



Debates

WEEKLY HANSARD

Legislative Assembly for the ACT

TENTH ASSEMBLY

12 MAY 2021

www.hansard.act.gov.au

Wednesday, 12 May 2021

Petitions: Planning—Giralang shops—petitions 1-21 and 4-21 (Ministerial response).....	1321
Motion to take note of petitions	1323
COVID-19—economy (Ministerial statement)	1323
Health—nurses and midwives (Ministerial statement).....	1333
Transport—recovery plan (Ministerial statement).....	1339
Business—Better Regulation Taskforce (Ministerial statement)	1348
Personal explanation	1353
Civil Law (Wrongs) Amendment Bill 2021	1354
Questions without notice:	
Government—business support.....	1357
Molonglo Valley—community facilities.....	1357
Planning—entertainment precincts.....	1359
Trees—removal	1360
Transport—COVID-19.....	1361
Roads—Boboyan Road	1363
Municipal services—cyclepaths	1364
Planning—green waste	1365
Health—nurse-led walk-in centres	1367
Building—proposed developer licensing scheme	1368
Roads—traffic management	1369
Energy—Zero Carbon Certification Scheme	1370
Parking—delivery vehicles.....	1371
Municipal services—tree removal.....	1372
Industrial relations—work safety	1373
Supplementary answer to question without notice:	
Government—business support.....	1374
Papers.....	1375
Education—trans and gender diverse students	1375
Yerrabi electorate—Yerrabi Pond	1388
Revenue Legislation Amendment Bill 2021	1398
Adjournment:	
Multicultural affairs—Sri Lankan new year events	1405
Seniors—scams on the elderly	1406
Arts—COVID-19	1407
Family violence services—funding	1409
Disability—Women with Disabilities ACT	1410
Arts—recent achievements.....	1411
Ginninderra electorate—SMILE nature-based playground.....	1412
Seniors—Silver is Gold Festival	1413
Standing orders—suspension	1414
Adjournment: Environment—swift parrot.....	1414

Wednesday, 12 May 2021

MADAM SPEAKER (Ms Burch) (10.00): Members:

Dhawura nguna, dhawura Ngunnawal.
Yanggu ngalawiri, dhunimanyin Ngunnawalwari dhawurawari.
Nginggada Dindi dhawura Ngunnaawalbun yindjumaralidjinyin.

The words I have just spoken are in the language of the traditional custodians and translate to:

This is Ngunnawal country.
Today we are gathering on Ngunnawal country.
We always pay respect to Elders, female and male, and Ngunnawal country.

Members, I ask you to stand in silence and pray or reflect on our responsibilities to the people of the Australian Capital Territory.

Petitions

Ministerial response

The following response to petitions has been lodged:

Planning—Giralang shops—petitions 1-21 and 4-21

By **Mr Gentleman**, Minister for Planning and Land Management, dated 11 May 2021, in response to petitions lodged by Ms Orr on 9 February and 10 February 2021 concerning the redevelopment of Giralang shops, including attachments.

The response read as follows:

Dear Mr Duncan

Thank you for your letters of 9 and 10 February 2021 providing Petition No. 1-21 and 4-21, lodged by Ms Suzanne Orr MLA, regarding the re-development of Giralang Shops.

I also note that on 3 March 2021, the Planning, Transport, and City Services Standing Committee agreed to inquire into these petitions and intend to hold a public hearing on the 27 May 2021.

I can provide the following background to the development proposal and have also sought, and have provided, a response from the developer.

I approved the re-development proposal for the Giralang Shops on 24 July 2018 (DA201833501). used my ministerial call-in powers to approve the development to try to deliver an outcome for the community and see the shops re-developed in a timely manner. I have provided a copy of this approval for your information.

While I do not have any update on when construction of the development may commence, I can advise that there have been two further applications made to the

independent planning and land authority (the authority) which relate to the original approval.

On 10 July 2020, pursuant to s 188 of the *Planning and Development Act 2007*, the authority granted an extension of time for the development to commence to 24 July 2023. The authority considered an extension of time which would allow the lessee to continue negotiations with prospective tenants to be preferable to letting the development approval lapse, which would have created further delays and greater uncertainty. No further extensions can be granted to this period.

Also, on 3 December 2020, the authority approved subject to conditions, an application to amend the original development approval. I have attached a copy of the Notice of Decision for the approval of the amendments for your information (DA201833501-197D).

The proponent of the re-development, Giralang Property Pty Ltd, has stated that they have so far been unable to secure an anchor supermarket tenant which is integral to the viability of the development. I have attached their update for your information.

I appreciate the frustration at the lack of development at the site and I hope to see the current development approval acted upon in the near future.

I would also like to take this opportunity to update the Assembly on important planning policy work for local centres, which is currently being undertaken by the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (EPSDD). This work is part of the implementation of the ACT Planning Strategy 2018.

The Planning Strategy identified that, while many local centres are thriving, providing an important social function, others are struggling to remain economically viable and integral to their surrounding neighbourhoods. Strategic direction 4.3 of the Strategy is '*Strengthen neighbourhoods and support their diverse character by creating strong local activity hubs*'. Two actions sit under this strategic direction:

4.3.1 Continue to support local community and business capacity by developing place-making approaches to support vital neighbourhoods.

4.3.2 Investigate planning mechanisms to respond to the changing role of local centres and their long-term viability and place within the hierarchy.

These actions have underpinned the current review, which is considering a range of issues associated with the viability of local centres within the well-established commercial centres hierarchy of the ACT, comprising the CBD (Civic), town, group, and local centres.

As part of the review, EPSDD has begun the process to amend the current planning controls for supermarkets at local centres from 1000m² gross floor area (GFA) to a maximum of 1500m² under the Territory Plan to improve the viability and competitiveness of local centres across the ACT. To this end, Draft Territory Plan variation DV381 has been prepared and was released for public consultation on 7 May 2021, with public comments due by 25 June 2021. DV381 was released with interim effect, meaning any development application lodged on or after 7 May is assessed against the proposed provision.

The balance of the local centres review is ongoing. Following completion of a report, further technical work may be required, to inform consideration of any further and necessary variations to the Territory Plan.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Attachment 1	DA201833501 – Notice of Decision
Attachment 2	DA201833501-197D – Notice of Decision
Attachment 3	Response from Giralang Property Pty Ltd, dated 11 March 2021

(Copies of the attachments are available at www.epetitions.act.gov.au).

Motion to take note of petitions

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

That the response so lodged be noted.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

COVID-19—economy Ministerial statement

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism) (10.02): Just over a year ago, the ACT government commenced implementation of our jobs and economic recovery plan, a plan for economic survival and recovery in response to the COVID pandemic, doing so at the same time as we continued our urgent public health response. The success of our jobs and economic recovery plan is evidenced by the territory's current economic position and our recently reaffirmed AAA credit rating.

As I have observed many times, the pandemic has been the greatest challenge our city has faced in our 32 years of self-governing history. It has now been more than a year since Australia's international borders closed and we were faced with what we hope is a once-in-a-century economic and public health crisis. At every stage of the ACT government's economic response to the pandemic we have prioritised the protection and creation of good local jobs and the diversification of our city's economy to ensure that we emerge from this period stronger and more resilient.

As a result of our efforts to date the ACT has the strongest labour market in the country and one of the strongest economies not just here in Australia but globally. Our fiscal position prior to the COVID pandemic and, most importantly, the decisive public health response when the pandemic first reached Australian shores has placed the territory in a better position than most.

The ACT government listened to expert health advice and we reopened our economy sector by sector when it was safe to do so. It is our effective health response to the pandemic that gives every employer and every employee confidence in our steps towards full economic recovery.

Through this period we have invested more than \$1.6 billion—around four per cent of the territory’s gross state product—to support Canberrans and our hardest hit industry sectors whilst bolstering our public healthcare system. The ACT government’s early economic survival measures provided immediate relief in the initial stages of the pandemic. Households and businesses, particularly small businesses, community clubs and tourism and hospitality businesses that were most impacted by those early public health responses benefited from a range of rebates, waivers and deferrals, rates relief and a period of no increase in government fees and charges.

The ACT government’s Jobs for Canberrans fund employed over 550 Canberrans who were left out of the JobSeeker and JobKeeper emergency payments from the commonwealth. We also fast tracked \$45 million worth of job-creating local government infrastructure and maintenance projects across the territory, and this supported more than 2,000 local jobs.

As the public health situation stabilised in the second half of 2020, the government started work on the next phase of our economic response, through the release of the jobs and economic recovery plan. The plan demonstrates the government’s intention to drive strong economic activity and recovery over the next five years and sets an ambitious target for the total territory labour market growing to over 250,000—that is more than 250,000 people in work in the ACT by 2025.

Because we understand that stable, secure employment means more than just affording the groceries or being able to pay the rent or mortgage and that it provides meaning, structure, connection and opportunity in people’s lives, we focused on jobs first. We are working towards our 2025 target, and it will require constant attention and focus to create new employment opportunities for the ACT as they arise.

That is why the government established the Canberra Economic Advisory Group to bring together business leaders, small business representatives, industry experts and public policy experts to advise the government on short- and medium-term opportunities to strengthen and grow the territory economy.

Our delayed 2020-21 ACT budget, which recently passed this chamber, sets out an expanded infrastructure program with significant investments across priority action areas, including responding to climate action, health, transport, education, and training. We are building and expanding schools in Canberra, particularly in growing suburbs, and delivering better health care closer to home with a new network of regional health centres across the city. And just last week the government submitted the development application for our priority infrastructure project—the expansion of Canberra Hospital. This project will create 500 jobs during its construction phase and contribute to our commitment to employ 400 new healthcare professionals in the territory over this term of government.

As members would be aware, we are also getting on with the job of building a city-wide light rail network. Following the overwhelming success of stage 1, the next stage will extend the existing route to Commonwealth Park on its way to Woden. As Minister Steel recently announced, work on this stage is expected to begin before the

end of this year, again helping to contribute to our jobs target by creating thousands of new local jobs through the construction phase.

It is well acknowledged that we are a national leader on climate action. In taking the next steps towards a zero net emissions future we are helping Canberra households to invest in renewable energy upgrades and creating up to 2,000 sustainable jobs through this important ACT government program. As the commonwealth continues to play politics on the very serious issue of climate change, it is reassuring to see state and territory governments moving to fill the void and provide hope for a more sustainable future in this country.

