured that, with a peak body in place, their organisation stays on the radar of government rather than falling through the cracks.

The current funding model allocates funding on a case-by-case basis rather than considering the bigger picture. The *Planning for indoor facilities and other sports and recreation infrastructure* report commissioned by the ACT government in 2018 tells us:

It is a common problem for sports and recreation planning that land is not always fit-for-purpose or sufficient in size ... Often, a generic allocation of land for sports and recreation is made without a clear understanding of the area needed, the purpose for which it is to be used, and its suitability.

This report identifies a hole in how we currently manage facilities. It echoes frustrations I have heard from community members and key stakeholders—having a new facility shoehorned into the cheapest available land block could miss the mark on what the community has asked for and really needs.

I also reflect on concerns that this kind of funding could be dipped into around election time as a way of locking up certain constituencies. That is not an accusation against any side of politics; all sides of politics are guilty of those kinds of funding announcements around election time. But it does not help our sporting clubs and it does not help them to build for future prosperity.

I am as delighted as anyone to see new sports facilities in my electorate. To paraphrase Bob Katter, let a thousand Olympic-class, twin-sheet ice sport facilities bloom, for all I care. Ice hockey and figure skating teams have worked hard to make that happen. I am excited to see a permanent dragon boating home, a great skate park or reinvigorated tennis courts. I am sure Ms Davidson will back me up when I say I am excited about the developments happening at the Phillip District Enclosed Oval, especially the construction of long overdue female change rooms so that women do not have to change on the side of the rugby field.

These are undeniably instances where the government have identified a real community need and they have worked really hard to meet it. I commend the government for that. We would also love to see the development of a multisport facility in the Woden area and for the government to embrace the opportunities that cycling and mountain biking offer ACT both for local use and for tourism.

Let us also briefly talk about the Mpowerdome in Fadden. As Canberra's largest existing multisport facility, it boasts space for tennis, netball, futsal, cricket, AFL and more—great school programs, a cafe and community space for hire. Since its closure in 2016, the Mpowerdome has remained a grossly underutilised space in the heart of my electorate. As you might have guessed by my questions during recent sitting periods, my constituents and I grow further concerned about the lack of open sports and recreation facilities in Tuggeranong in particular.

The underutilisation of privately owned sports and recreation facilities should be considered in the development of a comprehensive facilities management plan. That comprehensive facilities management plan is just that—comprehensive. By looking at all of the options available to us, we ensure that all sports and recreation groups can get the resources they need when they need it and where it makes the best use of our existing assets.

A plan lets us fund systematically and provides our sports and recreation groups with much-needed clarity rather than having them sing for their supper. Let us come up with a game plan and let our sports and recreation groups get back on the field.

Community sport has a vibrant hub of volunteers—mums, dads, big siblings and supposed retirees, who put aside weekend after weekend for oranges, sausage sizzles and bib-wrangling glory. These are also a lot of the same people who will bend over backwards in a personal capacity to make sure that this great opportunity for community sport is afforded to everyone, including those Canberrans for whom the cost of sports would otherwise price them out of a good time. Season registration is not a negligible sum of money. Even at the casual competition level, consider the cost of uniform, equipment and even reliable transport to and from games and practice, and you start to see how not all Canberrans have the means to afford to play.

I am impressed and inspired by the hard work of sporting groups that I have met with over the last six months. But it should not just be up to them. We, as the government, need to take responsibility for looking after Canberrans from low income households, rather than relying on sports and rec groups to take up the slack. Identifying barriers to participation for these people is the first step in developing good systems to ensure that all Canberrans can be part of our great sports and rec community. It also helps us to support our community organisations to look after their players and volunteers without community organisations having to reach into their pocket.

Sports and recreation are essential to many Canberrans' physical and mental wellbeing. With a long-term plan for indoor and outdoor sporting facilities informed by a peak body that brings all sporting voices to the table and with confidence that sports opportunities are made available to all Canberrans, regardless of income, I am very excited by the vision for sports and recreation in the ACT. I hope all my colleagues share my enthusiasm. I look forward to the Assembly supporting this motion today.

MR MILLIGAN (Yerrabi) (3.51): It is hard to know where to start with this one; I am gobsmacked by it. I have not tried to amend it, as it shows a lack of understanding of the local sporting landscape and the history of this portfolio. I do support more investment in sport and recreation, particularly at grassroots level. The idea of a peak sporting body is not new; in fact it was this government, and Mr Rattenbury as sports minister, who did away with it in 2015!

ACTSPORT ran for almost 30 years as a peak body for sport and recreation. After it was disbanded, most of the decision-making was vested in the Chief Minister's directorate. As recently as 2018, a new body was formed by the leading participation sports in Canberra. This coalition of nine sports has operated successfully in terms of being visible, being connected and lobbying the government. In 2020 it put a proposal to the government to receive funding as a reformed peak body.

Also on this topic today, I can say that this new body has been very effective. Still, the Canberra Liberals do recognise that change in this space is needed. After years of neglect from this government, we lack the facilities and funding that our community deserve to keep pace with growth and broader demands.

With more local talent available, the professionalisation of the sports industry and the University of Canberra offering a leading sports management degree, there certainly is a case to re-establish a broader peak body organisation. I do, however, have concerns and will write to the minister about these, following this debate, to make sure that they are noted.

Currently, there are 72 registered sports in the ACT and most would not qualify as major sports. There is no formal channel for these sports to lobby the government, except through national peak organisations. Worse still, there is no clear avenue for bodies representing recreation activities. If a new peak body is formed, it must include all sports and it must also engage with recreation groups.

As I noted earlier, ACTSPORT was disbanded in 2015, with a key reason being their success in professionalising sport in the ACT. Therefore the forming of such a body should be looked at with caution. A reduction in funding to ACT bodies, big and small, may impact on their ability to employ staff, many of whom are part time. Most importantly, any new body must be run at arm's length by independent active sporting bodies that represent all sports not just the largest or most financially successful. There is scope for a new peak body to provide a strategic and holistic view. I worry that a new peak body may become a vehicle—and cop the blame—for this government to continue to delay investment in community facilities.

My support of this motion has limits. I do think that the assessment of a new body is a good idea, but consideration must be given to the risk factors that I have outlined. However, what makes me frustrated is when Labor and the Greens start talking about facilities and infrastructure. Sadly, this is mostly talk, with very little action.

The Canberra Liberals recognise that for far too long there has been a reactive approach to facilities and funding in the ACT. The lack of adequate sporting facilities across Canberra must be addressed in a timely manner. Investment has failed to keep pace with population growth and trends in participation. Funding has been sporadic and poorly recognises local clubs or community interests. By waiting for this body to be formed before developing a plan, we could see another whole term before anything is built. The delays, endless studies and reports on sporting facilities, without timely outcomes, are shameful. The government conducts feasibility studies, desktop reviews and surveys but rarely delivers recommendations or outcomes.

This motion covers climate change and sport. Weather and smoke certainly have been factors of late. In fact the ACT Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment released a report on this issue. This 2019 document had some great suggestions, none of which have been acted on by this government.

This motion talks about barriers to participation, but not the main one—this government. This Labor-Greens government already administers a wide range of grants. However, most of these grants require professional quotes to be provided, rather than allowing clubs to coordinate their own projects and working bees. Grants aimed at addressing participation across a range of cohorts have failed to address real needs, and the proposal in this motion to examine barriers for low income households

will only reveal the same issues; that is, the lack of facilities. These facilities are not close to home, working families suffer time and financial constraints, and there is a lack of practical government support.

In nearby Queanbeyan, families are able to access many state-of-the-art facilities. They can walk to their local oval or send their kids to play indoor sports. Here we have poorly maintained ovals, many left in ruin or without basic facilities like change rooms or toilets, and facilities for female participation are rare. We have waiting lists for indoor sports because of a shortage of venues. We have no sport vouchers or assistance for hardworking families. Worst of all, we have no long-term plan and no vision.

While the Canberra Liberals will support this motion today, it is with reluctance. A new peak body has potential as a concept, but we are cautious about how it will operate under this Labor-Greens government. We believe more investment in sport and recreation—in both activities and facilities—and a long-term plan, are essential. In fact, that is why the Canberra Liberals developed, in 2019, “Find your game”. I am glad that this Labor-Greens government is taking a leaf out of the Canberra Liberals booklet and, if they need any further assistance, I am happy to sit down with them. Any investment in sport and recreation provides greater outcomes for our community. I notice that in this motion we are missing the important area of recreation.

The Canberra Liberals were out listening to the community. We spoke to all of the organisations. We spoke to the new major participation sports organisation. We developed the Canberra Liberals plan, “Find your game”. As I said the Canberra Liberals are more than happy to work with this Labor-Greens government to deliver what should have been delivered many years ago. They have been in power now for 20 years, and we still see a lack of facilities and a lack of investment in sports right across this territory.

Seriously, something needs to be done in this space. I am just concerned that it may take longer to get anything happening here. At the end of the day, it will be the mums, dads and kids out there that are participating in sport and recreation that miss out.

DR PATERSON (Murrumbidgee) (3.59): I wish to thank Mr Davis for bringing this motion to the Assembly. I concur with all of the points that Mr Davis raised in his motion, including that sport and active recreation are essential to an individual’s sense of physical and mental health and wellbeing, and that participation should be accessible to all ACT community members. These are very important matters to me.

Our local sporting groups and clubs, together with a large number of volunteers, are vital to the viability and accessibility of sport and physical recreation opportunities for all members of our community. I thank everyone who donates considerable time each year across many disparate aspects of sport and recreation.

In my local electorate of Murrumbidgee, I have engaged with many local sporting groups and organisations over the last few months. I have heard from these groups and individuals about their passion for, and commitment to, the sports and recreational activities which they are part of.

Local sporting groups are often a way for new residents to meet new people, to make friends and establish lifelong social networks. They provide a sense of belonging, identity and pride. A large number of the Canberra population spend their evenings and weekends running kids around to various sports. Different sports require different levels of infrastructure and, given the thriving sporting environment in the ACT, there is significant competition for financial resources, facilities and support across Canberra.

