



Debates

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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.

Visitor

MADAM SPEAKER: I acknowledge the presence in the gallery of Mr Norm Jensen. Welcome; it may have been a long time since you were here. Mr Jensen was a member of the First Assembly. We are glad to see you back.

Self-government in the territory—32nd anniversary Statement by Speaker

MADAM SPEAKER: Today marks the 32nd anniversary of the first day of sitting of the Legislative Assembly. It is not often that we get to sit on the anniversary of the very first day—11 May.

In looking back at 11 May 1989, we can see that a lot has changed. Prior to 1989, the ACT was administered by the commonwealth government. In the late 1980s it was decided that with a population of 270,000 we needed our own system of government. The first election of the ACT Assembly took place on 4 March 1989. We first went to the polls as a single electorate of 17 members. What fun that would have been in campaigning!

The first political party to form government was the Labor Party, with five seats. The other parties that made up the First Assembly were the Canberra Liberals; the Residents Rally, which I understand Mr Jensen was a member of; the No Self-Government Party; and the Abolish Self Government Coalition.

At the first sitting of the Assembly, Rosemary Follett was elected as the Assembly's first Chief Minister; Trevor Kaine was elected Leader of the Opposition; and David Prowse was elected Speaker. For the first few years the Assembly was housed around the corner, in Constitution Avenue, until our permanent home here was established for us in 1994.

In the last 32 years, the electoral system has evolved from a single electorate to three electorates and now to our current five electorates of Brindabella, Ginninderra, Kurrajong, Murrumbidgee and Yerrabi, each with five members.

A total of 89 members have been sworn into the Assembly. I would like to thank all of them for their service and the contributions they have made to the governance of the territory. I also thank their staff, who are an integral part of running any member's office.

I would like to thank the people who have kept the Assembly running smoothly. Without them, we would be quite a disorganised rabble at times, I suspect.

Mr Parton: Or even more so than we are.

MADAM SPEAKER: Perhaps, Mr Parton.

I also thank the staff of the Assembly secretariat, now the Office of the Legislative Assembly. Last, but not least, I acknowledge the people of the ACT. We come here every day to represent them, to do them well, and to provide service to them.

Thirty-two years. Who would have thought?

Paper Out-of-order petition

MS ORR (Yerrabi) (10.05), by leave: I table the following out-of-order petition:

Petition which does not conform with the standing orders—Gungahlin—Union Land Playground—Shade sail—Ms Orr (101 signatures).

I seek the leave of the Assembly to make a very brief comment on the petition.

Leave granted.

MS ORR: This is a petition by Mary, who is one of the residents bordering the park. She, along with her neighbours, felt very strongly about getting better shade for the area and spent the summer collecting these signatures. She approached me, in my capacity as a local member, asking how she could deliver the petition.

I am very glad today to be able to table the petition and I thank the Assembly for its indulgence because it is an out-of-order petition. I look forward to working with the minister in representing these matters.

Crime—sexual assault Ministerial statement

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

Suburban Development, Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, Minister for Sport and Recreation and Minister for Women) (10.06): It is my pleasure to be making a statement in the Assembly today on the commitment made by the government to take action on the prevention and reduction of sexual assault in the ACT.

The ACT government has acknowledged that this is an issue that affects everyone in our community and is an issue bigger than politics. That is why I am proud to be making this statement today and to be working closely across party lines to deliver a tripartisan approach. We are the only jurisdiction in Australia to have made this shared commitment.

The ACT government is committed to doing the work required to address this issue, but first we need to listen carefully to our local experts, and to victim survivors and their advocates, and we need to look at what the evidence shows us about what is already working well, where the gaps are, and where we need to invest and build new programs of work.

Early findings from the Women's Health Matters survey on women's experiences of seeking help following sexual assault demonstrate that women need tailored responses that cater to their diverse and unique circumstances. Survey results indicate that many of the women who have experienced sexual assault never sought help, out of fear of disclosure, stigma and victim blaming. One woman involved in the survey commented:

The system is rigged against victims of sexual assault. Instead of support it feels more like hoops to jump through. A survival of the fittest ... if we can convince people that our case deserves to be heard ... that we deserve justice. That if we want to protect other women from the men who assaulted us we have to put ourselves on the line.

Madam Speaker, this listening is critical. As Australian of the Year Grace Tame has said:

Many people didn't know how to respond. That said, the ones who listened, the ones who were eager to understand, even when they couldn't, made all the difference.

Responding and preventing sexual assault and sexual violence require a whole-of-government integrated approach. That is why it is critical that the right governance be put in place to guide us with this work. I am establishing a steering committee and three working groups to focus on prevention, response and legislative reform.

The working groups will be inclusive and intersectional about experiences of sexual violence across the community, including for people with disability, young people, the LGBTIQ+ community, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, and communities that are culturally and linguistically diverse. We know that there are many different experiences and that our response must provide more than just one pathway.

This work also needs to have a gendered lens, as women make up 86.6 per cent of victims of sexual assault in the ACT.

The working groups, which will report to a steering committee, will be made up of representatives from non-government organisations, the service sector, unions, research bodies, our university sector, and government representatives. These working groups will identify key priorities for future work and action.

Our key objective, once we have listened, must be to coordinate our efforts across the community to develop an effective, systemic, evidence-based response to sexual assault in the ACT.

The working groups will each have a distinct focus. The prevention working group will focus on driving systemic cultural change, particularly targeted at schools, universities, CITs and workplaces. The response working group will focus on service provision and police responses and will be informed by victim survivor experience of accessing support, advocacy, counselling, and health and medical care. The law reform working group will focus on progressing the parliamentary agreement commitment to reform consent laws and related sexual assault law reform.

Each working group will undertake specific consultation with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to ensure that the experience of these community members informs all aspects of the ACT's sexual assault prevention and response work.

The time to start this work is now. Each of the working groups will have five fortnightly meetings, starting in May, to prepare a summary document for the steering committee's consideration by 30 June 2021. The steering committee will provide support and independent oversight to the working groups as well as draw on this work to formulate recommendations to government. I will hold a broader community roundtable discussion later in the year to explore the findings of the working groups and steering committee.

Cultural change to stop sexual assault is going to be a whole-of-community effort. I will be working closely with partners in the community and justice sectors and with my colleagues in the Assembly to coordinate this.

Madam Speaker, I want to finish with a message of hope, especially for victim survivors. It is a momentous time; government is demonstrating its commitment to putting survivors at the centre of how we respond to sexual assault and violence. I have hope that, with the right things in place, we can work with the community to make long-lasting change to cultures of behaviour. Everyone will be brought along on this journey for change.

I present the following paper:

Sexual assault—ACT's prevention and response program—Ministerial statement, 11 May 2021.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

DR PATERSON (Murrumbidgee) (10.12): I thank Minister Berry for the work that she is doing in establishing the sexual assault prevention and response program. This is a very complex, sensitive and emotional issue. We need to ensure that we have world-class leadership here in the ACT in relation to addressing sexual assault.

The methods through which we, as a government and a community, will achieve this are many and varied. We will require long-term cultural change. A coordinated and strategic program that includes all stakeholders, including victim survivors themselves, is critical.

I commend Minister Berry and all stakeholders on coming together to consider, review and assess our current situation and “where to”. Minister Berry’s proposed program for prevention, response and law reform will ensure that a targeted and focused effort is brought to education and awareness, victim support and criminal justice.

Broad community education is paramount to ensure that we have an understanding about respectful relationships and a core principle in our city that sexual activity without consent is illegal and will not be tolerated.

Victim survivor support is absolutely critical. Victims must feel comfortable and confident that they can report incidents of sexual assault and know that they will be taken seriously, their complaint will be investigated, and they will be supported.

Law reform is another critical component to addressing sexual assault. Across Australia, we see many jurisdictions reform sexual assault legislation to be in line with contemporary community standards. Much of this process hinges on the definition of consent, as well as other matters. The definition of consent in the ACT Crimes Act and legal system is outdated and out of step with community expectations. It continues to rely on the notion of non-consensual sexual activity being that in which a person actively resists a sexual act.

We need to turn this around 180 degrees so that non-consensual sexual activity is, instead, commonly understood and interpreted in our legal system and law courts to be that where a person has not positively communicated their agreement or willingness to participate in the act. This is a much more nuanced approach and is often referred to as a model of communicative affirmative consent—that is, a person clearly indicates their agreement to participate in the act, rather than relying on the starting point that the victim has to prove that they did not agree to the act.

Our legal definition of consent should be based on the principle of a person giving free and voluntary consent—not where a person may agree to participate in a sexual act only because of force, fear, intimidation, threat or other forms of coercion or mental and emotional abuse.

However, I would like to challenge us further in the way we think. Statistics suggest that the vast majority of sexual violence happens at the hands of a perpetrator that is known to the victim. At a national level, the personal safety survey of Australia found that this is the case for 87 per cent of sexual assaults. These are not random acts of violence; they are calculated and happen within the broader context of people's lives. That changes how we may respond.

The most common perpetrator type was a previous partner—26 per cent—followed closely by a boyfriend or a date. An estimated 40 per cent of women who experienced sexual assault by a male were assaulted in their own home, in the most recent incident. A further 17 per cent were sexually assaulted in the perpetrator's home. A further 13 per cent were assaulted in another person's home.

Eighty-six per cent of women sexually assaulted by a male did not contact police. Of those who reported to police, only a quarter saw convictions—about 3.5 per cent. Half of all women who experienced sexual assault by a male sought advice or support about the most recent incident. Of these women, 71 per cent sought advice or support from a friend or a family member. Over half of the women who had experienced sexual assault by a male felt anxiety or fear for their personal safety in the 12 months after the reported incident.

To summarise these statistics, women are predominantly sexually assaulted by someone they know, in their own home; they do not contact police; they will talk to a trusted friend or family member; and they feel long-term impacts of anxiety and fear for their personal safety.

Now let us flip it. What does the perpetrator look like? He looks like someone you know. He knows his victim; he knows where she lives; he probably knows her friends and family. He probably has a pretty good hunch that she will not go to the police. As a society, we do not critique how he manipulated her—how many drinks he bought her or how he put intense pressure on her to go home, especially to her house, where perhaps she thought she might have more control over what happens and feel safer. We do not critique the perpetrator's actions.

The perpetrators of this violence in our community need to be put squarely in the frame. As long as there is so little accountability and responsibility for sexual violence, nothing will change. This is a cultural response as much as a criminal justice response.

I look forward to working with Minister Berry on the sexual assault and prevention response program to ensure that we, as a community and a society, together bring an end to sexual violence and communicate a strong message to perpetrators that they will be held to account.

MS VASSAROTTI (Kurrajong—Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, Minister for Homelessness and Housing Services and Minister for Sustainable Building and Construction) (10.19): I thank Minister Berry for her work in this area and recognise the fact that this is an issue that we need a whole-of-government response on. I would like to particularly focus on the issues as they relate to the housing and homelessness service area.

As outlined in Minister Berry's statement, there are things that we know in relation to sexual assault. We know that sexual assault is shockingly common, and it is generally gendered. We know that there are particular groups in our community that are at higher risk—First Nations women, women in custodial settings, women with gender diverse identities, and women with disabilities. We also know that there are strong links with domestic and family violence. We know that children are often impacted by this violence.

In engaging with this issue, we know that there is particular relevance to the issue of homelessness. For example, we know that sexual assault is a driver of homelessness, including links with domestic and family violence, which are the leading driver of homelessness for women and children. We also know that homelessness increases the risk of further sexual assault.

While these challenges can leave us feeling as though the issue is too big to solve, we are also engaging with the specialist homelessness sector that is skilled and able to support victim survivors to heal, recover and rebuild their lives.

A key thing that we can do, given the particular and complex nature of sexual assault in homes, institutions and the community more broadly, is work with the homelessness sector to ensure that it is trauma informed and able to meet the needs of victim survivors.

We know that we need to invest in gender sensitive crisis and housing services and housing stock to ensure that victim survivors of sexual assault—women, in particular—have safe, secure housing options and support and safety packages as they navigate their way to safety.

We also need to provide targeted responses for people we know are at high risk, including ensuring that there are wraparound services and support for victim survivors to enable recovery from the trauma of sexual assault.

We can build stronger links between sexual assault specialist services and the housing and homelessness services sector, and we can continue to build the capacity and skills of people working in the homelessness sector to support people to feel safe to disclose sexual assault and put in place the supports for people to respond to this.

We have much to learn from the work that is going to happen in the next few months. We really are committed to developing strong partnership approaches to respond to the challenges and co-design of the service system.

In the specialist homelessness sector, as we move into a new service agreement cycle, there are real opportunities to work with the sector to design a system that is responsive to the needs of those that are experiencing homelessness, including victim survivors. As we work together, we will need a range of services that provide responses that are tailored, gender sensitive and able to respond to groups who are at heightened risk. We have a real opportunity to develop an integrated approach to sector development. We also have opportunities to look at how we provide our social housing support and how we connect people with the supports they need.

I really look forward to the outcomes of the work that Minister Berry has commenced and look forward to working in close collaboration with the specialist homelessness sector, responding to the issues identified through this current work to ensure that we are doing everything we can to support victim survivors to heal, recover and thrive in their new lives.

MR DAVIS (Brindabella) (10.23): I thank the minister for the collaborative way in which she is conducting this work. I am encouraged and quite delighted that such an important issue has been taken so seriously across all three political parties in this place in a tripartisan manner.

I got a lot out of joining the minister at the launch of this reform work just across the road. I am compelled to rise to speak briefly, Madam Speaker, though I was not intending to, noting that so far only my female colleagues have risen to speak. I have grown troubled that this is an issue that disproportionately affects women in our city, and I am committed to making sure that it is not a problem that women are disproportionately burdened with fixing.

The contribution I want to make, very quickly and very simply, is to encourage the men of Canberra to engage earnestly and enthusiastically in this conversation. I encourage them to listen not only to their mothers, their wives and their sisters but to all women, including the women here who speak with not only professional but personal experience on these issues; to come to the conversation with an open mind; and to try and learn the skills necessary when working with males in their family, their workplace and their community. As Dr Paterson so rightly pointed out in her contribution, the perpetrators overwhelmingly are men that we know.

I am very enthusiastic about the work that we are going to do together on this. I again thank the minister for including me. I am looking forward to speaking less and listening more—engaging where it is constructive and helpful and, as a man in the debate and as the ACT Greens spokesperson for the elimination of family and domestic violence, doing all I can to engage with the men of this city to ensure that an issue that disproportionately affects women is not the burden of women disproportionately to solve.

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) (10.26): I am pleased to speak today in support of Minister Berry's speech and to echo the government's commitment to sexual assault prevention and response.

Sexual assault prevention and response, including the way the system responds to reports of sexual assault and the supports provided to victim survivors, is an important issue because it affects so many people in our community. We have heard from sexual assault survivors and the sector that trauma that stems from sexual assault and the process of reporting assault can stay with people for a long time and affect their quality of life and their happiness.

I have a diverse range of portfolios, from overseeing protections for workers in every ACT workplace to responsibility for parts of the criminal justice system. There is one common theme across the senior leadership of these areas: an ongoing commitment to improve. Ensuring that there are effective, evidence-based measures in place to prevent and respond to sexual violence and assault is a priority. I will continue working in each of my portfolio areas to improve outcomes for victims while working hard to put in place what is needed to stop sexual assault occurring in the first place.

Madam Speaker, we want to improve workplace safety and industrial laws so that employers are held responsible for ensuring that workplaces are free from sexual assault of any kind. We will keep working with ACT Policing to ensure that their ongoing priority is the safety and wellbeing, both mentally and physically, of victims and survivors of sexual assault. We will keep working with the new corrections commissioner to improve our trauma response for detainees in the AMC, recognising that many detainees are victims of domestic and family violence or sexual assault and that often this trauma has contributed to their offending.

We will achieve progress in this area by working together as a government and, importantly, by listening to the sector and victims when they tell us what they need. I welcome the opportunity that this important work outlined by Minister Berry presents and I look forward to working with my ministerial colleagues to improve responses to and outcomes for victims of sexual assault.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong—Attorney-General, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Gaming and Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction) (10.28): I would like to add a few comments from my particular perspective as the Attorney-General. This is a really important process. I am very pleased to see an opportunity where there is real engagement from experts, stakeholders, community service providers, government service providers, victim survivors and others to help the government focus where we need to focus and make sure that we are making the changes that people with all those experiences tell us need to be made.

During the election campaign, for us as the Greens it was very clear that these were important areas. We had a number of policies in this space. Each and every one of us has to do the most we can to protect people, particularly women, and validate and support victim survivors.

With my Attorney-General hat on, let me say that we have heard loud and clear that we cannot rely on legislation alone. Often that is seen as the thing that we must do, but that will not protect people entirely. For many victim survivors, the courts are not how they want to deal with what has happened to them. However, the legal work is still also an indispensable element of this work for those who do choose to seek justice through the courts. It is also necessary to underpin the vital education and cultural parts of this work.

Dr Paterson spoke this morning about issues of consent. That is an area of important legislative reform that is not just about legislation but also about defining new parameters, new expectations of behaviour in our community.

I look forward to working with the outcomes from the legal stream of this work and making sure that, in the legal areas, we put the right reforms in place in a timely manner.

MS DAVIDSON (Murrumbidgee—Assistant Minister for Seniors, Veterans, Families and Community Services, Minister for Disability, Minister for Justice Health and Minister for Mental Health) (10.30): It is distressing that, to this day, we are still grappling with a crime that causes so much pain to individuals and communities.

Sexual abuse has a significant impact on mental health. Studies show it has a lasting impact and increases the risk of mental illness diagnosis or symptoms later in life. Reducing the risk factors for poorer mental health outcomes, such as those feelings of self-blame, shame, the negative reactions from others and dealing with the trauma itself, requires support and compassion from those around the affected person.

To support people, the ACT Health Directorate funds a range of therapeutic programs and services. These include trauma-informed health services, including counselling at ACT Women's Health Service. There is also the Question, Persuade and Refer online suicide prevention training program that is delivered by the Office for Mental Health and Wellbeing, in partnership with Healthier Work and the Black Dog Institute.

I also note that people with disability are an at-risk and vulnerable group in our community. Women with disability are 40 per cent more likely to experience domestic violence than their non-disabled counterparts, and the rates of sexual violence against women with disabilities are four to 10 times those without disability. Nine in 10 women with an intellectual disability have been sexually abused.

The sexual assault prevention and response working group must focus on listening to people with disability, identify how we can reduce harm to Canberrans with disability, and ensure that services are trauma informed, specialised and accessible for people in need.

I welcome this tripartisan commitment to prevent and respond to sexual assault. I note that it is crucial that services are trauma informed, so that people who have experienced violence can feel safe and supported in order to share their experiences and seek help.

When I think about the work that we need to do, I think about all of the stories that women have shared with me in my previous work in advocacy in the community sector and as a frontline welfare support worker over decades in this city, and I know that we have much more to do. But I want the community to know that we want to hear from you, we believe you, we are working hard to provide the support that is needed, and we will never stop working on this while you need us. I look forward to working with my Assembly colleagues on delivering the right responses and support for people.

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra—Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Minister for the Arts, Minister for Business and Better Regulation, Minister for

Human Rights and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (10.33): I also rise to speak in support of the statement today, and to thank the Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, Minister Berry, for establishing this important way forward.

I would also like to acknowledge my colleagues the Attorney-General, Minister Rattenbury, Minister Stephen-Smith, Minister Mick Gentleman, Minister Vassarotti and Minister Davidson, along with their directorates, who have been active in, and committed to, this work to ensure that progress is made in a coordinated and supported way across government. I also acknowledge the other members, from the opposition and the Greens, for their support.

Importantly, I want to acknowledge survivors. I want to acknowledge all of those in our community who work so hard to support survivors, providing rights-based, victim-centric services, and all of those who are driving cultural change. I am proud of the ACT government's commitment to taking action to prevent and respond to sexual assault. I especially acknowledge Minister Berry's leadership in this space.

As Minister for Human Rights, my broad policy responsibilities include the policy related to the work of the ACT Human Rights Commission on discrimination rights and victims services. It is vital that the justice system continues to make improvements to better acknowledge and meet the needs of victims and survivors of sexual assault. This leads to more people feeling able to report crime, better cooperation with police investigations and prosecutions, and improved justice outcomes. Treating victim survivors with respect and providing appropriate assistance to participate in the process also helps to avoid the justice process being experienced as distressing or re-traumatising.

The ACT has a strong history of upholding human rights and promoting and protecting the interests of victim survivors. As you know, Madam Speaker, the ACT was the first jurisdiction to establish a Human Rights Act, and the only jurisdiction with the Victims of Crime Commissioner, which is located within the Human Rights Commission. Now the ACT has the most robust victim rights framework nationally.

As many of us know, the Charter of Rights for Victims of Crime commenced on 1 January this year. The charter sets standards for how victims should be treated as they progress through the justice process by way of obligations for justice agencies, and an accountability framework so that there is a clear and reliable complaints resolution process where rights are breached.

The charter's accountability framework includes the ability for a victim to raise a concern with a justice agency directly—indeed this is where the majority of concerns are expected to be resolved—or with the Victims of Crime Commissioner or the Human Rights Commission, where conciliation can be accessed so that there are opportunities for the acknowledgement of the breach having occurred and for practice change.

The charter will assist in bridging gaps between victim entitlements and what occurs in practice, raising community awareness about how justice processes occur and the

role of the victim, and providing a restorative accountability framework which sets out clear pathways for acknowledgement of the impact where victim rights are not upheld, as well as opportunities to improve victim engagement practices, including for sexual assault victims.

In my capacity as Minister for Human Rights, I am committed to improving services for victims and survivors within our rights-based ACT context. I want to stress how important the work that the Victims of Crime Commissioner and Victim Support ACT is for victims of crime in Canberra and how much they have done for victims and survivors here. As a community, we are indebted to them for the work they have done to continue to provide these dedicated services, and especially so during the pandemic, when demand increased even further.

I am committed to supporting the work of the sexual assault prevention and response working group and the steering committee, and to working closely with my ministerial colleagues, the community, the service sector, unions and relevant stakeholders on responses to sexual assault in the ACT.

It is important that the working group be inclusive, so that the experience of sexual violence across the community can be heard, including from, as has already been acknowledged across the chamber today, people with a disability, children and young people, the LGBTIQ+ community, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, and communities that are culturally and linguistically diverse. We know there are many different experiences for these different groups and that our response must provide more than one pathway to support and justice.

Given my responsibility for victims services, I want to ensure that the services available for victims and survivors are efficient, appropriate and responsive to their needs. I look forward to working with the steering committee and its subcommittees to ensure that this is realised.

Mr Davis is right; this is an issue that disproportionately affects women, but that does not mean it should be women's burden alone to solve it. This is the responsibility of all of us, as a community, and as leaders in this space. The approach that Minister Berry has taken is one that firmly recognises this. I look forward to engaging with the steering committee and the working groups.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (10.39): I am pleased to speak about the sexual assault prevention and response work that has already started. I thank Minister Berry for bringing forward this really important piece of work with tripartisan support.

The Canberra Liberals are 100 per cent behind the very real desire and attempts to make, at last, a really concrete difference, because we have been encountering the same issues for so long. Not a lot has changed over the last 20 or 30 years. I am really hopeful and optimistic that now, at last, community sentiment has reached that tipping point where it is now concurrent with or at the same level as the desire of service providers in the field and legislators to make a very real difference.

It is with hope and optimism that we participate in this work. Madam Speaker, you will have already seen that the Canberra Liberals do have a lot to offer. We have already put forward some suggestions in this space.

As well as the ministers who have spoken and who have outlined the responses of their directorates in the areas under their direction, I would also like very much to express appreciation to the Victims of Crime Commissioner, who does such a fantastic job in this area, and is always full of positivity and the knowledge that we can and will do better. It affects so many people in our society. I refer not just to the victim survivors themselves but to the great ripple effect on their families, friends and colleagues when some kind of sexual assault takes place.

As someone who has worked in the community sector, in homelessness and in disability, I have seen firsthand and heard about the disproportionate effects on women as a result of sexual assault and sexual violence, so it is important. As I have already said, my colleagues and I on this side of the chamber have so much to offer with respect to possible solutions and approaches to sexual assault prevention and response.

I urge the minister to continue to have a tripartisan approach to this issue in reality, not just in words. I remain absolutely hopeful and optimistic that we can and will make a difference.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

COVID-19 pandemic response—update Ministerial statement

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Families and Community Services and Minister for Health) (10.42): I rise to provide an update on the COVID-19 situation in the ACT and the plans, preparations and actions that the government continues to take to protect the health and wellbeing of Canberrans.

Since my last update on 20 April, the ACT remains in a strong position in our response to COVID-19. Across the country, Australia continues to do well, despite a recent increase in the number of positive cases detected in returned international travellers in hotel quarantine. I thank the Canberra community for following the public health directions and advice, as this is critical to our continued efforts to stop the spread of the virus.

I also want to acknowledge the continued hard work of our frontline hospital staff, the staff at our testing and vaccination centres and our entire public health system for helping to keep the community safe. I appreciate the community's patience as we progress the COVID-19 vaccination program to protect our community, and now see more and more ACT residents eligible to book their vaccination appointment.

Over the past several weeks we have seen COVID-19 cases rise in many parts of the world. Concerningly, in late April we saw new peaks in global daily cases since the pandemic began, largely driven by the situation unfolding in India. It is distressing to see the terrible impact this is having in these communities and the intense pressure placed on health systems which are struggling to cope.

Our thoughts are with India, Nepal and all countries dealing with the stress of rising cases at this time. The commonwealth government is facilitating a shipment of emergency medical supplies to India, including personal protective equipment and medical equipment to help address their critical oxygen shortages. I know this situation is extremely distressing for Australian citizens and residents who have family and friends in India and other countries that are seeing waves of new COVID cases.