We know some industry sectors have been particularly hard hit by the pandemic. Some received some support last night in the federal budget but others were clearly left out. Our jobs and economic recovery plan prioritises employment growth across key sectors, including retail, tourism and hospitality, construction and housing, and the arts and creative industries, while also strengthening our city's innovative and high-growth industry sectors such as cybersecurity, space, health innovation, advanced manufacturing and, of course, renewable energy. These are the jobs of the future and it is from there that the territory's jobs growth will come over the coming years. We will also ensure that our city is best positioned to compete with jurisdictions around the globe for these jobs.

The ACT faced the early days of the COVID pandemic on the back of a robust economic position driven by strong population growth, low unemployment and a strong pipeline of ongoing investment. The territory has not emerged from this period unscathed, but our quick and effective public health and economic responses meant that today the ACT continues to be one of Australia's strongest economies.

The jobs and economic recovery plan sent a clear message about the ACT government's determination and our decision to invest in Canberra and Canberra's future, giving businesses the confidence to co-invest with us to make investment decisions of their own but, most importantly, to keep employees working.

The latest CommSec *State of the States* report has ranked the territory in second spot overall with the ACT leading the country on relative economic growth, unemployment and retail trade. Economic activity in the ACT in the year to December was 22.1 per cent above the territory's decade-average level. That is quite a remarkable result in the face of a global pandemic.

The report also found retail spending in the ACT was the strongest in Australia and 19.4 per cent above the territory's decade average, reinforcing the importance of supporting households through the pandemic. Through that support, households felt confident to be able to spend in our economy which, in turn, supported the business sector. State final demand grew 1.3 per cent in the December quarter following a 2.4 per cent increase in the September quarter. Pleasingly, that growth was largely driven by a recovery in private sector activity.

The statistics I have mentioned highlight why it was that private consumption rose by 4.2 per cent in the December quarter. What that meant in real terms in the real

economy is that Canberrans spent more at cafes and restaurants and across our recreational and cultural sectors, and domestic tourism meant more money was being spent in our hotel and accommodation sector.

As a result of all of this, the ACT has Australia's strongest job market. The territory's unemployment rate sat at 3.4 per cent as of March, which was significantly below the territory's decade average according to the CommSec report. This recovery is reflected also in our underemployment rate, which in the ACT has been trending down since April last year and was sitting at 4.7 per cent in March this year. That is the lowest rate of all Australian jurisdictions. That is important because it means more people are getting the hours of work they want. That is important in terms of household's incomes. It flows into consumption and it flows into activity for local businesses. That is a virtual circle that reinforces our number one economic objective—that is, is to do everything we can to support the journey back to full employment. We are in an historic position where job vacancies are broadly aligned with those currently seeking employment in the labour market. After last night's budget we can conclude that the Reserve Bank, led by Governor Phil Lowe, having worked very, very hard to provide the economic environment to see full employment reached in this nation is now, at least for the short term, not swimming against the tide of commonwealth fiscal policy. An alignment of monetary policy, interest rate settings and availability of money in our economy with the commonwealth fiscal policy settings being expansionary at this time sees perhaps a once-in-a-generation opportunity to achieve full employment. We are going to get there first in the ACT, given our starting point, but that is a worthy goal for any government.

I am delighted that Treasurer Frydenberg has listened to the advice of the Governor of the Reserve Bank and the Secretary of the Commonwealth Treasury, Steven Kennedy. If the Assembly will indulge me, a small shoutout to Dr Kennedy and his team at commonwealth Treasury—their advice has been excellent and it is good to see commonwealth Treasurer listening to his Treasury.

Turning now to economic development priorities, one of the industries the ACT government will continue to support throughout this recovery period is our city's visitor economy. Domestic tourism is the mainstay of the territory's tourism market. It has been significantly impacted over the past year and, as members would be aware, international tourism has been completely wiped out. One of the key assumptions in last night's budget was that international borders will remain closed well into 2022. With the exception of the New Zealand bubble, which we will focus on in the coming months, our focus for tourism recovery is domestic.

Since our initial measures to support businesses in our most vulnerable sectors, including tourism, during the early stages of the pandemic, we have followed those up by investing in opportunities for tourism businesses to drive demand, to develop new initiatives and create jobs, all with a high level goal of attracting more visitors to our region.

I need to state clearly this morning the government's firm view that tourism is central to the next stages of our economic recovery. A job in our economy is created for every \$152,000 spent by visitors to our city. That is why in September of last year the

government launched the framework for recovery of our visitor economy, accompanied by an action plan with an ambitious goal of growing the total annual domestic visitor spend from \$1.28 billion dollars in September last year, back to \$2½ billion by mid-2022.

To achieve this we have introduced the tourism cooperative marketing fund which provides matched funding to local tourism operators for campaigns that seek to attract visitors to the ACT. I am pleased to advise the Assembly that to date grant funding has been invested across 24 projects in partnership with 87 tourism businesses in our city.

We have also established the COVID-safe tourism co-investment program to support businesses to develop new COVID-safe tourism products and infrastructure that can bring more visitors to Canberra. Again I am pleased to inform the Assembly that the assessment of applications for the first round of funding under this program is now underway. We are also growing visitor numbers and spending through marketing and partnerships with tourism industry partners, including VisitCanberra's More Than campaign.

It is fair to say that—whilst there is always the risk of further COVID outbreaks that impact on travel—this strategy, these sets of investments alongside the relaxation of border restrictions from other states and territories are working for our tourism sector. More people are staying in Canberra. The ACT's commercial accommodation occupancy level in March was 66.9 per cent and its private accommodation occupancy level—that includes providers like Airbnb—was at 69.7 per cent, both well above national levels.

The government has also invested in initiatives to support the recovery of our aviation sector, and we have done so in partnership with the Canberra Airport. Our objective is very straightforward—we want to make it easier and cheaper for people to travel to Canberra. It is pleasing that with the announcement last week of Qantas of a direct flight to Darwin that Canberra is now better connected within Australia than at any point before. We have seen the establishment of new direct routes between Canberra and the Sunshine Coast, Cairns, Hobart, Port Macquarie, Ballina and now Darwin.

I think for the first time in over a decade Canberra has a direct flight to every capital city in the country. We even have competition on some of these routes, which is a pleasing outcome and perhaps somewhat surprising given where domestic aviation was at the peak of the pandemic. I take this opportunity to thank Rex Airlines for stepping up and launching seven daily services—49 flights a week—between Canberra and Sydney, stepping in to provide competition on one of the busier domestic aviation routes out of our city.

Canberra Airport is now operating more than 300 flights a week, around 85 per cent of pre-COVID flight levels. There is still room for further recovery in aviation. It will, of course, be some time before we see frequent international travel. However, we will continue to work with Canberra Airport to establish new routes and re-establish those that were broken by the pandemic. Particularly we have an opportunity in the short-term to develop new trans-Tasman services.

I will be in New Zealand, COVID willing, later this month to engage with my counterparts in Wellington and Auckland, the relevant key industry stakeholders, national and city government colleagues to seek to put a package to the airlines to develop a mutually beneficial transport connection between New Zealand and Canberra. We have made this connection before, and the circumstances are right with an Australian-New Zealand travel bubble and availability of aircraft to be able to do this again. I look forward to undertaking that work and, hopefully, getting a successful outcome and positive response from the aviation industry and my counterparts in New Zealand over the coming weeks and months.

The arts and creative industries are clearly linked to our visitor economy and play an important role in bringing the community together. Minister Cheyne has recently launched the ACT's creative industries plan. The ACT government has partnered with the University of Canberra to position our city as a hub for collaboration in this industry. Those working in the creative sector have undoubtedly felt the devastating impacts of the pandemic, with the cancellation and deferment of pretty much all activity. The government has responded with an increased grants funding to support the sector. Canberra's public and private event organisers and creatives have demonstrated innovation and resilience in adapting exhibitions, performances, and a range of other activities in a COVID-safe manner. Last year's Floriade Reimagined is a great example of such adaptation—how we can turn one of our most cherished tourism and community events into something that further inspired and connected Canberrans whilst ensuring the health and safety of our community.

Clearly, attendance data and flow-on economic benefits were not able to be tracked in 2020 in the same way as the past, due to the changed format. We know the significance of this event at this time of year for our city. Floriade 2019 attracted a record 507,550 people through the turnstiles at Commonwealth Park, providing an estimated \$44.7 million in economic expenditure in our economy that supported jobs, fuelled local tourism, hospitality and retail businesses. As I have mentioned publicly more than a few times, planning for this year's Floriade is well underway. We look forward to seeing this premier tourism event returning to Commonwealth Park whilst also retaining many of the very popular elements of the community planting program from 2020.

The ACT's track record of managing the pandemic has enabled us to step up and support elite sporting events. Indeed, were it not for Canberra and our investment in Manuka Oval, including those lights, we would not have been in a position to have rescued the Big Bash and a number of international fixtures. Canberra staged more professional cricket matches over the summer of 2020-21 than at any time in our city's history.

I observed at the time that we did not need further reinforcement of what a good investment our investment in Manuka Oval has been. But, if you absolutely wanted proof of it, it is now the reality that our city is able to host these sorts of national and international events, and Canberra is no longer excluded from our nation's greatest summer sporting passion, being cricket. Even those who are a little bit less supportive of AFL begrudgingly acknowledge that the symbolic and symbiotic relationship

between those sports using the same sorts of sporting infrastructure means that investment has paid significant dividends for the territory not only in an economic sense but also in a social and cultural sense. It was a good investment then; it is an even better investment now, and it will be fantastic for Canberra's future.

Turning now to the government's priority investment program and the future jobs fund, one of the government's key economic development priorities has been to attract investment, increase jobs and, importantly, to encourage collaboration across key industries. The priority investment program was established in 2018 with these goals in mind.

In response to the pandemic the program's 2020-21 funding round has focused on supporting projects that contribute to the city's economic recovery and increase jobs in our emerging growth sectors, particularly tertiary education and research have been wilfully overlooked by the commonwealth. Clearly the universities have done something to offend the Morrison government over the years, and that played out in—

Ms Stephen-Smith: All coalition governments.