There are small, minor upgrades and investments on which I am more than happy to work with local groups to raise awareness and notify them of relevant grant opportunities. However, there are also bigger projects that require significant investment, such as the Weston Molonglo Football Club's request for lights on additional ovals so that they can field games and training at night.

I am committed to advocating for the needs of sporting groups in the electorate of Murrumbidgee. I am committed to promoting their activities through my social media and I am committed to having regular ongoing dialogue with these groups. I support the motion to ensure we continue to collaborate with and explore options to further recognise the sport and recreation sector peak body in the ACT.

Given the varying nature of our diverse sporting groups, there are often competing demands for resources. It is important that we explore options to ensure that all the interests are met and represented in a collaborative and coordinated way. I will be particularly interested in the government's report examining barriers to participation for people from low income households and what can be done to address this.

I thank Mr Davis for bringing this motion to the Assembly and offer my support.

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (4.02): I could not let this opportunity go by without rising to note the hypocrisy from the Greens when it comes to sport and local sporting clubs. I would concede that there are a number of pretty good things in this motion. Madam Speaker, you have already heard that the Liberals are not going to oppose it, but I just love it when my friend Mr Davis stands up here in this place and makes out that he cares for our local sporting organisations. I understand that this motion is not, at its core, about sports funding. It is difficult to find what its core is. But when we are talking about the problems that are facing most grassroots sports organisations, for many of them it is money. It is access to funding.

Luckily, in our town—if Mr Rattenbury were here, he would give me the eye roll—we still have a relatively strong clubs sector, which does ensure that many of these sporting clubs get access to the funding that they need. However, a strong part of the CLAG agreement involved a somewhat stealthy program to have our clubs transition away from gaming. I do not believe for a single moment that Mr Rattenbury's utopian vision of that transition will actually materialise. What I am saying is that I do not believe it will be nearly as successful as he is anticipating, but let us for a moment consider: what if it is?

Let us for a moment consider what would happen if indeed Mr Rattenbury's vision is realised and our clubs transition very quickly completely away from gaming. Let us all consider what happens to our grassroots sporting groups when the gaming is gone and, all of a sudden, that massive community injection is also gone.

As we ponder the re-establishment of a sports body to replace the one that was taken away by the CLAG in the last decade, it is worthwhile for us to ponder whether this government, this cash-strapped government, will have either the will or the financial means to stump up the missing funding if indeed Mr Rattenbury is successful.

Let us also consider that the territory would be further cash-strapped in that we would have lost the tax revenue from gaming. Additionally, what about the support services that we would be compelled to provide to ACT problem gamblers, who would undoubtedly travel to Queanbeyan and then return home here to the ACT? We as a territory will no longer have access to the money provided by clubs for this.

I think that we should, as an Assembly, be very careful about what we wish for.

MS DAVIDSON (Murrumbidgee—Assistant Minister for Seniors, Veterans, Families and Community Services, Minister for Disability, Minister for Justice Health and Minister for Mental Health) (4.05): Madam Speaker, I would like to make a few remarks about community sports facilities in my electorate of Murrumbidgee.

As many people who have attended a Woden Community Council meeting would know, I am a big fan of multi-use indoor sports courts. With the loss of the former Southern Cross Club basketball courts in Woden, as well as the CIT sports hall, there has been increasing pressure on school sports halls and other small community halls.

For activities that need a larger space or a higher roof—badminton, for instance—there is often nothing in the Woden area that can be booked by a small volunteer-run community group, so people are forced to book sports courts further afield, for example in Tuggeranong, Belconnen or even Queanbeyan. I have not even started on the need for facilities in Weston Creek and Molonglo Valley.

I love Tuggeranong; some of my favourite people live there. And I do not mind a bit of travel for my favourite sports. But having sports and recreation facilities close to where people live has benefits beyond just physical fitness. Research shows that shared sports and recreation facilities that can be accessed easily by small informal groups help to build social connection. When two groups who do not normally engage with each other are sharing the same physical space, it is a great way to literally find common ground and get to know each other's experience and interests. It builds empathy and connections across our community, instead of each of us only interacting with our already established separate groups.

I loved sharing indoor sports courts with fencing, gymnastics, badminton, basketball and skating before the Woden indoor basketball courts were demolished. But it is not just indoor sports that I am into. The ACT government's recently announced upgrades to the Phillip enclosed oval will enable more games for multiple football clubs,

including better facilities for women's rugby. I am greatly looking forward to seeing the Royals women play there. I am sure the irrigation upgrades at Curtin oval will be appreciated by a range of clubs, including the Rebels baseball and Easts junior Rugby Union. And we are still appreciating the upgrades to the cricket facilities in Phillip that enabled visiting teams to train here last summer.

I was very happy to see the ACT government's announcement in February that Belconnen skate park will get a competition-standard half-pipe. This gives me hope that in future perhaps we will also see funding for a skate park in Dickson.

Most of all, I would like to see a facilities management plan and support for a community sport and recreation peak body to give us long-term strategic advice on our plans for our city. If for no other reason than that you will never have to hear me advocating for indoor sports courts in Woden ever again, I hope you will all support Mr Davis's motion!

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) (4.08): I welcome the opportunity to talk on this motion today. I was happy to work with Mr Davis in putting this motion together for the Assembly. It replicates what is in the parliamentary and governing agreement. I will continue to explore this work with sport and recreation representatives—as I have in the past—as I have committed to do.

It is important to note, as Mr Milligan said, that there was a sports organisation peak body, SPORTSACT, which ceased operating six years ago. Since the ceasing of SPORTSACT, significant changes in the representation of the sports communities have occurred with their increasing sophistication and with their being able to employ people to do that sort of work with the ACT government and within their communities—more than there had been in the previous 30 years. The SPORTSACT work was not really required, as these sports communities became more sophisticated and were able to work and represent themselves to governments in a way they had not been able to before.

Also, after that, once I became sports minister, I revamped with the sports community the CBR Sport Awards. That was significant work. It was previously done by SPORTSACT, but we really zhooshed it up. Mr Milligan will agree, having attended those sports awards celebrations at the Arboretum, what a fantastic celebration of all our sports that was—not just at the elite level, but also at the community-based level, recognising everybody in our sports communities from volunteers all the way up to gold medal elite athletes. I really enjoyed being with all our sports communities in celebrating their achievements across the ACT.

I want to mention a couple of other things that Mr Milligan referred to around women's sport, in particular, and women's facilities. I remind members in this place that for as long as I can remember, and well before that, women's sports facilities did not exist, because sports facilities and pavilions were built by men for men. Who

would ever imagine that women would go and play football on a sports field anywhere? Who would ever imagine that happening?

Under my leadership, with the Sport and Recreation portfolio, the ACT government has been improving women's participation in sport by improving those facilities and making sure that they are more inclusive; making sure that there is increased and more certain funding for our elite athletes, the Canberra Capitals and Canberra United teams; and ensuring that our sports organisations that receive triennial funding from the ACT government have at least 40 per cent of women representatives on their boards.

When I suggested that we needed to increase women's participation in those sports organisations, there were suggestions that the world might fall in. It did not. They managed to find women who were able to do that work. Crazy, I know! Now, all those women are happily engaged, and those sports communities have much more diversity of experience and knowledge because of women's representation on those sports boards. I will not forget—I need to remind some of the newer members in this place—Mr Milligan's previous comments about the ridiculous amount of focus on women's sport in the ACT. I remind everybody about his interest in women's participation in sport before he starts suggesting that the ACT government is not doing that work.

With regard to participation in sport—particularly for those in our community who might not ordinarily have the chance—before the election ACT Labor committed to an expansion of bursaries within our schools for parents and families and young people who might need a hand up to be able to participate in sport or access other items that they might need for their education or outside school. That will be expanded across our primary, high school and college systems. We also have the Housing ACT participation grants, which Ms Vassarotti and I have announced today. There are 120 individuals accessing those participation grants—doubled because of the increased need within that community, particularly through COVID. The ACT government also partners with a charity organisation Every Chance to Play, which provides funding for families and individuals who need that support most. There is a lot of work already happening to make sure that, in a very targeted way, funding and support go to individuals that need it most.

The ACT government has two pieces of work in 2021. We are working closely with the sector to do them. They include the review of the sport and recreation grants program and the sport and recreation strategic plan. Last year during the bushfires, as everybody was coming to terms with a reduction in sport and recreation activity because of the impact of smoke and heat on our sports community, I indicated a specific plan to take into account the change to our climate and how sports would be able to continue, moving forward, with regard to, particularly, increases in heat due to climate change. I look forward to working with our sports community on that.

The ACT government also continues to invest in infrastructure. I have already talked about the upgrades to pavilions, particularly to ensure that they are more female friendly and inclusive for everyone. Our investment in infrastructure in the last term totalled \$122 million across our city.

We will be investing in the home of football in Throsby and the Stromlo Leisure Centre in Molonglo, a fantastic epicentre for recreation at Stromlo Forest Park. We have already progressed new tennis facilities in Gungahlin, a new home for dragon boating, major upgrades to the Phillip enclosed oval, upgrades to netball, and much more.

These commitments are significant. We know that as our community grows, our city expands and the needs of our sports evolve, we have the highest participation rate in the country. That has increased, particularly this year. All our sports communities are saying that they have had a real increase in the number of people who are wanting to sign up to participate in a whole range of different sports across our community, particularly women's sports. We know we need to work with them and continue with that investment.

Going to climate change, through all the projects I have mentioned, we need to understand how we develop and upgrade sports facilities better. That includes how we reimagine participation in our landscape, with extreme heat, smoke and storms, which will be increasingly prevalent.

Despite being an active community, the ACT, like other jurisdictions, has large sections of the population that are under-represented in sports. The government will continue to look for opportunities to increase participation across this community. Opportunities to participate in sport and recreation are important for community wellbeing and connectedness. The government will support this by continuing to work with the sector, investing in facilities and breaking down barriers.