Our thoughts are with those Indian, Nepalese and other communities who are experiencing loss and anxiety as the global pandemic spreads. As at 9 May 2021, there have been more than 157 million confirmed cases, including over 3.2 million deaths, reported to the World Health Organisation.

Across Australia, the situation remains relatively stable, with most jurisdictions, including the ACT, operating under eased “COVID normal” public health restrictions. While the situation is optimistic, we must continue to be cautious, as we expect to see continued outbreaks and instances of community transmission. Over recent weeks there have been two instances of community transmission infection linked to hotel quarantine in Western Australia and the identification of new community acquired cases in New South Wales which are currently under investigation to determine if there is a missing link in transmission linked to hotel quarantine.

The ACT has responded to these new Sydney cases, particularly in response to people who have been in exposure locations and source investigation locations, by placing restrictions on entry to high-risk facilities in the ACT. We continue to plan for the likelihood of these events as we know that the virus is difficult to contain and can spread even from very tightly controlled quarantine settings, and the lessons are continually being applied.

In the ACT I am pleased to report that we are doing an excellent job in maintaining COVID-19 suppression, and there continues to be no evidence of community transmission. Presently, there are no active cases in the ACT, with our total number of cases at 124, and three deaths earlier in the pandemic.

On 28 April 2021 a new case of COVID-19 was detected in a man in his 50s, a diplomat, who returned to the ACT on 25 April. This individual flew into Sydney international airport and travelled to Canberra by private vehicle on the same day. He did not stop en route to the ACT and remained in home quarantine following his return. The individual followed all quarantine measures for returning overseas travellers and was supported by ACT Health. Three close contacts identified also entered quarantine and have followed the instructions of our public health officers. ACT Health deemed there to be no risk to the public and there were no further

positive cases identified. I am pleased to report that the individual is well, and has now recovered and been cleared by ACT Health to conclude quarantine.

Testing remains an important part of our pandemic response as a community, and we continue to encourage anyone with symptoms to come forward for testing. As at 10 May the ACT has conducted more than 203,000 negative tests. Please continue to come forward to be tested if you are experiencing any symptoms, no matter how mild.

On 5 May 2021 New South Wales announced a new COVID-19 case in a Sydney resident who has not recently travelled overseas and does not work in a hotel quarantine, border or health setting. Genomic sequencing linked the case to a returned international traveller who had tested positive while undertaking quarantine at the Sydney health accommodation facility. New South Wales Health is investigating the missing link in transmission, as there is no known link between the new case and the hotel quarantine case. One household contact tested positive on 6 May 2021. The individuals had visited a number of locations in Sydney while potentially infectious.

Focused restrictions have been put in place within the ACT, which require anyone who has attended any of the New South Wales exposure locations, on the dates and at the times specified, to immediately get tested, quarantine for 14 days from the time they were there and contact ACT Health. Anyone who has attended a source investigation location on the dates and at the times specified must get tested for COVID-19 and self-isolate until a negative test result is received. Anyone who has recently travelled to Sydney is also being asked to continue to review the list of exposure locations and to follow the advice provided.

As previously noted, there have been two recent hotel transmission events in Western Australia resulting in locally acquired cases in the community. In response to a cluster of cases linked to the Mercure Hotel, one of whom was detected in Melbourne after travelling there, the Western Australian Premier announced a three-day lockdown for the Perth and Peel regions, commencing on 24 April.

Following the WA lockdown announcement, the ACT introduced new stay-at-home restrictions for anyone travelling from the Perth and Peel regions after 8 am on 24 April. In addition, travellers who had been to an identified exposure site were subject to additional conditions, dependent on their individual situation, including potential quarantine, self-isolation, testing and exemption conditions. The stay-at-home requirements in the ACT were lifted with effect from 2 am on 27 April, in line with WA.

However, in a separate incident, on 1 May the Western Australian government announced three new COVID-19 cases. The initial case was a security guard contracted to work in a different quarantine hotel, and who was subsequently found to have been infected by a returned international traveller. Two of this individual's close contacts also tested positive. WA determined that a lockdown was not necessary at that time but introduced mandatory mask-wearing indoors and outdoors, and further tightened some gathering restrictions.

In response to this incident the ACT updated its restrictions for travellers from the Perth and Peel regions commencing from 6 pm on Sunday, 2 May. The ACT reintroduced the online declaration for anyone who had been in the Perth or Peel regions in the past 14 days who had not already completed the declaration since they were last in those regions. As a result of the three additional cases, many new casual and close contact locations were identified, and any person affected was required to follow additional conditions, including quarantine, testing and exemption requirements.

ACT Health is currently advising anyone in the ACT who is considering travel to WA to keep monitoring the situation carefully, and to keep up to date with the latest public health advice. Travellers should also be aware that they need to be prepared to comply with any restrictions in place, noting that situations can change very quickly.

Our COVID-19 vaccination program rollout is progressing well in the ACT. We are ensuring that the rollout continues in an efficient and, above all, safe manner. I thank the community for their patience and for booking their vaccination when it is their turn, through either their local GP or a government clinic. I am pleased to say that, as of 10 May, 33,873 doses of the Pfizer and AstraZeneca vaccines have been administered by the ACT government.

The ACT government vaccination clinics are now live on the Australian government's Vaccine Eligibility Checker and eligible Canberrans in phases 1a, 1b and the 2a cohort brought forward can make a booking online, with the checker linking people directly to the MyDHR Digital Health Record online platform. The ACT government COVID-19 vaccination phone booking line is also available for those who are unable to register for MyDHR or who prefer to speak with someone to make a booking. Canberrans can also contact participating general practices to book their appointment. Participating GP clinics will commence administering AstraZeneca to those now eligible under 2a, persons aged 50 and over, from 17 May onwards. More than 70 ACT general practices and respiratory assessment clinics are supporting the national rollout.

The ACT government's Garran COVID-19 mass vaccination clinic remains well placed to deliver vaccinations, and became a Pfizer-only site from 3 May. On the same day the new site at Calvary hospital was opened to take bookings for the AstraZeneca vaccine. Subject to a consistent and regular supply, our two ACT government clinics can provide more than 8,000 vaccination doses per week.

We are continuing to plan for the opening of additional clinics and locations if required. We are also focusing on vulnerable and hard-to-reach groups in the ACT as a priority. We are working with the commonwealth to expedite the disability residential care program, and to supplement the general practice rollout if required.

Our local GPs play a vital role in the rollout of the vaccination program in the ACT, and the government will continue to work closely with our local primary health network to ensure that we are effectively administering vaccinations to Canberrans. I would like to thank the many GPs in Canberra for supporting the vaccination rollout

as well as acknowledging the incredible efforts of all of our own staff at our clinics and behind the scenes to facilitate the delivery of COVID-19 vaccinations in the territory.

I encourage Canberrans to visit the ACT Health website at www.covid19.act.gov.au to find out more about the vaccination rollout in the ACT and check when they are eligible to book their appointment.

In line with the ACT's positive situation, the ACT is continuing to operate under "COVID normal" restrictions. Our cautious approach to the easing of restrictions throughout the pandemic has enabled us to remain in a strong position while also helping ACT businesses and the community to continue to move forward.

I am pleased to see business and community support for the Check In CBR app. This measure is vitally important in our efforts to keep businesses and venues open with increased capacity, while ensuring ACT Health can quickly and accurately conduct contact tracing should there be a new COVID-19 case reported in the ACT. As of 9 May, there have been more than 12 million check-ins using the Check In CBR app, with more than 10,000 venues registered and over 650,000 downloads of the app since its launch.

We know that the live music and performing arts sectors have been especially impacted by the pandemic, so we have updated the COVID safe event protocol advising live music performance venues on how to safely host live music events and seek an exemption for larger audiences. This includes the possibility for live music performance venues to increase capacity for ticketed events to up to three persons per four square metres of usable space by submitting an online event exemption form which must be approved by ACT Health. We are aware that the same venues often host other types of live performances. The Chief Health Officer is currently considering what a next stage of restrictions easing may look like for these venues and more broadly, noting that there will still be a requirement to maintain a level of restriction for certain businesses and activities.

With the latest easing of restrictions comes an increase in responsibility. It is essential that businesses and the wider ACT community continue to follow COVID safe practices, including staying home if unwell and getting tested with even the mildest of symptoms, practising good hand and respiratory hygiene, and checking in with the Check In CBR app for contact tracing purposes. This is especially important given the recent community cases detected in New South Wales.

We only need to look beyond Australia's shores to see that the COVID-19 pandemic continues to have dire impacts on many countries, regions and communities abroad that are grappling to control its spread. We are fortunate in the ACT and across Australia to be in the position we are in, which is testament to our response and to the community's united efforts to stop the spread. But with the situation continuing to evolve and the risk still high, the ACT government needs to be able to respond by implementing and enforcing public health directions to protect Canberrans.

Given the global situation, I expect that the requirement for mandatory quarantine for returning travellers will continue for some time. Our approach will continue to be guided by the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee advice and careful assessment of the risk to our community.

We have also seen in the last week the discovery of new community cases which are not easily linked to returned international travellers in hotel quarantine, demonstrating the need for everyone to be aware of the potential for infection. We know that our COVID-19 vaccination program will help to protect the community. Once again, I encourage Canberrans to please book your appointment to have your COVID-19 vaccination when it is your turn to do so.

I am pleased that we are doing well in the ACT and congratulate every Canberran on contributing to these efforts. I present the following paper:

COVID-19—Update on Government response—Ministerial statement, 11 May 2021.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bradyn Dillon—coronial inquest Ministerial statement

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Families and Community Services and Minister for Health) (10.56): I rise again today to make a statement to the Assembly following the release of the report of the coronial inquest into the death of Bradyn Dillon. Bradyn's tragic death has had a devastating impact on his family and on many people in our community. I extend my deepest sympathies and those of the government to Bradyn's mother, to his family and to everyone who knew him.

I also acknowledge and thank every person who participated in the inquest. The circumstances of Bradyn's death are horrific and heartbreaking, and I know that this has been an incredibly difficult process for those who gave evidence in the hearings. This includes staff across Child and Youth Protection Services, other ACT government directorates and community agencies, who work daily and diligently to ensure children and young people are safe, strong and connected to family and the community.

Support is available to staff and community members who were involved in the inquest and for those who are impacted by its findings. I encourage those who have been affected by this process and the reporting around it to reach out, talk to someone and seek support. There are services available to support you, including Lifeline, 1800RESPECT and the Domestic Violence Crisis Service. We know that family

violence has a serious and devastating impact that can affect people for years and that stories of other people's experiences can be triggering.

I would like to acknowledge the work and findings released by ACT Coroner Margaret Hunter OAM on Thursday, 29 April and the 17 recommendations that the government is now considering. It is important to specifically note the key findings of the coroner. I would like to highlight to the Assembly some of the words of the report. Firstly, there is this powerful sentence:

There is no issue as to who caused Bradyn's death. That fact has been well established. Graham Dillon is the sole person responsible for the murder of his son Bradyn.

Secondly, there is this critical finding:

Having considered all of the evidence as well as submissions by counsel together with the reports I received, I have come to the conclusion that no one could have predicted the outcome that eventuated. It is my view that no one could have predicted that Graham Dillon would murder his son.

Coroner Hunter has identified a series of "sliding door moments" and events where potential opportunities to change the trajectory of Bradyn's life are now apparent to us. With full information and the benefit of hindsight, the coroner identifies that "opportunities to recognise the children were at risk of abuse were lost".

In considering the evidence, the coroner recognises the complexity of child protection work, the benefit we have in viewing these matters through the lens of hindsight, and ultimately Graham Dillon's sole culpability for the murder of his son.

However, it is also important that we take the opportunity, as the coroner has done through her recommendations, to identify how the systems that work with children, young people and their families can be improved to better respond to similar circumstances when they arise.

The coroner's findings do not take away our responsibility as a government and as a community to do all we can to keep children and young people safe. We will consider seriously the coroner's recommendations and respond in accordance with the requirements of the Coroners Act.

Already, over the last five years, the ACT government has made significant investments and implemented reforms to improve policies and practices across CYPS and in our responses to family and domestic violence in the ACT. This work is ongoing and is informed by a large body of reports and recommendations, many of which have occurred in the years following Bradyn Dillon's death.

CYPS staff work in complex, emotional and challenging situations. I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge the work of CYPS staff in protecting children and young people every day. I recognise that the very difficult decisions that CYPS staff must make on a daily basis are some of the most complex and important made by anyone in government. Our community is fortunate to have dedicated, deeply caring

professionals working every day with the best interests of children and young people at the forefront of their considerations.

Since 2012 the ACT government has delivered record investments, through successive budgets, to support a substantial reform agenda and to ensure that the child protection system is better resourced and our staff are better supported to undertake this essential work with Canberra's most complex families.

In 2012-13 the ACT budget allocated almost \$1.2 million a year towards increasing the frontline workforce by 10 frontline positions, to increase capacity in the system to manage demand. This funding increased to almost \$1.5 million each year for an additional two full-time equivalent positions in the 2014-15 financial year.

In response to the growing number of child concern reports being received from the community, the 2017-18 budget further committed \$2½ million a year to establish two additional frontline casework teams. In the 2016-17 ACT budget almost \$2½ million was allocated through the Safer Families package to enhance quality assurance of child protection services through a case analysis team within CYPS and the development of an independent child and youth protection quality assurance and improvement committee, now known as the Strengthening Practice Committee.

The establishment of the case analysis team has been a key platform for improving decision-making and the quality of case management. This team provides independent analysis of individual cases at key decision-making points. The independent case analysis allows case managers to think about the long-term cumulative impact of abuse and neglect and ensures that the voice of the child is at the centre of the work. The case analysis also explores the risks and vulnerabilities to a child's safety.

The Strengthening Practice Committee was established to strengthen the quality of child protection practice in the ACT and to foster ongoing improvement of the child protection system. The committee acts as an advisory committee, including independent interstate experts, to drive a culture of practice improvement to ensure better outcomes are achieved for children whose safety is at risk from abuse and neglect.

In addition, the complaints and client services team was established in May 2018 with a focus on internal complex case matters and complaints. The complaints and client services team engages directly with parents, carers, schools and community organisations as an independent point of contact on CYPS decisions, and can provide feedback on the rationale for decisions and provide complaint resolution processes as required.

Additional funding was provided in the 2018-19 budget to establish the Family Group Conferencing program, to fund the Our Booris, Our Way review, establish and fund the Functional Family Therapy program—a partnership between Gugan Gulwan and OzChild—and to increase staffing and support into the adoption and permanency teams within CYPS to achieve increasing numbers of permanency orders for children in long-term, stable kinship and foster care placements.

The 2015-16 budget allocated funding to commence the development of the new case management IT system known as CYRIS, with further investments over subsequent budgets. The first and second phases of this project have been implemented and have resulted in significant improvements in how staff can access information and link information across different family units. As this project continues, we will be able to realise improved information sharing between CYPS and the Education Directorate, police and our funded community providers that deliver out of home care services, as well as with carers and children and young people.

The investment in out of home care services has been significant with the implementation of the Step Up for Our Kids Out of Home Care Strategy. The 2017-18 budget committed an additional \$33.7 million over four years for delivery of out of home care services, with a further \$39.8 million committed in the 2019-20 budget. The Step Up for Our Kids strategy has been transformational in driving down the number of children and young people entering care, and in lifting expectations for the outcomes experienced by children and young people who are unable to live safely with their biological family. We are now considering the impact of the first step up strategy as we embark on a process of redesigning and maturing the system through the second iteration of the strategy.

The government has also invested funding to ensure there is improved capacity to share information across the service system and to support the implementation of the reportable conduct team, a key recommendation of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

In the 2019-20 budget review, a further \$2.8 million over four years was committed to strengthen the oversight and delivery of services to vulnerable children and young people and their families by providing ongoing staff and resources for the practice and performance function in CYPS, specifically to support workforce development and training and operational policy to ensure CYPS can continue to develop and mature its service response.

Work is underway to improve internal decision-making processes within CYPS in response to feedback about what needs to change to improve the consistency and transparency of decision-making. Underpinning the implementation of an internal review process will be a program of practice development to strengthen decision-making practice with a focus on restorative principles, documentation, collaboration and relationship management.

The ACT government is also undertaking work with the ACT Human Rights Commission to develop an external merits review model for child protection decisions in the ACT. This is driven by a community expectation and government understanding that external merits review should be available for more child protection decisions.

As the President of the ACT Human Rights Commission recently noted in an interview on ABC radio, however, most decisions made by CYPS staff are the right decisions, made in a complex environment. Child protection workers are skilled and

committed, and we need to ensure that good, experienced staff are supported to stay in these critical jobs.

That is why the last round of enterprise bargaining saw a new child and youth protection professional classification structure established under the ACT public sector technical and other professional enterprise agreement 2018-21. The CYPP classification structure contains provisions to improve CSD's ability to compete in the marketplace to recruit and retain suitably qualified staff to work in front-line child protection roles.

These include: provisions for CYPP staff to move from the CYPP level 1 to level 2 and from level 2 to level 3 classifications based on competency-based advancement, which is a higher predictor of success in the role than traditional interview and application-based forms of recruitment; the introduction of a CYPP advancement scheme, which is designed to recognise, retain and reward outstanding generalist and specialist practice in the areas of child protection and/or youth justice; and the introduction of a CYPP paraprofessional scheme, under which employees will be supported to complete a bachelor degree in social work, psychology, social welfare, social science or a related discipline, while attaining valuable on-the-job experience. Employees will then advance to the CYPP 1 classification following attainment of their qualification and satisfactory work performance.

The CYPP classification structure also acknowledges the significant contribution that individuals with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander or other cultural heritage and experience bring to improving outcomes for children and young people. Other work underway across CYPS includes: embedding the recommendations from the Glanfield inquiry into CYPS practice; continued co-location of external services, such as OneLink, the sexual assault and child abuse team of the AFP, and Education and Health Directorate liaison officers; and the implementation of the Safer Families collaboration in partnership with the Domestic Violence Crisis Service.

The collaboration uses the Safe and Together model, which is an international, evidence-based model to assist child welfare professionals to become more domestic violence informed. The Safer Families collaboration also includes embedding two DVCS staff within CYPS to provide expert consultation, advice and attend joint home visits as appropriate.

Other work includes: since 2016, providing a five-day training course to staff on working with families affected by family and domestic violence; achieving agreed information-sharing protocols between states and territories and establishing an interstate liaison officer position within CYPS; implementing the co-location of child protection practitioners and policing officials at the family law courts; establishing an information-sharing reference group, where CYPS and AFP staff meet each month with co-located officials in other jurisdictions and oversee information provided to the courts; the establishment of a national child protection information-sharing system called Connect for Safety, which went live in September 2020 and the Community Services Directorate has actively participated in this work at a national level; and implementing, in October 2020, a new "notice of child abuse, family violence or risk"

form to provide CYPS with substantially more information regarding risk factors for children who may be the subject of family law proceedings.

Further, the Community Services Directorate is currently working to respond to a significant number of recommendations from a range of reviews, inquiries and reports. This includes 51 recommendations from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, eight recommendations of the Glanfield review, 34 recommendations of the Our Booris, Our Way review, and 53 recommendations of the recent Legislative Assembly inquiry into child and youth protection services. These recommendations focus heavily on building a child and youth protection service system that is restorative, contemporary, and underpinned by good decision-making and communication.

This work has driven change right across government, to improve information sharing and the interaction between ACT government directorates, agencies and service providers. The coronial inquest has made a further 14 recommendations in relation to CYPS, and the government will have more to say on how these recommendations will fit into and further inform our existing reform agenda when we provide our formal response to the report.

The government also continues to address family violence through Safer Families initiatives to ensure those experiencing domestic and family violence get the help and support they need. This has included further work driven by recommendations from the Glanfield review, as well as recommendations from the review of domestic and family violence deaths in the Australian Capital Territory by the Domestic Violence Prevention Council and the ACT domestic violence service system final gap analysis report by the Community Services Directorate.

In June 2016, when the ACT government outlined its commitment to action in the ACT government response to the family violence report, it took action to appoint the Coordinator-General for Family Safety, a full-time position to lead change and provide accountability across the service system; implement a collaborative and integrated approach to service re-design and improvement through the Family Safety Hub; and build collaborative practices and further develop a skilled and educated workforce, especially front-line staff, in responding to the needs of adults and children experiencing family violence.

We have continued to work to make changes to legislation, policy, practice and culture to shape reform. The 2020-21 budget invested \$24.4 million over four years for Safer Families initiatives. This funding supports a range of initiatives that strengthen the capacity of front-line services to respond to domestic and family violence, improve coordination across government, build important partnerships with the community sector and test promising new approaches.

The Office of the Coordinator-General for Family Safety works closely with the sector to understand the ongoing needs of women and children and families seeking help. We continue to invest strongly in our primary domestic and family violence responses. In 2020-21, DVCS and the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre received nearly \$1.1 million in government support. In addition, we funded a further \$3.25 million in

critical services responses in 2020-21, including supporting three health-justice partnerships. The service integrates lawyers in healthcare settings where they can reach people experiencing domestic violence who would otherwise not receive any help. We continue to focus on responses that change the behaviour of people who use violence, because we know that we can never make women safe if we do not deal with the violence being used.

In January 2020, the ACT government released a report into responses to domestic and family violence perpetrators—“Reducing domestic and family violence in the ACT”. This report highlighted the need to take a risk assessment approach and improve practices for holding perpetrators to account for their abuse and violence and at the same time offering them timely opportunities to change their behaviour. The report’s findings were based on a literature review of best practice for perpetrator programs and interventions, as well as two forums held with key ACT stakeholders and national experts.

In response, the government has funded DVCS to deliver Room4Change, a therapeutic residential men’s behaviour change program. Room4Change supports the whole family and is one of a small number of residential behaviour-change programs nationally. The government also continues to undertake ground-breaking research on people’s lived experience.

In 2019-20, the Family Safety Hub and the ACT Children and Young People Commissioner partnered to listen to young people talk about their experiences of family violence so those needs could be better understood. We know that it is only by listening to children and young people themselves that we can understand how they think and feel about family violence and what support they need in response.

The consultations helped to shed light on the unique experiences of young people when there is violence in their homes. From these conversations have come a series of insights, now published online and in a booklet titled, “Now you have heard us, what will you do?” The insights are a guide to how we can expand and improve services to better meet the needs of children and young people.

The Family Safety Hub is currently engaging with the youth sector and other relevant people in government, the community sector and the general community to explore opportunities to co-design and collaborate on the implementation of solutions to address the needs identified by young people. We have also committed \$2.7 million over four years to deliver domestic and family violence training for all ACT public servants, because we know how important it is to continually develop our skilled workforce, ensuring they are equipped to recognise and respond to the needs of people experiencing domestic and family violence.

Mr Assistant Speaker, the coroner acknowledged in her findings that Bradyn’s schoolteachers were diligent, honest and thorough in their reporting and they were clearly concerned for his safety and welfare. However, the coroner has made a number of recommendations relating to school systems, which the ACT will consider carefully and respond to in due course.

As with CYPS, it is important to note the work that the Education Directorate has already undertaken, informed by the recommendations of the Glanfield review. The Education Directorate has made legislative amendments in 2019 to the Education Act 2004 allowing for greater sharing of information across jurisdictions regarding information about a child or young person being enrolled at an education provider or registered for home education; continued to strengthen use of the school administrative system to ensure attendance data is accurately collected and analysed to enable early intervention and responses to students and families of concern; stood up a school attendance team allowing for more targeted work on supporting re-engagement and re-enrolment for students of compulsory education age; and commenced an enrolment and attendance policy and procedure review to align with the legislative amendments and to strengthen current practice in schools.

The directorate's responses relating to student engagement and attendance have been intended to minimise the risk of children and young people "disappearing" from the education system, noting this was an issue which was subject to commentary in the coroner's report.

When tragic deaths occur as a result of family violence, they rightly act as a catalyst for government to refocus our efforts to keep children and families safe. It is also important to recognise that, as a community, we share a collective responsibility for the safety of children and young people. In the words of the inimitable Dr Sue Packer: "If we want children's lives to be better, we have to be actively involved in supporting the family a very long time before abuse occurs. Everybody should be able to intervene and intervene safely." As a community and as a government we must continue our efforts, working together, to support children, young people and families.

To conclude: I would like to again reiterate my sincere condolences to Bradyn's mother, family and friends. I would like to thank everybody who has contributed to the inquest and to the significant work and substantial reform that has already taken place to prevent family and domestic violence and to better protect our children and young people. There is always more to do, and we are committed to doing it. We will carefully review the recommendations from the coronial inquest and consider how these can be addressed in the context of the significant reform agenda already underway. The government response to the coronial inquest will be tabled in the Assembly within the next six months. I present the following paper:

Coronial inquest—Bradyn Dillion—Ministerial statement, 11 May 2021

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Planning—Gungahlin town centre Ministerial statement

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Manager of Government Business, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Industrial Relations and Workplace Safety, Minister for

Planning and Land Management and Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (11.17): I am pleased to present the ‘planning for the Gungahlin town centre’ ministerial statement. This statement reinforces the Assembly’s interest in the Gungahlin town centre and the Assembly’s agreed resolution on the town centre from February this year. It also outlines the current planning and activities being undertaken in the town centre.

As I stated in February this year, the town centre is continuing to grow and evolve. Envisaging a lower scale urban village when development commenced in the 1990s, the centre has grown rapidly, attracting new residents, businesses and investment. It has also been transformed through the commencement of light rail. We want Gungahlin, like other parts of Canberra, to represent best practice planning and design and to provide for the future with an ability to adapt to changes in the market, in technology, in design and in the community.

Planning for Gungahlin and Canberra is an ongoing process, and we continually look at lessons and innovations from within Canberra and other cities to apply to get positive development outcomes for our city. Planning, land release and development is a long process. Developments that are approved today may take a number of years to be constructed. Planning has many challenges along its way that need to be worked through incrementally and systematically. This needs to be worked through by our planners with other areas in government and, of course, with the community.