MR BARR: Yes, and that played out again last night. When you are splashing \$100 billion deficits around and there is nothing for the university sector—the largest service export sector in our nation, and one of the largest employers—it tells you that something is broken. We will step in. We do not have the budget of the commonwealth, but through this program we are focused on supporting tertiary education and research in our city. The program's current funding round resulted in six shortlisted projects from 22 expressions of interest. An independent panel has assessed the shortlisted projects, and I will be making some announcements on successful applicants over the coming weeks.

The government has also established the Future Jobs Fund to further support economic growth and recovery, with a focus, again, on higher education and research and on creating jobs in high-growth industries through a combination of grants, loans and government investment. This new funding, which was passed by the Assembly last month, will prioritise projects that protect the jobs we have and create new jobs in our universities and in the private sector.

As members would be aware, cybersecurity and space are among our city's high-growth sectors. Last month we established the Canberra Cyber Hub to position Canberra as Australia's cyber capital. The hub will grow the ACT's cybersecurity education pathways, accelerate small-to-medium enterprises, and promote our city's research and cybersecurity capabilities.

In the space sector, we will be working closely with the South Australian and Northern Territory governments on the implementation of the MOU that I signed with then Premier Weatherill and Chief Minister Gunner. I met with South Australia's Premier, Steven Marshall, in Adelaide last week, and we reaffirmed our commitment to the delivery of the MOU and, indeed, opportunities for further partnership.

Premier Marshall is undertaking a very significant urban renewal project, called Lot Fourteen, on the old Royal Adelaide Hospital site, on the edge of their CBD. That is also home to the Australian Space Agency. I was able to meet with a team of Canberrans from Questacon who are involved in setting up the space discovery centre there. Whilst we are perhaps still a little bit sore that the decision was taken to locate the Space Agency's headquarters in Adelaide, nevertheless we have a strong MOU with South Australia and the NT, and I had some very productive discussions with the Premier about opportunities for further collaboration. I look forward to that work being undertaken.

Last night we witnessed a federal election budget. It was certainly very big on announcements, but we are used to that from the commonwealth. What remains to be seen is whether their delivery will match their announcements. I will say from the outset that I welcome the commonwealth's shift away from the tired, weary and intellectually bankrupt 'debt and deficit' rhetoric that has dominated Australian national politics for a decade or so. We are all Keynesians now, apparently! That is good to see. I again commend Treasurer Frydenberg for listening to the Reserve Bank governor and the Treasury secretary on this point.

The commonwealth is moving its focus on to jobs and full employment. I am sure that if you were looking at this from outer space, and were not particularly aware of team red or team blue, you would probably imagine that the *Australian* newspaper would have a headline screaming, "This is a big spending, outrageous Labor debt and deficit budget." When Wayne Swan delivered a much more modest budget of this accord in response to the global financial crisis, that was indeed the *Australian* newspaper's response, resplendent with Wayne Swan and others dressed as communists. I did not see that in today's *Australian*. I did not see Treasurer Frydenberg dressed up in the Red Army outfit and all the rest. But it is the right fiscal policy approach at this time.

I can foreshadow that the ACT government will not be in a race for austerity, that we will be looking to cement our economic recovery and that there will be alignment in fiscal policy direction between us and the commonwealth, and having regard to the economic advice from the Reserve Bank, our own treasury and the Commonwealth Treasury.

In simple terms, monetary policy is targeting full employment. That is a good thing. The commonwealth government's fiscal policy is lagging slightly, but it is pleasing to see that, at least over the next four years, jobs are being put ahead of surpluses for the sake of surpluses. I imagine there is a bit of clenching of teeth and other features from some of the fiscal conservatives around the country at the moment. The editorials in the *Financial Review* and the *Australian* and the right wing of the Liberal Party will be beside themselves at this. Lots of people will be saying, "Whatever happened to Joe Hockey, Tony Abbott and the like?" It will be an interesting period for those people. We are all Keynesians now, Madam Speaker. The Treasurer has been listening to the expert advice of the Reserve Bank governor and the commonwealth Treasury secretary.

Governments across Australia, at the commonwealth, state and territory level, are embracing expansionary fiscal policy at this time. There is reason for confidence that this will accelerate the recovery of national, state and territory economies. The ACT government will step up to fund the health, transport, education, climate and community infrastructure that our city needs, whilst keeping Canberrans in sustainable jobs. We will continue to make major productivity- and sustainability-improving investments. We did so in the first budget of this term, which has just passed, and I foreshadow that we will seek to reinforce these efforts in the second budget of this calendar year, to be delivered in August. That has been our consistent priority for ACT government expenditure over the last six years, and it is one that has become even more important to implement over the last year.

It is long past time for the commonwealth to deliver funding for major projects and institutions in the ACT—funding that seems to flow so readily to marginal electorates around the country. I have been heartened, in the last few months, that the commonwealth has begun to recognise how important the ACT is for our broader region. We are an essential health, education and economic hub, not only for the ACT, obviously, but for southern New South Wales, and the national capital is the focal point of the nation.

I sincerely appreciate the commonwealth government's recognition that Canberra's light rail system is a system worth investing in. Could I declare today a hope that the light rail wars that have been a feature of territory politics for more than a decade might finally be over. Even now, with the commonwealth partnering with us to the tune of nearly \$133 million on the next stage of the project, the question will be: will the Canberra Liberals admit that their bitter opposition over the last decade or more might have been an error? Time will tell.

The commonwealth government's commitment to fund long-overdue capital works upgrades at our city's national cultural institutions and to provide some additional support for their operations is another positive step in the right direction for our critical national cultural institutions. They are also important tourism drivers for our region. They are institutions that have suffered many years of cuts. My hope is that this funding will assist these institutions to recover from the economic impacts of COVID, to sustain local jobs and bring new visitors to our city.

Looking to the future, it is disappointing that the commonwealth did not take the opportunity in the budget to prioritise the construction of dedicated national quarantine facilities to support Australia's ongoing repatriation efforts to get our citizens home from high-risk countries. The hotel quarantine program is costly. Hotels are not purpose-built quarantine facilities. The best practice requirements that are necessary have significantly limited the number of hotels that are able, willing and capable of supporting such a high-risk program.

Hotels in Australia were not built to be quarantine facilities. They are unsuited to quarantine arrangements. The repeated hotel outbreaks—another one in the last 24 hours—despite the best precautions continue to show that these are not fit-for-purpose facilities. As domestic travel increases, the pressure on city-based hotels as the

primary quarantine facilities for our country will only grow. The workforce requirements for repatriation from high-risk countries are more significant, and the risk of the virus spreading from quarantine is elevated.

Additional quarantine capacity will provide opportunities to consider the return of international students to Australia, which continues to be a significant challenge, not just for universities here in Canberra but across the nation. This must be a national priority, but it is being supported by a number of worthy proposals coming from state governments around the country at the moment. Again I call on the commonwealth to get serious in this space. If we had done this a year ago, we would not be in the position that we are in now.

It is also clear that Australia will need domestic manufacturing capabilities for the range of first, second, third, fourth and fifth generation COVID vaccines that will be required on an ongoing basis for the rest of our lives. Over-reliance on overseas suppliers will always leave Australia behind in the global effort to vaccinate against the virus and boost those vaccinations with the frequency that may well be needed into the future.

I am pleased to note that the commonwealth has indicated it will redirect pandemic response funding towards this onshore capability, but at this stage there is not a commitment to a time frame or a cost. Again I note state and territory leadership on this matter, with both the Victorian government and the New South Wales government putting money and ideas on the table.

The states and territories have led Australia's pandemic response in public health, and now in response to some of the shortfalls and challenges that we are seeing in the vaccination program, and looking to the long term. There has been a renaissance for state and territory governments during this period. Thanks to that leadership—and Australians should be thankful for that leadership across premiers and chief ministers—the national cabinet has worked because of our involvement.

The federal government, through the budget, I am pleased to say, has included the continuation of national partnership agreements on health care and early childhood education. I mentioned in question time yesterday that I think this is the seventh annual rollover of the early childhood partnership. At some point that might get a longer run than a year.

While the continuation of these agreements is relatively good news for the thousands of nurses, doctors and teachers in the ACT, this was a rare opportunity to make the right investments to set up the nation for success in the years to come. The extension of the National Partnership on Universal Access for Early Childhood Education to three-year-olds could have made a seismic difference to the long-term educational outcomes of Australian children. It means that jurisdictions like the ACT will go it alone, at least in the short term, on the provision of free preschool education to three-year-olds.

Finally, I want to touch on an important announcement that was made by the commonwealth ahead of the budget—that it will contribute \$8 million towards an

ACT financial assistance scheme for ACT residents who have contracted asbestos-related diseases from living in a Mr Fluffy home. Mr Fluffy has been a blight on our city for decades—longer than my entire life on this planet. Any other city that lost more than 1,000 houses and had generations of residents exposed to such a deadly substance would have been declared a disaster zone. That we have managed this major rectification over the last six years is testament to the quality of ACT public service work and to the strength of our city’s community and our community spirit.

Now we must take the next step, and help those in our community who may fall ill over coming years. They have a right to obtain the latest medicines and treatments without having to decide to use and be forced into using their family life savings or superannuation. They have the right to have some comfort that their families will not be left destitute after their passing.

The recognition by the commonwealth and ACT governments of joint ethical and community responsibility to address this demonstrates that some issues can transcend politics and strict legal liability. I particularly want to thank and acknowledge Minister Hunt for recognising that. This has required advocacy by the ACT government and, of course, the considerable efforts of James Wallner and his dedicated loved ones and supporters. As I am sure members are aware, Mr Wallner passed away on the weekend. On behalf of the ACT government, I extend my condolences to his family and friends.

In conclusion, we have a long way to go in our recovery, but the government has a plan to ensure that Canberra emerges stronger together, and our results to date prove that we are on the right track. I present the following paper:

ACT economic recovery—Driving the successful recovery, one year on—
Ministerial statement, 12 May 2021.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Health—nurses and midwives Ministerial statement

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Families and Community Services and Minister for Health) (10.46): Nurses and midwives underpin the healthcare system and are vital to Australia’s future health care. Their contributions to individual wellbeing, local communities and the wider society are immeasurable. Nurses and midwives provide socially appropriate, evidence-based care in all settings across the health sector—as you, Madam Speaker, would be more aware of than any of us in the chamber, except perhaps the representatives of the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation, who I welcome here today.