I again thank Mr Davis for bringing on this motion today. I look forward to continuing to work with our sport and recreation sector to ensure that every child, every family and every person gets to participate in the sport that they choose.

MR DAVIS (Brindabella) (4.16), in reply: I put in a concerted effort to bring a motion to the floor of this Assembly that I was convinced, perhaps in my naivety, would be completely uncontroversial and universally supported. But heaven forbid we find an opportunity not to be in opposition!

Mr Milligan, you are the right man to be the opposition spokesperson for sports and rec. You must be a keen gymnast, given your presentation. You started by saying "I don't understand it; I don't know why we are doing it" and went to pretty much reaffirming a lot of the points I made in my motion before reluctantly being dragged to accepting it and supporting it. No-one is holding your hand up for the vote, Mr Milligan—you are free to vote any way you like—but I will take an affirmative vote for today's motion as an acknowledgement by the Canberra Liberals that we do need a facilities management plan; that sport and recreation, and all sporting groups, deserve a seat at the table when government is making a decision over facilities; that they need a peak body to best represent their interests; and that sport is great. I will take support of my motion to indicate exactly that.

As I understand it, Madam Speaker, the point of the concluding remarks in the last 10 minutes is to sum up the motion. Given Mr Parton's insinuation that he did not quite understand it, it would seem that that needs to be done.

Sports are great. Sports groups should be part of the conversation. We need to know exactly what we own and what it looks like as we develop a facilities management plan. Poverty or household income should not be a barrier to accessing sport. That is a nice simple summary. I am glad that we are in unity on that one.

Mr Milligan, you raised a few points in your contribution to the debate that are factual inaccuracies that need to be clarified.

You made the suggestion that the motion did not necessarily include recreation. The word "recreation" is mentioned nine times in the motion. I very thoroughly have gone to the work of making sure that recreation is included. I just did a bit of a count; it did not take too long.

Mr Milligan: Just not in the title.

MR DAVIS: Just not in the title? Well, it is there nine times through the motion.

I give a lot of credit to my friend Mr Parton! I have a lot of time for my friend Mr Parton; he can turn any motion into a conversation about community clubs. I reckon that if Mr Parton tried hard enough, he could have made Mrs Jones's motion about endoscopy into one about community clubs! It is pretty impressive.

I want to reaffirm—both on my own part and on behalf of my political party—my absolute endorsement of, commitment to and support for the great work that volunteers and community clubs do to support sports in the ACT. We are really committed as a party, and I am really committed as a member, to ensuring that clubs can continue to play that constructive role in our sporting community into the future.

I do not think it is helpful, and I think it confuses the debate, to try to conflate facilities management and sports and recreation funding more broadly with the very separate and very necessary conversation that the Minister for Gaming is having with sporting clubs to ensure that they have long-term, sustainable business models in line with their community expectations.

I put a considerable amount of work into bringing what is only my second motion to this place. In that work, I have liaised with a number of stakeholders throughout the community. You would be interested to know that there is not a stakeholder or volunteer who loves the idea of their kid's jersey being funded by problem gamblers. There is nobody currently engaged in sports and recreation who has made the argument to me that sports and recreation in the ACT, and its future, are sustainable only if clubs continue to collect the same pokies revenue they currently do. Nobody has made that suggestion to me.

I have met with a number of groups, and my motion reinforces what they have told me the problem is. To quote Tony Abbott, I am not the ‘suppository of all wisdom’! Frankly, I fully declare that I am not a particularly sporty person. It has been a joke among the Greens organisation for some weeks that this is my spokesperson responsibility. If you want a real joke, Madam Speaker, come and see me on any sports field trying to handball; it is going to be laughable!

The point of my motion is in direct response to what stakeholders and constituents have said to me. The ACT Greens sports and recreation policy that we took to the election and that was supported by the electorate was informed by the feedback given to us by stakeholders and by the community.

In summary and in closing, sports deserve a seat at the table when decisions are being made that affect them. We need a root and branch review of exactly where sports are being played in Canberra, the facilities which they are subjected to in some instances, and a long-term strategic plan about how we continue to invest to make sports sustainable.

I am encouraged—albeit with the robust contributions made here today—that we as an Assembly are going to unanimously support the motion. Sport is great. I am really excited about spending the next 3½ years as the ACT Greens spokesperson for sports and recreation and finding, reinforcing and developing this newfound love I have for community sport.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Executive business—precedence

Ordered that executive business be called on.

Appropriation Bill 2020-2021

[Cognate bill:

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

Cognate papers:

Committees—Standing—report

Committees—Standing—report—government response]

Detail stage

Schedule 1—Appropriations—Proposed expenditure.

Debate resumed.

City Renewal Authority—Part 1.14

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (4.23): Madam Speaker, I was expecting a speaker from the government. Nonetheless, I will speak.

Mr Barr: I will go last, as I do on budget items. I have already spoken three times in the debate.

MR CAIN: Thank you for that correction, Chief Minister. Madam Speaker, I have here a picture of the areas of Canberra covered by the City Renewal Authority. I realise there is a rule on props or something.

MADAM SPEAKER: There are no props allowed, Mr Cain.

MR CAIN: I seek leave to table this document.

Leave granted.

MR CAIN: I present the following paper:

City Renewal Precinct Places—Map.

I do wonder, just wondering aloud a little, do we need a City Renewal Authority? For example, why do we not have a Belconnen renewal authority? Why do we not have a Gungahlin renewal authority, a Woden renewal authority or a Tuggeranong renewal authority? At the current time why do we not have these other parts of Canberra being given special treatment like the city precinct and inner north seems to be getting along the light rail corridor. I am sure Canberrans living in my electorate, Ginninderra, would like to have their district given special funding and allocation for development and maintenance.

The City Renewal Authority has an operating cost of \$23.245 million and a capital cost of \$59.161 million and I do query whether we need this separate authority, given the neglect shown to other parts of Canberra. It is a focus on one part at the expense of others. I do wonder too what proportion of the budget the City Renewal Authority has at its disposal compared to expenditure targeting other districts of Canberra. I suspect other districts are poor losers. I think of the many worthy projects in my electorate of Ginninderra, and I am sure there are other places in this city that would love to see this kind of expenditure, or part thereof, redirected to their neighbourhoods in Canberra.

I give some brief examples: the wonderful local initiative for developing play space in Melba, the SMILE initiative; upgrades to Florey Oval adjacent to a primary school that has need of such a facility; local shopping centres that need extra infrastructure like shaded areas, play equipment and public toilets—for example, Evatt shops, Paige shops, Florey shops, just to name a few; perhaps a focus on better cycling infrastructure for Ginninderra so that arterial roads like Kingsford Smith Drive, which has been recently re-marked to eliminate double-line traffic passage, which can be reviewed to see if there could be a dual lane and capacity for cycling down that main arterial road at Belconnen; and of course, as has been said many times this week, higher priority for better housing services, better policing services so that the community can feel safe in their neighbourhood. It is disappointing that there is one particular part of Canberra that is receiving disproportionate attention and expenditure, in my opinion, and I wish the government would reconsider its funding priorities.

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism) (4.27): I will give Mr Cain the benefit of the doubt, given he obviously has not been a member of this Assembly for very long and may not be familiar with the context of the establishment of the City Renewal Authority and the Suburban Land Agency and may not be familiar with the distribution of functions and responsibilities in relation to land release, urban renewal and indeed the other functions that he has requested for other parts of Canberra which are indeed carried out by the Suburban Land Agency and the City Services directorate in the main.

The City Renewal Authority was established by legislation in this place about five years ago and has a range of responsibilities. I refer Mr Cain to the City Renewal Authority and Suburban Land Agency Act 2017, where he will find the direct responsibilities and issues that the CRA has responsibility for as well as those of the Suburban Land Agency. He questioned why there were not development authorities associated with different parts of Canberra. The answer is that, in fact, over the history of the development of those areas, both pre self-government and during the self-government period, there have indeed been precinct development authorities. There was a Gungahlin development authority, one of the ones that we had in the early days of self-government. Prior to self-government, the National Capital Development Commission, a predecessor to the now National Capital Authority, was indeed responsible for the development of Belconnen, the Woden Valley and Tuggeranong.

The issue of renewal goes to the obvious point that the oldest part of Canberra is indeed the city centre. The rationale for the precinct approach is one that is consistent with redevelopment and urban renewal precincts in other states and territories, delivered by governments of both political persuasions, including, amongst others, the Barangaroo precinct under a Liberal government in Sydney; South Bank in Brisbane that was also a renewal precinct; various examples in South Australia under both Labor and Liberal governments; and in Western Australia under both Labor and Liberal governments. So it is not a new concept to have a defined area precinct authority. The rationale for this particular one is that at the time we had the biggest single transport and infrastructure project in the territory's history underway. Mr Cain tabled the precinct map and he might note that that is indeed the route of stage 1 of light rail as it comes through the inner north and the CBD. And that is why the precinct is shaped the way that it is.

Again, Mr Cain, I do not expect you to be across every element of debate on planning and urban renewal, given you have only been in the opposition shadow spokesperson role for a couple of weeks and in the Assembly for about five months now. At the time there was a concerted push by the Canberra Business Chamber and by a range of planning stakeholders, following an extensive amount of community consultation and discussion, that we needed a CBD renewal focus. I have been in this place longer than anyone else now. I have heard this debate about city versus town centre go round and round probably a thousand times in the 15 years I have been a member, and then you add the five years I worked here before that. But the polycentric nature of employment within our city is where the focus should be. The oldest and tired infrastructure is in the city; the area where the transport investment as part of stage 1

light rail is in the city; most of Canberra's heritage buildings that are outside the parliamentary triangle, which of course is the responsibility of the commonwealth government, are in the city. So this is the area for urban renewal.