Planning controls themselves take a number of years to change and are subject to robust statutory processes and community engagement. We need to keep checking whether our planning system is delivering good results. With approximately one-third of the town centre still to be developed, we take opportunities to review planning frameworks to facilitate appropriate development for the centre, while reflecting and balancing the expectations of the community.

This is why, in 2017, we started the Gungahlin town centre planning refresh, which led to the public release of the snapshot document in 2018 and the draft variation to the Territory Plan No 364 in 2019. Nine submissions on the draft variation were received. On 31 March this year, DV364 was formally referred to the Standing Committee on Planning, Transport and City Services for consideration. The committee, on 8 April 2021, agreed to conduct an inquiry into DV364 and is currently inviting submissions. This is a great opportunity for the community to tell us what they want to see in the Gungahlin town centre, and I look forward to receiving the committee’s report in due course as well as to the government formally responding.

On 10 February this year, the Assembly, with my support, passed a resolution calling for additional employment and better mixed-use developments in the Gungahlin town centre. While the resolution does not require a formal report back to the Assembly, the government intends to respond to the resolution. The directorate has already commenced considering the resolution in its work, including in relation to the ACT planning system review and reform project. I look forward to providing the Assembly with a response to the resolution before the last sitting day of this year.

A key objective of the planning system review and reform project, reiterated in the 10th Legislative Assembly parliamentary and governing agreement, is to improve built form and public spaces across the territory. The agreement also identifies the need to incorporate character, context and design as key elements of the system to substantially lift the quality of the design of new developments. As part of the planning system review and reform project, we have already examined some international and national planning systems for best practice examples.

Further, the National Capital Design Review Panel, established by the ACT government in partnership with the National Capital Authority, is driving improved design for major development and redevelopment projects across Canberra. The design review panel will also play an important role in the ongoing development of the Gungahlin town centre, and it will provide advice on best practice mixed-use development for four sites currently for sale.

The Gungahlin town centre still has land zoned for commercial uses. The ACT government has long called for a major federal government agency to join Defence Housing and our ACT public sector employees in the Gungahlin town centre. In particular, I would like to call on the federal government to locate their new national resilience, relief and recovery agency in the Gungahlin town centre. This is a new agency announced just last week and would be a wonderful opportunity for commonwealth public servants to catch the light rail to Gungahlin to work. It is a national agency that should be based in the national capital.

Canberra was planned as a city with a range of different centres that have different roles. Part of Canberra's design is that not every centre is a complete city in its own right, and there are other parts of Canberra where we will go to find the specific services that we need. This is not unique to Canberra. The Territory Plan is a planning document and does not mandate specific businesses or favour one business type over another. It provides for uses within centres.

I would like to remind members that, while recent focus has been on the town centre, Gungahlin is more than just its town centre. The Gungahlin district's population is estimated to reach approximately 82,500 people this year, an increase of more than 6,000 residents from 2017. Of course, in a previous life, I was a real estate agent helping people find their first home or their new home in the broader Gungahlin area. It has been wonderful to see more and more Canberrans choose to call this part of our city home.

Several suburbs are still under construction and there is one further suburb, Kenny, to be developed in the coming years. That is 15 residential suburbs, including Mitchell, since the first houses were completed in Palmerston in 1992. Further, government land development in the Gungahlin region over the past decade has been recognised by local and national industry bodies. The developments of Franklin, Throsby, Forde, Harrison, Crace and Bonner have been recognised for their outstanding delivery of master-planned suburbs, residential development, urban design and affordable housing.

I know that there is wide interest in the proposed new community centre within the town centre. The project is identified as a commitment in the parliamentary and governing agreement for the 10th Legislative Assembly. This also follows an Assembly motion agreed in February 2019. The community centre's project brief will be further informed by a Gungahlin district community and recreational facilities assessment that is currently being prepared by an independent consultant. Engagement with key community stakeholders began in February 2021 and will continue with further community consultation in the second half of 2021. This will be considered by the government in future when it has the evidence and information to support a budget business case.

Mr Assistant Speaker, as you can see, Gungahlin and its town centre are providing homes for thousands of Canberrans and will for many years into the future. The town centre is well connected to public transport and offers a wide range of shops, amenities and recreational opportunities. There are many local businesses thriving there, which is a great endorsement of the centre's planning. The government is continuing to monitor the growth and planning for Gungahlin to create the best centre and district possible. I thank members for their continuing interest in the Gungahlin town centre. I present the following paper:

Gungahlin—Planning for the town centre—Ministerial statement, 11 May 2021

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi) (11.26): I will not speak for too long as I do not wish to steal my thunder for this afternoon, but I would like to thank the minister for presenting the statement to the Assembly. I note that the Gungahlin Community Council extended a written invitation to the minister on 27 April asking him to present at one of their public meetings. Hence, I draw it to the minister's attention that he could fit it into his schedule and provide to the local community the information which he has presented to the Assembly so that he can hear their concerns in person. Apart from that, I will leave it until this afternoon when we will have a full and substantive debate on the future of the Gungahlin town centre.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee Scrutiny report 4

MR HANSON (Murrumbidgee) (11.27): I present the following report:

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee (Legislative Scrutiny Role)—Scrutiny Report 4, dated 4 May 2021, together with a copy of the extracts of the relevant minutes of proceedings—

I seek leave to make a brief statement.

Leave granted.

MR HANSON: Scrutiny Report No 4 contains the committee's comments on four bills, 16 pieces of subordinate legislation and two government responses. The report was circulated to members when the Assembly was not sitting. I commend the report to the Assembly.

Public Accounts—Standing Committee Statement by chair

MRS KIKKERT (Ginninderra) (11.27): Pursuant to standing order 246A, I wish to make a statement on behalf of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts in relation to reportable contracts under section 39 of the Government Procurement Act 2001. The Government Procurement Act 2001 requires responsible territory entities to provide the public accounts committee with a list of reportable contracts every 12 months. Reportable contracts are defined, with some exceptions, as procurement contracts equal to or over \$25,000—also known as notifiable contracts—that contain confidential text.

The responsible entity is required to provide the committee with the parties to the contract, a brief description of what the contract is for, the date the contract was made, the end date of the contract, the value of the contract, and any other information prescribed in the Government Procurement Act 2001 or by regulation.

The committee acknowledges that the information provided in relation to reportable contracts is publicly available on the ACT government contracts register. However, its scrutiny is assisted by receiving a consolidated report every 12 months. The committee has been provided with a consolidated list of reportable contracts for the 12-monthly period from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021.

As per previous practice, the committee believes that there is value in tabling the consolidated list of reportable contracts for the period specified as a transparency mechanism to promote accountability. I therefore seek leave to table the list of reportable contracts for the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021 as received by the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

Leave granted.

MRS KIKKERT: I table the following paper:

Reportable contracts—Agencies reporting reportable contracts for the period
1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021

Statement by chair

MRS KIKKERT (Ginninderra) (11.30): Pursuant to standing order 246A, I wish to make a statement on behalf of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts in relation to the following Auditor-General's reports:

No 2 of 2021: Total Facilities Management Contract Implementation;

No 2 of 2020: 2018-19 Financial Audits—Computer Information systems;

No 3 of 2020: Data Security;

No 7 of 2020: Management and care for people living with serious and continuing illness;

No 9 of 2020: 2019-20 Financial Audits Overview;

No 10 of 2020: 2019-20 Financial Audits—Financial Results and Audit Findings;

No 5 of 2019: Management of the System-Wide Data Review implementation program;

No 6 of 2019: ICT Strategic Planning;

No 9 of 2019: 2018-19 Financial Audits Overview;

No 10 of 2020: 2018-19 Financial Audit—Financial Results and Audit Findings; and

No 11 of 2020: Maintenance of ACT Government School Infrastructure.

The committee has agreed to note and not inquire further into these reports.

Statement by chair

MRS KIKKERT (Ginninderra) (11.31): Pursuant to standing order 246A, I wish to make a statement on behalf of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts in relation to the following Auditor-General's reports:

No 1 of 2021: Land Management Agreements;

No 1 of 2020: Shared Services Delivery of HR and Finance Services; and

No 6 of 2020: Transfer of worker's compensation arrangements from Comcare.

The committee has resolved to inquire further into these reports. Whilst the terms of reference for the inquiry will be in the information contained within each audit report, the committee's inquiry will focus specifically on the conclusions and key findings in each report, and the government's response to each report and implementation of each audit report's recommendations.

In relation to Auditor-General's report No 1 of 2021: *Land Management Agreements*, and Auditor-General's report No 6 of 2020: *Transfer of worker's compensation arrangements from Comcare*, the committee will be inviting written submissions to its inquiry from key interest and stakeholder groups.

In relation to Auditor-General's report No 1 of 2020: *Shared Services Delivery of HR and Finance Services*, the committee will be seeking to hear only from the relevant ACT government ministers and ACT government contractors. The committee is expecting to report to the Legislative Assembly on each of these Auditor-General's reports as soon as practicable.

Statement by chair

MRS KIKKERT (Ginninderra) (11.33): Pursuant to standing order 246A, I wish to make a statement on behalf of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts in relation

to Auditor-General's report No 7 of 2019 which was tabled in the Assembly on 27 June 2019. The report, entitled *Referral processes for the support of vulnerable children*, contained the outcomes of a performance audit by the Audit Office ACT which considered universal early family support services provided by the Community Services Directorate and Canberra Health Services and their linkages to more targeted services and interventions. The report contained a number of conclusions and key findings and made six recommendations.

The government's response to the Auditor-General's report was presented to the Assembly on 24 October 2019. The committee received a briefing from the Auditor-General in relation to the audit report on 17 February 2021. Pursuant to its resolution of appointment, the committee has inquired into this audit report and resolved on 5 May 2021 to bring it to the attention of another committee of the Assembly for further consideration. Accordingly, the committee has written to the Standing Committee on Health and Community Wellbeing referring this report for that committee's attention and consideration.

Utilities Amendment Bill 2021

Debate resumed from 20 April 2021 on motion by **Mr Barr** and **Mr Rattenbury**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

MS CASTLEY (Yerrabi) (11.35): As the shadow minister for energy and emissions reduction, I am pleased to speak on this bill and to signal from the outset the Canberra Liberal's support of this legislation. We support the bill for two key reasons: firstly, it gives more information and buying power to consumers—to Canberrans and their families—which will mean more money in their pockets through cheaper power bills.

That is something we should all applaud. Secondly, the Canberra Liberals have long campaigned on cost-of-living pressures, so any measures which ease the load on household budgets is welcome and overdue, particularly for low-income Canberrans and families.

Given Victoria introduced a price comparison framework, the Victorian default offer, almost two years ago in July 2019 and New South Wales and South Australia also require electricity retailers to include a default market offer as a price comparison tool for customers, I wonder whether this legislation could have come to the Assembly earlier. But here it is, so let's get it done.

One of the two main parts of this bill are setting a reference price framework so consumers receive a reference bill for a typical consumer. This gives Canberrans a benchmark to compare deals and offers from other retailers, from competitors, and make informed choices so they get the best deal. This brings to mind what we now see on our supermarket shelves where customers can see products and compare prices on boxes of cereal and muesli bars by knowing their price per unit or weight. Secondly, the bill ensures retailers will tell customers of best offers, if they are on the best electricity offer and how much they could save by switching to a different one.

The reason the Labor-Greens government has brought this bill to the Assembly is that it was recommended by the independent regulator, the ACT Independent Competition and Regulatory Commission. In its 2020-24 electricity price investigation report the commission surveyed more than 1,000 ACT electricity consumers and consulted with electricity retailers, consumer groups and the community in preparing its recommendations.

As part of its work, the commission has been encouraging retailers to tell their customers to visit the Australian government's Energy Made Easy website to check if there is a better offer from another retailer. Until I began researching this bill, I had never heard of the Energy Made Easy website, and I suspect the vast majority of Canberrans do not know about it either.

One of the big challenges for legislators is not only introducing legislation and other measures to hopefully improve people's circumstances but also ensuring that information is relayed to customers so that they know about it. Even if time-poor Canberrans and families are aware of the website, I wonder how many, when they hear 'energy made easy' have a healthy dose of cynicism and wonder, 'Really?'

As consumers, we are advised to shop around, but so often it is time-consuming, confusing and complicated. We either do not bother or we start, find that it is too hard and we get frustrated and give up. The Australian Energy Market Commission is on the record saying that many Canberrans are missing out on cutting their power bills by not shopping around. Yes, we get it—if only it was not so difficult. That is where this bill should be effective, because energy retailers will be required to inform customers if they have a better offer on the books and consumers will know the benchmark price to help compare a like-for-like basis with competitors' prices and go elsewhere if they see a better deal.

A September 2019 report revealed that while ActewAGL's market share has been declining the partly publicly owned company still has 83 per cent of the market. That is huge. The vast majority of Canberrans are with ActewAGL on the standard flat tariff—in other words, we are paying more than we should be, and for many of us much more. That money should be in our pockets, not in those of the electricity retailers. There are better deals on offer and there are also a host of other retailers in the market, but the consumer is none the wiser. Thank goodness that is soon to change.

In a briefing to understand this bill, I was informed that customers could save up to \$400 annually by switching retailer or moving to a better offer with the same retailer. Apparently, ACT consumers are far less active than elsewhere in Australia, and ActewAGL has benefitted from a loyalty tax. That is not surprising when you consider Canberrans have not had the transparent pricing that several states have had for a number of years now.

The St Vincent de Paul Society 2019 report on energy prices revealed that Canberrans are losing as much as \$500 a year by failing to actively seek out a better deal of electricity and gas prices. Their warning to Canberrans was if you snooze, you lose—you are getting duded if you are not active. Canberra Liberals do not want

Canberrans duded on power bills, which is why this bill is overdue, particularly as we now have a host of retailers on the market.

Canberrans have been left in the dark for too long. Economic conditions are still challenging for many Canberrans, a saving of up to \$400 per year is significant. The Canberra Liberals support measures to make electricity prices more transparent for consumers but caution that the price comparison framework must be carefully monitored to ensure it produces the required outcome for consumers and it must be regularly reviewed and evaluated.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong—Attorney-General, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Gaming and Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction) (11.41): I thank members for their contributions to the debate on this bill. The bill introduces an electricity reference price framework and requires electricity retailers to inform customers of better deals. These are important reforms that will assist ACT consumers to make informed choices when comparing electricity offers.

The regulation of electricity prices in the ACT has contributed to households having relatively lower electricity prices compared to other capital cities over the past decade. However, many consumers still pay more than they should because comparing offers and discounts proves difficult for them. The reference price that will be set under these reforms will not be an indicator of the lowest price available; rather the reference price will be a comparison tool or benchmark that will be set annually to broadly reflect the average customer and a possible annual price of electricity. Retailers will use this price for comparison purposes in advertising, ensuring that all offers and discounts are compared against the same benchmark.

Some other jurisdictions have already introduced similar measures to improve the transparency and comparability of their electricity offers. For example, the National Default Market Office Scheme applies in New South Wales, South Australia and south east Queensland, and the Victorian default offer obviously applies in Victoria. The initial outcome from these jurisdictions suggests the reforms are helping consumers find the best offer for their circumstances, saving them money.

National and jurisdictional initiatives do not apply in the ACT, due to our regulation of retail electricity prices. This bill brings the ACT in line with these other jurisdictions. The territory reference price framework draws from both existing schemes to overcome the current issues of inconsistent discounting and advertising practices that confuse many customers. The proposals have been recommended to the government by the ACT Independent Competition and Regulatory Commission.

The ACT Greens proposed action on these recommendations in our election commitments at the last election and they were agreed in the parliamentary and governing agreement between the Labor and Greens parties. We are acting on them now through this bill, and they should be in operation in the second half of this year.

The market of electricity plans has become a confusing labyrinth for consumers. In many ways it is comparable to the epitome of customer difficulty—the mobile phone plan, where there are base rates, time-based charges, flag falls and a range of different

charges that make it too complex for customers to understand, at least not without hours to spare making comparative tables. This framework seeks to demystify the electricity price landscape for Canberrans and enables them to make better informed choices regarding electricity offers.

In the ACT, around 40 per cent of retail electricity customers and over 50 per cent of small business electricity customers are on a standard electricity contract. Switching to the cheaper market offers could literally save these customers hundreds or even thousands of dollars every year. But many customers do not realise this or find the array of different contracts too complicated.

The two changes in this legislation can, hopefully, improve this situation and save people and businesses money. The reference price allows customers to compare a simple apples-for-apples price across contracts. This reference price will be set by the government and signed off by me as energy minister and by the Treasurer upon advice from the ICRC. Perhaps even more powerful is the requirement that electricity retailers proactively contact their customers and inform them if there is a cheaper contract that would save them money. This is required to be done in a formal and factual way, not as part of some advertisement where the customer may not be certain they can trust the information.

We do not want to delay consumers getting information that helps them manage their energy costs. The Australian Energy Regulator has recently announced that it is undertaking work to draft a better bills guideline, which could include similar requirements introduced by this this bill. As this develops, we will consider how this affects our approach in the ACT.

It is important that ACT consumers are provided with assistance to get better deals now and make the comparison of offers easier. There was some question about whether we should wait for the AER to finish their work. But it is quite clear that these important reforms should be done sooner rather than later to provide Canberra consumers with the information that will help them reduce their energy costs.

In summary, this bill achieves our commitment to helping consumers find better electricity deals and delivers on our commitments set out in the parliamentary agreement. I thank the ICRC, Treasury and EPSDD for their advice and their ongoing work on this issue as well as electricity retailers for working with the government to implement these changes.

I also thank members for their support of the bill. These new changes will help to ease cost of living pressures by making it easier for Canberra residents to save money on their electricity bills. That is an important outcome for the community both as consumers who have a right to clear and consistent information from service providers and as people and families who have to manage household costs. It is also part of the government's strong commitment to ensuring that the transition to a zero emissions future is one that is fair and just for all.

I commend the bill to the Assembly.

DR PATERSON (Murrumbidgee) (11.46): I thank the Chief Minister for bringing the bill to the Assembly. Comparing the cost of utilities is a complex matter for households and businesses across the ACT and one that is not well understood by many people. It can be difficult for members of our community to compare offers and discounts between different service providers because of the ways in which information is marketed by different providers and the number of different options available.

With a range of energy providers in the ACT, it can be overwhelming for people to understand differences between each one and their service offerings and to understand the best deals with the lowest prices. It can be difficult to reassess the situation as households and business needs change. The difference between a standing offer price and the best market price in the ACT can be up to \$400 a year. Not only are there different providers but there are also many different online platforms and tools, ostensibly to help households and businesses select the best plan for them. However, this too can sometimes add to the confusion rather than helping.

Individual suppliers often have a range of different plans from which to choose, and then a person needs to compare among different providers. Some of the various aspects a person needs to consider include the overall cost of the utility service, any tariffs which determine differences in prices at different times of day or night and even across the year, any discounts that might apply, and whether the household or business is eligible for any rebates or concessions. It is time consuming.

This bill introduces a reference price framework for the ACT, making it easier for consumers to compare deals between different providers. The bill places an onus on service providers to give greater transparency about their services and costs, notifying consumers if there is a better deal that they could be on. Households and businesses across the ACT will finally be able to make informed decisions in making sure they get the best deal for their unique needs.

Recent government and industry reports note that many people in our community are on a particular plan simply because it is what they know and have always had. There are many different terms and conditions and a lack of clarity on how discounts are calculated. Too many Canberrans are not confident that their current plan provides them with the best deal. The requirement in the bill to ensure retailers proactively issue notices about better deals advising customers if they could save money by switching to a new offer will encourage consumers to reassess their options and to reduce their overall household or business operating costs. This places the onus on service providers and reduces the burden on consumers to figure it out for themselves.

Those in our community who are most likely to benefit from this bill are lower income households, for whom electricity costs often represent a far greater proportion of their overall weekly or fortnightly household income. Any savings will be acutely and positively noticed. The price of electricity is a key component of the cost of living and impacts on the wellbeing of many Canberrans. It remains critical that we continue to ensure low-income households have access to more affordable renewable energy and that the industry helps them to reduce their costs.

Four of the 17 United Nations sustainable development goals are positively impacted by the provisions from this bill: affordable and clean energy, climate action, responsible consumption and production, and sustainable cities and communities. A transparent cost analysis framework will reflect a move to clean energy production and the ACT government's commitment to zero net greenhouse gas emissions.

ACT households and businesses will be more conscious about making the switch from gas to greener sources of energy as finding the best energy deal will be made much simpler. Household and businesses will also be able to better understand their needs and the options and deals available to them. This is good news for our community, local businesses and the environment. I welcome and support this bill.

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) (11.51): I support this important reform introduced by the Chief Minister as Minister for Climate Action. The ACT has a proud record of delivering better outcomes for our citizens when it comes to the electricity sector. We have done this while supporting and leading the push to have more renewable energy both powering our city and making the national electricity market cleaner. Throughout my career in this place I have supported renewable energy. When I was first elected, I was proud to play my part in bringing in the first solar feed-in tariff for Canberrans. Since that reform, our city has gone on to be a leader in renewable energy.

At a time when the federal Liberals were relentlessly attacking renewable energy, it was this Labor government that provided a lifeline to the nation's renewable energy sector—it was this Labor government that was pioneering and showing jurisdictions across the world how to power cities and states with 100 per cent renewable electricity. I am disappointed that the Liberal Party of Australia continues their ideological and illogical attacks on renewable energy. Only last week we saw the federal government veto a recommendation by the Northern Australia Infrastructure Fund to loan \$280 billion to a wind farm project in north Queensland. This comes on the back a ludicrous notion from the Prime Minister that more fossil fuel generators are needed. This push by the Liberal dinosaurs to support more fossil fuel utilities goes against science, evidence and economics.

A recent report from the Climate Council shows that renewable energy supported by battery and other storage technology is the way forward for our electricity needs. Consider this: the so-called party of free market, the Liberals, are supporting a market intervention that supports outdated and expensive technology, over a renewable energy which is the cheapest and cleanest form of electricity in the national grid. The policies stand in stark contrast to the course being charted by the Chief Minister and ACT Labor.

It was this Labor government that took an ambitious and bold suite of climate and renewable policies to the last ACT election, the only major party to do so. These built on Labor's record on climate action for Canberra. Emissions have reduced because of the efforts made to drive change across government and the territory to prepare the

city for a cleaner energy future. Powering Canberra with 100 per cent renewable electricity is one important reform this government has undertaken.

Thanks to the leadership of Labor, over the next four years we will see more rooftop solar across households and businesses, helping support the deployment of more renewable energy and helping to reduce electricity costs. Labor leadership will also see more battery storage deployed across the city, including the big battery. These policies will support more renewable energy into the grid, as well as helping both the nation and the world transition to a renewable energy led electricity grids.

These policies are also supporting jobs across our city. It is this Labor government that supported jobs through the worst economic crisis faced. This government is charting a path led by renewable energy to ensure our city is prepared for the challenges that global warming will inevitably bring.

Labor's policies also support training and reskilling, and I am proud that some of this work is being done in our home of Tuggeranong, with the training for diesel bus mechanics to upskill and work on our new electric buses. Of course, Mr Assistant Speaker, we both agree that much more could be done in Tuggeranong.

As we deploy more renewable energy into the grid it is also important to reform our regulatory framework. Understanding the electricity market can be complex, and I support initiatives that make things simpler to understand. We have heard the bill brings added transparency for consumers to our city. Canberrans already have access to some of the lowest retail electricity prices in Australia, and the reforms proposed by this bill will allow electricity consumers to better understand prices offerings from those retailers.

The objective, as we have heard, is to bring about a reference price framework—in essence, a consistent benchmark to allow consumers to compare offers between retailers. The bill has reforms in it that arise from recommendations from the ICRC and adopts similar measures in other states, known as the default market offer.

I understand around 40 per cent of electricity consumers in our city are on a standing price offer, and the difference between a standing price offer and the best market price can be up to \$400 per year. So, by implementing the reforms in this bill, tens of thousands of Canberrans will be able to find the best electricity price in the market and save on their bills each year. As I said at the beginning, the territory has led the push for more renewable energy while supporting Canberrans. The bill builds on this record, and I commend it to the Assembly.

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism) (11.57), in reply: I thank members for their contributions to the debate. I thank and acknowledge Minister Rattenbury for co-sponsoring the legislation with me. To be clear, as we have heard through the debate, the bill delivers on a key government commitment to make it simpler for Canberrans to get better energy deals. As we have heard, those improvements could be to the tune of around \$400 a year. We think about 70,000 households stand to benefit by up to \$400 a year as a result of this legislation passing.

Given that, I am not surprised there is unanimous support for such an important reform.

The process began in 2019 when I made a determination requiring the ICRC to examine options for better comparability and transparency of electricity offers. The ICRC have undertaken that work as a result of my direction in 2019, and I am pleased we are now at a point where the Assembly will unanimously pass an important piece of legislation and a key government commitment.

I thank all members for their contribution to the debate and look forward to this joining a number of government legislative interventions to deliver important cost of living benefits for Canberra households. This builds on an enviable record the government has—CTP reform being another example where we are delivering savings for Canberra households in hundreds of dollars each year. I commend the legislation to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Leave granted to dispense with the detail stage.

Bill agreed to.

Sitting suspended from 12 to 2 pm.

Questions without notice

Education—schools performance

MS LEE: My question is to the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs. Minister, a 2017 Victoria University paper titled *Government school performance in the ACT* found that

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

The report found that ACT numeracy results:

... are markedly below the rest of the country, compared to what would be expected based on the populations schools are serving in the ACT.

It also found that year 5 students in the ACT are almost six months behind students in comparable schools interstate. Minister, why is it that under your government ACT government schools on average achieve negative results on every measure according to this report?

MS BERRY: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question and I am happy to talk about our schools results across all ratings across the country and in the world.