The ACT government is proud of the excellent dedicated nurses and midwives who work in the ACT to make our community a better place. Last year was International Year of the Nurse and Midwife, and the events of 2020 certainly highlighted the contribution of health workers generally and the very important work of nurses and midwives across Australia.

Nurses have been critical in containing and limiting the spread of COVID-19 because of their quality clinical work at the coalface and across the health system. As the pandemic evolved in 2020 and into 2021, nurses have continued to step up to provide COVID-19 testing to the community, often upscaling to meet demand when new hotspots emerge interstate. As well as staffing our testing centres, they have been at the airport and hotel quarantine, including supporting COVID-positive people in the medi-wing.

Last week an outstanding team leader at the Weston Creek Walk-in Centre, Kirsty Cummin, was recognised as the ACT's Nurse of the Year for her strong communication and exceptional listening skills. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Kirsty led the transformation of the walk-in centre to become one of Canberra's main COVID testing sites. Her role then extended to delivering care to those in hotel quarantine and overseeing staff delivering care in the medi-hotel. Despite expanded responsibilities, Kirsty consistently maintained high levels of professionalism with exceptional communication to all staff, ancillary staff, patients and relatives.

Nurses are also leading the ACT government's COVID-19 vaccination service, providing a vaccination program that the ACT community can trust, bringing their expertise, flexibility and can-do attitude. The Canberra Health Services nursing staff are currently providing COVID-19 vaccinations to those eligible under phase 1a, 1b and the early 2a cohort through the COVID-19 vaccination clinics.

An example of the expertise of nurses is the FIT testing checks performed by the occupational medicine unit nursing staff located on site at Canberra Health Services for other health professionals. This process involves a check to make sure that staff are wearing appropriately fitted respirators that seal to their skin, that are compatible with other personal protective equipment and that are not displaced when the staff member moves. This ensures that our valued staff are safe when providing expert clinical care to vulnerable patients.

Nurses are providing leadership and contributing at a policy and strategic level, including in the development of COVID-19 strategy, preparedness and response in the aged-care sector in the ACT. Last year the office of the chief nurse and midwife developed a collaborative partnership with the aged care sector, working on the ACT Aged Care COVID Response Plan, including establishing training in infection prevention and control in ACT facilities.

Nurses in the ACT Health Directorate continue to perform critical functions in response to the pandemic, including: disease surveillance for notifiable conditions, including follow-up with patients, clinicians and reporting; input to and representation on national disease surveillance committees; collaboration with research projects for

notifiable conditions and funding applications for grants; assistance with outbreak management and advice to high-risk settings such as aged care and childcare centres; support for existing immunisation programs, including a record year for influenza vaccination in 2020; development of the COVID-19 vaccine program; COVID-19 response support, including contact tracing, case coordination and quarantine follow-up; and monitoring, investigation and reporting of adverse events following immunisation for all vaccinations.

The themes for International Day of the Midwife and International Nurses Day are fitting, considering the work being undertaken across the ACT. The theme for International Nurses Day, celebrated today, 12 May, is “Nurses: a voice to lead—a vision for future health care”. This theme highlights the future development of nursing and how the profession will transform the next stage of health care.

ACT Labor committed to providing more nurses and midwives in the healthcare system, and an important part of that commitment is the implementation of nurse-to-patient ratios. Ratios enable a safer and more effective ACT healthcare system for our patients as well as the nurses and midwives themselves.

A memorandum of understanding was signed between the ACT government and the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation to complete a body of work, specifically the development of an appropriate ratios framework that could be implemented in ACT public health services. “Ratios framework” means a workload management system that includes agreed mandated minimum nurse and midwife ratios that consider the acuity, patient safety and workload in each designated clinical area.

As part of the negotiations for the new nursing and midwifery enterprise agreement, parties have discussed and agreed in principle on the first phase of implementation of nursing ratios at Canberra Health Services and Calvary Public Hospital, Bruce. The first phase has a focus on general medical, general surgical, acute aged care and the adult mental health unit. A phased approach is intended, with the first phase completed over the next four years.

Nurses and midwives are also involved in culture change and enabling a safer healthcare system. One example of this is the establishment of the Nurses and Midwives: Towards a Safer Culture project. The towards a safer culture project is nearing completion of the implementation phase and is aimed at supporting the fundamental rights of nurses and midwives in the ACT public healthcare system to be safe and protected from harm in their workplaces.

Occupational violence is a global problem confronting all health workers; this is a major focus for our health services as they strive to provide a safer and healthier environment within diverse and dynamic workplaces. Nurses and midwives have led the implementation of the Safewards model and interventions, a model designed to reduce conflict and containment events in inpatient mental health and medical settings. The Safewards model and interventions trial in ACT public health services will conclude in June 2021 and will be reviewed to inform future approaches.

Nurses and midwives have also actively provided expert clinical advice in the development of best practice guidelines, including the Challenging Behaviour Guideline and the Remote or Isolated Work guideline. Implementation of these guidelines will help to prevent and/or safely respond to risks associated with managing challenging behaviours sometimes exhibited by patients, and better support workers engaged in isolated or remote work.

ACT nurses and midwives have been instrumental in providing expert advice and consultation towards the development of the staff rights to a safe workplace fact sheet, which defines what occupational violence is as well as the importance of always reporting any incident of occupational violence and ensuring staff rights to be safe and protected from harm in their workplaces.

The ACT Health Directorate is currently reviewing how to support nurse practitioners to allow them to work to their full scope of practice. The project aims to develop recommendations for legislative and policy change that ensure a “right touch” regulatory approach to the nurse practitioner workforce which maximises workforce potential and ensures sustainable nurse practitioner contributions to the ACT health system.

The territory-wide education and training project aims to develop a framework to support and enhance access to the education and training of nurses and midwives across the territory and the surrounding region. The government is investing in the education of nurses and midwives to ensure they can access high-quality training that supports the care of the community.

At the commencement of the project, more than 100 staff participated in one-on-one and small-group workshops from across Canberra Health Services, Calvary Public Hospital and the ACT Health Directorate. This initial consultation also included representatives of academic partners, consumer groups, unions and non-government organisations.

Implementation of a framework at Canberra Health Services is nearing completion and has coincided with a review of the existing essential education policy. Work is continuing with the ACT Health Directorate and Calvary Public Hospital Bruce to strengthen and align nursing and midwifery education in our health services to a high standard. We know our nurses and midwives are highly skilled and we want to ensure they can continue to engage in education and training opportunities across their careers.

Between 5,000 and 6,000 babies are born in the ACT each year, with midwives working in a variety of settings contributing to both maternal and child health across the ACT. Our midwives in the ACT are integral to the Canberra community, with many Canberrans being able to say they were birthed by one of our exceptional midwives in the territory.

This year’s theme for International Day of the Midwife, celebrated on 5 May, was “Follow the data: invest in midwives”. This theme focuses on the role of midwives in ending preventable maternal and newborn death and emphasising the importance of investing in quality midwifery care.

Midwives across the ACT are supporting the commonwealth's Safer Baby Bundle project, with the aim of a 20 per cent decrease in stillbirths by 2023. Our midwives are dedicated to safely birthing the babies of Canberra and the surrounding region, and are implementing five different elements following an implementation workshop for all stakeholders on 17 May.

The five elements of the bundle are: smoking cessation, in supporting women to stop smoking in pregnancy; foetal growth restriction, by improving screening and surveillance; decreased foetal movements, by improving awareness and management of decreased foetal movement; side sleeping from 28 weeks, to improve awareness of maternal safe sleeping position; and timing of birth for high-risk women, to improve decision-making around timing of birth for women with risk factors.

The 2021 Midwife of the Year, Jessica Boutzos, is a midwife at Calvary Public Hospital, Bruce. Over the last year, in collaboration with a nurse practitioner from the emergency department, Jessica developed an early pregnancy loss support package to assist staff, initially intended for the emergency department but applicable to all areas of the hospital. Jessica is described as parent-focused, caring and collaborative, and that was clear in the way she accepted her award as a reflection on the whole team. I congratulate Jessica, Kirsty and all of the other 2021 Nursing and Midwifery Excellence Award winners.

Team of the year is ward 11B, aged care, at Canberra Health Services. Excellence in management practice goes to Nicole Slater, emergency department, Canberra Health Services. Excellence in leadership practice goes to Wendy Beckingham, infection prevention and control, Canberra Health Services. Excellence in clinical practice goes to Nicole Shiels, Tuggeranong community nursing team, Canberra Health Services. Excellence in quality improvement or research practice goes to Stephanie Parry, justice health, Canberra Health Services. Excellence in educational practice goes to Jodie Murray, learning and development, Calvary Bruce Private Hospital.

I also want to congratulate all the nominees for the 2021 Nursing and Midwifery Excellence Awards. The celebration of these awards was truly a celebration of professionalism, innovation, compassion and commitment.

Work is underway on the government's election commitment to employ more healthcare workers across our public health system, including 200 additional nurses and midwives. The work of these additional nurses and midwives to strengthen our health system will be based on clinical services planning, the strategic direction for health across the ACT, as well as opportunities in education, research and innovation. The passion and skill that our nurses and midwives demonstrate each day will reach further into the community and provide care when and where it is needed.

In closing, I again acknowledge the incredibly hard work that our nurses and midwives do each day and thank them for their dedication to the health and wellbeing of the ACT community. I present the following paper:

Nurses and midwives—Ministerial statement, 12 May 2021.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

DR PATERSON (Murrumbidgee) (11.00): I wish to thank Minister Stephen-Smith for bringing to the attention of the Assembly the importance of recognition of our nurses and midwives. It seems appropriate that International Day of the Midwife is 5 May and International Nurses Day is a week later, on the 12th, with Mother's Day this year in between.

It is a week to recognise all the women and men in our community who provide services for the health and wellbeing of us all. I note both the women and men who work in this sector. I think it is commonly regarded, as with the teaching profession, as a sector which is largely comprised of a female workforce. The statistics definitely support this. In 2018, 88 per cent of people practising as nurses and midwives in the ACT were female. Of the 170 midwives in the ACT, only one was male. There are comparable statistics across all jurisdictions in Australia. I find this really interesting in the context of the gendered landscape and commonly-held gender norms in which we live.