CBDs are fundamental to cities' economies, and Canberra's CBD has doubled its economic output in the last 15 years from around \$3 billion to \$6 billion. The residential population in the CBD, by deliberate plan, has doubled and will double again to manage that significant infrastructure program and to facilitate the billions of dollars of private sector investment that the government is seeking through a range of public-private partnerships, transport related, social infrastructure related: for example, convention centres, stadiums, new theatre precincts. These are single assets that there will only be one of in a city of 450,000 people. And through two decades of planning work and countless debates, it was determined that those key pieces of infrastructure would be located centrally so that they could serve all Canberrans. The City Renewal Authority, a small team, is tasked with the delivery, in partnership with key agencies, of that massive renewal agenda.

The legislation that established the City Renewal Authority allows for other precincts to be identified in the future as priority urban renewal precincts. And the government—through City Services, through Minister Gentleman's directorate, and through the Suburban Land Agency—also undertakes renewal projects outside the CRA precinct. This point in time and this decade, 2017 to the mid-2020s, is going to see the most significant renewal of the oldest part of Canberra, and it needs a dedicated agency to manage that renewal. It is beyond business as usual.

To address Mr Cain's specific concerns, if we took all the staff who currently work on renewal projects in the territory out of City Services, out of planning and out of the SLA, to focus just on this piece of work in the city, then he is correct—not much else would happen in Canberra. Given the scale of the program, we needed additional resources. I brought legislation to this place. It was passed in 2017 and the City Renewal Authority was established. It is undertaking incredibly important work, facilitating investment that will only come in Canberra's CBD. We need to understand that there is a massive, massive competition for local capital and that Canberra at 440,000 people with an economy the size that we have is not going to be able to compete with other major cities in Australia, let alone within the South Pacific, the Southern Hemisphere and indeed globally unless we have a dedicated focus on chasing that investment and securing it for Canberra. Why? That means jobs, opportunity and economic growth for our city.

In what sorts of areas, I hear you ask. In the arts and culture, the new theatre precinct; in convention facilities; in new hotels. A key part of the City Renewal Authority's responsibility is what people will have seen unfolding around our CBD, which is investment in public spaces and places—the 50,000 people who come to work in the city every day. Its residential population is approaching 30,000 and it is going to keep on growing. So it is fundamentally important to Canberra's future economic success that we have a viable and vibrant CBD. We will always have the most polycentric distribution of employment of any Australian city, and there is more employment outside our CBD than there is inside our CBD. We are one of the few cities in Australia that has that feature.

So rather than looking at this as the city taking away from town centres, why do we not instead approach this as a successful Canberra requiring a successful CBD and successful town centres? Let us take a glass half-full approach. If I can offer one bit of advice to Mr Cain as he takes on his new responsibilities, this city will only thrive if we talk it up. And if we spend all our time in this place complaining about which part of the city gets investment in one particular investment cycle, that is not going to be good for Canberra's long-term economic health, nor will it be good for attracting the national and international investment that our city needs to grow.

We have a tiny pool of local capital. We are a young city. We are not a city that is full of wealthy people who have been living here for centuries. Canberra has to attract capital from outside in order to grow, more so than most other Australian cities. And if Australia's economic development story has been one of importing capital from overseas, that is doubly true for Canberra. That is why we have a City Renewal Authority. It is the only way that our CBD can grow and grow effectively in our lifetimes. We can just sit back and hope that people might come and invest here, or we can go and actively chase it, guide it and deliver better outcomes. That is how we are going to get a new theatre quicker. That is how we are going to get a new stadium quicker. That is how we are going to get new convention facilities. We have got to attract that capital. We need an agency to drive that, and the City Renewal Authority is doing an outstanding job. I commend the appropriation to the Assembly.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Cultural Facilities Corporation—Part 1.15

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (4.38): I will speak very briefly on Cultural Facilities Corporation. I would like to acknowledge all the work that they have done throughout the COVID-19 period. During the hearings that we held, it was good to hear all about the flexibility in the work that they did. They still have a way ahead of them, coming out of the pandemic, but, once again, my congratulations to them. As a final point, I would also like to say that we have talked for a long time about a new theatre precinct and a new Canberra theatre, and I am looking forward to hearing a lot more about that in the future. Rather than all the talk, it would be nice to see some action.

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (4.39): The Cultural Facilities Corporation is an ACT cultural leader for the arts and heritage. It manages the Canberra Theatre, CMAG, Lanyon Homestead, Calthorpes' House, and Mugga-Mugga Cottage. As the Greens crossbench spokesperson for the arts, I want to take a moment to acknowledge the corporation's work over the past 18 months. I am sure that we all have rich memories of major performances, or a visit to a quirky collection or one of Canberra's historic homesteads. I particularly enjoyed last year's activism exhibit in CMAG, which touched on some of the big social movements in Australia and showed how these fights were driven by ordinary people.

Culture is so important. It brings us together in shared experiences and helps us reflect on changing times. I want to recognise the amazing achievements of the Cultural Facilities Corporation, which has navigated a lot of change over the past year. It is a

good example of what has happened to all of our arts venues and all of our artists over the past year. First, they had to deal with bushfires. Those threatened the staff, volunteers and visitors at some really remote locations. It required a lot of thought about evacuation and care about risk. Those fires also threatened some irreplaceable historical artefacts, and the Cultural Facilities Corporation had to come up with a plan for that too.

After that came the smoke, and that shut down a lot of the facilities. It drove away the audiences and, once again, it threatened to damage those precious artworks. Once the corporation dealt with that, there came the constant program and venue changes arising from COVID. I have heard that they got really good at cancelling and reissuing tickets! They are experts at it now. All of this they adapted to, just like the rest of our arts sector had to adapt.

One of the lesser-known roles is in making jobs for our practising artists. A lot of artists cross-subsidise their incomes by working front-of-house at shows or working in galleries. I am quite worried about jobs and income for artists at the moment, as everybody here knows, and I am keeping a close eye on their jobs and income. I am really glad to see that the Canberra Theatre and CMAG are back to good capacity and making those jobs again. It is a boon to our art sector and our audiences; but it is also a boon to our practising artists who are working there. I hope we get to return to full capacity for every single venue really soon.

So, get out and visit the places you love. We lost them for a while and now we know how much we like them. It is a real way for us all to heal and process everything that happened. Congratulations to the Cultural Facilities Corporation for coping so well.

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) (4.42): Through this budget the government is recognising the importance of arts, culture and heritage in our community, including through making a major investment to support the work of the Cultural Facilities Corporation.

As Ms Clay noted, the CFC manages a range of major cultural assets: the Canberra Theatre Centre, the Canberra Museum and Gallery and three historical places—Lanyon Homestead, Calthorpes' House and Mugga-Mugga Cottage. The government is providing \$1 million in additional financial support for the corporation in this budget, the purpose of which is to assist it in addressing the impacts of COVID-19 on the corporation's theatre venues, which have led to a major drop in theatre income due to having to cancel or reschedule shows. The \$1 million provided through this budget is in addition to an extra funding of \$2.5 million provided to the corporation as part of the 2020 August Economic and Fiscal Update. Together, these allocations of additional funding are supporting the corporation as it rebuilds its theatre operations. They form an important part of the ACT's creative recovery from the pandemic.

We are very pleased that entertainment venues, including the Canberra Theatre Centre, have recently returned to 100 per cent capacity of audiences. As I mentioned here yesterday, that has resulted in another 34,000 tickets that the Canberra Theatre Centre

has been able to issue. I know that Canberra audiences are snapping them up, but the theatre business does still have some way to go in fully recovering from the situation and resuming normal levels of activity, including and especially during the national touring productions. This extra funding supports the theatre in returning to pre-COVID levels of business and will therefore deliver important benefits for the ACT economy. In the 2018-19 financial year, the theatre centre produced a total economic impact for the ACT of nearly \$33 million, with a contribution to the visitor economy of over \$21 million.

The additional funding provided to the corporation to assist it in recovering from COVID is in addition to the government's investment of over \$9 million each year for the corporation's operations. The extra funding provided this year and our ongoing investment in it demonstrate the government's commitment to enhancing the cultural life of our community and reinforcing Canberra's status as a creative capital. In commending this appropriation to the Assembly, I want to thank the many staff employed through the corporation, CEO Harriet Elvin and the board for the creative ways in which they have responded and engaged to thrive under incredibly difficult circumstances. We are indebted to them for their professionalism and advocacy, for how much they give to our community and for how they care about our community, ensuring our cultural and creative recovery. I, and many members in this place, look forward to engaging with all of the important institutions under the corporation's umbrella over the coming months, years, and decades ahead.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Icon Water Limited—Part 1.16

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Legal Aid Commission (ACT)—Part 1.17

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (4.46): I will not take too much of the Assembly's time. Unfortunately, it has been the theme of this entire budget debate—the Labor-Greens government does not have its spending priorities right. The services provided by Legal Aid to Canberrans are more often than not in relation to family violence, mental health, employment, NDIS and care and protection, amongst others. These are strongly impacting issues and events that go to the wellbeing of our community.

Unfortunately, we heard during estimates earlier this year, from Legal Aid representatives themselves, that they are being asked to do more with less. In addition, the committee heard that the Tenancy Advice Service has been rolled into Legal Aid, asking them to take on even more responsibilities. Unfortunately, and yet again, under this Labor-Greens government Canberra's most vulnerable seem to be losing out.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong—Attorney-General, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Gaming and Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction) (4.47): Legal Aid does perform a vital role in providing legal support to those who need it most. The legal needs of vulnerable Canberrans have grown in both volume

and complexity, particularly as a result of the pandemic, and Legal Aid has been vital in preventing these complex problems from deteriorating.

COVID-19 has led to a very regrettable increase, particularly in the area of family violence advocacy needs. Even without a grant of aid, Legal Aid is often there as the first step when vulnerable people desperately need help. They often provide that important landing point, and this is help we cannot afford not to give. This is much the same in the area of residential tenancies, which Mr Cain was just referring to, where Legal Aid provides a vital service to make sure that people are given the best chance to be able to stay in secure housing. The important areas covered by Legal Aid are myriad, from criminal to civil law, family violence to the incredibly high-volume helpline service, and from youth law to family law. Every one of these services helps to better the life of somebody with nowhere else to go.