What is important to note is the way that those measures are calculated and whether those calculations are fair and provide the right data that suggests that our ACT schools are not performing in the way that they absolutely are. In my opinion—thanks to our excellent teaching professionals—our public schools are providing the best possible education across the ACT. I congratulate our public school teachers every single day and I thank them every single day for the work that they do to support our children and our families across our systems, to make sure that they have the best possible education outcomes and can aspire to whatever it is they want to be.

MS LEE: Minister, what assessment have you or your directorate undertaken to come to the conclusion that this report is not accurate, and what have you personally done to address the negative results identified through the report?

MS BERRY: I remind members of the Assembly that NAPLAN is a point-in-time assessment on a very narrow set of margins that does not tell the whole story of where a child is on the education journey. That is the important part of this conversation. What is important for a student, and for their parents and families, is how that individual student is going with their educational journey. The best person to provide that advice—

Ms Lee: Point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: Resume your seat, please, minister.

Ms Lee: Madam Speaker, the question specifically was about what assessment the minister has undertaken to come to the conclusion in her first comment that she had a problem or a concern about the results of this report. She has not answered that question.

MADAM SPEAKER: She is talking about various assessments.

Ms Lee: She is talking about NAPLAN specifically.

MADAM SPEAKER: I still think the response is in order. I give the minister the time she has left to conclude.

MS BERRY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The point I was getting to was that teachers know best how these students are performing.

MR DAVIS: Minister, could you outline some of the supports the directorate is providing to young people who are undertaking the NAPLAN test today?

MS BERRY: I thank Mr Davis for the question. It is important that students who are participating in NAPLAN today take it as it comes, to not stress too much, and that is definitely the message—

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MS BERRY: It is lucky I have some issues with hearing today, Madam Speaker, because I cannot hear very much of the interjections. I will take your point, Madam Speaker, and I will ignore—

Mr Parton: We'll go louder then.

MADAM SPEAKER: No, you will not, Mr Parton.

MS BERRY: I will have to depend on your super mum's ears, Madam Speaker, to call the others to attention on this, but I would say that that is the message that I am providing to students, parents and teachers as well.

This is an interference for teachers in the everyday education of our students. It does mean that it puts some pressure on them, making sure that students and young people are not feeling the level of anxiety that unfortunately sometimes the palaver and the circus that occurs around NAPLAN results provide. That calm settled environment that is provided by teachers during this process is important.

Young people need to know that this is a point-in-time test. It does provide some data which is a useful tool for teachers to include in their kit, but it is only one tool. Teachers know best the educational experiences of students and the different kinds of supports that they need. My message to parents is always: if you want to understand better or have more supports for your child, student or young person in our schools, please go and speak to your teaching professionals; they are the ones who know your young person the best.

Education—schools performance

MRS JONES: My question is to the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs. In 2018 the Grattan Institute released a report titled "Measuring Student Progress: a state-by state report card". The report found:

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

Minister, are ACT school students falling behind students interstate?

MS BERRY: What I would say to our school communities across the ACT is not to pay very much attention to the question that Mrs Jones was asking. PISA, in fact, shows that our schools are performing very well compared to other schools in the country. If comparisons are going to be made across jurisdictions and schools, they are not accurate because of the unique features of our city and our school system. And that is the point that I was trying to make in response to the question the Leader of the Opposition was asking. Our schools are excellent; our schools provide a great education.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: That is enough, Mr Hanson.

MS BERRY: In fact, the best people to provide advice on a student's education are the teaching professionals themselves—not academics, not politicians around the country. Speak to the teaching professionals who are there in the front of the class every day providing that great support and that great education. I absolutely value and respect the support and the education that our teachers in the ACT provide and I know that they do everything they possibly can to support each individual student on their learning journey.

MRS JONES: Minister, are there any independent reports you can point to that indicate that the ACT's academic results are improving compared to other states?

MS BERRY: PISA.

MR HANSON: Minister, what are the consequences for students if they fall behind in literacy and numeracy?

MS BERRY: Again, I ask that parents of students who are concerned about a child's education speak to the teaching professionals in their schools about the different kinds of supports that a student might need. Our teachers are there every day making sure that our students get the best possible education and they are best placed to provide that advice and that support.

Education—schools performance

MR HANSON: My question is to the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs. Minister, the international standard of assessment of literacy and numeracy, PISA, and of literacy, numeracy and science, TIMSS, are international assessments of educational performance. On the most recent PISA assessment, the ACT—compared to high Australian socio-economic advantage quartile groups—placed below the average on every indicator: literacy, maths and science. Further, on the TIMSS assessment in 2019, ACT maths and science scores were well below the means used for assessing socio-economic advantage in both year 4, and year 8. Minister, what are you specifically doing to improve numeracy in ACT Schools?

MS BERRY: Again, I support our teaching professionals to provide them with the most up-to-date methods of teaching across our schools to make sure that students who are undertaking studies in numeracy get the best possible, up-to-date methods of education in that space. We have a number of programs across the ACT that support teachers to deliver in that space.

Again, whilst I respect the information and opinions of academics around the country, our education professionals are the best ones and are best placed to provide education, rather than the interactions of politicians from around the country, who always like to spend a bit of time making children, students and schools feel they are not succeeding as much as they should be, when everybody in the ACT school community knows that they are.

MR HANSON: Minister, what are you specifically doing to improve science in ACT schools?

MS BERRY: I can speak to two examples of where the ACT government has supported science and education in STEM across the ACT. Our two future skills academies—one on the north side at Lake Ginninderra college and one on the south side at Caroline Chisholm school—both provide specialised, expert support from science professionals to teachers to learn in that environment and then take those learnings back to their school communities.

MR PARTON: Minister, what are you specifically doing to improve literacy in ACT schools?

MS BERRY: I am making sure that teachers have everything that they need to deliver a great education to our students.

Education—teachers

MR DAVIS: My question is to the minister for education. Minister, given the high rate of teacher turnover in Australia, what mechanisms does the ACT government have in place to ensure the retention of our high-quality educators and staff in public schools?

MS BERRY: ACT public schools are growing incredibly with population growth. We have made a commitment to hire 400 new teachers in the ACT to make sure that every school has a great teaching and learning experience. We are ensuring that our teaching professionals get that support through the Teacher Quality Institute, which, Madam Speaker, when you were the education minister, you had an integral role in setting it up. It is an important part of a teacher's professional development, every step of the way.

In addition we work very closely with the Australian Education Union and their members to ensure that their members are supported through industrial arrangements, that their health and wellbeing are supported, and that they have and maintain the highest pay rates in the country.

MR DAVIS: Minister, is the ACT government actively pursuing information on the reasons why educators are leaving the teaching profession within the first five years of their career?

MS BERRY: That is not actually the case for the ACT. In fact what we are seeing is that teachers are staying longer in the ACT—longer than the five years that is being reported nationally as when teachers leave. That would be because we do provide those great working environments, through our great partnerships with the Australian Education Union.

In addition to that, we make sure that our beginning teachers are supported, before they even get into the classroom. That is through our Affiliated Schools Program with

the University of Canberra, where teachers are able to practise their craft before they even have the experience of having a class of their own. That is important because experienced teachers are able to mentor those beginning teachers so that they do not leave—they have the experience before they start their teaching profession and teaching career. In addition to that, beginning teachers get to share those up-to-date methods with experienced teachers, and experienced teachers are able to mentor beginning teachers and provide them with a great start to their profession.

DR PATERSON: Minister, could you further detail how teachers just starting out on their careers are supported in our schools?

MS BERRY: Thank you, Dr Paterson, for that question. I think it was in reference to some of the responses that I provided to earlier questions were around how we support beginning teachers. This has been really important and successful, and we are showing that by how teachers are staying in our ACT school systems for longer than is the case across the country. It is because we are supporting our beginning teachers before they even start in a school.

What we have been hearing from beginning teachers is that that experience has given them the mentoring that they have needed. Experienced teachers are saying that they wish they had had it when they started teaching in a class 30 or 40 years ago. We are really proud of our partnership with the University of Canberra in being able to provide that support to beginning teachers. We will continue that work, and expand it across all of our schools.

Federal government—budget

MR PETTERSSON: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, what has the ACT government called on the commonwealth government to deliver in its 2021-22 budget?

MR BARR: I thank Mr Pettersson for the question. I am delighted to advise the Assembly that we have already been successful in securing commonwealth support for several important infrastructure and service delivery partnerships in the federal budget. It has been pleasing to see further commonwealth support for major transport projects in the ACT—

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MR BARR: like light rail, Mr Hanson. You fought so bitterly against it. I have to say it was certainly a highlight to stand next to Senator Seselja as he spruiked the benefits of light rail and the commonwealth's investment, brushing aside a decade of bitter, bitter opposition from the Canberra Liberals! But I digress.

The federal budget, as has already been announced, will include national partnership agreements on health care and training and, I think, the seventh one-year extension of the early childhood education national partnership. We are disappointed, though, that the commonwealth has not committed to a longer term early childhood partnership

and extended it to three-year-olds. This means that jurisdictions like the ACT will have to go it alone in the provision of free preschool education to three-year-olds.

In this budget we have also called on the federal government to take steps to better embed gender responsive budgeting in its processes, which will bring the commonwealth more into line with the ACT's commitment to wellbeing budgeting. Certainly, it would support the federal government in allocating its resources in a way that enhances gender equality.

We also reiterate the ACT's long-held position that there be no cuts or transfer of essential commonwealth public sector functions away from the ACT. (*time expired.*)

MR PETTERSSON: A supplementary, Madam Speaker. Chief Minister, why is the ACT government pursuing a wellbeing budget?

MR BARR: We are embedding the wellbeing framework in our 2021-22 budget process. Throughout the pandemic the ACT government has focused on economic growth and jobs, and this has led to our nation-leading performance. Indeed, in many contexts, whilst Australia has been world leading, within Australia the ACT has led the way.

The pandemic, of course, has highlighted the importance of wellbeing measured beyond simply economic statistics. By turning our attention to indicators of social progress and then considering them alongside economic issues that we already measure, we will get a clearer picture of the broader effects of policy and, indeed, some non-policy factors that impact on our citizens, our businesses and our systems of service delivery.

It is measures like social equality, community safety, emission reduction and ability to participate in community life that go to the overall quality of life and wellbeing for our residents. So, whilst gross state product is an important economic measure at the macro level, we need to look more broadly. We are, across 12 wellbeing domains, so the government can truly capture the wellbeing of our citizens in our budgetary processes.

MS ORR: Chief Minister, why does the parliamentary and governing agreement commit to implementing a whole-of-government policy that government services will not be contracted out where they could be performed by public servants?

MR BARR: I thank Ms Orr for the question. There is a bit of a renaissance in the public sector. We have heard over the last year or so, from people who have spent most of their political careers criticising the public sector, what a valuable role a high-quality public service plays in the moment of national crisis. What we have seen at a commonwealth level and at a state and territory level during the pandemic is the importance of high-quality public services.

That is why it is critical that we continue to invest in the capability and capacity of our public sector and why we move beyond some of the tedious debates that have been had too often in this place, and certainly more so up on the hill, that everything that

the public sector contributes is somehow inefficient, bad or unworthy and that only the private sector can deliver service outcomes efficiently. In the 15 years I have spent in this place I have been lectured almost to the point of tedium by members opposite on the inefficiency of public services, who spend most of their time bagging the public sector—

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members, enough!

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, no more!

MR BARR: which is a curious political strategy in the jurisdiction with the strongest public sector in Australia. Nevertheless, long may you continue with your deeply held philosophical views against the public sector in the ACT.

Schools—enrolments

MR PARTON: My question is to the minister for education: currently government schools in the inner north and south of Canberra are facing larger enrolments. With continued urban infill and the possibility of Catholic school closures, does the government have plans to build or reopen former public schools in the area?

MS BERRY: No, not at this stage. A lot of the schools that were changed from education facilities to community facilities—even more than 30 years ago before self-government—are still being used by organisations to provide various supports to the ACT community.

Hr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, You are warned now. I did try and get through the day without doing that!

MS BERRY: I can see his mouth moving, but I can't quite hear what he is saying.

Members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members, the minister is answering a question, not interjections.

MS BERRY: I have answered the question—not at this stage. They are being fully utilised by community support organisations, and that's important for our community as well.

MR PARTON: Minister, is there a limit to the size the current primary schools will be allowed to reach?

MS BERRY: No, and across the country there are schools that are significantly larger than those in the ACT. But, again, I direct Mr Parton to the expertise of our teaching professionals, because whilst a facility might have a very vibrant and full student community, it is the teaching professionals that make the difference every day to a child's education. I have no advice that suggests that the size of a school affects a child's education, but what does affect a child's education is the professionalism of the teachers. That is why I will back the teachers in every day.

MS LEE: Minister, why has government school infrastructure not kept up with the numbers increasing?

MS BERRY: I do not agree with the premise of that question, because it has.

Education—NAPLAN

MR MILLIGAN: My question is to the minister for education. Minister, the ACT Auditor-General's report 4 of 2017 established that only 10 per cent of principals found NAPLAN data to be not useful in supporting their decision-making. A comprehensive review of NAPLAN commissioned by the ACT, Queensland, New South Wales and Victorian governments, handed down in August 2020, concluded, with some changes, that "standardised assessment is important in Australian education and that it serves a variety of purposes". You, however, are on the record as saying that NAPLAN is used to point out dumb students. Minister, why are you ignoring ACT school principals and experts with your ongoing attacks on NAPLAN?

MS BERRY: As usual, the opposition are picking and choosing the comments that they want to make in this place. With respect to what students perceive of themselves, because of the whole circus that occurs around NAPLAN results every single year, with politicians and academics pointing fingers here and there, it is definitely the perception that they form of themselves that they are not as successful if they do not do as well on a NAPLAN test.

For me, I depend on the expert advice of the teaching profession about what is best for education in our schools—

Mr Parton: Whatever the teachers say goes.

MS BERRY: Yes, exactly, Mr Parton. Whatever the teachers tell me, because they are the experts every day in providing a great education to their students. As I said before, I will back them every day over the kind of negativity that comes from the Canberra Liberals about how our schools perform here in the ACT.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, why, in your area of responsibility, is NAPLAN becoming a circus?

MS BERRY: I just have to say to old mate over here, Mr Milligan—

MADAM SPEAKER: No. Minister, you will refer to him by his title.

MS BERRY: Mr Milligan, it is every state and territory's responsibility to deliver NAPLAN as part of an agreement with the federal government, but it is not this government's responsibility as far as how NAPLAN works across our communities—I am supporting our schoolteachers in making sure that our kids get great education every single day of the year, not just for this week, for these three days of the year, when there is a point-in-time test that provides a tool, but just one tool, for teachers to use to support a child in their education.

MR HANSON: Minister, do you not like NAPLAN because, in actual fact, it exposes 20 years of failure in the education system by ACT Labor?

MS BERRY: Again, I am happy to talk about my views on NAPLAN, because my views on NAPLAN, the test itself, are that it is there; it provides some data for teachers; and it is an additional tool that they can include in their kit, to be able to support a child's education. What I do not support about NAPLAN is the way that it is reported—the way it points the finger at individual schools and individual students, belittles them and makes them feel like they have not been successful. It does not tell the whole story of a child's education journey, and that is where I disagree with NAPLAN. I do not see that it is of value to be able to pit schools against each other, or students and classes against each other, in such a public and national way. I just do not think that is useful for a child's education, and I have been consistent on that all the way along.

Education—schools performance

MRS KIKKERT: My question is to the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs. Minister, an ACT Auditor-General's report of 2017 found that ACT public schools are performing below similar schools in other jurisdictions. The Australia Institute in 2017 found that there is a systemic problem with the relative performance of high-SES government primary schools in the ACT. Victoria University in 2017 found that ACT numeracy results are markedly below those of the rest of the country. And an ANU report in 2018 found that for government schools there was systemic underperformance in primary and high schools in NAPLAN. Minister, are the Auditor-General, the ANU, the Australia Institute and Victoria University wrong when they say that the ACT schools are underperforming?

MS BERRY: As I said before, I think you need to be careful around comparisons in different jurisdictions and for different schools because in the ACT we have a unique feature where we have high numbers of parents and families who are on higher incomes or higher levels of title, if you like, and then that skews the kinds of comparisons that these organisations are making. Of course academics and various researchers will make assessment and use data and tell different stories. That is what data is used for. But I think you need to be careful when you are comparing jurisdictions against jurisdictions—

Mrs Kikkert interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Do not respond to interjections.

MS BERRY: I cannot hear anyway; so go for your life, Mrs Kikkert. I just think you have to be careful about making comparisons across jurisdictions because of the unique nature of the ACT specifically. What I am interested in—

Mr Hanson: On a point of order, the question was very specifically about whether the Auditor-General, the ANU, the Australia Institute, Victoria University and others are wrong when they say that ACT schools are underperforming.

MADAM SPEAKER: Yes, I know what the question was and she referred to a number of reports. I cannot direct the minister on how to answer the question, but she also went on about how you measure different data sets. So the response was in order.

MS BERRY: Madam Speaker, I might just finish off with the last 30 seconds just to say that all of those organisations are using the same data. In my view—and on the advice I have—that data is flawed because the comparisons are unfair.

MRS KIKKERT: Minister, it is time to commission an independent review into the ACT education system?

Mr Parton: You'd get teachers to do it, I reckon.

MS BERRY: In that moment of time of that question I did hear Mr Parton's interjection there about the teachers. Yes, I would absolutely ask the advice of teaching professionals because they are best placed to provide that information. Why would you not ask the advice of the teacher professionals who are there in the classroom every day—

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members, please! Allow the minister to answer the question.

MS BERRY: to provide advice on how our schools are performing, particularly our public schools, which seem to be the focus of the questions here today, around whether they are performing or not. In my view—

Mr Parton: On a point of order on relevance, the question was regarding an independent review of the ACT education system, which has nothing to do with my interjection.

MADAM SPEAKER: Therefore, I would advise you not to interject and I would encourage the minister not to respond to an interjection. You have the floor for a minute longer.

Mr Rattenbury: So not just interjecting; you were irrelevantly interjecting!

MS BERRY: Yes, good point, Mr Rattenbury. The interjections often do not have any pertinence but what I would say is that our schools are constantly assessed using the national school improvement tools, which is an independent assessment.

MR DAVIS: A further supplementary. Minister, in addition to teachers, what other groups do you actively and regularly consult when reflecting on the academic performance of students?

MS BERRY: I think the Affiliated Schools Program that we have with the University of Canberra. I listen to the teachers and trainers at the University of Canberra about their experiences with improving the profession of teaching in the ACT by supporting teachers through the Affiliated Schools Program; they are another group of experts that I would consider, again paying very close attention to what the teachers say as far as what supports are needed.

But I do also pay very close attention to what students tell us as well and in the consultations that we had in developing the future of education strategy we had over 2,700 representations from students about their experiences and what they would like to see as far as their education experience in schools is concerned, and that is why we have a student-centred approach in our education system in the ACT, because that is what students told us they wanted to see. Of course the Australian Education Union and P&Cs as well.

Planning—Territory Plan

MS CLAY: My question is to the Minister for Planning and Land Management. I have heard about a lot of brand new developments in Belconnen that are connecting gas as the default option. This is a problem for the climate, and it will also lead to health risks and big bills for those unlucky residents. Community members have told me that Environment Planning and Sustainable Development are saying that there are currently no mandated requirements for new buildings to be all electric and it would require a change to the Territory Plan. What changes would the government need to make to ensure developers are no longer connecting and installing gas in brand new infill developments?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Ms Clay for the question. I am proud as minister for planning to have removed the obligation on developers to connect gas to new suburbs in greenfield areas. I think that has helped drive a change across the development sector. In regard to gas mains in brownfield areas or denser development that we are doing across the territory, it would mean a change to the Territory Plan. We would need to work with the community, particularly the development community, and, of course, some of the key stakeholders, like ActewAGL, Icon Water and the other groups to ensure that we can deliver that in a timely manner. But it is, of course, something we are working on and I hope to see that occur in the not-too-distant future.

MS CLAY: What are the time frames for that work you are doing with those stakeholders?

MR GENTLEMAN: That work has already begun. We have begun talking to stakeholders. In fact, I met with the Master Builders Association last Friday and talked about denser development along transport corridors and local centres. They are

very keen to assist government in how we go forward to ensure that we have an efficient city into the future. Of course, they always take the opportunity to let me know about the charges the government makes for those developments, but it is always an informative time. We were able to have a free conversation about the challenges that we have as we look at densification and the opportunity of 70-30 in development.

MR DAVIS: Minister, how many new developments have been built in Canberra in the last three months with a gas connection?

MR GENTLEMAN: I will have to take that on notice to get the exact number.

Government—sexual assault prevention and response working group

MS ORR: My question is to the Minister for Women. Minister, can you please update the Assembly on the work of the sexual assault prevention and response working group?

MS BERRY: As members know, on 28 April, ministers from all political parties, directors-general and all relevant ACT public service directorates, the Chief Police Officer, and representatives from non-government sectors, came together to make a clear commitment to take action to prevent and respond to sexual assault in Canberra. I was enormously pleased to see everybody coming together to work together to address this important issue and the complex challenges that it presents to the community in how we respond to it.

Because this is an issue that affects everybody in our community, it is important to work closely across party lines, across government and across our community. This is an important signal not only to those people in our community who have been affected by sexual assault—those victim survivors—but it sends a really strong message to the rest of the country about how you can work together to address these important community issues. This is the only jurisdiction in Australia to have made this shared commitment, and we should all be proud of that.

MS ORR: I have a supplementary question. Minister, what will be the focus of each of the three working groups to be established under the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response steering committee?

MS BERRY: I thank Ms Orr for her supplementary question. It is important to make sure that, as this work progresses, the right representation and the right governance is in place, so these three working groups will be able to focus on prevention, response and law reform. The responses that we need to make to this are, as I said, diverse. It is a complex issue, so having these working groups work across these different areas will mean that we can have representation and cultural change driving the systemic change across all of our ACT community—particularly targeting schools, universities, CIT and workplaces. That is the prevention working group. The response working group will focus on service provision and police response, informed by victim survivor experiences. The law reform working group will progress the parliamentary agreement commitment to reform consent laws and related sexual assault law reform.

The objective is to coordinate efforts across the community, the service sector, unions and stakeholders to develop an effective system and evidence-based response to sexual assault here in the ACT.

DR PATERSON: I have a supplementary question. Minister, what is the importance of considering all of these issue through a gendered lens?

MS BERRY: The evidence in the ACT shows that women make up 86.6 per cent of the victims of sexual assault in the ACT and that this work needs an evidence-based approach that reflects on the lived experiences of victim survivors. That is what we have heard from the Women's Health Matters survey so far—that victim survivors have a diversity of experiences and so our response needs to be diverse as well. Sexual assault and sexual violence cannot be prevented without challenging the harmful power dynamics and gender norms which normalise gendered violence. It is this kind of long-lasting cultural change which requires a commitment from the whole community.

Of course we will be working across intersectionality, including other victim survivors' experiences. That will include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, multicultural communities and LGBTIQ+ communities as well. Although the advice from Women's Health Matters and from all of our support services in the ACT is that a gendered lens really does need to be cast in our response to all of this. It has been made clear to everyone in the Assembly that this government is committed to doing this work. I will listen carefully to the local experts in an attempt to understand what the evidence shows us, how we need to response and where we need to invest to ensure that our programs of work meet the needs of victim survivors.

Government—sexual assault prevention and response working group

MS LAWDER: My question is to the Minister for Women. Minister, I refer to the sexual assault and response working group that met recently. You have emphasised many times that this group has tripartisan support and how important that is. Could you advise why, then, during the first meeting of the working group, only Greens and Labor MLAs present were asked to speak, despite there being two Liberal MLAs in attendance?

MS BERRY: I am not surprised that Ms Lawder asked this question. I understand that Ms Lawder was upset that she did not get a chance to speak at that working group, but the purpose of that working group was to hear from ministers of the government, not all members of political parties.

Nonetheless, I have made the commitment to include and have invited—I think everybody has agreed to be part of this approach as to how we approach sexual assaults in the ACT through this prevention and response working group. The Canberra Liberals, and the Greens political party and the Labor Party, I expect, will all work together across a whole range of different areas. I will do my very best to ensure that the Canberra Liberals members, in particular Ms Lawder, feel as though

they are included meaningfully and that my commitment to ensuring that they are included is not words, as she has referred to before, but is real.

MS LAWDER: Minister, why did you invite Liberal members to be included in that group if you were not going to allow them to speak?

MS BERRY: Again, it was about hearing from ministers who had areas of responsibility with regard to our response to sexual assaults here in the ACT. The intention was not to have a feeling that the Canberra Liberals were excluded. In fact, when I spoke to the services about the first meeting, they were so happy to see that all political parties in the Assembly were present. That has definitely been the very clear message that I have heard from them: that they want all political parties to be part of this approach. Inviting the Canberra Liberals to be part of that meeting by attending it and then being included in the media response following that meeting was an important way for the sector to understand and to hear very clearly that I was committed and the government was committed to a tripartisan approach to this.

MRS KIKKERT: Given that ministers were asked to summarise broadly why sexual assault is relevant to their portfolio, their commitment to doing better by victim survivors and their commitment to supporting the work of working groups, would it not have been in the interests of tripartisanship to hear from all three parties?

MS BERRY: Again, it was because it was ministers of the government that were providing advice on areas of government that do this work across the sexual assault spectrum. I am sorry that members of the opposition feel like they were not included at the start of this process, but I make the commitment again that my intention is for this to be a tripartisan approach. At the end of the day, it is Labor and Greens members who are in government, so those ministers' portfolios are the ones that will have an influence on the responses. We definitely want the Canberra Liberals to be part of this work, to be part of the conversations with our community and in other ways they might find useful for them to be able to represent people in their community.