Undoubtedly, midwifery in particular is historically and traditionally a role undertaken by women. To a lesser extent, but still prevailing, is nursing. In much the same way the construction industry, among others, is typically a male-dominated space. I recognise that a range of different factors influence our career choices and life aspirations, but I also believe that it is really important that both men and women have the opportunity to challenge our society's gendered norms and landscapes.

It is great to see more and more women joining what have been traditionally male-dominated industries, and the positive promotion given to this through media articles and awards of recognition. It is often said that nursing and related professions require good communication skills, together with empathy, care and patience. I believe both men and women are more than capable of possessing and demonstrating these qualities. I would like to challenge more men to take up positions in nursing and midwifery. Often, like many of the professions and industries that sustain us as a community, the daily work and achievements of nurses and midwives go unnoticed and unrecognised. This week is an opportunity to change that.

The annual midwifery day has been held since its formal establishment in 1992 and 12 May was chosen as the International Nurses Day, coinciding with the birthday of Florence Nightingale, the founder of modern nursing in the late 19th century. Some of Nightingale's key social reforms included improving health care for all sections of British society, advocating for hunger relief programs in India, helping to abolish prostitution laws that were harsh for women, and expanding the acceptable forms of female participation in the workforce.

Nurses work across many different areas in our community. They may be specialised nurses in areas of mental health, intensive care, theatre and neurology, and they might not work in our hospitals but in practitioner clinics, in aged-care homes, in child health centres, schools and community health centres.

Midwives provide an important service to improve maternal and child health and care, and to achieve the best outcomes for mothers and babies. I am one of the lucky women that Minister Stephen-Smith referred to who has had three healthy babies, safely delivered, and in the wonderful hands of midwives at the Canberra Hospital.

The international days for midwifery and nurses are also an opportunity to support the cause to ensure appropriate education and resourcing for people working in this sector. It is to the benefit and advantage of all of us that investment is made in appropriate resourcing, providing opportunities for professional development, and to show the value of the work of nurses and midwives. Now, more than ever, it is a great time to recognise and thank our nurses and midwives.

MADAM SPEAKER: Members, before I put the question, and with some level of indulgence, can I say that I am sure all here thank and appreciate the nurses and midwives across our community. Can I personally recognise my daughter-in-law, Bianca Warner, who works in a cardiac unit in Perth.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Transport—recovery plan Ministerial statement

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee—Minister for Skills, Minister for Transport and City Services and Special Minister of State) (11.05): Last week we released the ACT Transport Recovery Plan, an important step forward in planning for Canberra's post-COVID recovery. Public transport is central to making Canberra a more connected, sustainable and vibrant city.

Transport currently accounts for over 60 per cent of Canberra's harmful carbon emissions, so it is essential that we work to reduce the number of private car trips taken across our city each day. As Canberra grows, encouraging more people to choose public transport will also be important for preventing the traffic gridlock that so many other cities struggle with.

The ACT planning strategy maps out a clear direction for limiting Canberra's urban sprawl and the impacts on our environment by delivering the majority of new housing in and around our major town centres and along transport routes. This goal will be supported by better public transport links that mean Canberrans can move around easily and sustainably, without needing to rely on their cars.

The ACT Transport Strategy, released last year at the height of the pandemic, outlines our plans to support this shift through an emphasis on strengthening public transport and active travel. We recognise that, for people to choose public transport as their preferred mode of travel, it must be convenient, reliable, comfortable and safe. The COVID-19 pandemic has challenged community perceptions about whether public transport is a safe way to travel. This is understandable when clear health advice throughout 2020 emphasised avoiding non-essential travel on Canberra's buses and light rail.

COVID-19 has also changed working and social habits in ways that continue to affect people's transport needs and choices. More Canberrans are working from home or in adapted, flexible modes, which can make the car seem like an easier choice than using public transport.

The pandemic is not over, but there are strong signs that Canberra's recovery is underway. Canberrans will progressively be vaccinated throughout the second half of 2021, and local businesses, shops and services are gradually returning to their pre-COVID rhythms. This means that it is time to step up our efforts to encourage people back onto public transport in a safe and sustainable way.

Our goal is to return public transport patronage to its pre-pandemic levels and keep growing it in the years ahead, as health advice indicates that it is safe to do so. This is essential for cutting Canberra's emissions and keeping our city moving as we grow. The ACT Transport Recovery Plan will drive the government's strategy to encourage Canberrans back on board buses and light rail when the time is right by harnessing lessons learnt during the pandemic, setting us up for a future where more people choose public transport.

It has been a rough journey over the last year for public transport in Canberra, across Australia and around the world. Before the pandemic struck, patronage had been growing, and there had been a huge start to the year in 2020. In the first three weeks of term 1 we had seen an increase of more than 10 per cent in the number of journeys taken across the ACT compared with the same period in 2019.

But then the pandemic hit. Immediately, based on health advice, Canberrans were directed to reconsider their need for non-essential travel on public transport. People were encouraged to use public transport only if absolutely necessary, and to travel off-peak in these circumstances. It was a huge shock to the system. Journeys across the bus and light rail network fell by almost 87 per cent from February to April last year. While these numbers are confronting, we welcomed them at the time as it meant that Canberrans were doing the right thing by their community.

We took a range of steps to make sure that those who were still on board—both our passengers and our drivers—were safe. This included moving to cashless ticketing, stepping up cleaning, asking people to enter via the rear doors of buses and blocking off seats to maintain physical distancing.

The falls in patronage were mirrored in other cities around Australia and the world more generally. Many governments responded by cutting back services as a way to contain costs in the face of falling revenues. I am pleased to say that here in Canberra we actually did the opposite. We stepped up light rail services to run every five minutes in the morning and added 692 extra bus services. Weekday bus services actually increased by more than 17 per cent.

That was last year; where are we now? Fare box revenue is through the floor—down \$9.3 million this financial year, or around 40 per cent. We have a vaccine rollout that is proceeding at a different pace to what was originally expected, resetting everyone's

aspirations about when life can start returning to normal. Public transport patronage has gradually increased but it is still down by about 25 per cent. Congestion on our roads is already worse than it was before the pandemic, with overall traffic volumes currently three per cent higher than in December 2019 across the ACT. Traffic in Woden, in particular, has increased, with volumes eight per cent higher than before COVID hit. Traffic volumes are up 21 per cent on Northbourne Avenue northbound and 27 per cent southbound compared to pre-pandemic traffic. That is at the peak time.

Data released this month in the ABS household survey shows that one in six users of public transport have not been back on board since the COVID-19 pandemic. Public health advice, under Canberra's COVID-19 recovery road map, is still to avoid public transport in peak hour. Clearly, we have a long road ahead of us. Expert health advice has been our guide throughout the pandemic, and it will continue to inform how we communicate with Canberrans about their use of the bus network and light rail.

While health advice remains paramount, it is important to start the conversation about life returning to normal. As we start the long journey of economic and social recovery, we must look at how we can safely invite people back onto public transport in a healthy and sustainable way. I am pleased to say that this is something that our government is tackling through the ACT Transport Recovery Plan. It outlines the work that we are doing to set public transport on a growth path as we move beyond COVID-19.

Our approach to achieving sustained patronage increases in a COVID-normal world is based upon four core principles. First, the health and safety of passengers is paramount, and we will continue to be guided by the health advice. Second, we recognise that the best way to restore community confidence is to foster a gradual ramp-up in patronage that is complemented by supporting activities such as the vaccine rollout. We should not expect everyone to jump on board a bus tomorrow, but when the time is right we will be strongly welcoming people back on board. Third, our actions will be data driven and aimed at improving the passenger experience over time. Finally, we will continue to invest strategically in our public transport network and refine our services to ensure that Canberrans who want to use public transport can do so.

Some of the key steps we will be taking through the plan include delivering a COVID safe etiquette campaign, which outlines to passengers what they can do to ensure that other passengers are safe and feel safe on public transport. We will review our existing fare structure to identify options that incentivise COVID safe public transport usage, particularly in terms of social distancing through spreading the peak. We will facilitate better integration between public transport, active transport and micro-mobility schemes to ensure that Canberrans have end-to-end options that do not require them to get into their cars. We will work with the private sector and major employers to find ways to have flexible working arrangements to stimulate economic activity, while also encouraging commuters to travel in the shoulder peak periods.

I want to unpack this last section a little further. Traffic volumes in Canberra are currently exceeding pre-pandemic levels because people have not yet returned to public transport. This is a trend seen in other cities around Australia and the world. As

I mentioned, in the last year the ACT government has made significant investments in strengthening Canberra's public transport network. We have added 692 more weekday bus services and increased the frequency of light rail services to prevent crowding at peak times. This has helped people to feel safe on public transport and has meant that our services are more accessible than ever.

But as Canberra's recovery continues, traffic volumes remain high. As we move into the upcoming delivery of major infrastructure works in and around Canberra's city centre, including building light rail stage 2 to Woden, we are keen to explore further opportunities to spread out peak demand on our roads network during the morning and afternoon commutes. We want to avoid Canberrans sitting in their car for 40 minutes to an hour, when they could have a shorter and more convenient commute by travelling a little earlier or a little later, particularly on public transport but also in a car.

We will be working with major employers to explore the uptake of flexible working arrangements outside the standard 9 am to 5 pm. No business will be required to make these changes, but they are one way that employers can help their employees to have an easier commute during a time when road congestion is high, due to COVID-19, and with upcoming disruption from the construction of major infrastructure projects, both public and private.

Spreading out the peak will not reduce the overall number of people coming into the city and accessing local businesses. It will just mean that the demand for transport and other services is distributed over a slightly longer period each day.

We are starting this conversation now with big and small employers and the Canberra community because we want to understand what is going to work best and how investments in public transport can work in partnership with other initiatives during the COVID recovery and the upcoming disruption period to keep Canberrans moving. This is about government, businesses and the community working together to find solutions to the challenges of the new normal. We appreciate the input from sector representatives like the Canberra Business Chamber, who have kept an open mind regarding this conversation.

Another important part of our recovery plan is moving permanently to cashless ticketing, building on what we have seen and learned through the pandemic. While cashless ticketing was originally implemented as a safety measure for drivers, networks around the world are seeing real benefits from making this shift. Cashless ticketing speeds up boarding times to improve network efficiency and can provide a more seamless experience for passengers who are used to tap-and-pay transactions in so many other contexts.