I mentioned some items yesterday under the broader JACS definition, but they bear mentioning here again in the context as to the Legal Aid components. Of the \$2.3 million over four years for domestic and family violence funding, \$1.3 million is for Legal Aid ACT's family violence unit, which is actually based in the court's building. There is also the \$1 million in 2020-21 to JACS Legal Aid and Community Services Directorate to develop and introduce a therapeutic care court, for care and protection matters. I think that these are both really important investments in giving Legal Aid additional capacity and in the case of the therapeutic care court, starting a new mechanism that will make a material difference in the lives of some of Canberra's most vulnerable families.

I recently had the pleasure of visiting the Legal Aid offices and meeting some of the staff who provide these vital and much appreciated services. This can often be very difficult work, for very vulnerable people, and it is delivered in truly innovative ways with real passion, taking full advantage of technology and with a real commitment to engaging with the whole person. Just one example of this is the award-winning community liaison unit, which recognises and caters to the needs of a diverse cohort of clients from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Making these personal connections with people can often make the difference between people getting the help that they need or suffering in silence.

The staff really have a knack for connecting to people who would not see themselves necessarily as coming forward to seek help. Importantly, they break down things like language barriers or people's uncertainty about accessing the system because they have come from overseas. This is why these investments in this budget are so important—to make sure that our community has the safety net in place. Legal Aid is constituted by tenacious, compassionate, confident, wonderful staff, and I extend my thanks to everyone who works there. I look forward to continuing to ensure that the agency is as well supported as it can be.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

ACT Executive—Part 1.18

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Office of the Work Health and Safety Commissioner—Part 1.19

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (4.51): The Canberra Liberals believe that workplace safety is a priority for the ACT. People are able to achieve dignity and self-reliance through work. Every single person has a right to be physically and psychosocially safe at their workplace. It is my understanding that following estimates hearings earlier this year, that WorkSafe ACT has implemented a new case management system to improve data collection and analysis. I look forward to hearing how the system will improve the data and intelligence used for enforcement. Given that compliance rates were only 24.5 per cent in 2019-20, I hope that we see improvements in workplace safety across all workplaces in Canberra. I am happy to engage with the Work Health and Safety Commissioner to understand the needs and goals of that office.

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Manager of Government Business, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Industrial Relations and Workplace Safety, Minister for Planning and Land Management and Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (4.52): I would like to take this opportunity to update the Assembly on some of the achievements of WorkSafe ACT and the ACT government in the budget period. WorkSafe ACT was established as an independent authority in July 2020. In its first year of operating as an independent regulator, WorkSafe has driven improvements to work safety culture through its compliance and enforcement activities and engagement with industry, workers and employers.

This work includes strategies to address present and emerging work health and safety risk, such as psychosocial risks; occupational violence and economic exploitation; silica dust; the safety culture in the construction sector and recommendations from the 2018 independent review; and engagement with the Work Health and Safety Council. WorkSafe has established a dedicated team of inspectors to identify hazards associated with psychosocial risk in workplaces across the ACT, including occupational violence.

In October 2020, an occupational violence networking group was initiated to gain industry and stakeholder insights. This will support the development of a framework for regulatory oversight of occupational violence. WorkSafe is also running a three-year campaign that is focused on safety in the residential construction industry. Since this campaign began in August 2020, 302 improvement notices, 92 prohibition notices and 24 infringement notices have been issued in the ACT. Work has progressed on implementing the outstanding recommendations from the 2018 independent review of ACT work health and safety compliance and enforcement arrangements. Of the 27 recommendations, 22 have now been implemented, with the remaining five recommendations being finalised.

The priorities of WorkSafe ACT and the Work Health and Safety Council are closely aligned. The Work Health and Safety Commissioner is an active member of the council. In August 2020, the Commissioner presented to the council on the psychosocial impact of COVID-19 on the workplace. The ACT government's COVID-19 work health and safety response is based on expert national guidance from SafeWork Australia, as well as expert health advice. A series of work health and

safety policies have been developed that require workplaces to implement the highest level of controls to eliminate or minimise the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

In addition to managing risk associated with COVID-19 itself, changed working arrangements required a strategic, targeted, whole-of-government approach to identifying and addressing psychosocial risks and supporting employee wellbeing. Looking to 2021-22, work health and safety priorities continue to be centred on responses to the pandemic, including transitioning guidance as a hybrid, and other changed working conditions embedded in workplace practices.

WorkSafe is improving its operational effectiveness and efficiency with revised corporate and regulatory governance frameworks, improvements to record management, and the implementation of a new case management system. The Work Health and Safety Commissioner and her team are doing a very important job—and they are doing it extremely well. In this, their first year of independent operation, they have achieved a great deal, and they are working to keep Canberrans safe at work and to crack down on dangerous and dodgy workplace practices. WorkSafe and the ACT government are working to protect the rights and entitlements of workers in the ACT. This important work is a priority of this government, and I am proud that we have a strong independent regulator that supports this.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

ACT Gambling and Racing Commission—Part 1.20

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (4.56): I would like to speak to the appropriation in my role as shadow minister for gaming and community clubs here, irrespective of the fact that much of the cut and thrust on a policy level is handled in the JACS space. I just figure that I have to limit the number of times that I stand up in here so that security do not remove me. I certainly listened very closely to the words from the minister, Mr Rattenbury, yesterday as I sat in the Speaker's chair during that debate. I do applaud the minister, genuinely, for his engagement in this space. He has improved dramatically, Madam Speaker, on his predecessor, Mr Ramsay. Well, he has improved just by turning up. In many instances he has turned up and faced the music, and I think he should be commended for that.

I would suggest, though, that Mr Rattenbury's vision of a timetable for clubs to transition away from gaming is very much a utopian view. The reality is that if clubs transitioned away from gaming in the speed that Mr Rattenbury is hoping, many of them would close. I would also note that much song and dance has been made about the funding that has been given to a number of clubs in the form of government grants as part of this ongoing program to assist clubs to transition.

As this program continues to roll out—although this does not necessarily relate to this particular post-COVID year—most of its funding comes from the clubs themselves in the form of brand new taxes, taxes on clubs who face one of the toughest years that they have ever faced since they were established. As we move forward with this program, we will see the minister giving clubs their own money back, and not all clubs. Of course, it will be only the clubs who have successfully gone through the

process of applying for those funds. We will see some clubs funding their competitors to move forward. I just note that it is probably going to get a little uncomfortable in that space.

Mr Rattenbury tells us that we are not just doing this to satisfy his progressive voter base and that we are not just doing it to virtue signal to a cohort who have never been inside a community club. I would note, of course, that as we went to the election in October, the gaming policies from Labor and the Greens were vastly different. I was always forecasting that Labor would just put up the white flag in this space and hand it over to the Greens, and that is what they have done. But we are not just doing it to virtue signal; we are doing it to curb gambling harm.

One of the inconvenient truths that became crystal clear during the COVID pandemic last year was that if we close clubs in Canberra, we see a phenomenal spike in gaming across the border in Queanbeyan. When the New South Wales clubs reopened, many weeks earlier than those in the ACT, the increase in gaming in Queanbeyan was astronomical. In some venues, on a per machine basis, there was an increase of 600 per cent; it was off the chart.

That experience last year, combined with the fact that the government's ongoing program of gaming regulation here in the ACT has delivered a big fall in turnover in the ACT, which has been mirrored by an increase of exactly the same numbers in Queanbeyan, shows us that the harm minimisation arguments being pushed by Mr Rattenbury do not stack up. We are an island surrounded by New South Wales. Those who are susceptible to gambling harm simply slip over to Queanbeyan when they are not able to play the pokies here. So the biggest single effect about the clampdown on gaming is to, in the first instance, take away turnover from clubs, thus removing jobs, ultimately to close clubs and then remove funding from the many sporting groups and community organisations that absolutely rely on funding from the clubs.

I know that Mr Rattenbury and, based on his reaction, Mr Barr are sick to death of me banging on with this argument. I also know that Mr Rattenbury does listen; he listens to what goes on in these debates. I just need to remind him what those on the ground are saying. Time and again the narrative from those on a mission to end gaming in the ACT is that the ACT has the most lax gaming regulations in the nation. We do not; we just do not.

The movement in this space in the last decade also is quite remarkable. I am not going to list those things, because no-one really cares. In addition to these regulatory changes, taxes have increased three times over this period. New gambling harm levies have also been introduced and increased. All these changes, of course, run alongside the growing and obvious disparity between us and New South Wales.

I would like to refer to the Gambling and Racing Commission 2020-21 budget statements and, in particular, strategic indicator 1. At the end of the day, it is something that I think we all agree we should be doing and that is to reduce gambling harm in the ACT. Much of our direction in this space is governed by data that came from the 2019 ACT gambling survey.

With the greatest of respect to all those who were involved in putting that survey together and rolling it out in the field, I continue to have major concerns with the conclusions of the data. Much of that concern is based on the fact that I was a random participant in the survey. According to my results, I suffer from gambling harm. Much of it is based on the fact that when the survey asks you how much money you have turned over on a particular form of gambling, it specifically asks you not to include winnings in that equation.

So, if on a Saturday afternoon—and I am sure that Mr Barr does this at home—I put \$50 in my TAB account and spend the afternoon having a little punt and I continue to turn that \$50 over—have a little win, invest more, have a few losses and have a little win—over the period of the afternoon I may invest, in total, according to the gambling survey, \$400. But I am playing with the same \$50. That particular fact is not recognised by the survey.

Mr Barr: A bit of sports betting?