Government—Ministerial Advisory Council on Women

MS CASTLEY: My question is to the Minister for Women. Minister, in the week of 8 February this year, cabinet approved new appointments to your Ministerial Advisory Council on Women. The Canberra Liberals recently gave notice of a motion to establish a small business ministerial advisory council, to give small business the same high-level government access that women enjoy, but the government opposed it. Minister Cheyne said that such a council for business would be time consuming and a burden. Minister, who are the new appointments to the Ministerial Advisory Council on Women, how were they chosen and what is the process for nominating women?

MS BERRY: The Ministerial Advisory Council on Women has a process whereby women nominate to be included on the ministerial advisory council; then there is an independent process involving representatives of the ministerial advisory council, the Office for Women and others to consider those nominations and whether they are diverse, whether they represent different parts of the community, like Aboriginals and

Torres Strait Islanders, LGBTIQ and women with disabilities, to provide advice to me, as a minister in the ACT government on matters affecting women in the ACT. Cabinet then confirms the membership of the committee.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, would you describe the Ministerial Advisory Council on Women as time consuming and a burden for its members, as your colleague Minister Cheyne said it would be for small business?

MS BERRY: I do not think that the comparison is fair. It is definitely time consuming for them, in volunteering their time to provide advice to me, and I very much appreciate that, so that we have different, diverse experiences across the ACT in how they provide that advice, in representing different people in the community. I refer particularly to their expertise and their own experiences, not necessarily that of their organisations.

MR PARTON: Minister, why can't advisory councils be established for other important groups like business, given the importance of the Advisory Council on Women?

MS BERRY: I think Minister Cheyne has responded to that question previously.

Schools—hazardous materials

MR CAIN: My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services. After much prompting from the opposition, the government finally released a list of schools that contained hazardous materials. The list contained only active schools. Following the mass closure of schools by the Labor government in 2006 many of these closed schools are being used as premises for community groups, services, businesses and even early learning centres. These schools are now under the management of the ACT Property Group. These former schools were not included in the list released by the government of schools with hazardous materials. Has ACT Property Group investigated the presence of hazardous materials such as asbestos and lead paint in decommissioned schools that serve as premises for community services, organisations and businesses?

MR STEEL: I thank Mr Cain for his question. I will take that on notice and come back to the Assembly.

MR CAIN: Minister, while you are considering that, will you commit to assessing these schools for the presence of hazardous materials?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his supplementary question. I will come back to the Assembly.

MS LAWDER: Minister, will the government also fund the removal of hazardous materials from these decommissioned schools if required?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her supplementary. The ACT government is responsible largely for maintaining ACT property in the Property Group portfolio. I will respond in relation to that question in substance on notice.

Planning—active transport

MR BRADDOCK: My question is to the minister for transport. The Gungahlin town centre is surrounded by a number of busy roads. What does the government plan to do to ensure that people are able to walk or cycle safely into the Gungahlin town centre?

MR STEEL: I thank Mr Braddock for his question. The ACT government understands the importance of active travel and investing in public transport as well as being important to creating a vibrant, sustainable and connected city. That is one of the reasons we have set out in our transport strategy the objective of shifting the balance of investment towards active travel and public transport. This is particularly important in areas that are growing, like Gungahlin. It is one of the reasons why at the election Labor committed to undertake a feasibility study to look at improved active travel links in the Gungahlin town centre connecting the town centre with the surrounding suburbs of the Gungahlin region.

We have also undertaken to develop a mesoscopic model, which is a complex traffic model which will look at traffic movements not only for road transport but also for active travel to help inform future improvements. The government has also been investing in infrastructure improvements in Gungahlin. That has, of course, included the new Flemington Road shared path connections, making sure there are good connections between active travel and public transport. We look forward to undertaking further investment in Gungahlin following the detailed work we have committed to do.

MR BRADDOCK: Thank you, minister; but what about the active travel links between the Gungahlin town centre and Yerrabi Ponds, a source of great recreational value to the local community?

MR STEEL: I thank Mr Braddock for his supplementary. That connection was identified following the Gungahlin town centre planning refresh and will act as an input amongst many other active travel links that will need to be considered as part of the feasibility study that Labor committed to at the election to undertake to provide better connections between the Gungahlin town centre and, as I mentioned, other parts of Gungahlin, including places of interest like Yerrabi Ponds. That will be the first stage of considering the needs in Gungahlin. We will do so in consultation with the community before we move in and consider what investments we need to make and what the priorities are for the Gungahlin community. I am looking forward to visiting Gungahlin Community Council tomorrow night to have that discussion.

MR PARTON: Minister, why is it that this government continually talks the big talk on active travel but time and time again cannot actually walk the walk of active travel?

MR STEEL: That question absolutely had no substance at all—like, literally no point. It was classic shock jock—no substance whatsoever; just a line. It is impossible for me to respond to something with no substance. We continue to invest in active travel. We have made a massive investment of over \$9 million over the past year as

part of the stimulus package to make sure we are supporting the increase in walking and cycling we have seen in our community. We will continue to make investments there. We have demonstrated through our strategic transport plan we released in August last year that we want to invest more in active travel. We are getting on with the job in every budget.

Canberra Hospital—expansion

DR PATERSON: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, can you please update the Assembly on the progress of the Canberra Hospital expansion project, the largest health infrastructure investment ever undertaken by the ACT government?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Dr Paterson for her question. Of course, the Canberra Hospital expansion is the delivery of the largest health infrastructure investment ever undertaken by the ACT government. It is on track, and construction is due to be completed in 2024—a situation that would not be the case if the Canberra Liberals had been elected and went back to the drawing board, as they intended to do. We did indeed lodge our development application in March, as we said we were going to do, and it is now open for public comment, because the ACT government remains committed to listening to the views of the Canberra public in the delivery of this critically important healthcare project.

Since partnering with Multiplex in the delivery of these works, the project team has completed design discussions with consumers and local residents, and has also completed two rounds of consultation with more than 120 clinicians across the hospital. That is just some of the consultation we have been undertaking.

Following this extensive consultation and preliminary design development, the development application is open for public comment until 18 June. Development application documents can be found on the planning website under the suburb of Garran, and are also linked from the Canberra Hospital expansion website. We welcome the community's input on this very important Health project.

Anyone who has recently visited the Canberra Hospital campus will have seen that there are already substantial construction works underway. Some of these new buildings currently under construction will house training facilities, staff areas and functions from buildings 5 and 24, in turn enabling those buildings to be demolished for the critical services building construction to begin.

In advance of this, Multiplex has already commenced preparatory activities, including confirming utilities capacity and resolving design and construction details with utility services providers. The ACT government's delivery partner has confirmed that construction of the prototype shed at the former CIT Woden site will begin in June, weather permitting. The prototype shed is to provide scale mock-ups of core spaces and rooms.

DR PATERSON: Minister, what key benefits will the Canberra Hospital expansion deliver for the Canberra community?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Dr Paterson for the question. The Canberra Hospital expansion project will deliver significantly increased capacity across Canberra Hospital's adult intensive care, surgical care, coronary care and emergency services. It will introduce a paediatric intensive care. At approximately 43,000 square metres, the new facility will enable a bigger, better Canberra Hospital to meet the needs of our growing city and region.

The expansion will see 22 new theatres. This will include state-of-the-art hybrid and interventional radiology theatres, to allow the latest advances in medical technology to be used for the care of the ACT community. The coronary care unit will include 32 acute cardiac care beds, including bariatric and isolation beds; four cardiac catheterisation laboratories, including one hybrid cardiac laboratory and one electrophysiology laboratory; and a cardiac day unit to support the cardiac catheterisation laboratories.

The new emergency department will have 147 spaces—72 more than are currently available at the Canberra Hospital. In addition the new emergency department will include a dedicated separate paediatric stream.

The new facility will add to the medical imaging facilities available at Canberra Hospital, with four X-ray rooms, including one orthopantomogram, a radiograph of the tissues and skeletal structures of the oral cavity; three CT scanners; two ultrasound rooms; one ultrasound procedure room; and two MRIs, including one interoperative MRI.

The government is committed to delivering world-class critical care facilities in the Canberra region through the Canberra Hospital expansion and our other investments in Canberra Hospital, and our planned investments on the north side. Again, if the Canberra Liberals had been elected, they would have gone back to the drawing board with the Canberra Hospital expansion. Mrs Jones clearly claimed that there was 12 months' worth of design yet to go before the development application was submitted. We submitted the development application on time, and I encourage people to take a look at it. (*Time expired.*)

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, how does the Canberra Hospital expansion fit within the ACT government's territory-wide plan for health care?

Mrs Jones interjecting—

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Pettersson for the question and Mrs Jones for her efforts. The ACT government is committed to the upgrade and delivery of new public hospital and health facilities across the territory. Over the last decade, we have invested more than a billion dollars in health infrastructure and we will continue to invest in the coming years. The government is taking a proactive approach to futureproofing our health system to ensure that the right care is delivered in the right place at the right time.

The Canberra Hospital expansion is part of a long-term plan to deliver a world-class health system for the people of the ACT and surrounding region, which includes new walk-in health centres, an elective surgery centre at the University of Canberra and a new north-side hospital. Planning for the new north-side hospital is underway, with the aim of commencing construction in the middle of this decade.

Canberra Hospital, of course, is a key part of our health system. It is the tertiary hospital for Canberra and our region. The Canberra Hospital master plan will provide a comprehensive planning framework for how the campus can evolve into the future. Consultation on the master plan started earlier this year and important conversations across the territory have been had with the community and our expert stakeholders for further improvements.

In addition to new infrastructure, we are looking at how we can better deliver health services so that Canberrans can receive high quality health care when and where they need it through territory-wide health services planning. The territory-wide health services plan will identify priorities for service development and the redesign of ACT government provided and funded services across the ACT for the next five to 10 years. In developing the draft plan, considerable work has been undertaken on analysing current and projected future service delivery activity across the ACT public hospitals, and consultation has occurred with key stakeholders as well as analysis of current service profiles, demographic data, health status data and burden of disease reporting.

The Canberra Hospital expansion is just one part of our large plan for ensuring that Canberrans can continue to access excellent health care in the future as our region changes and grows.

Mr Barr: I ask that all further questions be placed on the notice paper.

Papers

Madam Speaker presented the following papers:

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee—Bills referred but not inquired into—

Crimes (Stealth) Amendment Bill 2021—Correspondence to Speaker, dated 28 April 2021.

Statute Law Amendment Bill 2021—Correspondence to Speaker, dated 28 April 2021.

Public Accounts—Standing Committee—Bills referred but not inquired into—
Utilities Amendment Bill 2021—Correspondence to Speaker, dated 5 May 2021.

Mr Gentleman presented the following papers:

A Step Up for Our Kids—Snapshot Report Update, as at May 2021.

COVID-19 Emergency Response Act—pursuant to subsection 3(3)—COVID-19 Measures—Report No 10—Reporting period 1 January-31 March 2021.

Freedom of Information Act—Freedom of Information (Accessibility of Government Information) Statement 2021 (No 1)—Notifiable Instrument NI2021-275, dated 7 May 2021.

Our Booris, Our Way—Implementation Update, dated May 2021.

Planning and Development Act—Pursuant to subsection 242(2)—Statement of Leases Granted—1 January to 31 March 2021.

Subordinate legislation (including explanatory statements unless otherwise stated)

Liquor Act 2010—Liquor Amendment Regulation 2021 (No 1)—Subordinate Law SL2021-7 (LR, 13 April 2021).

Residential Tenancies Act 1997—Residential Tenancies (COVID-19 Emergency Response) Declaration 2021—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-55 (LR, 22 April 2021).

**A Step Up For Our Kids—update
Our Booris Our Way—update**

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Manager of Government Business, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Industrial Relations and Workplace Safety, Minister for Planning and Land Management and Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (3.02): Pursuant to standing order 211, I move:

That the Assembly take note of the following papers:

A Step Up for Our Kids—Snapshot Report Update, as at May 2021.

Our Booris, Our Way—Implementation Update, dated May 2021.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Families and Community Services and Minister for Health) (3.02): I am pleased to be able to present together the six-monthly progress reports of the government response to the recommendations from the Our Booris, Our Way review—six-monthly update, and A Step Up For Our Kids—out of home care strategy 2015-2020 snapshot report.

The Our Booris, Our Way final report was provided to the government in December 2019 and comprises 28 recommendations and eight sub-recommendations, a total of 36 recommendations, to inform systemic improvements to child protection systems, policies and practices in the ACT. Since the first interim recommendation was received in August 2018, we have been able to make substantial progress around a number of these recommendations. In July 2020 I provided an update on this progress when I tabled the formal government response to the Our Booris, Our Way review.

The government has made a firm commitment to fully implement the recommendations of the Our Booris, Our Way review in collaboration with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. The government has backed up this commitment with funding in the 2020-21 budget, bringing the overall investment to \$15.7 million from 2018-19 to 2023-24.

Systemic reform takes time, and the frustration felt by community members through this process is understandable, particularly when we are talking about something as vital as improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. This is the reason I have committed to provide an update on progress against each of the Our Booris, Our Way recommendations every six months. Just as important, this report also provides information on what will be done in the following six months. This helps keep the government accountable to our commitments and provides the community with an opportunity to see the ongoing change that will lead to better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. This first six-monthly update reports on activities and outcomes from July to December 2020.

I take this opportunity to thank the Our Booris, Our Way Implementation Oversight Committee. Since being established in June 2020 the committee has worked closely with the government to monitor and drive these much-needed reforms, providing a valuable cultural lens to this process. The committee is instrumental in making sure that government understands and addresses the original intent of the Our Booris, Our Way recommendations and that we are accountable to the community for our commitments.

As shown by the key activities over the next six months and the case studies, the active efforts across the Community Services Directorate to implement the recommendations from the Our Booris, Our Way Review are not occurring in isolation. The directorate is acutely aware of the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in the statutory child protection system. Child and Youth Protection Services continue to identify better ways of working in order to respond to the issues, drive change in this area and to understand the reasons for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people entering care. Included in the service delivery response is the development of strategies to reduce the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people entering care, improve their experience and outcomes while in care and, where appropriate, exit children from care through restorations.

The six-monthly progress report on A Step Up For Our Kids has been presented to the Legislative Assembly since April 2018, with the last snapshot report tabled during the December 2020 sitting week. In considering the snapshot report it is important to note that the data is internal operational data that can be updated and changed between reporting periods, and caution should be exercised when using and interpreting data in this report in comparing between reporting periods.

Another caveat I would like to identify with regard to the snapshot report before I move on to the data itself is related to the transition to the new record management system known as the Child and Youth Record Information System or CYRIS on 1 October 2019. The transition to CYRIS provided Child and Youth Protection Services with an opportunity to review and expand the carer data collected in order to gain further insight into carer approvals and demographics.

The process to approve and renew carers is complex, and the review identified that new measures were required to provide better reporting on what occurs in day-to-day

practice. As a result, the current carer measures have not been updated, as the data is not comparable. The new measures will be included in the next snapshot report presented to the Legislative Assembly during the October 2021 sitting week.

The snapshot report highlights the following. The number of new entries into care for the first half of the 2020-21 financial year is 72, which is higher than in the past two financial years but is lower than the 2016-17 and 2017-18 financial years. The number of children and young people exiting care, 68, is higher than it has been in the past three years—58 for 2018-19 and 2019-20, and 65 for 2017-18. Of the 68 children and young people exiting care in the current quarter, 23 identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. Placement types within the out of home care system remain relatively stable, with the majority of children and young people in kinship care placements, 394, as at 31 December 2020.

We continue to see a lower number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people entering care over the past years, given our investments in functional family therapy and family group conferencing as an extension of the implementation of A Step Up For Our Kids. However, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people represented 26 per cent of those entering care in the first half of the year, which remains an unacceptable level of over-representation. Disappointingly, this compares with 20 per cent in the same period in 2019-20 and only 13 per cent in the same period in 2018-19.

While it represents a reduction from 34 per cent in the same period in 2017-18 and 30 per cent in the same period in 2016-17, the situation calls for a renewed focus and a clear understanding of what is driving the increase in this period. What this means in terms of numbers is 19 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children entered care in the first half of 2020-21. This compares with 12 in the same period in 2019-20, seven in 2018-19, 28 in 2017-18 and 33 in 2016-17.

The number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the care of the director-general with a cultural care plan in place has again declined slightly. As at 31 December 2020, 180 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children had a cultural care plan in place, which is 85 per cent, compared to 181, or 93 per cent, in the same period the previous year.

Child and Youth Protection Services remains committed to ensuring quality cultural plans are in place and has recently established a new cultural panel to support this work. In addition to the step-by-step procedure and practice guide to support staff to develop and maintain a cultural plan, all outstanding care plans will be referred to the cultural panel for review.

We continue to support children, young people and their families through prevention services, with a positive trend towards those being supported not entering care. Between 1 July and 31 December 2019 there were 90 children and young people whose families had agreed to participate in a uniting prevention service. Of the 90 children and young people 12 months after commencing with the preservation service, 84 did not enter care within six months of support commencing and 80 had still not entered care within 12 months of support commencing.

I remain acutely aware of the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the out of home care system and remain committed to driving change in this area, as shown by the work the Community Services Directorate is doing as part of responding to the recommendations from the Our Booris, Our Way review as articulated in the six-monthly implementation update which is also tabled today along with the snapshot report.

In closing, I assure members that I acknowledge the importance of the work undertaken in the government response to the Our Booris, Our Way review and A Step Up For Our Kids to the Canberra community. As such, I am committed to providing updates on subsequent reforms occurring within the out of home care system and providing the combined six-monthly progress report on an ongoing basis.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Children and young people—out of home care

MRS KIKKERT (Ginninderra) (3.10): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) care and protection orders in the ACT terminate when a young person reaches the age of 18;
- (b) Australian and international research indicates that young people who exit care are more likely to leave school, be unemployed, experience homelessness, be involved with the criminal justice system, have children at a young age, and experience poor health and mental health outcomes;
- (c) for these reasons, in 2012 the ACT Government commenced providing financial and casework support to care leavers up to age 25, and has enhanced such supports under its current out-of-home care strategy; and
- (d) there is a growing national consensus that support for care leavers needs to include the option of remaining in care until age 21; and

(2) calls on the ACT Government to:

- (a) commit in principle to support the extension of care to age 21, including for those exiting residential care and those unable to remain in a foster or kinship care placement;
- (b) improve data collection on young people who have exited care to allow for robust evaluation of post-care support services, including any extension of care to age 21; and
- (c) create a taskforce to review international best practice and then propose the best way to implement an extension of care to age 21 in the ACT, with a report of findings to be tabled in the Assembly by the last sitting day of June 2022.

I bring this motion before the Assembly today on behalf of young people in the care and protection system, as well as the many dedicated carers, youth workers, case

workers and others who do their best to provide stability to these young people in the present and give them hope for the future. The care and protection system is for children and young people who have been removed from their birth families. In the ACT, about 30 per cent of these kids are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. Those who then exit out of home care are known as care leavers. Some of these young people, of course, go back to their birth families; many, however, spend a large amount of their lives in foster, kinship and residential care. And some of them will age out of the system as adults.

A vast body of literature documents the difficulties faced by many young people who transition to independence after having grown up in out of home care. Across the world, care leavers are at increased risk for homelessness, failure to complete school, lack of further education or training, unemployment, contact with the criminal justice system, poor health, poor mental health, substance abuse, violence and poverty. Research in Australia suggests that 50 per cent of care leavers end up either homeless, in jail or as new parents within 12 months. According to a Swinburne University survey, almost two thirds of homeless youth, nationwide, are care leavers. This disadvantage has several interconnected contributing factors. Many children in care and protection have a history of abuse or neglect, increasing the risks.

At the same time, removal from birth families can disrupt the traditional support structures, including extended family, friends and community. Those structures help reduce such risks. In addition, the process of transitioning to adulthood can be very different for care leavers, leaving them especially vulnerable. As we have personally experienced, there is no magical point at which a young person becomes fully independent. Instead, it takes a gradual, natural process; each child's pathway is unique. This process occurs best in a safe, stable environment that includes people who support the young person through what can often be a bumpy and sometimes strange journey.

It should be no surprise, then, that according to the Australian Institute of Family Studies, 43.4 per cent of those aged between 20 and 24 still live with their parents. In contrast, care and protection orders in the ACT, as in other jurisdictions, end when the young person becomes an adult at age 18. Historically, this has resulted in abrupt exits from out of home care. This unnatural transition has contributed in a big way to the negative outcomes that many care leavers experience. In short, it simply does not replicate the natural transition process experienced by young people who grow up in a secure home, where they can gradually enter adulthood and assume full independence, supported by one or both parents.

Aware of this reality, in 2012 the ACT government started providing a level of support for care leavers up to the age of 25. This included a small team of specialist case workers and brokerage funding to assist care leavers with one-off expenses. Two years later, however, when the government introduced its current strategy, it was clear that this service needed to be enhanced, so an extended continuum of care for care leavers up to 21 years of age was introduced. This new approach included the possibility of a small subsidy for foster and kinship carers who are willing and able to continue to care for a young person after the age of 18, as long as a number of eligibility criteria can be met. Currently, this subsidy is not quite two-thirds of what a

carer receives to provide for a 17-year-old, and is less than what a carer receives to care for a baby. Nonetheless, it certainly helps.

It should be pointed out, however, that according to the government's own strategy, this extended subsidy was never intended to be universally available but only available in "select cases". It should also be noted that ACT Together provides a select list of other services to care leavers up to the age of 25, including help with housing applications, driving lessons and counselling. These are all good things. The question that now arises is whether this old policy meets today's challenges. I believe that it does not. I have twice asked the minister for data relating to the wellbeing of care leavers.

In the first instance when I asked about homelessness, I was told that this government does not collect territory level data on the housing circumstances of young people after exiting care. When I sought data regarding education and employment, I was told that the Community Services Directorate does not routinely keep data on young people who have left care. To me, it is irresponsible for the government not to have this data. How can we improve old policy when it does not know, for example, how our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander care leavers are going? Without data to provide information and insights, the government is blind, wandering through child protection like a kangaroo in the headlights. This is astounding.

Under ACT law, the legal parent of a young person in the territory's care and protection system is the ACT government. But the government does not know anything about its kids once they turn 18. Can you imagine any other parent, who, when asked how their young adult children are going, where they are living, if they are working or studying and so forth, would say they simply do not know? This is the case for the ACT government at the moment. This is clearly something that needs to change to meet today's challenges. I sincerely hope that those opposite agree.

A 2018 discussion paper written by the ACT Community Services Directorate repeatedly states that data collection on young people who have exited care is absolutely necessary to review the progress and impact of recent policy and legislative changes to transition support. "This data-driven evaluation," the paper goes on to state, "will enable the development of evidence-based policy to improve outcomes for young people leaving care and ensure the best start towards independent adulthood." In the absence of this data, we are left with anecdotes.

In preparation for this motion, I have spoken at length with stakeholders, service providers, Aboriginal elders, former care and protection workers and young people who have exited care. The consensus is that we are failing kids and carers and clearly not doing enough. One stakeholder noted that current policies have not been fully implemented and that there are still too many barriers to outcomes being realised. Another stakeholder used the word "roadblocks". One young person who recently aged out of the system but could not stay with his carers reported sleeping in bus interchanges and pedestrian underpasses, in addition to a youth refuge and on mates' lounges. He still does not have stable accommodation. I share this information to bring clarity and to improve our capacity to support all care leavers.

There is an important saying that “We do the best we can,” and, following on from that, “When we know better, we need to do better.” The time to do better is clearly now. Let us give care leavers better opportunities to be happy and successful. Tasmania and South Australia have made clear commitments to go beyond merely discretionary supports by extending out of home care to age 21. Western Australia is currently piloting this approach and in November the Victorian government announced that from 1 January 2021, all young people turning 18 years of age and due to leave care will be able to remain with their foster carer or kinship carer, supported by an allowance, case work and flexible funding; or, for those leaving residential care, to transition to other housing options—for example, private rental—supported by an allowance, case work and flexible funding.

These important life-changing innovations have been backed by the national Home Stretch Campaign, which has powerfully made the argument for universally extending out of home care to age 21. Part of this campaign has been commissioned research demonstrating the cost benefit of doing so. In Canberra, the assumed benefit cost ratio of such a program is 1.77—that is, is every dollar invested in the program is associated with an expected return of \$1.77 in either savings or increased income. The same study estimates that universal access to extended out of home care could be provided in the ACT for an annual cost of under \$900,000. Research indicates that extending out of home care halves the probability of care leavers falling into homelessness.

In 2018-19, government funding for youth homelessness support in the ACT was \$5,250,038. Clearly, reducing the risk that a care leaver will end up sleeping in bus interchanges and under pedestrian overpasses is not only very good for kids, but will, overtime, pay for itself. The Canberra Liberals went to the election last year with a strong commitment to universally extend out of home care in the territory to age 21. I am pleased to see that the agreement between ACT Labor and the ACT Greens includes a pledge to improve the extended care system for 18 to 21-year-olds in the out of home care system.

It is not yet clear, however, exactly what improving the current system for care leavers will look like. For that reason, I have today brought this motion before the Assembly to call on the ACT government to commit in principle to supporting the universal extension of care to age 21, including for those exiting residential care and those like the young man mentioned above, who are unable to remain with foster or kinship carers. Considering what is happening in the states around us, it should be clear that merely fiddling around the edges of the current approach will result in Canberra’s kids being left behind, possibly homeless, unemployed or even with physical and mental health issues.

In this important matter, we simply cannot afford to leave any young people behind; we need to walk with them. It is that simple. As I sought to make very clear a few minutes ago, we desperately need to improve data collection on young people who have exited care to allow for robust evaluation of post care support services, including any extension of care to age 21. We simply cannot afford to walk into what will be important reforms blinded by a lack of data. We need the data that will inform and

provide insights to a clearer way for improvement, to help make visible another reality.

Lastly, I call on the ACT government not just to make a clear commitment but to begin this important work by creating a task force to reveal what is being done in Australia and what has been done internationally to ascertain best practice and then propose the best way to implement an extension of care to age 21 in the ACT. For example, the UK is currently trialling a Staying Close program, where those who exit residential care remain a part of the community, visiting the house for dinners, birthday celebrations and Christmas parties, whilst enjoying ongoing contact for 10 hours each week with support workers in the home. This is a real opportunity for us not just to note what others are doing but to become a model that other jurisdictions will seek to learn from.