It makes sense for the ACT to go cashless now because we are currently in the process of procuring a next generation ticketing system to replace MyWay. We want to have a modern, flexible system that will give passengers more ways to manage and pay for their travel—from their mobile device, credit or debit card, or a dedicated transport card. Making this system cashless from the start will increase the range of potential providers and solutions in this tender process so that we can get the best deal

and the best technology outcome for Canberrans. Providing contactless payment options will also help to minimise the risks of further outbreaks and support the ability of Health officials to undertake contact tracing. In making this transition, we are focused on ensuring that the new cashless system works for all of our passengers, including the most vulnerable.

We are in the process of establishing a new Transport Canberra and City Services accessibility reference group to ensure that the needs of people with a disability, older Canberrans and other vulnerable groups, like children and families, are considered from the start and are fully met so that public transport remains accessible for everyone.

The ACT recovery plan does not just deal with the immediate challenges in front of us. It takes a longer perspective that aligns with our transport strategy as well. A key focus of that strategy is making future-focused decisions which progressively shift investment towards public transport, cycling and walking. We recognise that infrastructure investments are crucial for rebuilding the economy. Public transport will need reliable financial investment to provide quality of service and revive passenger confidence.

Light rail is a great example of this. We are investing now in light rail stage 2 to Woden so that we have the right infrastructure in place before congestion brings Canberra's south to a halt. Building light rail to Woden will give Canberrans on the south side more options on when and how they travel and cut transport emissions to support our transition to net zero emissions by 2045. It will also help to create better city spaces along the line where people can live and work, well connected by public transport.

In a survey earlier this year, around a third of light rail passengers said they had never used public transport before hopping on board stage 1. That demonstrates how much light rail can be a catalyst for more people choosing public transport, and we want to spark that same shift on Canberra's south side.

Our choices today should help drive a long-term and sustainable shift to public transport in the future. As the "new normal" takes shape, we will focus on making services more adaptable and flexible so that our networks are robust enough to attract and sustain strong patronage in the years to come. That is what the ACT Transport Recovery Plan is all about, and that is what our investments in the coming years will seek to deliver. I present the following paper:

ACT transport recovery plan—Ministerial statement, 12 May 2021.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (11.19): Can I firstly applaud Transport Canberra, Canberra Metro and all associated staff for holding things together so well during what has been a difficult 12 months. As the minister made mention of, transport

numbers fell off a cliff in every jurisdiction, not just in Australia but around the world, understandably, in the last 12 months or so. Our recovery, in relative terms, has been quite positive. I think the minister has every right to be proud of the decision to run increased services during the last year. We applaud him for that.

In 2021, I think it is always pleasing to hear government officials, at any level, in any jurisdiction, talking about the prospect of life returning to normal. Although we are still a little way off, it is extremely important that there is a strong plan for transport recovery in the ACT. I think there are some extremely positive things in this plan. The Canberra Liberals are fully supportive of many of the suggestions in the plan.

I have already expressed my concerns about the push for radically staggered work hours because of the effect that it is going to have on businesses. I note that Mr Steel in his statement talks about the fact that the same number of people would be coming into the city. But certainly, for some businesses, it would require them to extend their shifts, extend their staffing, for the same amount of business, which obviously is not going to work for them. To some extent, it depends on how radical that staggering of hours is. I cannot remember the exact wording in the statement from the minister that suggests we are talking about a minor staggering to take the pressure off the peak travelling times.

I would flag that we have some concerns about the announced review of the fare structure which, according to the minister, will incentivise COVID-safe travel by spreading the peak. Irrespective of any push to stagger working hours, the reality is that most Canberrans will not have much of a choice as to when they work. I would like to put it on the record that penalising people for travelling to work, whenever their work happens to be, would seem extremely unfair. I know that the minister and the directorate will be taking these things into account when decisions are made. I understand that this will be a very delicate balancing act, but I just need to make our position on that very clear. We will be watching it pretty closely.

In a city where, for the vast majority of Canberrans, our current public transport system does not take them where they want to go and when they want to go there, any move to further penalise motorists who are forced to drive would not be welcomed either by the Canberra Liberals nor, certainly, those many thousands of Canberrans who are just trying to live their lives. I think all of us share the view that we need to encourage more Canberrans onto public transport. The Canberra Liberals prefer a carrot approach rather than the use of stick. Obviously, we have not seen the details of any proposed new fare structure, but we will be looking at it very closely.

It is positive to hear the minister talking about the next generation ticketing system to replace MyWay. Of course, I have already expressed my frustration at the time that this has taken and the various road bumps along the way. I am sure that the minister shares my frustration.

The minister has noted that infrastructure investments are crucial in rebuilding the economy. Of course, he will not get any argument from us. It is timely, the morning after the federal budget, that this has come up. I am sure that members on all sides would join me in applauding the Morrison government for their commitment to the

continuing rollout of light rail. In doing so, I am echoing the words of the Chief Minister in this chamber yesterday, this morning and on ABC Radio this morning that the Morrison government will be contributing \$186 million towards ACT infrastructure projects, including \$132.5 million for light rail stage 2A. I think that is to be applauded.

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (11.23): I was really pleased to attend Minister Steel's forum on the ACT transport recovery plan recently. It was great to hear the plan being delivered and broken down by a lot of public transport experts that we had in the room, and it was really good to hear some of the questions that we had from the audience. I think Canberrans are well-educated and are really keen to engage with how we can improve the systems that we have.

The challenges we have had from COVID have been enormous. I would like to thank TCCS staff for their hard work. I join with Mr Parton in that. They have kept the network running and they have risen to a number of challenges. TCCS have also done a lot of very smart things. They helped people who were out of work during COVID by expanding our cleaning program and creating jobs. That was a marvellous health move, but it was also a great jobs move. I am also keen to see upgrades to our ticketing system and I look forward to seeing its release in 2023.

I am pleased to see Canberra expanding our public transport network by increasing our bus services and expanding our light rail. I am glad that we are now finally committed to that project and we are rolling it out. We still have improvements to make in our network design. We still have some problems with the timing of services. I am sure everybody gets regular constituent complaints, just like I do. People are very frustrated when they miss a connection.

Changes need to be made when we need to improve efficiency, but every change is quite difficult for people to adapt to. We need to make sure that we are making those changes where we need to and that our connections are connecting smoothly at the hubs. Reliability is really important too if we want to encourage new people onto the network.

I am particularly keen to see an increase in our cycling and active travel as well. I think sometimes this is an aspect of our public transport system that we have not really focused on enough. Most people do not use simply one means of getting to work. Even if you drive, you are going to walk at some point to get into your car or out of your car, and most people are combining trips. That is actually the way of the future—multimodal travel.

We need to make sure that we are supporting our active travel infrastructure and network in the same way that we support our roads. Anecdotally, we know that walking and cycling increased a lot during COVID, whereas public transport use decreased. I know that public transport is going to bounce back, but I hope that we maintain that high level and interest in walking and cycling. Many people have taken to our shared paths and footpaths, often for the first time. We need to invest more in that shared path and footpath infrastructure. If we want 20 per cent of people walking

and riding, we should be spending 20 per cent of our roads budget on that infrastructure to make sure that they can do it.

We need to maintain that infrastructure, as well as build it. We need to fill in all of our missing links. We need to remember that if you cannot walk to the bus stop, you are not going to use that bus. And if you are not confident that you can jump on a bus and get home, if the weather suddenly changes and you do not like riding in the rain, you are not going to use the bus and you are not going to cycle; you will jump back in a car. We have really got to make it as easy as possible.

We are really pleased at the transition of the ACT government fleet to modern disability-compliant buses. That is a really important step in reliability for those who really need it. We are glad to see that our modern, fully-accessible bus fleet is almost here. It is a really good compliment to some of the work that we have seen in the housing space by Minister Vassarotti and we are moving to a more inclusive and disability-friendly city.

I am glad to see our zero emissions buses. This is a really important step in not only reducing our emissions but also improving people's experience of using and waiting for buses. It means that when they are sitting around at the bus stop they have less noise pollution and diesel and they are not breathing in fumes. It is just a better way to run our city. I would really like to see the same policy extended to the entire government fleet. We have got garbage trucks and other vehicles. They can all be zero emissions. The more we move all of our vehicles to zero emissions, the better it is going to be.

I was also pleased that Transport Canberra have committed to stepping up engagement with the community when they are designing and delivering our public transport initiatives. That community feedback is essential. I know, from running businesses, that you need to talk to your customers and give them what they want. It is no good talking to them afterwards and trying to persuade them to buy what you have produced. You need to get that feedback in at the start.

I was also a bit sad. I have heard a few comments from Mr Parton recently about flexible working arrangements and he has made some more today that were a bit more nuanced, which is good. I am a bit concerned that maybe not everybody understands the value of flexible working and the changes that have come through COVID. I have been accessing flexible working for the last 15 years, and it is marvellous. It means I have been able to run businesses and achieve quite large career milestones whilst raising a family. I look around and find I have a lot of friends who are in the same situation.

What it means when you are accessing flexible workplace arrangements is that you tend to have your work meetings in your local cafe. We have seen that during COVID. Many local suburban businesses have actually seen an increase in business and that has been good for those businesses. Obviously, any change means that we need to help people through those changes, but it is a real shame if we are not leaning into the marvellous opportunity that we have from COVID.

We really need to make sure that people who want to access flexible working can do so, and we need to help all businesses, employers and employees to adapt to that. It is the most inclusive thing we can probably do. It helps women and it helps a lot of individuals who would not otherwise be in that workplace. It means that you can work and raise your family at the same time. It is really good to see that we have made a lot of progress in this transport plan, and I welcome it.

MS DAVIDSON (Murrumbidgee—Assistant Minister for Seniors, Veterans, Families and Community Services, Minister for Disability, Minister for Justice Health and Minister for Mental Health) (11.29): I just want to make a few comments in my capacity as an MLA for Murrumbidgee. I noticed in the ACT transport recovery plan that there is some mention of data and engagement as core tools to drive more customer-centric outcomes. There is some talk in there about using the data insights that are generated across our transport networks to ensure that services respond to the way people want and need to travel and, at the same time, stepping up consultation and research with people in the community to better understand their needs in this rapidly-changing environment. Frankly, you cannot make me happier than evidence-based decision-making that uses both quantitative and qualitative data; so this is fantastic.