MR PARTON: No, it was not sports betting actually; it was horses. All I am saying is that I am keen to keep the jobs of all those who are currently employed in the club sector here in the ACT, but I do hope that I can, in some way, assist Mr Rattenbury in what is our joint goal of reducing gambling harm in the ACT.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong—Attorney-General, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Gaming and Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction) (5.03): I will not speak for long, as I spoke to an extent yesterday. I just want to quickly touch on a couple of points that Mr Parton made. I thank him for his warm words. The point around the fact that some of the money going to clubs is coming from other clubs is, to an extent, true. This is through the Diversification and Sustainability Support Fund. This is a fund where clubs are required to make a contribution, if they are of a certain size, and the government matches that. It is worth the chamber noting that during the COVID period the government did not require the clubs to contribute, but the government kept contributing. The pool did get larger, only through government contribution.

I was very pleased recently to award the first round of allocations under that program. It went to a range of clubs across the city for a range of activities. We had some clubs investing in solar panels, which will help them reduce their energy bills. We had clubs investing in a complete kitchen upgrade. Another club is going to build a childcare centre on their site, because that will create an alternative stream of revenue. A couple of the other clubs are using the money to get consultants in to help them do planning for further diversification. I think that this fund is doing exactly what we want it to do, which is to either help clubs cut their costs or create new streams of revenue, both of which are beneficial to their long-term sustainability.

The point around being an island surrounded by New South Wales is true. It is one of the great challenges that we face as a jurisdiction in a range of areas. The fact that that is the case and the fact that New South Wales is captured by the gaming industry does not mean that the ACT should not do anything. New South Wales is notorious for the

gaming industry having a strong influence over the government. That does not mean that we should be held back by its poor standards.

I was encouraged to see, towards the end of last year, the New South Wales gaming minister actually suggest some new policies. I can assure the chamber that we are looking very closely at what is happening in New South Wales. Where there are opportunities to align ourselves, where good policy comes forward, we will do that because it is beneficial, where it is possible, to line up. I think that we should also not be held to the lowest common denominator by the fact that we are surrounded by the most pro-gambling state in Australia.

There is a lot of work to do in this space, as Mr Parton touched on. There are lots of views. I am quite pleased that the ministerial advisory council will shortly get underway. We have received some terrific nominations. Once those go through cabinet, I will be pleased to share that with the chamber. I have a lot of optimism for that group sitting down and having some pretty robust conversations. I have always thought that it would have been an interesting moment to have been in a few of the clubs when the Chief Minister announced that I was taking the gaming portfolio. I suspect that there were a few sharp breaths drawn. There are some really great people working in the clubs sector. They are full of good ideas—

Mr Parton: I'll tell you about some of those conversations.

MR RATTENBURY: I bet you can, Mr Parton. There are some great people working in the clubs sector. Already they have shared some really good ideas with me. I appreciate that and I look forward to continuing to work with them over the next few years on the agenda that we are moving forward with.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Public Trustee and Guardian—Part 1.21

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (5.06): I will not take up too much of the Assembly's time. It is my understanding, Madam Speaker, that the Public Trustee and Guardian business transformation project is underway. I welcome such a project. It is essential that Canberrans have confidence in our Public Trustee and Guardian. Unfortunately, there have been causes for concern in recent times. In closing, and obviously in brief, I look forward to hearing in future how the new IT system is enabling improved business processes and strengthened assurance.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong—Attorney-General, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Gaming and Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction) (5.07): I thank Mr Cain for his brevity. The ACT government is firmly committed to safeguarding the rights of older Canberrans and Canberrans with a disability. These are the key members of our community that the Public Trustee and Guardian support. We have particularly seen that as a challenge due to the social isolation caused by the pandemic. It has underscored the importance of making sure that we have a well-resourced Public Trustee and Guardian who provide care for those who have no or reduced decision-making capacity, as well as administering estates of last resort.

This service cannot go unperformed. As such, it is incumbent on the government to make sure that it has the funding to operate in response to the needs as they arise. That is why I am very pleased in this budget to allocate an additional \$1.7 million over four years to increase the community service obligation for the Public Trustee and Guardian. They have seen a significant increase in both the costs and the complexity of managing the affairs of their clients, as well as an increase in number. The Public Trustee and Guardian will also increase their own source revenue to cover the cost of managing their clients' accounts.

I just want to take this chance to explain to the Assembly that there are some clients who are quite capable of paying for the services. The Public Trustee and Guardian operate on a basis where those who can afford the services are charged a fee and those who cannot are subsidised by the government community service obligations. So there are two groups there. Through those two additional sources of revenue, the Public Trustee have assured me that they will be able to provide an outstanding service for members of the Canberra community. Also, of course, they have some money in trust. With the low yield fiscal environment we have been in, it is necessary to support the Public Trustee and Guardian in recognition of that. I commend this appropriation to the Assembly.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Independent Competition and Regulatory Commission—Part 1.22

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism) (5.09): Very briefly, I will highlight for the benefit of members the two key pieces of work that the ICRC will be undertaking.

The first, which I alluded to in the legislation introduced this week, around improving competition in the retail market for electricity, is the work developing an industry code which will require retailers to promote their offers to consumers. This work will make it easier for ACT consumers to get better electricity deals by improving price transparency and providing the ability to compare offers.

The second important piece of work that the ICRC are undertaking is a review of non-potable water charges. They will be providing specialist advice on recycled water costs as part of this review. The review will assess non-potable water costs with the intention of assisting high intensity club users of non-potable water in maintaining their operations. I know that this is an issue that has been raised both with myself and with Mr Rattenbury and others. This is important work that the ICRC will be undertaking. I commend this appropriation to the Assembly.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Total appropriated to territory entities.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Treasurer's Advance—Part 1.23

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism) (5.11): Again, very briefly, Madam Speaker, if no-one else will be speaking on this, I just advise that the Treasurer's advance in this budget year represents five per cent of total appropriations. This is significantly higher than would normally be the case; it is normally set at around one per cent of appropriations. The reason for the higher amount is to allow the government to respond to any urgent or unforeseen needs during the COVID public health emergency. A similar provision was put in place for the previous fiscal year.

For the benefit of members, clearly any expenditure against the Treasurer's advance is reported to Assembly members, because nearly \$300 million is a significant amount of money.

In case you had not noticed, colleagues, the listing, distribution and order of debate for the budget is listed by size of appropriation. This is larger than the appropriation for many directorates. The reason for it being this large this year is, as I say, to respond to COVID-19.

When—"when", I will say confidently—we move out of the public health directions, the public health emergency, it would be my expectation that the Treasurer's advance would return to its more normal levels of approximately one per cent of total appropriations. I commend the Treasurer's advance to the Assembly.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Capital works reserve—Part 1.24

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (5.13): The capital works reserve appears to be an unnecessary budget provision that indicates gross mismanagement of our hard-earned taxpayer dollars. I remind the government that the money they spend belongs to constituents. If they managed our money properly and got Canberra's priorities right, we would see major projects delivered on time, on budget, without the need for a reserve. This would free up vital funding to improve the inadequate services being delivered by the government in health care, education, roads, policing, housing, and corrections, to name a few. Instead, we have an infrastructure slush fund to cover up failures. A Canberra Liberals government would get this spending into line and focus it on areas that matter most to Canberrans.

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism) (5.14): I am going to have to again correct Mr Cain's understanding of a legislated provision—within the Financial Management Act, in this instance, something that was debated by this place and agreed to.

It is not a slush fund, I can assure Mr Cain. In its history, it has not been drawn upon. It is a reserve that allows agencies with multiyear budget allocations for capital works—many agencies have large projects that extend over multiple years—to draw on future funding that has been appropriated. It is not to expand the pool of funding but to bring forward funding into the current budget year if capital expenditure exceeds that allocation for that year. You bring it forward and then you subtract it from the future year. It is not net additional spending; it is simply around when, in a project, money is required to be drawn down.

For example, Mr Cain—through you, Madam Speaker—if a project is delivered faster than scheduled, a directorate can access its future year funding, already approved and appropriated by this place, through the reserve to maintain the pace of progress on a project whilst staying within the overall project cost envelope.

The amount available in this reserve—whole of government, in a capital works program that is approaching \$1 billion annually and \$4 billion over the forward estimates period—is \$150 million. It is a small percentage of the territory's total capital expenditure. I regret to say that since its establishment in 2019, no agency has drawn on the capital works reserve; but the mechanism remains available to help accelerate the delivery of a program.

There is an incredible amount of accountability and transparency over the use of funds from the reserve. This is governed in the Financial Management Act 1996 as part of the amendments that I brought to establish the fund that we debated. We had all these discussions; it is on the *Hansard*. It was only in the last Assembly.

The power to authorise payments from the reserve is vested in the Treasurer under section 18E. The Treasurer must notify the Assembly of details on payments from the reserve in the quarterly financial statements that are required under section 18G and section 26 of the FMA.

The territory's financial operations in a year are reported in the annual financial statements that are prepared by the Under Treasurer and then audited by the Auditor-General. Both the annual financial statement and the Auditor-General's opinion on the statement are presented by the Treasurer to the Assembly in accordance with sections 22 to 25 of the FMA.

So there is a rigorous amount of transparency associated with the use of the reserve. I have not yet had to advise the Assembly of use of it, because it has not yet been drawn upon; but I believe the public policy principle and the reason it is there are very sound. We would not want an infrastructure program or project delayed because it was ahead of schedule. That would send a really bad signal, I would argue, to our directorates delivering public works.

That is why the reserve is there. If and when it is called upon, it is reported on. It is not a slush fund. It does not take money away from other projects. It simply allows money to be brought forward from one fiscal year into the current fiscal year. Then any money that is brought forward is subtracted from the money for the future fiscal year. The total project cost remains the same.

It is a very good piece of public policy, an excellent amendment to the territory's Financial Management Act. I commend it to the Assembly.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Total appropriations

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Clauses 1 to 10, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Title

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism) (5.19): As this will be the last opportunity to speak on the appropriation bill, I would like to take the opportunity at the conclusion of the debate to thank members for their contributions over the last three days.