As the task force takes on its important and exciting task, they should consider recommendations such as those from Monash University and academics Philip Mendes and Justin Rogers. First, extended care needs to be applied universally to include youth leaving all forms of care, including residential care. Second, the system needs to be flexible enough to allow young people to exit and enter as needed, capturing both those who move away for work or study but still need a home to return to, and those who may not fully understand their future needs at age 18. Third, exploration absolutely needs to include young people with lived experience. And, fourth, it is vital that there be ongoing monitoring and review of the effectiveness of policy and practice implementation.

To these, I would add my own recommendation that special attention needs to be paid to supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander care leavers in culturally appropriate ways. As a dear friend Dr Bray said, “It is incredibly fulfilling to one’s mental health and sense of identity to be grounded in the language, dance and culture of a person’s ancestry.” We need to make sure that every opportunity is taken to achieve this. I commend this motion to the Assembly.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Families and Community Services and Minister for Health) (3.24), by leave: I move:

(1) Omit paragraph 1) c) and d) and substitute:

“(c) in 2015, the ACT Government enacted amendments to the Children and Young People Act to extend the continuum of care subsidy payments for eligible care leavers up to the age of 21;

(d) young people aged up to 25 years and their carers can access post care support in the form of:

- case work coordination;
- planning and oversight of therapeutic interventions;
- assistance to access their care records and life story work;
- practical material support and/or time limited brokerage;

- referral to services; and
 - mediation work with families and/or carers;
- (e) there is a growing national consensus that support for care leavers needs to include the option of remaining in care until age 21; and
- (f) the Government has committed, through the Parliamentary and Governing Agreement for the 10th Legislative Assembly, to improve the extended care system for 18-21 year olds in the out of home care system;” and
- (2) Omit paragraph (2) and substitute:
- “(2) calls on the ACT Government to:
- (a) commit in principle to support the extension of care to age 21 for any young person who wishes to remain in a supported care environment after they turn 18;
 - (b) explore options to enact a presumption that the continuum care subsidy automatically extends to young people up to at least 21 years of age, including for those exiting residential care and those unable to remain in a foster or kinship care placement;
 - (c) explore legal options to provide statutory provision for this presumption in the *Children and Young People Act 2008*;
 - (d) explore ways to improve data collection on young people who have exited care to support robust evaluation of post-care support services; and
 - (e) report back to the Assembly on the progress of this work by the last sitting day of June 2022.”

I thank Mrs Kikkert for bringing this motion to the Assembly today. It is, indeed, a very important issue. The ACT has historically led the work, nationally, in relation to transitions from out of home care to adulthood. Mrs Kikkert mentioned a paper that was prepared as part of the *National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children 2009-2020—Third Action Plan*, which was prepared by ACT officials as some of the jurisdictional leaders in this work in 2018. I table that discussion paper for the information and benefit of the Assembly:

National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children 2009-2020—Third Action Plan 2015-2018—Discussion paper—Transition from out of home care to adulthood: Mapping legislation and policy across Australian jurisdictions, dated December 2018.

That paper demonstrates that in 2018, at the time that the paper was drafted, the ACT was ahead of most other jurisdictions in Australia in the support and care that was provided, including financial support for young people from the age of 18 who were exiting their care and protection orders. As Mrs Kikkert’s motion notes, and the government’s amendments expand on, the existing supports are available to young people who are leaving out of home care when they reach 18 years of age. Home Stretch, a coalition of a large number of organisations with an interest in supporting young people and families in the out of home care system is one of the key advocates for extending support to age 21 at the national level. I met with Home Stretch in

March—it was at least my second meeting with them—to discuss their views on extended care and the ongoing work in the ACT to improve the system.

Home Stretch outlines its vision for extended care on their website. In their own words:

The Home Stretch seeks governments to support the extension of care to 21 years for those that:

- Wish to stay on in their foster care or kinship care placement and have the agreement from their carer, or
- Who are not ready to go and wish to remain in a supported care environment but either cannot remain in the care placement past 18 years; such as those exiting residential care, or do not wish to remain in foster care.

I have picked up those words in amended paragraph 2(a) in relation to any young person who wishes to remain in a supported care environment after they turn 18, in recognition of the wishes of the children and young people. Home Stretch further clarified what they envisage extended care would look like. Extending care would require governments to provide support in the form of ongoing care and reimbursements to carers and case management to the young person, and resources to access education and employment activity.

It is important to recognise that a number of jurisdictions that provide extended care determine a young person's eligibility for that based on whether the person is engaging in education and/or employment. That is one of the issues that we need to consider as we work to extend and expand the improved extended care for 18 to 21-year-olds as per the Parliamentary and Governing Agreement. In 2012, the ACT government commenced providing support to care leavers up to the age of 25. This involved the establishment of a small team of specialist case workers and brokerage funding being made available to assist care leavers with one-off expenses.

Mrs Kikkert has admirably summarised the current situation in relation to the extended continuum of care for 18- to 20-year-olds where fostering kinship carers are caring for young people who may be eligible to receive the extended continuum of care subsidy where the child's transition plan states that the young person will be best supported by continuing to live with the carer after they turn 18 years old. As Mrs Kikkert has indicated, this extension is currently determined on a case-by-case basis, where it can be demonstrated that the young person's wellbeing would otherwise be jeopardised by the cessation of the carer subsidy at 18 years old, and the provision of that subsidy is subject to a review process. There is also, of course, after care support available for care leavers up to 25 years old—and that is really critical.

Some of that is provided by ACT Together, and shorter term assistance could be provided in relation to guidance, information and advice and referrals to other services. But in some circumstances, more intensive, longer term assistance may be needed. That sort of support can include case work coordination; planning and oversight of therapeutic responses and counselling; support accessing; reading and processing care

records, including life story work, which is critical for the psychological wellbeing of young people to understand why they were in care and their own care experience; practical supports, such as assistance with housing applications, driving lessons and accessing the transition to independent living allowance that the commonwealth provides; mediation with families and/or carers; and financial support and funding of services for young adults up to 21 years who have high and complex needs.

So there are a range of supports already in place, but I have also heard from young people, from advocates and from carers, that the current system of making determinations on a case-by-case basis is a bit complex for people. I acknowledge the contribution of Mr Davis and his office in writing paragraph 2(b) of my amendment, to explore options to enact a presumption that the continuum of care subsidy automatically extends to young people up to at least 21 years of age, including for those exiting residential care and those unable to remain in foster care or kinship care placements. I think the change to a presumption that care will continue changes the conversation that caseworkers are having with young people as they plan the transition from out of home care to independence.

That planning is statutorily required to start at the age of 15. The plan is more than a list of aspirations; it provides a flexible plan of action that specifies how the young adult will access education, employment and health services, and it must include information about where the young adult will live from the age of 18. A transition plan may also incorporate contingency arrangements in the event of a breakdown of their living arrangements after they have left care. In planning for this transition from care it is the role of the care team to coordinate the tasks and activities necessary to support a young adult in accordance with their transition plan. This should detail any medical, educational and therapeutic requirements and will include referral to mainstream services such as Centrelink, education and training providers, housing authorities and providers within the public health system to support ongoing needs, including organising support through the National Disability Insurance Scheme, if that is a possibility and not already available. An application for the Transition to Independent Living allowance may be completed where the case manager and young adult agree that the proposed use and timing is appropriate.

As members would be aware, the government is currently in the process of developing the next iteration of A Step Up for Our Kids, the out of home care strategy. This process represents an opportunity to review what has worked in the first iteration of Step Up, what can be strengthened, and what can be done better or differently. I had the privilege yesterday morning of attending a working breakfast with staff from Child and Youth Protection Services. I had conversations with some fantastic, experienced Child and Youth Protection Services staff about what has worked, what has improved in the last five years, what needs to be done and what more can be done to do things a bit differently. They were really great conversations, and it was heartening to hear about the improvements that they have witnessed over the last few years through the implementation of A Step Up for Our Kids.

In April 2020, state and community services ministers met. This reflects an ongoing priority within the framework of the third action plan for protecting Australia's children, but it is an ongoing priority for ministers across the country. As Mrs Kikkert

has said, jurisdictions are leapfrogging each other in improving services and support in this space. In April, state and territory community services ministers met with the commonwealth and agreed to direct their officials, through the Children and Family Secretaries Group, to prepare a paper outlining, for each jurisdiction, the number of young people in care turning 18 years old before 31 December 2020 and details of transition supports in place for these young people during the coronavirus pandemic, and identifying any gaps in supports for young people transitioning from care during COVID-19. That report was a really important one. Every jurisdiction looked at the supports in place. We did provide additional support through our COVID-19 response for young people who were transitioning off orders during this period of pandemic, when we knew that life was going to be tougher for all young people, but particularly for young people who do not necessarily have the natural family supports that are available for most young people.

Additionally, the government has already committed to improving our extended care provisions through the Parliamentary and Governing Agreement, as Mrs Kikkert touched on and as is reflected in the motion and the amendment. It is the normal business of the public service to analyse the operation of government services and to provide technical advice on how to implement changes. In this case we already have work underway. The work on the next iteration of the Step Up for Our Kids out of home care strategy was funded—in the August economic statement, if I am not mistaken—so this work that Mrs Kikkert has called for a taskforce on, is already underway. These conversations are already being had—including with Child and Youth Protection Services staff, but also with young people, with carers and with birth families—about what the next stage of the strategy should look at. That is why my amendment removes Mrs Kikkert’s reference to a taskforce; it would simply be duplicating work that the government is already doing in this space.

My amendment strengthens what we are committing to in principle in relation to the extension of care. It explores options to enact a presumption that the continuum of care subsidy would automatically extend to young people, and—again I give credit to Mr Davis—it explores legal options to provide a statutory provision for this presumption as we work on amendments to the Children and Young People Act as part of our review of the act and our development of the next strategy. I appreciate Mrs Kikkert’s intention in that regard. Reference to the task force has not been removed because we do not want to do the work; it has been removed because the work is already happening. There is already a group doing that; it would not make sense to duplicate that work. We also support the call in the original motion for the government to report back to the Assembly on our progress against this commitment by June 2022, and I look forward to the opportunity to update the Assembly at that time.

I think it is important to recognise and acknowledge that young people in out of home care or exiting from orders are legally considered adults when they reach the age of 18—just like all other young people in our community—and this comes with all the legal rights and responsibilities of adulthood. We know, absolutely, that nothing magically changes when a person reaches their 18th birthday—our problems do not disappear, our abilities and resilience do not suddenly improve, and our need for support does not go away. My notes refer to “any parent with adult children”, but I

think anyone who has been a young adult knows how much support young adults need from their loved ones.

Many carers of children in out of home care have exactly the same experience, and they continue to live with, or otherwise support, the young adults that they have cared for through the statutory system. Unfortunately, that is not always possible. Indeed, sometimes young people who have been in statutory care want to move on. They want to exit themselves from the system, at least for a little while. The really important thing is that they always understand that they can come back—that they will continue to get that support. So it does not need to be continuous. That is going to be a really important part of the consideration.

We have long acknowledged that we must have a role in supporting young adults after they have exited out of home care, and we have committed already to making this support stronger. So my amendment to Mrs Kikkert's motion strengthens what she has suggested the Legislative Assembly should be calling on. In relation to data, we have retained that "exploring ways to improve data collection for young people who have exited care". It is not a straightforward matter; you are talking about a relatively small number of young people. I think in the 2018 report we had 42 young people exit care. There would need to be individual data collection in relation to young people exiting care and their experiences, and they would therefore need to be willing to engage in that process. We cannot force them to provide us with data, and the numbers are so small that the capacity to capture them in a wide data set would be quite difficult.

Mrs Kikkert has pointed out that the 2018 paper highlights the importance of data. We absolutely agree with that, but it is not a straightforward matter, as Mrs Kikkert seems to suggest, that we obviously should have this data. She makes it sound as if it is really easy. It is not easy to collect that kind of data. We would really have to work at how we were going to do that. But we do agree that it is a really important thing to try to better understand, so we are very happy to support that part of the motion. With that, I again thank Mrs Kikkert and I thank Mr Davis and his office for their collaboration in the amendment.

MR DAVIS (Brindabella) (3.39): I support the amendments proposed by Minister Stephen-Smith. I thank Mrs Kikkert for her motion, and I am glad to have been able to work with Minister Stephen-Smith's office to strengthen the motion to support the extension of government support to young people in the care and protection system.

The parliamentary and governing agreement commits the government to improving the extended care system for 18- to 21-year-olds in out of home care. The ACT Greens have a strong and comprehensive policy to improve child and youth protective services, including by enshrining the right to extended care to at least 21 years of age, as well as reforming the Children and Young People Act to create an external merit review system, develop a charter of rights for parents and families in the out of home care system, and implement the Our Booris, Our Way recommendations.

This is an issue that runs at the heart of ending inequality and intergenerational poverty, particularly between First Nations and non-Indigenous people. It speaks to

justice reinvestment and the social determinants of health. The significant evidence base that is drawn on to support extending care and familial connections for people in out of home care shows us that young people in the care system are more likely to experience poor mental health, drug use, homelessness, poverty and violence if they are not provided with ongoing support past 18.

We know that investing our efforts and resources in providing young people in the care and protection system with housing, education, familial supports and community has a significant impact on their wellbeing and security throughout their lives. Evidence from the United Kingdom presented in Anglicare Victoria's 2016 report into extending out of home care for young people shows us that young people who can stay with their foster families into their 20s are more than twice as likely to stay enrolled in full-time education, more likely to find and sustain employment, and more likely to find appropriate, stable housing arrangements. We know from our work with the ACT Youth Coalition that community and familial support for all young people in their late teens to early-to-mid-20s has a significant impact on lifelong wellbeing and is a preventative measure to ensure resilient mental health. This is particularly important when it comes to young people in the care and protection system.

This motion calls on the government to ensure that young people have the security of knowing that they will be supported beyond age 18. We need to develop a system where all young people who would benefit from ongoing support are assumed to receive it. While the current process allows for 18 to 21-year-olds to apply to access support, this opt-in care system places an ongoing administrative burden on young people and their foster families. This is an unnecessary burden and can create tensions for young people seeking greater independence. We know that the lifelong journey of a child involved with the care and protection will often be negatively impacted long after leaving care, and we believe that they should be able to access ongoing support as a matter of course. It should not be something they have to fight for.

We want to see these policy changes enshrined in the Children and Young People Act to provide security and assurance to young people and to those who look after them. This security is vital for carers and young people to be able to plan together for the first few years of adulthood. Thanks to research done by Deloitte Access Economics, we know that for every dollar spent extending care to young people from 18 to 21 years of age we save \$1.75, due to the reduced impact on our criminal justice system and our homelessness sector. While the economic arguments pale in comparison to the social and emotional outcomes for young people in our care, this policy change will also free up resources that can be reinvested into the care and protection system and the organisations that provide support and advocacy for these young people and their families.

In February, I met with one of these fantastic organisations, the CREATE Foundation, along with one of their young consultants, who told me about their experience in Canberra's child protection system. It was very powerful to meet such an articulate young person who has had first-hand experience of the systems that we are discussing today. It took me back to a time in my adolescence when I was struggling to retain connection to my community while navigating homelessness. I could see the great

relationship that this young person had with the community facilitator who came to speak with us. It reminded me of the terrific people in the community care sector who provided care to me. I have a strong appreciation and adoration of people in this sector, who go to work every day to provide care and protection to Canberra's most vulnerable.

I was particularly taken with how valuable the lived experience of the young person was in informing my position on the work that is required in this space. It is so important that we value lived experience when we build systems to respond to complex and intersecting problems such as these. While I do not question the intent of anybody in this place to achieve the best outcomes for people in the care and protection system, I am convinced that better outcomes are obtainable if we actively seek out and genuinely respect the experiences of these young people who have lived these systems.

As a rule, as I continue to work in this space, if you bring me a great idea on how we can make Canberra better for young people the first question I will ask you is, "How many young people have you spoken to about this idea?" That is my responsibility, not only as the ACT Greens spokesperson for young people but as a young person with lived experience of the care and protection system. I am committed to elevating the voices of those who receive care and those who provide care. Thank you again to Mrs Kikkert for her earnest and genuine commitment to reform in this space. The ACT Greens will be supporting the amendments to strength the principles that sit behind it.

MRS KIKKERT (Ginninderra) (3.45): I move an amendment to Minister Rachel Stephen-Smith's amendment to my motion:

- (1) In paragraph (2) (b), add "and to consider increasing the continuum case subsidy to a sufficient amount."

I will just speak to the amendment and close. This motion is an important one. I am a mother of five children. Two of them are young adults and one is approaching that age. I know that some kids are ready to leave home at age 18 but many are not. I understand that no family is perfect but even imperfect families can provide ongoing love, support and encouragement to young people as they finish school, get their first jobs, get better jobs, start university, enrol at CIT, get their licences, buy their first cars and so forth. Even after young people find their feet and leave home, something very important happens. They still have somewhere to go home to. Maybe it is during Christmas; maybe it is in the break between semesters. Maybe they are between jobs. Maybe they are on field leave from the military. Maybe they need a place to start again. Maybe they just miss mum and dad's hugs and words of encouragement or food. Most of us here in this chamber know what it feels like to be able to go home. We still do it for holidays and important events, both joyful and tearful.

Having a home is a wonderful and a powerful thing. It brings a sense of security that allows a person to try new things and do hard things, including establishing homes of their own that can shelter the next generation. We sometimes take for granted what or

who is there for us on a daily basis. Imagine if we did not have that; how devastating that would be. Many kids in out of home care do not have a home to go to, and they deserve to have every opportunity in life that others do. Rather than abandoning them at 18 years of age, let us walk with them a little bit longer and give them more love, more support and more compassion.

I wish to speak to the amendments to this motion tabled by Minister Stephen-Smith and raise some points of concern. The first amendment is certainly a move in the right direction. Under the current policy the continuing care subsidy is only available to foster and kinship carers who wish to continue providing homes to the young people they have been raising. Making this very small payment available to those exiting residential care, and those unable to remain in foster or kinship care, is something that I welcome. That is why I moved the amendment to that amendment. From what I have heard, that continuing care subsidy is less than what the foster carers and kinship carers were receiving before the child turned 18 years old. The amount of money drastically drops. I want the government to understand that the foster carers and kinship carers are quite aware of this and they want to see the government consider an increase in the amount of the money that they receive when the child turns 18.

I also want to speak to her point about data collecting. It felt as if she was making fun of me for asking the government about data collection. I just want to point out that when a child feels comfortable and loved at home, after they turn 18 they are welcome to return home by their choice. They are welcome to go home because they know they feel safe and loved there and because they were respected and honoured when they left home. Likewise, legally the government is the parent of kids in out of home care under the age of 18 years. If the child does not feel safe and does not feel respected by the government—if the child does not feel like they are being heard by the government—of course they are not going to want to come back to the government when it wishes to collect data. Of course they are not going to listen to what the government asks them to do. Of course they are going to feel, “This is the government forcing me to do something that I do not want.”

However, if the child in out of home care feels that the government is listening to them before they turn 18 and that they are respected, are being treated with honour and given what they need, that child, when they turn 18, will be happy if the government says, “If you find a job please come back and tell us. If you enter CIT, please come back to tell us.” The minister is mocking that remark because she does not know what it feels like. When a child trusts a parent, they will come back and tell them what is happening to them after they leave home. It is similar for a child leaving the out of home care system. They will come back and do a survey if the government treated them with respect and honour when they were in the government’s care. But if the government does not give them the care that they need, of course they will not listen—of course they will not care about any government survey to collect data.

So I urge the minister to change her mindset, to treat the young people in her care with respect and honour, and to hear them out. When you ask those young people—when they leave at the age of 18—to do a survey about how they are doing with their lives, they will happily do that because they know that they have been respected by the government.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Families and Community Services and Minister for Health) (3.51): I would like to reassure Mrs Kikkert that we will explore how we can collect data. All I was saying was that it is not easy. That was the only point I was making. It is not straightforward. That is why it requires exploration, and we are very happy to do that because we think it is really, really important. I am not quite sure that all the yelling was necessary.

We will not be supporting Mrs Kikkert's amendment to my amendment. Again, I think I understand the intention of the amendment but the way it is written in terms of "consider increasing the continuum of care subsidy to a sufficient amount" would have us agreeing that the current amount is not sufficient, which I do not agree with. Mrs Kikkert's amendment talks about considering an increase in the continuum of care subsidy but the continuum of care subsidy is not just for young people from 18 upwards; it is actually a subsidy right across the continuum of care. It is a subsidy that is provided with Act Together for that broad continuum of care. So it is not that I disagree with the intention of the amendment; as part of the ongoing work that we are doing, I will certainly look at what the appropriate amounts of support should be and how those appropriate amounts of support should be accessed, particularly for young people who are not with a carer. It is one thing to provide a carer subsidy; it is another thing to consider how you would provide financial support to young people and how that would interact with any support they might be getting from the commonwealth et cetera.

That work will definitely be done, but the way that Mrs Kikkert's amendment is worded has a couple of issues so we cannot support it. I do not really want to go backwards and forwards amending her amendment to my amendment, but I assure her that the consideration of the quantum of any subsidy will absolutely be part of the work that we are already doing.

Mrs Kikkert's amendment to **Ms Stephen-Smith's** proposed amendment negatived.

Ms Stephen-Smith's amendment agreed to.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

Planning, Transport and City Services—Standing Committee Statement by Speaker

MADAM SPEAKER: Members, before I give the call to Mr Braddock, I wish to make a brief statement concerning private member's business no 2. As members would be aware, some of the subject matter of Mr Braddock's motion on the Gungahlin town centre development is the subject of an inquiry by the Standing Committee on Planning, Transport and City Services, which is inquiring into draft variation 364 on the Gungahlin town centre. That draft variation was referred to the committee by the Acting Minister for Planning and Land Management on 31 March

this year in accordance with section 73(2) of the Planning and Development Act 2007. Submissions are currently being accepted until 30 June of this year and the committee is required to report within a statutory period.

As the Standing Committee on Administration and Procedures reported in its report no 13 to the Assembly of July 2019, if a member wishes to lodge a notice of motion that closely relates to subject matter currently under inquiry by an Assembly committee, the Assembly is able to debate the matter if it so chooses. However, if the Assembly does debate such matters, such debate cannot and should not pre-empt the findings or possible recommendations of that committee. Given the link between the notice given by Mr Braddock and the committee inquiry, I thought I would draw these comments to the attention to the Assembly before the debate. Additionally, I am aware that, given the statutory function of the committee, GSO advice has been sought about whether there is any intersection across that.

Before question time I received a letter from the Standing Committee on Planning, Transport and City Services regarding conflict of interest. Whilst the standing orders do not exclude members from voting, they refer only to a conflict of interest in a pecuniary sense and not when somebody may be conflicted by participating in debate in the Assembly while a member of a committee.

Given that, the principles I have just outlined apply and should be considered by members. Given the late notice of the committee letter and the possible broader issues, I have not been able to formally reply to the committee.

I also remind members of the admin and procedure report which I have mentioned—no 13 of 2019—which noted that it will be the Assembly that ultimately determines whether it is the Assembly or an Assembly committee where matters can be progressed. So it is up for the Assembly to decide if matters should proceed here or be adjourned until matters of conflict are clearer, the GSO advice is received or, indeed, the committee concludes its work.

Planning—Gungahlin town centre

MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi) (3.58): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) the Suburban Land Agency auction on 12 May 2021 of the following blocks in the Gungahlin Town Centre:
 - (i) section 246 block 4;
 - (ii) section 249 block 4;
 - (iii) section 249 block 5; and
 - (iv) section 249 block 12;
- (b) the Gungahlin Town Centre Planning Refresh Community Engagement Report;

- (c) Draft Variation 364 (DV 364), Gungahlin Town Centre Precinct Code, is currently the subject of an inquiry by the Legislative Assembly's Standing Committee on Planning, Transport, and City Services;
 - (d) the resolution relating to development of the Gungahlin Town Centre passed by the Assembly on 10 February 2021 (the resolution) calling on the ACT Government to "support the further development of the Gungahlin region and town centre, ensuring that there are additional employment opportunities in Gungahlin by ... ensuring current sales of development sites incorporate the requirements to support best practice mixed-use developments"; and
 - (e) the importance of increasing the level of affordable rental and public housing stock in close consultation with the community so as to maintain community support and deliver good social outcomes; and
- (2) calls on the ACT Government to:
- (a) report to the Assembly by the next sitting day, how the sale of the aforementioned blocks meets the conditions specified in the resolution, in particular "ensuring current sales incorporate the requirements to support best practice mixed-use developments";
 - (b) acknowledge the level of community concern about Gungahlin Town Centre planning;
 - (c) address the community's concerns by developing through effective consultation with the community, and incorporating into the Territory Plan, a plan for the Gungahlin Town Centre that incorporates the following elements:
 - (i) no reduction in commercial office space, the area of the linear park, or Community Facilities Zoned land;
 - (ii) any variation to the use of blocks 3 and 5 section 231 must be done via a disallowable instrument; and
 - (iii) within current height limits;
 - (d) not proceed with any other sales of land in the Gungahlin Town Centre for the purpose of mixed-use development until these variations are incorporated into the Territory Plan;
 - (e) report to the Assembly every three months updates on Gungahlin Town Centre planning;
 - (f) direct the Suburban Land Agency to develop land in the Gungahlin Town Centre in a way that generates higher quality outcomes for the community by:
 - (i) consulting widely with the Gungahlin community before future mixed-use or commercial blocks are sold, and ensuring that outcomes from that consultation are reflected in an appropriate sales process;
 - (ii) consider bringing land to the market in larger blocks that encourage place making development; and
 - (iii) increase the size of commercial premises allowed in the lease restrictions for mixed-use developments;

- (g) designate a single point of contact within ACT Government with responsibility for whole-of-government outcomes for Gungahlin; and
- (h) develop and publish a strategy to actively encourage employment in the Gungahlin Town Centre by 31 December 2021.