I notice that in the 2017 ACT and Queanbeyan-Palerang household travel survey there were some gender differences that were found in travel patterns. There has been a commitment from TCCS to continue to gather that gender data in future surveys, which I am really looking forward to seeing. It is also important that we have intersectional data analysis for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people with disabilities and people in our multicultural community. I really welcome the access reference group, which will absolutely help with planning a system that works well for people with disabilities.

We know from the existing data that only 26 per cent of trips in that 2017 survey were work related, but that this was 31.8 per cent of trips for men and 20.9 per cent for women. We also know that women make 13 per cent more trips per day than men in Canberra and that women aged 30 to 49 years with zero daily income had the highest daily average, with 4.6 trips per day. This is because women do a lot more trip-chaining than men, which includes things like dropping off and picking up other people on the way, maybe having to stop and pick up something from the chemist or the shops on the way to or from work or home or other places they have to go.

We also know that women are the fastest growing group in our community getting into cycling and that the changes in the way that we work and live as a result of the restrictions in 2020 have accelerated women moving to active travel. Bike shops sold out of bicycles for women in 2020, which was fantastic to see.

As we return to workplaces and schools, now is a fantastic time to provide people with active travel pathways that are safe and accessible for a greater number of cyclists, scooters and skaters, as well as end-of-trip facilities and bike and ride locations. I welcome all of the work that is being done on that. Based on feedback from my Murrumbidgee community, they are looking for fast-route cycle paths that

are segregated from car traffic that leave footpaths and existing shared paths for people moving at a more relaxed pace.

We know from local research by Women's Health Matters, as well as vast amounts of international research, that safe and accessible active travel paths and bus stop locations are about good lighting, active use of the space by a diversity of people in the community, and good passive surveillance where paths and bus stops are visible to the front of houses and shops, rather than back fences. I welcome all the work that the ACT government and TCCS are doing to improve that.

The overall strategy for Canberra's public transport system is a hub and spoke model. It has been very focused on moving people to and from employment in the city and town centres. This focus on employment-related travel reflects some inbuilt biases about the purpose of our investment in public transport around the economic value of people who travel for paid work.

It is vitally important that we make use of the data about where and when people travel who are not in paid work and recognise the value in investing in transport systems that support parents, unpaid carers and people who engage in our community in ways that do not involve paid work. For that reason, that qualitative research and consultation with people is going to be so helpful, as well as the access reference group.

So improving measures to facilitate trip chaining and non-work related travel—such as the integrated ticketing system, the increasing park and rides, the hop on, hop off nature of high frequency light rail coming to Woden, which I am very excited about, and increasing off-peak bus services—do help, as does integrating our bus and light rail systems with safe and useful active travel paths.

I support the work to improve safety in useful locations of bus stops and pathways and to better understand the travel needs of people who are reliant on public transport. Instead of just going back to the old normal, I welcome this move to a better normal, with more flexible and sustainable travel for all of us. Let's do more of it.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Business—Better Regulation Taskforce Ministerial statement

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra—Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Minister for the Arts, Minister for Business and Better Regulation, Minister for Human Rights and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (11.34): I am pleased today to report to the Assembly on the Better Regulation Taskforce and the work our government is doing to make it easier to start, run and grow a business in the ACT. Emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic, never has the role of government been clearer: to respond quickly, to invest, to support our most vulnerable, and to protect and shape the local economy. The ACT government recognises the invaluable contribution that business, particularly small business, makes to Canberra.

Throughout the pandemic, Canberra businesses faced many challenges. Over 10,000 jobs were lost in the ACT within weeks of the national lockdown. In mid-2020, almost 15,000 people were receiving JobSeeker payments, while around 10,700 ACT businesses had enrolled in the commonwealth JobKeeper package.

Businesses in the ACT have been asked to do a lot, and they have responded every time. They have been fundamental to our successful COVID-19 response and to our recovery. The government recognises that it is businesses who strengthen our economy, who did it so tough, who responded to our asks during the pandemic, and who are now leading us through the recovery.

The ACT government's jobs and economic recovery plan released in August 2020 features a \$4.9 billion commitment to protect and create secure local jobs. A key part of the next phase of our economic recovery is supporting a smooth transition from public support and stimulus measures to private sector-led growth.

The ACT government has committed to a bold agenda of regulatory reform to ensure that the ACT economy continues to rebound from COVID-19 and grow. As a jurisdiction, we have a strong record of removing unnecessary red tape affecting ACT businesses. Over the last few years, the government has focused its work on some key reforms.

Firstly, the introduction of legislative and systems changes to support the property sector and consumers by providing for electronic conveyancing. E-conveyancing means that manual transactions for land transfers will be done electronically, saving time, increasing transaction security and allowing for new services and operators to enter the market.

Secondly, the removal of duplication in regulation and reporting requirements for charities and associations.

Thirdly, the removal of requirements to use outdated communication methods, to encourage the use of digital tools. This involves switching government business communications to the online world, achieving greater efficiencies for business.

Finally, leading Australia, the ACT regulated on-demand transport industries including rideshare like Uber. This innovative regulatory leadership provided best practice guidance to other Australian jurisdictions on how to achieve an economic and regulatory balance between taxis and rideshare.

The next step in this work is the creation of the Better Regulation Taskforce, reporting to me as Minister for Business and Better Regulation. The task force has been established to support immediate business recovery in the short term through addressing issues, while also delivering reforms for long-term economic growth. The task force's job is to make the interaction between government and business better, faster and simpler.

Canberra means business, and the Better Regulation Taskforce shows that. It is here to talk to business and to systematically improve the conditions for starting and growing a business right here in Canberra. One of the task force's first and most critical initiatives has been talking to business about how to talk to business; what methods, with what frequency, suit business owners best to have their views and concerns heard by government. This is work that will serve Canberra businesses well beyond the task force and will benefit everyone who runs or works in a business in the ACT, whether or not they have particular regulatory concerns.

The government is committed to ensuring that businesses are being heard, that the lines of communication between business and government are built to work for business, that talking to government about regulations that hinder starting, doing and growing business is not itself a regulatory hurdle. By engaging directly with industry, community and business, especially small business, the Better Regulation Taskforce is working to improve the ACT government's rules, regulations, processes, information and support available for businesses.

The Better Regulation Taskforce is examining and applying lessons learned during the COVID-19 response, such as maintaining clear and open communication, prioritising adaptability and rapid action, and engaging with risk to achieve the best outcomes for businesses in the ACT. The immediate focus of the task force is to identify processes or regulatory issues that create a burden for business, and which can be reformed or simplified.

The Better Regulation Taskforce has a range of current work and priorities. It is undertaking a wide-ranging legislative review to identify reform opportunities and ensure there are regulatory settings which support best practice. Further, the Better Regulation Taskforce will expand digital solutions for government and business operations and continue removing barriers to investment in the territory.

The Better Regulation Taskforce is drawing on lessons from previous reform programs from across the country, and leading ACT involvement in national reforms emerging from the commonwealth's Deregulation Taskforce. The task force is also working directly with businesses in the ACT to deal with regulatory issues or delays that individual businesses are facing in real time.

Since the Better Regulation Taskforce's commencement, officials have met with many businesses and representatives directly to seek to get straight to the issue and improve the regulatory landscape. Groups such as Canberra Women in Business, the Canberra Business Chamber and precinct groups have been able to seek assistance and guidance from the task force.

Specific questions about government processes from individual businesses have been answered, quickly enabling the businesses to understand and move forward. For example, the Mitchell Traders Association has met directly with me and with task force officials and discussed the diverse economic activity in the Mitchell precinct. I thank the Mitchell Traders Association for their willingness to discuss

whole-of-government regulatory issues and to support the diverse economic hub of Mitchell.

Questions regarding government programs for street improvements have been addressed, and we have built stronger relationships of communication and response. The task force is not just focusing on the long term, but actively solving issues we are hearing along the way. As an example, the National Zoo and Aquarium's concerns with road management plans have already been addressed. The task force ensured that the correct information was provided and it prevented unnecessary duplication between government agencies. My officials from the task force will continue to engage closely with the zoo's management to ensure a close working relationship between this important tourist attraction and the ACT government.

Since taking on the Business and Better Regulation portfolio, I have had an open-door policy encouraging businesses to meet with me. Encouragingly, this has been embraced by the business community, and it has complemented my attendance at existing industry forums and events. This initial engagement has confirmed our understanding that businesses across the ACT have varied experiences and needs depending on their business nature, business focus or point in business life cycle.

Through the task force, we are leading with ongoing engagement that is accessible, inclusive, and tailored to stakeholder availability and preference. This ensures we capture the business community's diverse views and needs, and it is proving effective. The task force is keen to understand the challenges that exist so it can move quickly to support business recovery.

The task force's engagement approach is underpinned by a few key principles. Firstly, we know that everyone is busy, especially business owners and leaders. Therefore, we want to engage with people in a way that suits them and is a good use of their time. Secondly, we recognise that engagement is a two-way process. To support this, we will loop back with business on what we have heard and what we are doing about it. And then, we are engaging directly with business owners, which includes going to where they already are and attending forums or associations they are already engaged in.

The activities of the task force are taking place within a broader context of ACT government response to COVID-19 and other initiatives to support economic recovery and growth. This is three-phase program of whole-of-government work over 2½ years. The phases are discovery phase, analysis and recommendations phase and implementation phase. I recognise the essential role of stakeholders to inform and contribute meaningfully to the work of the task force throughout all phases.

We are undertaking a discovery phase right now and listening to business, because they know what they need and have practical ideas about what needs to change. The task force has undertaken direct engagement with stakeholders, held internal and external workshops and attended peak body forums to capture business input. The task force has engaged with over 60 stakeholders across the ACT, from sole traders and start-ups to larger and more established businesses.

I maintain ongoing engagement with key peak bodies, including the Canberra Business Chamber, Canberra Women in Business and the Australian hospitality association, who together represent a broad member base. I greatly value their counsel and appreciate the time the leaders of these organisations give me on a regular basis. As we continue this phase, we will hold further workshops, roundtables, meetings and focus groups.