I may have lost the bet—we are going to pass this on Thursday night, not Friday morning—but I thank colleagues very much for keeping their comments relatively brief throughout the course of three days of debate. I particularly thank all of those who have been involved in preparing the committee reports that we are also debating here cognately, including the secretariat.

My particular thanks, as is always the case with the single biggest piece of work that is undertaken by any government in any year, goes to the team at ACT Treasury and the ACT government directorates that support Treasury in the delivery of the budget. Within my office, I particularly need to acknowledge Faheem Khan, who works very hard on the budget process each year.

This year being a very unusual year, with two budgets, we are already underway on the next one, and we look forward to presenting that to the Assembly at the end of August.

So thank you. Budgets are difficult. The debate in this place on the budgets is important. It guides the government's thinking in the context of the inevitable next budget. There are going to be five of them in this parliamentary term. I am very pleased now to be able to sign off and endorse the first of five for this the Tenth Legislative Assembly.

Title agreed to.

Question put:

That this bill be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 13

Noes 7

Mr Barr
Mr Braddock
Ms Burch
Ms Cheyne
Ms Clay
Ms Davidson
Mr Gentleman

Ms Orr
Dr Paterson
Mr Pettersson
Mr Rattenbury
Ms Stephen-Smith
Ms Vassarotti

Mr Cain
Ms Castley
Mrs Jones
Mrs Kikkert
Ms Lawder
Mr Milligan
Mr Parton

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to.

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

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

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (5.29): I have a feeling that, for the first time today, the Chief Minister and I will be in agreement.

As a new MLA—I have been reminded of this on several occasions this afternoon—and one with little experience, I would like to start by thanking the hardworking staff of the Office of the Legislative Assembly, who keep this place running like clockwork. They have been a great support to me in setting up my office and getting running. I was impressed to see them even do guard duty in the Assembly when the doors were closed. It is a very impressive performance.

Madam Speaker, I would like to acknowledge your contribution to this place and to give special acknowledgement to the Integrity Commissioner, the Electoral Commissioner and the Auditor-General. These individuals and their respective offices all play an important role in community confidence in the robustness of our institutions and they support our continuous efforts to guarantee good governance for the people of the ACT.

Madam Speaker, I am very much looking forward to seeing the Assembly's digital transformation unfold, as it will no doubt aid good government and further improve transparency.

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism) (5.30), in reply: I thank Mr Cain for his contribution. We are in agreement, and what a happy note on which to conclude the budget debates this afternoon.

I echo the comments of Mr Cain in relation to the work of the Legislative Assembly and the statutory officers who are funded by this appropriation. This change to the way that this place and other statutory offices are funded came about several years ago. It is a good practice, Madam Speaker, and one that I am pleased has now settled into a reasonably smooth pattern for managing the appropriations. I thank you for your important role in facilitating the engagement of all the independent bodies with the budget process each year. We look forward to hearing from you again in the not-too-distant future for the 2021-22 budget process.

I commend the bill to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Leave granted to dispense with the detail stage.

Bill agreed to.

Standing orders—suspension

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

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent the order of business of the Assembly for Friday 23 April 2021 being as follows:

Prayer or reflection

Presentation of petitions

Private Members business Notices 1 and 2

Question time commencing at 1:00 pm

Presentation of papers

Adjournment

Adjournment

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

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Canberra—growth

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (5.32): I want to share with the Assembly some reporting from the RiotACT website today regarding land release. I particularly want to share this article with the Assembly following the words from Mr Gentleman and Ms Vassarotti in earlier debates today about land release and the reported flight of residents leaving the ACT because they cannot secure the housing that they require here in the territory.

Mr Gentleman asserted that nobody is leaving the ACT looking for greener pastures. Ms Vassarotti asserted that everyone was staying here in Canberra because this government is doing so many wonderful things to keep them here. I refer Mr Gentleman and Ms Vassarotti to the article from Katrina Condie in the RiotACT today. She says:

With vacant lots getting harder to find in Canberra, a new land release in the capital has been fast-tracked.

Demand for the 30 blocks at South Jerrabomberra is expected to be high when they hit the market ... on Saturday, 1 May.

She continues:

Village Building Co CEO Travis Doherty said the new release is welcome news for buyers who are currently looking to secure hard-to-find land in the Canberra region.

Ministers Gentleman and Vassarotti, and the whole of the coalition of Labor and the Greens, continue to ignore the steady stream of families and individuals who, out of frustration, are purchasing the sort of dwelling they want on the sort of block they want over the border in New South Wales.

Seniors—elder abuse and ageism

DR PATERSON (Murrumbidgee) (5.34): I draw the attention of the Assembly to the concerns and perspectives of our elderly residents in the ACT. As Australia's population continues to age, a growing concern is the welfare afforded to older residents. Unfortunately, the erosion of federal support and societal perception and attitudes undermine the ability of some older Australians to enjoy their retirement or ongoing work.

The 2021 Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety found systemic financial, mental and physical abuse in some aged care facilities. The elderly have been treated as a column on a budget sheet, not a vulnerable group of people who deserve to be treated with dignity and respect.

Many older people who I have talked with have expressed feelings of isolation in the wider society, particularly if they are living alone. COVID-19 has magnified these feelings of loneliness and social isolation for many.

Further to this, older people are increasingly isolated in our community through the impact of technology. As older people struggle to keep up with technology and smartphones, they fall further behind and become more and more isolated, as they are simply unable to engage. This is why community- and government-led initiatives have never been more important.

Taking this a step further, I would like to discuss gendered ageism. Gendered ageism encapsulates the disproportionate effects of ageism which women experience relative to men. We have heard a lot in the media lately about workplace inequality in

Australia. What we also know is that women face inequality across almost every aspect of the life span. This disadvantage accumulates over the life span and presents significantly at later age.

Due to career limitations throughout their lives, women retire with less superannuation than their male counterparts. Older women find it more difficult to find a job than men do. Women above the age of 55 are the fastest growing group of homeless Australians. Older women are disproportionately at risk of social exclusion.

Older women also continue to be the subject of unrealistic beauty standards and expense. Subtle discrimination in products labelled as anti-ageing reorientates the conversation around the elderly, making them undesirable or fading. Women today, more than ever, feel a growing pressure to conform to a standard that is not of their own choosing. We cannot stop ageing, but we can stop demonising the ageing process and, in doing so, support elderly women in our community and workplace and families.

To fight inequality in old age, we must strive for equality at every age. Age discrimination is a very layered and complex issue. We must ensure that the hardship faced by the elderly, particularly ageing women, is not ignored as the conversations continue.

I was fortunate to meet recently with COTA, the Council on the Ageing, a community organisation engaged and invested in this emerging issue. By having these conversations with the elderly, and with stakeholders and advocates, we can all become better informed regarding the issues faced by older constituents.

As I have met with community members and organisations, I have been simultaneously humbled and moved by their resilience in the face of adversity. We can all do our part in recognising and fighting against ageism and gender discrimination by considering the impacts our actions have on others and by challenging established societal norms around the process of ageing and the elderly. It is imperative that this policy space continues to evolve in a holistic way.

World Heritage Day

MS VASSAROTTI (Kurrajong) (5.38): Today I rise to reflect on the significance of World Heritage Day. Officially the International Day for Monuments and Sites, it was endorsed by UNESCO in 1983 and is celebrated on 18 April each year. This is a day which gives communities the opportunity to celebrate the diversity of cultural heritage, raise the awareness of important monuments and sites, and to recognise the importance of preserving culture.

The ACT Greens value increased community conversation about heritage significance and we have had a great opportunity in the territory over the past few weeks to do just that. This year we are celebrating the 38th Canberra and region Heritage Festival and recognise the need to conserve our natural, historical and First Nations heritage. Over 150 diverse activities are taking place, including workshops, tours, walks, talks, virtual events, and more.

Following the cancellation of last year's events, the theme "Reimagine" returned this year and perhaps is even more apt, with many holders having to reimagine how to present their activities in a COVID-safe way. I am thrilled to say that they have done so wonderfully, and it has been my privilege and my pleasure to attend a number of events, both in my role as Minister for Heritage and personally.

The events that I have enjoyed included a tour of the ANU's Heritage Aboriginal Trail with Ngunnawal elder Wally Bell. I gained insight into ceremony and how the local Aboriginal people manage their landscape. I attended "Fooling around in flannels", an exhibition about cricket on the Limestone Plains, which began in the 1840s. I also attended the launch of the digital Father Maher collection. The collection provides the history of 23 of our territory's pioneer families, one of which I discovered was mine. I unveiled a new sign at the site of the Dickson aerodrome, got up close and natural with nature art at the Old Barn Gallery at Pialligo, and learnt much about our modern-built history from tours of Braddon and Griffith.

I mention these events to give members an insight into the wide range of activities that have given our community the opportunity to learn more about, and celebrate, our heritage. I would like to thank festival organisers and participants for their hard work in dreaming up and delivering this event. This has happened because of the efforts of many volunteers. For those members who have not enjoyed one of this year's Heritage Festival events, I strongly encourage you to do so. There are still a few more days to go; don't miss out.

Anzac Day—Light Up the Dawn

MS DAVIDSON (Murrumbidgee) (5.41): Australia did not get to celebrate Anzac Day in the traditional way last year. By 25 April, we had just got our first wave of the COVID pandemic under control, and we were jittery about what the future might hold. And rightly so, as it turned out.

By late March, all overseas Anzac Day commemoration services had been cancelled, as well as dawn services here in Canberra and around the nation. It had been 101 years since the last cancellation of the national ceremony, during the 1919 flu pandemic. That year the devastating effects of the First World War would still have been fresh and apparent, both for individuals and across the community. It would have been the first Anzac Day commemoration since the coming of peace. Although the traditions that are now so well established were still in their infancy, the sporadic attempts to mark the day in grief for loved ones lost so recently must have been even harder in the face of the influenza crisis. But community spirit and pride and determination would have been running high, too, as they are still.