As members may have guessed, I am very passionate about Gungahlin and how the town centre develops. I am keen to see the community help shape the future of Gungahlin so that it helps to meet the needs of the Gungahlin district. When people come together to discuss their vision for the place they call home, we know that great things emerge. From my conversations with people in Gungahlin, I know they do not want to live in a dormitory region where they can sleep but do little else. They want a liveable town centre with employment opportunities, green space and places to gather, as well as quality homes.

The Greens went to an election on a strong platform of building a better normal. Part of that is ensuring that the development of this city meets community needs and that the community has a proper say. I want community views reflected in a comprehensive plan for the Gungahlin town centre to guide future land sales to developers. The ACT government has united behind these goals in the parliamentary and governing agreement to deliver better planning outcomes and, therefore, better social outcomes. We need to reconsider land sales in the Gungahlin town centre to ensure that we make decisions that will support our community's wellbeing for decades to come.

By lodging this motion, I have brought attention to this issue and the importance that Gungahlin residents place on the future of our town centre. The motion has generated numerous valuable discussions within our community and within government. I wish to see these discussions continue so that we can create a better normal. As the minister for planning said this morning, Gungahlin is more than a town centre; it consists of 15 surrounding suburbs and is home to about 82,500 residents at the last count. The town centre is critical in providing the employments and services that this number of residents quite rightly expect from a town centre. It is important to ensure that we have the balance of community space, employment opportunities, and services right. That is why it is so important to ensure that the community have their say.

I welcome the planning minister lobbying for another federal agency to be placed in Gungahlin, where so many federal government employees reside. But I also do not hold my breath; the federal government has neglected Canberra as it moves federal departments into whichever marginal seats it needs to sandbag. However, the ACT government cannot just throw up its hands and say that it is too hard. This is the time for innovative thinking on how we can create employment opportunities for Gungahlin. Vertical aged care, digital hubs and cooperatives are just some of the ideas. I am sure that with the depth of expertise in government and the breadth of ideas in the community we can develop a rich array of ideas and opportunities for Gungahlin. We just need to try.

The Greens are launching a digital Possibilitree to collect and collate community views on the future of Gungahlin. I have been out in the electorate with a physical noticeboard and now have a digital one online. But we cannot implement innovative

ideas or get community to buy in to the process if the land has already been sold. Therefore, it is important that we ensure we get this process right.

This motion builds on Ms Orr's motion on development in Gungahlin which was passed by this Assembly in February. That motion was to support the further development of the Gungahlin region and town centre and ensuring additional employment opportunities in Gungahlin by ensuring that current sales of development sites incorporate the requirements to support best practice, mixed-use developments. It is important for the community to have the confidence that the blocks under auction tomorrow incorporate the requirements to support best practice, mixed-use developments to ensure that we are creating quality places for people to live, work and play.

I will say a few words about the matter raised by the Speaker in regard to draft variation 364, the Gungahlin town centre precinct code, that is currently the subject of an inquiry by the Standing Committee on Planning, Transport and City Services. I do not want to prejudice or prejudge the outcome of this inquiry. I want the inquiry to be conducted in full, and I have full trust in the members of that committee to diligently and fairly examine the question at hand. I invite everyone who is interested in the future of Gungahlin to put a submission into that inquiry.

I fully acknowledge that the achievement of the parliamentary agreement is sometimes complex and difficult. Like all members who signed the parliamentary and governing agreement, I remain committed to delivering 400 additional public housing dwellings by 2025 and 600 additional affordable rental housing dwellings. The importance of providing safe, secure housing for Canberra's most vulnerable is important to me.

I note that the proposed auction would not contribute to the achievement of the affordable rental target with all the affordable homes being for sale. This is not to detract from the importance of affordable houses for sale but simply to highlight that the Greens' emphasis is on affordable rentals. It is critically important to increase the level of affordable rental and public housing stock in close consultation with the community and not in a piecemeal fashion, development application by development application.

I likewise acknowledge that there are significant challenges in land availability, industry, and sector capacity to deliver additional housing, and capital demand on the territory budget to meet these targets. But the parliamentary and governing agreement also mentions some other items, including: facilitate residential development and housing supply while ensuring Canberra remains sustainable, liveable and attractive; improve community confidence in the planning system; lift the quality and sustainability of new developments; improve community consultation and involvement in the development of Canberra; ensure that the planning system continues to deliver affordable housing; and further refine land sale processes to allow major sites to be released for high-quality proposals and not just to the highest financial bidder.

My motion is not at odds with the parliamentary agreement; it is entirely in line with it. This is not an either/or argument and I reject that framing. It is possible to do both—in fact, it is critical that we deliver the parliamentary and governing agreement for the people of Canberra so that we can do both. I commend this motion to the Assembly.

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) (4.05): I want to speak to this motion and particularly draw attention to the delivery of housing, and affordable and public housing as well, in this term of this government. The government entered this term committed to more housing for Canberrans. And that is all housing, including affordable to purchase, including affordable rental and including public housing. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, demand for houses and land has been staggering and went against all predictions across the country. The government is working really hard to meet that demand and to keep on making Canberra a great place to live.

It is important to refer to the parliamentary agreement of this Labor-Greens government and its commitment to more housing. In speaking to this motion, we all need to remember that. The parliamentary agreement says that we will increase the housing supply to meet increased demand; we will build 400 new public housing dwellings; we will build 600 more affordable rentals; and, finally, especially relevant to this motion, we will build at least 70 per cent of new housing within Canberra's existing footprint.

These are ambitious commitments and they will require a lot of hard work over the term of this government by our public servants, by our community and by industry workers to meet that demand. To deliver on this, we are going to have to build houses in town centres and everywhere. This is the reality of a growing population and the growing need for homes that comes with it. It is also the reality that Canberrans value the environment, value the green space, and that means our focus must be on the existing urban footprint.

As Minister for Housing and Suburban Development, I am responsible for the Suburban Land Agency. That agency's land release program is how we make more homes available and the upcoming auction in Gungahlin will result in 450 more homes. Seventy-six of these will be affordable homes and eight of them will be public housing homes. Without sales like these, we just simply cannot meet our commitments to the community. Wherever there is construction in someone's neighbourhood, people are of course entitled to have something to say about that. The government values good consultation and we do engage, and we listen.

But in delivering these places, we need to ask people do they want to support the people who are most at risk in our city and ensure that there is more affordable and public housing. We need to do more of that, and we need to build now and we need to

build them everywhere. That is why we need to take this situation seriously and engage with our communities about what that actually means.

I want to just quickly talk on the four blocks listed in this motion. I asked the SLA last week to meet with the Gungahlin Community Council, and I met with that group myself. We heard their concerns and we listened very carefully to what they had to tell us. It was a productive discussion and the SLA was able to give more information about how the land to be released would deliver better outcomes for Gungahlin.

To address the concerns of best practice, mixed-use development, the sites will require mandatory referral to the National Capital Design Review Panel as a step in the process of supporting best practice, mixed-use development. The sales conditions for the four sites include a condition of mandatory referral to the National Capital Design Review Panel. The national review panel has developed a set of design principles for projects to be assessed against. The design principles for the ACT have been benchmarked against best practice from design review panel documentation across Australia and New Zealand. These features of the SLA's land sale will promote best practice, mixed-use development in the Gungahlin town centre.

The Suburban Land Agency and I have offered the opportunity to work with the Gungahlin Community Council on the place planning of the future land releases in Gungahlin town centre, including engagement on how the sale of the future blocks are brought to the market, the provision of open space and interface with the linear park area, as well as future public realm to provide opportunity and to give direction to future developers and address community needs and commercial options available on future sites. A significant number of sites remain scheduled for future release in the Gungahlin town centre which are in locations that lend themselves to positive commercial outcomes.

During these meetings I also heard from the council about their opposition to all new residential development in the Gungahlin town centre, but the reality is that we need to build more of this housing, we need to build more homes and, as I said before, we need to do them now. These homes have to be built somewhere. People have to have the options to live, whether they are affordable homes, affordable rentals, public housing or homes. Every person, regardless of their background or where they come from, should have the opportunity to have a place to call home.

I am proud to say that making sure that our most vulnerable neighbours have a safe place to live has been and will continue to be my top priority because, as I said, everybody deserves a place to live in our community.

MS CASTLEY (Yerrabi) (4.11): My response to this motion on behalf of the Canberra Liberals is simple. What we see here is yet another example of government neglect, Labor-Greens government neglect of Canberra's fastest growing region, Gungahlin. It is an area of mostly young, energetic and ambitious Canberrans; yet an area that has been described as a dormitory town, even a ghost town, as residents flee as early as they can each morning to avoid traffic chaos and dart in various directions to their places of work.

We often hear people hail Canberra's lifestyle virtues because everything is only 15 minutes away; so you are not stuck in your car and you can get to places easily. That might be the case for many Canberrans but not so for the residents of Gungahlin who trek for miles to their places of work because there is so little employment in town.

I draw attention to a few recent comments in the media by the Greens MLA for Yerrabi, Andrew Braddock, who has brought this motion today. Mr Braddock has said, "Locals have told me they want green spaces, employment opportunities, community gardens, better retail opportunities and community spaces." He has said he wants to give the community a real say in how their town centre develops and he wants their voices to be heard in a meaningful way. As do I.

I find this staggering because this year marks two decades since Labor has ruled the ACT, largely with support from the Greens. So you cannot help but wonder why this Labor-Greens government has for the last 20 years neglected Gungahlin to such an extent that residents are in revolt. After years of lobbying successive Labor-Greens governments for sensible planning to bring vibrancy and jobs to the place that they call home, Gungahlin locals, through the Gungahlin Community Council, have had enough.

Consider again Mr Braddock's remarks. He talks about residents' pleas for green spaces, community gardens, for a say in how their town centre develops. This is politics 101, is it not, for the Greens? Is this not in the Greens' DNA: green spaces, community gardens, sensible planning?

As I said, this year marks two decades since Labor has ruled the ACT, largely with support from the Greens, and our Chief Minister, Andrew Barr, has been at the helm for seven years, since 2014. It is worth noting that ACT Labor has had one of the longest unbroken runs of any state or territory government and its sixth election victory last year means that it will have been in power for 23 years by the time of the next election in 2024.

Interestingly, that is the same length of time that the coalition was in office federally until Gough Whitlam's "It's time" 1972 election win. Given the "It's time" slogan was such a success for Gough, whose victory on 2 December 1972 marked a historic turning point in Australian political history, perhaps we can adopt the same mantra in this place and say it is time that the Labor-Greens government took seriously the people of my electorate, Yerrabi.

If you want further proof that Yerrabi gets duded by this government time and again, look at the executive, the line-up of ministers and where they hail from. I have said it before and I will say it again. It is Chief Minister Barr who chooses his ministers and what electorates they represent, and Mr Barr has selected ministers from every electorate except Yerrabi. What a surprise that Yerrabi is ignored. What a surprise that Yerrabi is neglected. What a surprise that government backbenchers like Mr Braddock need to bring motions calling on ministers to pay attention to the area that he endeavours to represent.

Look at how Chief Minister Barr has looked after his own electorate of Kurrajong—four ministers flying that Kurrajong flag: Mr Barr; our Greens leader, Mr Rattenbury; health minister, Rachel Stephen-Smith; and environment minister, Rebecca Vassarotti. Canberrans know that all the important decisions are made by ministers sitting around the cabinet table. What a shame that the Chief Minister decided not to have anyone there to represent the good people of Yerrabi.

It is worth noting that the Gungahlin Community Council, of which Mr Braddock is a former member, said that the council had taken the drastic step to call for the suspension of government land sales until planning laws are reviewed after “years of lobbying the government about the unclear planning rules”. The council does not mince words. In its submission it says that it has completely lost confidence in the planning system—in other words, the government. Has Mr Braddock also completely lost confidence in his Labor-Greens government because of its ongoing neglect of the electorate?

Before concluding, I draw attention to remarks by Greens leader, Shane Rattenbury, on this issue:

It is evident that there are significant planning challenges in the Gungahlin town centre. The community has repeatedly asked for green space, community facilities and commercial opportunities to build a more viable place to live.

Yes they have, Mr Rattenbury. So why have you not been listening? If the Greens leader is so alert to these issues, what has he been doing about them since he was elected 13 years ago in 2008?

I support Mr Braddock’s motion effectively calling on his own government to end the neglect of Gungahlin. The fact that the member has to move a motion and call, for example, for a single point of contact in his own government to liaise with about issues affecting Gungahlin shows how dire the situation is. The Gungahlin Community Council has completely lost confidence in the government’s planning system and it seemed to me that Mr Braddock’s motion reveals that he has too—completely lost confidence in his own government to pay attention to an area that has been left off the ACT map.

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

That the debate be adjourned.

Mr Hanson: My understanding is that I was going to be allowed to speak.

MADAM SPEAKER: I will put the question. Mr Gentleman has the call.

Mr Gentleman: Madam Speaker, due to the issues that you raised earlier about consideration from the groups across the chamber, I have moved:

That the debate be adjourned.

Question put.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 16

Noes 9

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

Question resolved in the affirmative.

MADAM SPEAKER: The question now is:

That the debate be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

Mr Hanson: Just on that question, Madam Speaker, are we allowed to debate that matter or has that got to be put automatically as well?

MADAM SPEAKER: It is an automatic question. That is my understanding.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Standing orders—suspension

MR HANSON (Murrumbidgee) (4.24): I move:

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent Mr Braddock's motion being called on for debate.

MADAM SPEAKER: It is a question but is it also a reflection on a decision we have just made?

MR HANSON: I did seek advice from the Clerk on that motion and he advised that that was the correct wording.

MADAM SPEAKER: I will accept that advice because I would have asked him the similar question.

The question before us is: is there a suspension of standing orders.

MR HANSON: There is absolutely no reason to adjourn this debate today. The advice that you provided—that there is no standing order that requires us to adjourn this debate—and the reality are that the committee is there to provide the support to

this chamber. This is where we make the decisions. This is where we come forward and we can make those decisions.

What has happened here is not any technical standing order issue because you clarified that, in your words. You clarified that. What has happened here is what we have seen time and again and that is the Greens in the media, out in the community, Braddock the brave, telling us how urgent this matter is, getting fired up in the community, doing all the media, and then coming into this place and getting weak-kneed; coming in here and gets schmoozed by Mr Gentleman. Mr Rattenbury is not going to want any disturbance in the nice little arrangement he has got going with the Labor Party. He has got all the deals. He says, "Look, Andrew, mate, look."

We understand. You are fired up. You have got to keep people engaged in the community. You want your bite in the media. You want to pretend that you care about these matters. In the media, you can say, "I am going to fight the Labor Party. I am going to stand up to the developers."

But what happens is they come in here and what we find out is no, Mr Braddock here is in bed with the Labor Party and the developers. They are going to vote along the way that they want to or adjourn this, and you know that this will never come back. You know that this will not come back to this place or it will be after the land sales have happened or Mr Braddock has been appeased in other ways.

There is no reason that this should be adjourned. Mr Braddock should not be out there in the community saying one thing, saying it in the media, coming in here and then deciding that they are going to hide behind some sort of standing order which you clarified, Madam Speaker. You clarified that there is no standing order that would preclude us debating this matter through to its entirety.

But the Labor Party and the Greens do not want a vote because they know that a vote would be pretty embarrassing, would it not? They do not want that disturbance to the force, this nice little marriage that they have got. So what they will do is continue with the playbook. They have got it better written. I expect that this has been a bit bumpy for them.

What will happen is that Mr Braddock and the others will go out into the community, they will get people fired up and they will get the community excited. "This is a Green that is different. This is a Green that is actually going to support what we say. He will work with the Liberals because he cares about Gungahlin. He will work with the Liberals and get some support to stop the Labor Party steamrolling over the Gungahlin community.

But what happens? He comes in here, just like Ms Le Couteur did, sadly, firing up the Weston Creek Community Council, firing up the Woden Valley Community Council, getting them excited, and coming in here and doing exactly what Mr Rattenbury wants, which is what Mr Barr wants.

We should not be adjourning this debate. There is no reason to, under standing orders. If members want to adjourn the debate or not have the vote, be honest about it. Say,

“I have realised the error of my ways.” Mr Braddock can say, “I do not really stand up for the Gungahlin community. I am not actually really here for them. I thought I would do a bit of grandstanding. It has backfired. I have been kicked in the arse by Mr Rattenbury, been schmoozed by Mr—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, just be very mindful of your language.

MR HANSON: “I have been schmoozed by Mr Gentleman and I know that the best way that we can deal with this is to just adjourn the debate and it will go away and I can go back to the community council and say, ‘Sorry, fellows, I tried my darndest but could not get it through. But I still love you.’”

We will not be fooled. And maybe we will come back. Maybe Ms Castley will come back with her own motion and see how the Greens vote on it next time. Maybe Mr Milligan, who was denied the chance to speak today, will come back with a motion and call your bluff. I commend this motion to suspend standing orders so that we can actually have this debate. Let us have a fulsome debate and let us see which way the Greens vote.

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (4.30): I rise in my capacity as chair of the planning, transport and city services committee. This is a bit difficult for us. This matter came to our attention quite late in the day. We were only able to have a quick discussion about it today in relation to whether or not there was a conflict of interest for us in this motion, given that there is an inquiry on foot. We have been unable to resolve that. As you know, Madam Speaker, we wrote to you to seek your guidance and you also did not have time to consider that—which I can understand. It is all moving quite quickly. There are obviously a number of matters in chain at the moment on the same question.

My committee was of the view at 1.30 pm today that we would either follow the guidance of the Speaker as to whether or not there was a conflict that precluded us voting on this matter, and if we were unable to obtain that guidance, we would prefer to have the debate adjourned until such time as we have been able to obtain that advice. So, on that basis, I would not like to suspend the standing orders because I think it is much better that everybody can get properly briefed on this matter.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong) (4.31): We have just seen a fine performance from the master of confected outrage, the Darth Vader of division, Mr Hanson, going for his next leadership audition here.

Members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members!

Mr Hanson: Madam Speaker, I would argue that Darth Vader is probably accurate, but I am not sure that it is parliamentary.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Rattenbury, you have the floor.

MR RATTENBURY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is tough for Mr Hanson. He is not even in the “Our Team” photo on the front page of the Liberal Party website; so he has got to get up here and give a fine performance.

Mrs Jones: That is not true. Your phone just cannot—

MR RATTENBURY: Have a look at your own website, Mrs Jones, the front page.

Members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members!

MR RATTENBURY: As colourful as Mr Hanson’s speech was, he has drawn a lot of long bows there. The simple fact is that this is a really important issue. Ms Clay has identified a particular problem that has arisen for the committee and there is further discussion to be had on this matter. It is a complicated issue and there is further work going on. I think there are some really good discussions again about the future of Gungahlin. Mr Braddock has raised some really important issues and I look forward to those discussions continuing. The simple adjournment today is to enable those discussions to continue. It is as simple as that.

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (4.33): In the interests of making peace and moving forward, and bearing in mind that the greatest conflict here relates to the three members of the planning committee, I know that, after discussions that our committee has had today, we would be more than happy to leave the chamber and abstain from the vote.

Mr Gentleman: Madam Speaker, a point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: Resume your seat, please, Mr Parton.

Mr Gentleman: Madam Speaker, members cannot, in this chamber, discuss matters that are discussed privately in committee.

Mrs Jones interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mrs Jones, let him finish.

Mr Gentleman: Mr Parton is reflecting directly on a conversation by committee members about a decision they have made. That is out of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: Members, I am going to allow it, but I will say that Mr Hanson has in some ways verbalised my comments. Many people have reflected on the fact that there are no standing orders on a conflict, but because there are no standing orders on a conflict, it does not mean to say that members are not conflicted regarding their role here, in having a debate, and their role as committee members as well.

MR PARTON: Madam Speaker, the very simple offer that I am making here, to move forward, is that I believe that the three members of the planning committee would be happy to leave the chamber and abstain from the vote, in order to allow the debate to continue.

MADAM SPEAKER: That is not the question that is before us. The question that is before us is a motion for the suspension of standing orders.

MS LEE (Kurrajong—Leader of the Opposition) (4.34): Let Canberrans see the circus that Labor and the Greens have made of parliamentary procedure—of abusing parliamentary procedure when it suits them. Mr Braddock brought this motion on, and it calls on the ACT government to, amongst other things, “report to the Assembly by the next sitting day”. It is so urgent that there is a “calls on” in this motion that asks for the ACT government to report by the next day.

We now have a farcical situation where he is voting with his Labor colleagues to adjourn this debate into the never-never. Do not forget that Mr Braddock is also the sponsor of this petition, a petition by the Gungahlin Community Council, which has said that the petition is being brought specifically because urgent action is needed. If this does not cry hypocrisy and make a mockery of what this Labor-Greens government is bringing to this institution, I do not know what is.

MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi) (4.36): Madam Speaker, I believe that I have been misrepresented by Mr Hanson during this debate. For starters, with “Andrew, mate”, I have never been called that by the Chief Minister or any other member of this government. I would also like to stress—

Members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members, please.

MR BRADDOCK: Excuse me.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Braddock, are you speaking to the suspension of standing orders?

MR BRADDOCK: I have supported the adjournment of this debate because we have started to have fruitful discussions, on notice, and I want to see those continue. I am still having those discussions and they will continue, and I look forward to those coming to fruition and being able to present something.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: I remind you, Mr Hanson, that you are on a warning.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, you are on a warning.

MR BRADDOCK: I have also, like many members here, sponsored a petition in this place. Sometimes they accord with my views; sometimes they do not. I do not say that the GCC one does not accord with my view, but I fully support their voice being heard in this Assembly, and that is why I brought forward this motion for consideration. It has brought the attention of this Assembly to this issue and we are starting to have very fruitful discussions on it. I think that is very valuable and it should be continued.

MR DAVIS (Brindabella) (4.37): I found this debate to be really useful. I think that Canberrans will find it really useful as well. What we have seen today is the kind of government that Canberrans are smart enough to understand—the kind of two-party government with two separate parties, with two separate identities, that sometimes have different policy emphases or can take different views on a different issue and—

Ms Lee interjecting—

MR DAVIS: I am not finished, Ms Lee—and will then bring that debate into the Assembly—

Mr Hanson: Madam Speaker, on a point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: Resume your seat.

Mr Hanson: On a point of order, a contribution to a debate on the suspension of standing orders must debate the issue of suspension, not a broader narrative about the merits of a Greens-Labor government.

Mr Rattenbury: That didn't stop you, Mr Hanson. You gave it everything.

Mr Hanson: No-one called a point of order, did they? They chose not to. I am taking a point of order. He needs to be directly relevant to the suspension of standing orders.

Mr Rattenbury: On the point of order, Madam Speaker, Mr Hanson ranged very widely in his comments. He offered a complete commentary on anybody in the chamber and—

Members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members, can I remind everyone that there has been lots of noise, and lots of flowery, descriptive language used about members in this place. I remind everybody that if someone is on their feet, everyone else should remain seated and remain quiet and peaceful. Mr Davis, you have the floor.

MR DAVIS: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Where was I? Reflecting on this motion, what we have seen is a mature, adult, smart, two-party government that the people of Canberra, in their overwhelming majority, elected, bringing a disagreement on policy into this place, and having that conversation in a transparent way, so that it is accountable.

Mrs Jones: It is not transparent.

MR DAVIS: It can't be more transparent with all of the cameras in here, Mrs Jones. It could not be more transparent than that. Everybody in Canberra gets to see this debate. Instead of genuinely reflecting on the contributions by Ms Clay on the compromised position that the planning committee find themselves in, we see the Canberra Liberals doing what the Canberra Liberals are uniquely good at and have become experts in, as the nation's longest-serving opposition—being oppositional for opposition's sake.

There will always be a conversation that 25 members in this room will have with our constituents in the broader Canberra community about what multiparty governments look like—power-sharing governments, two distinct parties with a publicly available, transparent contractual agreement on how they will govern, and about them having the occasional disagreement. They choose to respect the electorate, to bring that debate into the chamber and to have that debate in an open and transparent way.

Ms Lee: That's the point. We're not having a debate. You didn't have the debate.

MR DAVIS: I am so glad that you bring me to that point. We find that three of our 25 would be disenfranchised from participation and voting in that debate, based on an addition from Mr Parton earlier, simply because they hold other important responsibilities within this parliament and to the people of Canberra by virtue of their position on the planning committee.

The idea that, in order to grandstand, this Canberra Liberals opposition would be prepared to disenfranchise those three members of the planning committee in order to extend the debate—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Davis, the time for the debate has expired.

Question resolved in the negative.

Adjournment

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

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Multicultural affairs—peace pole Ahmadiyya mosque

MRS JONES (Murrumbidgee) (4.41): On 21 March, the Governor-General and Mrs Hurley, along with many representatives of faith and cultural communities, unveiled the peace pole at Nara Park. What a wonderful occasion displaying a desire for worldwide peace. Well done to everyone involved.

Peace poles are monuments which feature the universal peace message “May Peace Prevail on Earth”. The first peace pole was developed by a Japanese man, Masahisa Goi, in 1955, and there are now over 250,000 peace poles scattered around the earth.

As part of the Rotary 100 Down Under Centenary, the Rotary Club of Canberra Burley Griffin proposed to see 100 schools receive a peace pole donated by their local Rotary Club. This was an extension of the work undertaken with the Canberra Rotary peace bell. The idea was inspired by the Warsaw World Peace Bell, where peace poles are also distributed to schools and communities.

To date, 125 poles have been reserved by Rotary clubs, with peace pole 100 being placed in Lennox Gardens, Canberra on Sunday, 21 March 2021. Each school or park where the peace poles have been located is invited to participate in World Peace Day ceremonies on 21 September each year by holding a short ceremony at their peace pole. The pole features the words, “May Peace Prevail on Earth,” in 15 languages.

The Canberra Multicultural Community Forum—CMCF Inc—are the recognised peak body representing more than 110 ethnic and associated community organisations in the ACT and surrounding region. They were established in December 2005 as a unified voice and a single peak body to promote the common interests and articulate the purpose and direction of the multicultural community in the ACT. The forum is established to act as the multicultural voice here. We acknowledge the support of the Multicultural Hub for the event and the great work of the Rotary clubs of Canberra.

On 21 March I also attended the laying of the foundation stone of the Ahmadiyya mosque in Narrabundah. It was my pleasure to speak at this event. This will be an event that is remembered by many religious Canberrans for many years to come. Religious freedom is the basis of our society, and I support places of worship where people desire to teach their children their faith.

The community were very proud of getting this mosque established in Canberra, since they are a particularly targeted group in some other countries and, in some places, they are not as free to worship.

The new mosque is called “house of guide”—“Baitul Hadi”, and will be built on Narupai Street near the Narrabundah Ballpark. The community bought the site in 2018 and submitted designs in 2019. We absolutely welcome this facility to our community, and I look forward to celebrating many times at the mosque as the building works continue, and once it is open for worship.

Mr John Marshall—tribute

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) (4.45): Mr Assistant Speaker, earlier this year, our city and community lost a Canberra icon in John Marshall, who you might know better as Mr Frugii, or Canberra’s own Willy Wonka. It is an honour today to share exactly what made him so special and the legacy that he leaves for

Canberra. My thanks to Serina, Gary, Michelle, Kaet, Evangeline, Susan, and especially Ed and Leon, for providing me with memories to share today.

John was born on 16 September 1958 in a small town called Wednesbury in the West Midlands. Something we all know to be true of him is that he would never, ever settle with being mediocre. In every aspect of his life, he was driven and he was determined.

Canberrans know him best as an extraordinary dessert maker, but he had many interests. He was passionate about kung fu in his early years, winning 76 of his 78 bouts. He loved the water. He fished for fun and competitively, whether in the UK's rivers and canals or internationally, and he was an expert diver. He caught and swam with great white sharks.

He simply loved technology, training himself and then becoming a renowned expert. It was this expertise that resulted in him being headhunted to Australia and continuing his IT career, first in Melbourne, then South Africa, then on to Brisbane, and finally settling in Canberra. But John never rested.

Like many Canberrans, I stumbled across John at a market. It is hard to remember exactly where, because he was a mainstay and constantly sought out. Whether it was at Handmade, the Old Bus Depot Markets, the centenary celebrations or the farmers market at EPIC, you could not miss the Frugii ice cream stall because there was always a crowd. John was always in full flight—talking, encouraging, “Hello darling,” and always obliging with taste after taste.

It was not just an ice cream stall. What made it fun was that there was always a new flavour on offer. But we kept coming back because of the quality of and care that he took with the product—the texture, the taste and the flavour. He made his own chocolate for his chocolate ice cream, and pavlovas for the Christmas-time ice cream special.

We kept coming back because of John. He shared so much of himself, readily answering questions and always reaching out, asking how we were. He was never too shy with his flavours and he readily encouraged suggestions before making them a reality—laksa, roast potato, durian, Vegemite and toast, beer, Christmas pudding, hot cross bun, and black truffle.

In 2015 Frugii transformed from a market stall to a permanent dessert laboratory in Braddon. It quickly settled as a must see, must do, must experience for locals and tourists alike. Not only were there the usual eclectic mixes of ice creams and sorbets, and always with salted caramel on offer; there were choux with pipettes, New York cheesecakes, and his own delectable version of paddle-pops.

This new permanent home was a truly family affair. John's wife, Ed, and son, Leon, had been regulars, assisting at his many market appearances, but this took it to a new level. How lucky we are to have been gifted with not only knowing John but the joyous engagement with Ed and Leon, who he mentored.

Everyone has their own Frugii story, whether it was the delight that bloggers took in meeting him and experiencing his passion, or families visiting him to mark a special occasion. He made people happy. He made families happy. He delighted and inspired. But it was always about more than the ice cream and the desserts. It was about the conversation and the friendship, the passion and the engagement, the kindness, and especially the generosity.

John was supportive and caring. He was a great friend, always. One friend described how she told John she was having her wisdom teeth out. In response, John did not just tell her that clove oil was a natural dental anaesthetic; he made her a special clove oil ice cream to help with recovery. For me, in the weeks before his death, he reached out about my broken ankle. He offered suggestions to increase my mobility, and offered support in his usual witty way. I did not realise that they would be our last conversations.

John leaves behind a legacy: an instigator of and then so firmly part of the Canberra food and food tourism scene; a boldness, experimentation, excitement and determination, but always firmly grounded in what mattered the most—community, friends and family. We have been so lucky to know and experience John’s creations, but we have been so lucky to know and experience John. We miss him dearly.

Mrs Margaret Reid, AO—commemoration

MS LEE (Kurrajong—Leader of the Opposition) (4.50): I rise today to commemorate 40 years since the election of Margaret Reid as representative for the ACT in the Australian Senate.

As a young law student at the University of Adelaide, Margaret joined the Liberal Party and went on to become the first female president of the Australian Liberal Students Federation. After a long and successful career as a barrister, Margaret was elected on 5 May 1981 to the Australian Senate to represent the people of the Australian Capital Territory.

Margaret witnessed some extraordinary events during her time in parliament, not just in Canberra but in our nation more broadly and across the world. There was the introduction of personal computers and the internet; the AIDS epidemic; the Chernobyl disaster and the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union; Nelson Mandela’s walk to freedom; and 9/11 and the Bali bombings. Closer to home, there was the Port Arthur massacre and the subsequent gun control debate, and the Mabo and Wik land rights decisions.

During her 22 years as a senator, Margaret championed many issues that affect the people of Canberra, most notably self-government.

Margaret was a trailblazer for women in politics. She served as the first woman President of the Senate, and it is with some dismay—but it is also an extraordinary testament to her enormous achievements—that I say that to this day she remains the only woman since Federation to hold this position. As president, she is remembered

for her dignity and integrity and for the support and assistance that she extended to parliamentary institutions in developing countries, especially in the South Pacific.

Margaret has received many awards and acknowledgements over the years, including the Queen Elizabeth II Silver Jubilee Medal in 1977 and the Order of Australia in 2004 for her service to the Australian Parliament and the ACT community.

Despite her seniority in parliament, she remained an active local member and knew many Canberrans by name. She was respected by the electorate and her parliamentary colleagues for her personal values, generosity of spirit and commitment to our city and our country.

A little closer to my heart, I am personally very grateful for the ongoing support that Margaret has given and continues to give to me—words of wisdom, good counsel, an extraordinary sense of community and a wicked sense of humour. I was very privileged to have Margaret speak at my campaign launch last year. Every single person at that event was blown away by Margaret’s warmth and steadfast support for my candidacy and also her extraordinary ability to essentially memorise my CV in delivering a speech with no notes, to show her support.

When Mia was born, Margaret gifted her a collection of classic Australian children’s books, including the beloved *Possum Magic*. These books hold a very special place in Mia’s bookcase and will for years to come. Thank you, Margaret, for helping instil in my daughter the love of knowledge, the love of learning and the love of classic Australian literature.

It truly was a great loss to the ACT and to the Australian Senate when Margaret left parliament in 2003. In one of her last speeches to the Senate, she detailed the devastating events of the 2003 Canberra bushfires and recounted with pride the courageous and resilient response of the Canberra community.

Beyond politics, Margaret continues to be a fierce advocate for the aged care sector, serving for many years as the patron for Goodwin, whilst also being active with dozens of other community organisations in Canberra. Margaret once said, “A lot of the things you do are small, but they all mean something to somebody.” That is advice that resonates deeply with me and will stay with me for a long time.

Today, on behalf of the Canberra Liberals, I congratulate Margaret on 40 years since her election and thank her for her continued friendship, leadership and support and ongoing contribution to our city, our Canberra.

Environment—fossil fuel non-proliferation treaty

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (4.55): Today I tabled a motion calling on this Assembly to support a fossil fuel non-proliferation treaty. This is part of a global movement calling for the treaty. It is a treaty that would stop the proliferation of fossil fuels by stopping their supply. It is modelled on a successful antinuclear weapons movement.

Fifty years ago, in the peak age of nuclear weapons, we did not hesitate. We spotted doom on the horizon. We knew we were about to destroy ourselves and take much of the planet with us. People from around the world got together and called for a nuclear non-proliferation treaty. Within three years, it was in place. Only four countries have acquired nuclear weapons since that treaty came in. We have avoided a global nuclear war. The treaty worked.

We are facing another apocalypse now. We are in the age of climate change. People made it happen, and people can stop it, but we will succeed only if we act together with speed. There is a growing movement that knows it is time for a fossil fuel non-proliferation treaty, a treaty modelled on the successful antinuclear treaty which only took three years from start to finish to set up all around the world.

A fossil fuel non-proliferation treaty fills a vital gap. It tackles the supply side of fossil fuel. This is an aspect of climate policy that has been left out of the Paris agreement. The Paris agreement makes no mention of coal, oil or gas, to the joy of the fossil fuel lobby and to the despair of environmentalists and rational people everywhere. We cannot simply wait for businesses and governments to wind down business models that have delivered profits for years. We need to give them a push. We have to deal with the supply side of fossil fuel if we are going to tackle climate change.

Here in the ACT we have done a lot to phase out the use of fossil fuels. The Greens campaigned on 100 per cent renewable electricity for years. I remember hearing about it at a climate rally in 2010, when Caroline Le Couteur told us that we would have 100 per cent renewables by 2020. I am embarrassed to say that I did not believe Caroline. It sounded too big, too far ahead of what the federal government said was possible, too much of a crazy Greens idea.

But here we are. We have made it. I am really proud to be part of a government that brought in 100 per cent renewables. Now we are working towards energy efficient buildings. We are changing our gas to electricity. We are trying to reduce our transport emissions. All of these steps tackle the demand for fossil fuel. None deals with the supply. We need to look at the whole picture.

We do not have a coal mine or a gas mine to close down in the ACT. You can bet that if we did, a few of my mates would be locked onto it right now. But there is still a lot of fossil fuel production in Australia. We have a federal government that is funding a gas-led recovery. We are part of an international system that actively supports fossil fuel. We should do what we can and call for a treaty that stops this madness.

We may be the first Australian jurisdiction to join this movement—we may be the first state or territory in the world to do so—but we will not be acting alone. Several major cities have called for a treaty. Los Angeles became the first US city to endorse the call a few weeks ago. Vancouver's resolution passed late last year. Barcelona followed earlier this year. A New York resolution has been tabled. Over 101 Nobel laureates, including the Dalai Lama, have signed an open letter calling for the treaty. That letter was sent to the heads of state in the lead-up to President Biden's recent

climate summit. Australia went to that summit. The best you can say for our contribution is that we showed up. Let us call on our federal government and all our state and territory counterparts to do better.

My daughter is seven years old. She has never experienced a normal climate and she never will. By the time she is my age, Canberra will not have a winter anymore. I will be joining my daughter at the next School Strike 4 Climate on 21 May in Glebe Park. I am expecting it to be another extremely upsetting day, another day when we listen to thousands of children who are literally begging their leaders for their lives. We are those leaders. We need to listen.

Wombats—mange

DR PATERSON (Murrumbidgee) (4.59): I wish to bring to the attention of this Assembly the challenges faced by our wombat population in the ACT, in particular the issue of mange, which presents a major threat. We are lucky, living in the bush capital, to have frequent encounters with many of Australia's unique and iconic native flora and fauna, of which the kangaroo is undoubtedly the most common.

Less frequently, but occasionally, we are reminded of our wombat population. Because we do not see wombats all the time, the issues they face are often invisible to us. Mange is perhaps the single largest issue facing the wombat population in the ACT and surrounding areas. Sarcoptic mange is a highly infectious disease that transfers between many kinds of animals, including humans.

The female mite burrows her way through the skin of wombats and leaves behind a trail of eggs, to which the host has an allergic reaction. The allergic reaction causes the wombat to scratch, resulting in open wounds on the wombat's skin, which often become infected, particularly in the warmer months. As time passes, a thick skin plaque grows across the wombat's body like a crust. The crust will often grow over the eyes and ears of the wombat, causing blindness and deafness. Once a wombat has mange, it is dying.

Treatment of this disease is difficult. In Canberra there are organisations doing fantastic work to help our furry friends. I had the pleasure of catching up recently with Yolandi Vermaak, the founder of Wombat Rescue. Yolandi is tackling the issue by raising greater public awareness and through the mange treatment programs that she runs. If the community is not aware of the issue, then wombats with mange will go unreported and untreated.

The second part of the battle that Yolandi is tackling is treatment. Late last year, in an interview with ABC Radio, Yolandi reported that an estimated 70 per cent of the bare-nosed wombat population across the ACT and New South Wales has been impacted. Trying to treat such a significant proportion of the population is tough. The treatment for mange is long term, a year or longer, and labour and resource intensive. After finding the burrows of wombats, a flap is installed at the entrance. When a wombat walks through the flap, the treatment is directly distributed onto the animal and begins taking effect.

So what can we, as members of the community and members of this Assembly, do to help our wombats fight off this disease? There are a few options. If you see a wombat that looks infected or unwell, you can contact Wombat Rescue or ACT Wildlife to inform them of the location and the health of the animal. You can even send a photo from your phone with a pin dropped at the location that you saw her or him. If nobody knows that there is a wombat suffering, no-one can do anything about it.

Another option is engaging in the treatment process itself. Both Wombat Rescue and ACT Wildlife have excellent programs that members of the community can join, whereby the organisation will provide you with a method of treatment and necessary resources. Members of our community can also donate to Wombat Rescue. This is a great option for those who want to help out, but do not necessarily come across wombats very often, if at all.

A big part of the battle for Wombat Rescue and ACT Wildlife is getting the resources they need to continue their work and help as many wombats as they possibly can. Treating mange in our wombat population is a tough battle but, as a community, we can work together to help combat it and support the efforts of volunteers who are working hard to ensure a healthy wombat population in the ACT.

Jonty Duvall—parliamentary representation

MS CASTLEY (Yerrabi) (5.04): I rise today to congratulate a very young member of my electorate. His name is Jonty Duvall. He lives in Ngunnawal and he goes to Mother Teresa School. Not long ago he was given an assignment on “Who represents me?” Jonty’s dad contacted me—we are good friends—and Jonty came into my office. He was dressed up to the nines; he had a tie and a shirt and just looked fabulous.

He had some of the most wonderful questions on how the ACT Assembly runs and works. The attendants were kind enough to bring us into the chamber. He knew what the books were for and he was checking out the seats. I was so impressed at his interest in the Assembly. It was wonderful. I received a message from Jonty’s dad the other day to let me know that he received a class award for an outstanding job on his assignment. So congratulations, Jonty, and thank you for coming in to see me.

International Compost Awareness Week

MS VASSAROTTI (Kurrajong) (5.05): I rise today to speak about the importance of composting. Last week it was my very great pleasure to launch the 2021-22 community garden grant round at the Good Shepherd Community Church garden in Chisholm. The day of the launch coincided with the first day of International Composting Awareness Week. As members may be aware, composting has many benefits for the environment, including enriching the soil, reducing the need for chemical fertilisers and reducing greenhouse gas emissions and the amount of waste going to landfill. Many gardens, including the one I visited, have composting systems that support not only the garden but provide a place for the wider community to engage in sustainable waste disposal and emissions reduction. The compost I saw was bright, rich and full of worms and is no doubt of great benefit to the soil that it is nourishing.

According to International Compost Awareness Week Australia, approximately 50 per cent of the rubbish that we put into our mixed waste bin could be used in our gardens as compost or mulch. Approximately 33 per cent of this rubbish is food organics, including peelings, and about 10 per cent is garden vegetation. This material, when buried anaerobically—without air—in landfill, causes over three per cent of Australia's total greenhouse gas emissions each year through the production of methane gas which, as members may know, has 25 times the global warming potential of carbon dioxide.

I encourage all members in this place to think about what goes into their bins—fruit and vegetable scraps, tea leaves and coffee grounds, eggshells, bread, human and animal hair, vacuum dust. All of these can go into the compost, along with grass clippings, weeds and dead flowers. There is no need for any of them to be disposed of as rubbish.

Composting can take many forms. Waste collected in kitchen caddies may be collected. The government is exploring options to deliver a food organics and garden organics service—a FOGO service—to households by 2023. Some people direct-compost by burying vegetable matter in the ground, whereas others use a compost bin or tumbler. You can also build a compost heap or create a worm farm in your garden. This last one is a great way to get the kids involved.

Composting also assists people to grow some of their own fruit and vegetables, something over 4.7 million households in Australia are doing. If you do not have a garden, there are many community gardens, including school and bush tucker gardens, that could benefit from your waste or you could contact some of our local waste services social enterprises that offer kerbside collection and composting services in Canberra.

I am really excited that urban agriculture falls under my portfolio and I look forward to progressing our commitments in the parliamentary and governing agreement to establish initiatives such as the Canberra region food collaborative, and to look at the Residential Tenancies Act to create a presumption that landlords can permit renters to compost and grow food.

I will finish by sharing some of the top benefits of composting: it reduces household waste to landfill; it helps reduce greenhouse gas emissions; it creates nutrient-rich material for garden soil; it deters plant diseases and garden pests; it helps the soil to retain moisture so that less watering is needed; and it also increases biodiversity.

Composting is fun, and it is very satisfying to see and use the fruits of your labour. Composting is one small thing we can do to help the environment. I encourage all members to explore the options that will work for them and give it a go. It takes about three to four months for compost to be ready to use. Composting in the Canberra region over winter may take a little bit longer, but a healthy, active heat will stay warm even in the coldest winter, so do not be deterred. Stop wasting your waste and get composting.

Standing orders—suspension

Motion by **Mrs Jones** agreed to with the concurrence of an absolute majority:

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent the adjournment debate continuing for a further 15 minutes.

Motion agreed to.

ME/CFS Awareness Week

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Families and Community Services and Minister for Health) (5.10): I rise to acknowledge that this is Myalgic Encephalomyelitis and Chronic Fatigue Syndrome Awareness Week. The awareness week started on Saturday, 8 May 2021 and tomorrow, Wednesday, 12 May, is recognised as International ME/CFS Awareness Day. ME/CFS is an invisible illness and a debilitating neurological condition. It is characterised by profound fatigue that is not relieved by sleep or rest following exertion and cognitive impairment. ME/CFS does not stop at fatigue; it also affects multiple areas of the body, including the gastrointestinal system, muscles and joints, causing pain and impairing immunity.

ME/CFS is characterised and can range from mild to very severe. A mild form of ME/CFS reduces a person's activity by 50 per cent or more. A very severe form may leave a person living with ME/CFS bedbound and needing help with all the aspects of their daily life. People living with ME/CFS may be unable to work, go for a walk or leave their house or bed for large parts of their day, if at all. ME/CFS can even impact whether a person can brush their teeth or do as much as read a sentence.

Unfortunately, the reason people develop ME/CFS is still unknown and it can affect anyone of any gender, age or background. The true scale of how many people live with ME/CFS remains unknown due to the complex nature of the condition. Emerge Australia, the national organisation supporting people living with ME/CFS, estimates that up to 250,000 people are currently living with ME/CFS in Australia, with an estimated prevalence of 0.4 to one per cent of the population. Based on the current estimated prevalence rates, that means up to 4,300 Canberrans may be living with ME/CFS in our community.

There is currently no cure, with symptom management being the only treatment to optimise the quality of life for those living with the illness. One strategy people may use is pacing—that is, undertaking activities in a stepped and staged approach to ensure that rest is optimised and energy is maintained for those things that are the highest priority.

For those who are not familiar with the condition—and sadly I am because my nephew has ME/CFS and I also have friends with the condition—I urge you to check out Jennifer Brea's Sundance award-winning documentary *Unrest*, if you can get a copy of it. *Unrest* is a personal journey from patient to advocate to storyteller.

Jennifer is 28 years old, working on her PhD at Harvard and months away from marrying the love of her life when a mysterious fever leaves her bedridden. When doctors tell her that it is all in her head, she picks up her camera as an act of defiance and brings us into a hidden world of millions that medicine has abandoned. This is a moving and powerful documentary and an insight into the lives of people who are too often invisible in our community.

The reason 12 May, which is also International Nurses Day, is International ME/CFS Awareness Day is because Florence Nightingale, who was born on 12 May, was thought to have lived with a very severe form of ME/CFS in the later years of her life. I make this speech today to bring to the awareness of members of the Assembly and the community this crippling condition, its prevalence in our community and the importance of taking it seriously. It is not in people's heads; it is real, and we need to keep our focus on it.

Planning—Kippax group centre flooding potential

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (5.14): I rise this evening to talk about the ongoing saga of the Kippax shopping centre. What a sorry state of affairs this Labor-Greens government has let this become.

The expression of interest to purchase the parcel of land on Holt playing fields is due to be released this month, some eight years after the government began its so-called community engagement on what the people of west Belconnen want for their local shopping centre. Over that time, the government has continuously ignored many in the community who are concerned about building on the oval and taking away a valued green space. For me, this highlights the inherent problems underlying the Labor-Greens government's 70 per cent infill agenda and calls into question their green credentials. It is a bit of an oxymoron, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Because this is a really bad piece of decision-making, there is a cloud hanging over the whole thing. The *Canberra Times* reported on this situation over the weekend:

A report that warned of heightened flood risks at a major West Belconnen shopping centre was kept secret until after the ACT government allowed more residential and commercial development of the area.

The secret report in question is an updated version of a report produced in 2015 which identified the need to undertake significant works to address flood risks whether or not the Kippax shopping centre was expanded onto the oval. The revised report, which is dated 15 July 2020, reiterates the need to undertake a range of flood mitigations, which the *Canberra Times* reports would cost close to \$2 million.

Six years on, the Labor-Greens government has done nothing with the flood mitigation recommendations and instead forged ahead with a variation to the Territory Plan enabling construction on the floodplain.

The government will say that they will include requirements in the sale of the Holt playing fields for any organisation building on the site to implement the necessary

flood mitigations. A major concern expressed to me by local residents is the likelihood that high density housing will be constructed on the playing fields and that after a major flood the people footing the bill will be the residents.

I am not making these predictions lightly, Mr Deputy Speaker. I regularly get emails and phone calls from Canberrans at their wits' end about houses or apartments with serious building defects and with limited options, short of costly legal proceedings, to have their homes made liveable and safe.

The Labor-Greens government have overseen an epidemic of failure in building quality in Canberra over the last decade. It has been made much worse by their high-density housing agenda. In 2009 the *Canberra Times* reported on economic analysis commissioned by the CFMEU which found that it would cost over \$260 million to fix structural and safety defects in apartment buildings all over Canberra. The ABC reported late last year that an apartment building in Macquarie had such severe defects that it would be likely to completely and rapidly collapse in the event of a fire.

In the face of this widespread problem in Canberra, an Assembly committee inquiry conducted into building quality concluded in its report delivered last year that Canberra should have an independent building commissioner to ensure compliance with building standards and codes. The Labor-Greens government said no.

The parallels with Kippax are obvious. The community has a lack of confidence that any flood mitigation caveats put in place by the government will be adequate or enforced. In an ironic twist, the 2020 version of the flood report identifies the existing car parks to the east of Hardwick Crescent as ideal areas for development because they experience at worst only minor flooding.

While this saga drags on, the people of west Belconnen are being left behind. Belconnen is a wonderful place to live. I am proud to call it home. The people of Belconnen are sick of being ignored by this Labor-Greens government. For once, the people of west Belconnen would like to be taken seriously.

Women—health services

MS DAVIDSON (Murrumbidgee) (5.19): I wish to speak today in celebration of the 30th birthday of Women's Health Matters, formerly known as the Women's Centre for Health Matters, who have never forgotten where they came from.

They first became a funded service in 1991, working within a feminist framework. Dorothy Broom, at the opening of what was then called the Canberra Women's Health Centre, at 3 Dundas Court in Phillip, said at their opening:

... our health needs as women can never be restricted to "complaints and conditions unique to women" ... it is revolutionary when we move to reintegrate the fragmented parts, and to devise ways of placing ourselves back in the healing relationship as responsible agents ...

They were the first feminist women's health service in Australia to be funded under what was then the National Women's Health Policy. They have demonstrated a remarkable ability to keep building on what has come before, and that is what makes them who they are today.

Their 2009 and 2016 surveys into ACT women's health built on Professor Dorothy Broom's 1996 survey about what women value about women's health centres. We saw this again in their 2019 research on why women value the ACT Women's Health Service. Their work, their research and their reports have been a valuable resource for community advocates to quote in submissions and to help policymakers understand what is needed for Canberra women.

They have demonstrated again this ability to continue to work on the issues that still matter to us, but to evolve those ideas and the way we talk about them to move with the community conversation. For example, their Reclaim the Night involvement extended into supporting the Summer of Respect. Their work on abortion law reform moved into work for exclusion zones around clinics and now making sure that services are accessible. Their "Invisible bars: the stories behind the stats" report was followed up 10 years later with the *Stories of ACT women in prison*, 10 years after the opening of AMC.

They have always advocated for an understanding of the social determinants of women's health: income, housing, and experience of violence, for example. Their work is intersectional. It always includes the voices and experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women with disabilities, culturally diverse women, and women in the LGBTIQ community. One of my favourites is their Women of Canberra project. It celebrates women's diversity of experiences and what we love about being women in this city.

Their name has changed over the years from the Canberra Women's Health Centre to the Women's Centre for Health Matters to Women's Health Matters, but everything has always been centred around women's experiences, women's health and working within a feminist framework. Today, I want to say thank you for your work, for understanding and celebrating women's lives, and for always understanding that women's health matters. Happy birthday.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 5.23 pm.