This year, with a partial return to a more familiar form of commemoration, we can see the Anzac spirit living on in the way that Australians have handled the pandemic of our own time. With relatively few exceptions, we have done what we needed to do. We have listened to the experts and taken individual responsibility. We have embraced the new details in our lives, such as the Check In CBR app, in the same way as those on the Australian home front, during Australia's wars, embraced ration cards and new biscuit recipes. We have supported fighters on the front lines of the COVID battle. There are ongoing changes in the way that we do things.

I am encouraging people across Canberra to look at the different ways that they can choose, this year, to commemorate our national recognition of veterans and their sacrifice.

Numbers physically present at the Australian War Memorial's dawn service will be limited and the ticket allocation is already exhausted. To support all of us to commemorate this day, the RSL has created an initiative called Light Up the Dawn, to allow as many people as possible to participate. As well as being COVID safe, this initiative promotes a deeper understanding of the Anzac Day message and brings awareness to those who might not previously have been involved.

Light Up the Dawn encourages people to stand at the end of their driveway or in front of their residence at dawn on Anzac Day, with a candle, while listening to the last post via local broadcasts, an app or even live. Local buglers among us can register the Canberra landmark or street, or perhaps an aged care residence in their area, where they will be playing the last post. Anyone can turn up to listen.

The ministerial council for veterans and their families will hold an informal commemorative service at 8 am on Anzac Day at Woden Cemetery, which I will attend and where wreaths will be laid on the tombstones of veterans. There will also be an invitation-only "For our Country" Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders service memorial after the Anzac Day dawn service, to honour First Nations Australians who have served in defence forces since 1901. It is an important recognition of their contributions, particularly as many of them served long before they were given the right to vote or counted as equal citizens.

As I have said before in this context, there is unity in this variety and new life has been brought to our old traditions. Anzac Day in 2021 will see tradition and innovation in commemoration side by side, reminding all of us that while there is a will, people will find a way to come together in remembrance.

Municipal services—Ginninderra

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (5.45): Today I reflect upon the commitment of Canberrans. I reaffirm the capacity of the people I have had the privilege to represent and whose ideas and concerns I provide voice for. Since I was given the honour of being a member of this Assembly, my appreciation for the work of the concerned citizens of Ginninderra inspires me every day, and only continues to grow. I would like to mention just a few examples of how their commitment makes Canberra a better place for all of us.

In Melba, two neighbours who believe that young children deserve safe, maintained and inclusive community spaces, have decided to take action. SMILE Melba—standing for Support Melba Inclusive Learning Environment—is a significant, growing community movement in Melba and is asking the government to upgrade recreational space in Melba next to the Melba High School. Currently, the site is neglected and underused, and SMILE is asking this government to act and transform it into an inclusive space for children, parents and community groups to enjoy. I, and some other of the Ginninderra MLAs—including my colleagues Elizabeth Kikkert

and Jo Clay—have visited and spoken to the organisers, and we look forward to working as closely as possible together in encouraging this initiative.

In Spence, I would like to thank Narelle, Steve, Judy, Ian and Maureen, who believe that major arterial roads should be safe and accessible for the Canberrans that use them every day. They have expressed grave concerns about the new lane markings on Kingsford Smith Drive. I spoke to some of these folk last Friday, and have written to Minister Steel for an explanation as to why the lanes have been changed, reducing traffic from two lanes to one in many parts of Kingsford Smith Drive.

In Page, Gordon and Jason, who spoke to me in February about the poor state of Page shops, believe that long promised improvements by the ACT government should be made, and that ramp access should be provided for residents who need to utilise disability parking. Again, I have written to the relevant minister and I am yet to receive a response.

In Hawker, residents who believe that they deserve quality outdoor spaces are dismayed by the continued neglect of the Hawker Tennis Centre. Similarly, in West Belconnen, residents continue to wait for this government to take action to improve the ovals and community spaces that too often have been ignored and left in disrepair. The residents that I have met in cafes, pubs, outside shopping centres, at door-fronts and during events do not expect the government to solve all their problems, but they do expect the government to meet its basic commitment to provide quality services. They expect this government to maintain the community spaces they pay for. They expect this government to ensure the safety of the roads they use, pothole free. They expect this government to hear their concerns and, based on their concerns, to take action to solve often neglected issues within their community and shopping centres.

University of Canberra—reducing inequality award

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) (5.49): I rise briefly tonight to congratulate the University of Canberra for being ranked number one in the *Times Higher Education* world university rankings for reducing inequality. You would be aware of the 17 sustainable development goals. *Times Higher Education* has been assessing universities against these goals, and this is the third year that it has done this.

Number 10 of those 17 goals is reducing inequality. In making these assessments, *Times Higher Education* has a sophisticated methodology, where it has assessed universities' research on social inequalities and has looked at universities' policies on discrimination—such as anti-discrimination and anti-harassment policies—and accessible schemes, facilities and accommodation for people with disability. There is also, as a part of this, an assessment of universities' commitments to recruiting staff and students from under-represented groups. This includes the proportion of the total student population coming from developing countries; students who identify as being the first person in their immediate family to attend university; and the recruitment of students and staff with disabilities.

The University of Canberra has been ranked number one out of 669 institutions from 82 countries and regions. Joining UC in the top 10 are other universities from Australia, including RMIT, at number two, and Western Sydney University and University of Wollongong. Institutions in Saudi Arabia, the UK, Denmark, and the US round out the top 10. This is a remarkable achievement and one that is well earned and well deserved. The combined rankings—that is, where the university is placed in a ranking with all of the sustainable development goals combined—has taken UC to 57th in the world, moving it from within the 101 to 200 band, where it was when it was last ranked.

I congratulate the University of Canberra for its commitment to reducing inequality, for being a recognised leader in this space, and for how this achievement reflects on and promotes our broader city and region, which is committed to reducing inequality too.

Multicultural affairs—events

MRS JONES (Murrumbidgee) (5.51): On 20 March, I had the honour of attending an annual event by the Federation of Calabresi, Canberra and Region, which celebrated its 30th anniversary with a dinner dance. I spoke about the music that I had enjoyed from my childhood, particularly the tarantella dance, which I have learned since I was under 10 years of age. I gave a speech in Italian describing my upbringing, in which I spoke about my Italian grandparents' childhood and the dance. It was such a moment of remembrance of my upbringing.

We then had an excellent three-course meal throughout the night at the Ainsley Football Club. Happy 30th birthday to the Federation of Calabresi, Canberra and Region. Italians are my love and my heart—and a lot of fun, too. Thank you to the president, Vincenzo Ciano, and to you, Frankie Dagleis, for the invitation.

Over 30 years ago, Antonio Costa with his wife Rosaria Costa, were asked by the then ambassador of the Italian embassy, “Why don’t you start a committee for the Calabresi? There are other associations for other parts of Italy,” he said, “but not for Calabria.” Antonio with his brother Virgilio started the association in a small room in a Queanbeyan household with a few people, who, like him, immigrated decades ago. He never put himself forward as the president and always wanted to remain just as a committee member. However, it was a good thing and well done to Antonio because the Calabresi association is still going strong. The very first event saw 700 people congregated at the then Italo Australian Club in Forrest, and it was a great night.

On 21 February it was an honour to attend the Karpathian Progressive Association of Australia’s annual barbecue at Weston Park. I would like to thank the president, Fina Vassiliotis, for her very warm welcome to this event. The Karpathian Progressive Association this year celebrates its 62nd anniversary and, in the six decades since the association was established in 1959, it has evolved from a concept to a widely respected association in Canberra, contributing financially and socially to the wellbeing of all people in the region. Few Canberra associations have more reason to celebrate their existence this year. The people from the island of Karpathos were the first Greek settlers to establish a parochial brotherhood in Canberra and the

surrounding districts in 1959. The Karpathians of Australia, most of whom live in Canberra, were instrumental in the drive to revitalise the island of Karpathos, economically and socially, from so many kilometres and miles away.

Lastly, I wanted to thank the fabulous barbecue chefs for their amazing delicacies on offer, ranging from the lamb souvlaki to the Greek doughnuts. The setting for the barbecue could not have been better, as my kids were also able to enjoy the water park nearby. Thank you for all the work you do for our Greek community and the ACT, and I wish you every success in 2021.

On 8 February, it was an honour to attend the inaugural launch of the Multicultural Association of Canberra here in the Assembly. I want to thank my colleagues for attending, and particularly Nicole Lawder MLA, for putting this event together and for uniting Canberra's multicultural communities. I also want to thank Nishi Puri, the president and CEO of this new organisation, for her hard work at getting this project off the ground, culminating in an enthusiastic speech. I would also like to thank the vice president Anil Gupta, treasurer Ashok Jain, public relations officer Rakesh Jain, and executive member Praveen Jain, for their commitment and willingness to serve the multicultural communities. It was a tremendous honour to meet His Excellency Mr A Gitesh Sarma, who gave a fabulous speech outlining the richness of our multicultural society here in the ACT. He also highlighted the fact that Canberrans of Indian heritage have been living here for many years now.

The organisation will help migrants coming into the ACT to ensure that they settle in quickly and develop contact with the local community. They have also been assisting international students affected by the COVID-19 pandemic as they continue their university studies, as well as helping the homeless by cooking fresh curries for them. It was a positive event with all attendees agreeing that, on the whole, Canberra was a very welcoming place for our multicultural communities.

Women with Altitude is an organisation which was born when Lisa LaMaitre had started a small business and wanted to be networked with other women who were on the business rollercoaster. Their mission is to serve, help and uplift. These amazing women strive to be fierce and determined in their plans, but kind and patient in their interactions. They want to hear your story and look forward to welcoming you.

On 19 March I had the honour of attending their event, along with my colleague Elizabeth Lee. Thank you, Women with Altitude, for a really moving networking event and a very supportive environment. We learned it is okay to be shameless; it is good to apply for awards; sometimes we must walk away; to be vulnerable with others; and that in business, flexibility is important. Thank you for your insightful words. What a life you have led, Lisa, in Canberra. Women with Altitude, well done.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 5.57 pm.