By the end of the discovery phase, we will have a catalogue of issues drawn from stakeholder engagement. The ACT government will use stakeholder input and ideas to develop options for reform. This phase will ensure we recommend and implement changes that bring about real positive change for business. Of course, as I have already mentioned, we have been solving problems throughout the discovery phase; if there is a quick solution to a problem facing businesses, the task force is solving it then and there.

In phase 2, the task force will consolidate, assess and analyse issues identified through its engagement to develop a reform program. This will set forward a comprehensive regulatory reform program for delivery this term of government. The work program will be business led, business informed and business ready. The task force is committed to listening and to responding.

The final phase, the implementation phase, will occur over two parts. The first will involve reforms that can be actioned immediately—these are happening as I have outlined; we are proactively fixing issues on the move—while the second will focus on complex reforms and systemic change, long-term structural change to support economic activity of business in our jurisdiction.

The reforms will achieve benefits for business, community and government. The task force will make the interaction between government and business better, faster and simpler. The task force is addressing the ACT government rules, regulations, processes, information and support available for businesses, especially small businesses. The Better Regulation Taskforce demonstrates that this government, when it talks about better regulation and helping business prosper, gets on and does it. I present the following paper:

Better Regulation Taskforce—Ministerial statement, 12 May 2021

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

MS CASTLEY (Yerrabi) (11.46): As the shadow minister for business and as a former small business owner, Minister Cheyne's statement about her Better Regulation Taskforce has left me flabbergasted—so much waffle by an old and tired government that has been in power for more than 20 years but still does not get small business and is completely out of touch.

Minister Cheyne declares in her statement that one of the task force's first and most critical task has been talking to business about how to talk to business. I will say it

again: one of its first and most critical tasks has been talking to business about how to talk to business! Are we serious about the 30,000 small businesses in the ACT that employ one in four Canberrans? The Labor-Greens have been wielding power in this nation's capital for more than two decades, but they are still working out how to talk to small business. Whatever happened to picking up the phone, walking the street, handing out your business card and saying, "G'day. How can I help you today?"

Minister Cheyne also reveals the key principles underpinning the task force's approach: firstly, that we know everyone is busy; secondly, we recognise engagement is a two-way process; and, thirdly, we are engaging directly with business owners. Well, thank goodness for that. No wonder the small business sector despairs at four more years of this out-of-touch government. Small business owners are smart operators and they have no interest in political babble and waffle. They know when they are being duded by a government and lost in reviews and task forces that are apparently still learning how to talk.

That is why the small business community backs the Canberra Liberals' call for the government to establish a small business ministerial advisory council, to do away with all of the task forces and have a permanent body with regular, high level access to the minister and government where decisions are made. Minister Cheyne said that a council would be a burden on business and time consuming. Instead, she serves up a task force with the critical task of talking to business about how to talk to business.

Before concluding, I note that Minister Cheyne said she has met with the Mitchell Traders Association and has built stronger relationships of communication and response. I have also been chatting with Mitchell traders. I wonder whether she has spoken to the local businesses that supply and install solar panels and are struggling because business has dried up as Canberrans wait for government to kick off its loan scheme.

I spoke to companies who were left high and dry by this government, as customers put on the brakes the moment the government announced the scheme in early August last year. That is 3½ thousand Canberrans who have expressed interest in the loan scheme, but it means that there are 3½ thousand customers that these businesses do not have and they are now struggling to stay afloat while they wait. The government expected this scheme to be up and running by April, but business is still waiting. Where is the certainty that business needs?

Canberra's small business community gets either whacked or ignored by this government, or it cops ministerial statements full of guff that show no understanding and a complete lack of respect for the small business warriors who are at the front-line of our economic recovery.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Personal explanation

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): Under standing order 46 and possibly also 47, I seek to make a personal explanation and to explain words.

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Cain): Please proceed.

MS CHEYNE: To suit Ms Castley's own agenda in her questions to Minister Berry yesterday in question time, and now again in her speech, she has intimated that she has been quoting me. However, I wish to stress that I have been verballled, including to a point that Ms Castley is using words that I have never uttered.

Civil Law (Wrongs) Amendment Bill 2021

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

Title read by Clerk.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong—Attorney-General, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Gaming and Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction) (11.51): I move:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

I am pleased to present the Civil Law (Wrongs) Amendment Bill 2021 to the Assembly. The bill enacts in the ACT the Model Defamation Amendment Provisions that have been agreed to by the Council of Attorneys-General, now known as the Meeting of Attorneys-General. The bill does this by amending chapter 9 of the Civil Law (Wrongs) Act 2002 to introduce these model provisions. These amendments will improve defamation laws in the territory as a part of this national framework.

The reforms ensure that defamation law aligns more closely with the community's expectations about what should and should not be allowed. They ensure our laws do not place unreasonable limits on freedom of expression and, in particular, on the publication and discussion of matters of public interest and importance. They achieve this by providing effective and fair remedies for people whose reputations are harmed by the publication of defamatory matter and promoting speedy and non-litigious methods of resolving disputes. These amendments will continue to harmonise and unify defamation laws across jurisdictions as part 1 of a stage of reforms.

In 2005 and 2006 state and territory jurisdictions endorsed and enacted the model defamation provisions. This was to be a uniform regime for regulating defamation actions across Australia. Since 2018 the Defamation Working Party, which consists of representatives from all jurisdictions, has been working to guide the implementation of the model defamation provisions, reviewing the proposed amendments and developing options to improve the operation of defamation laws nationally.

The review of the model defamation provisions has involved detailed policy work and two rounds of stakeholder consultation. From the discussion paper released in early 2019 inviting stakeholder submissions, 44 submissions were received and three

stakeholder roundtables were held. Five main themes emerged from stakeholder submissions: first, the urgent need for the model laws to be modernised to adapt to digital communications; second, the increasing use of defamation law for trivial and vexatious matters; third, parties not having sufficient incentives to resolve disputes without resorting to litigation; fourth, the need for a dedicated public interest defence to protect the ability of journalists and media organisations to report on matters of public concern; and fifth, there were several provisions requiring clarification and refinement to ensure they continue to operate as originally intended.

On 27 July 2020 the Council of Attorneys-General approved the final version of the Model Defamation Amendment Provisions 2020. This bill is the culmination of an intense reform process informed by peak legal bodies, academics, digital platforms, media companies, consumer groups, legal representatives for plaintiffs and defendants, and individuals with experience in bringing or defending defamation claims. I express thanks to those who have given their time to provide input to the development of these reforms. The model defamation amendment provisions agreed by the Council of Attorneys-General are far reaching.

The fundamental aim of this bill being presented to the Assembly today is to strike a balance between, on the one hand, providing fair remedies for a person whose reputation is harmed and, on the other, ensuring that unreasonable limits are not placed on a person's right to freedom of expression. This balance is especially important to strike when it concerns matters of public interest. Any individual's right to freedom of expression is important but when they bring new information to light that can contribute to public debate it is even more important to make sure that right is not overwhelmed.

With the rise of digital platforms and digital media over the past years we have seen a clear need for our laws to keep up with these revolutionary ways of communicating and disseminating information. These are challenges on a scale that the reforms in 2005 and 2006 were not designed to handle, and this bill helps realign our defamation laws with modern expectations.

Importantly, this does not mark the end of reforms to defamation laws. A second stage of national work focusing on the liabilities and responsibilities of digital platforms for defamatory content published online is already progressing. Stage 2 will consider, among other issues, takedown procedures for defamatory content published online and the extension of privilege to statements made to employers about allegations of unlawful conduct.

It is important to note this bill supports the right to freedom of expression through introducing and refining several defences to a defamation action. The most notable of these defences relates to the responsible communication on a matter of public interest.

One of the key messages conveyed in developing these amendments is that existing defences did not adequately protect media publication regarding matters of public interest. Submissions received by the Defamation Working Party noted that the existing defences relating to fair reporting and public concern have not been successfully argued by a mass media defendant since they were introduced. While this

does not mean that every case defended on the basis of public interest should succeed, the stark absence of a successful defence on this ground suggests the existing framework has not achieved the object of facilitating open discussion on matters of public importance.

A dedicated public interest defence exists in the United Kingdom, Canada and New Zealand, and now too it will exist in Australia generally and in the ACT specifically if this bill is passed. Getting the balance right between the right to reputation and the right to freedom of expression is of fundamental importance in a human rights jurisdiction like the ACT. Both these rights are protected under the Human Rights Act 2004, and a key focus in this bill has been getting the balance right between the two.

The bill introduces a raft of reforms to address the increasing use of defamation law for trivial and vexatious matters. At the forefront of these reforms is the introduction of the widely supported serious harm threshold. This amendment requires that a plaintiff prove that the publication of defamatory matter has caused or is likely to cause serious harm to the reputation of the plaintiff. There are additional mechanisms incorporated in this bill which will ensure that this threshold question is determined as soon as practicable before a defamation trial commences to facilitate the expedient resolution of matters. This will increase the efficiency and operation of defamation laws in the territory.

The introduction of a serious harm threshold is complemented by the further amendment requiring an aggrieved person to issue a concerns notice before litigation can be commenced. This mandatory requirement will further encourage the expedient resolution of defamation matters as well as providing a clear mechanism through which parties may seek to resolve the dispute before proceedings are even commenced. The territory stands to benefit from this legal framework that will encourage pre-trial resolution to alleviate resources on the judicial system and provide protections to people answering to trivial defamation claims.

While the model defamation provisions are uniform there are slight differences across defamation laws in Australia due to each jurisdiction's respective legal frameworks. The ACT is one of three jurisdictions where defamation proceedings are heard by a judge alone. This bill implements the model defamation amendment provisions in such a way that is congruous with the laws of the ACT to adopt a uniform law that fits within the ACT legal environment. This will ensure that the bill will introduce amendments that allow the model provisions to operate effectively in the ACT, including that defamation trials will continue to be heard by a judge alone.

I am pleased to say that this bill not only is compatible with human rights but will, in fact, promote and balance a number of rights. I am confident that the amendments in this bill will improve the effective administration and operation of the laws in the territory. This bill is the result of hard, careful work and I believe it will be of great benefit to the territory and the nation. I commend the bill to the Assembly.

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

Sitting suspended from 12.01 to 2 pm.

Questions without notice

Government—business support

MS LEE: My question is to the minister for business. Minister, I refer to a recent *Canberra Times* article stating that car-sharing company GoGet has closed in Canberra, removing its 27 cars, saying it was quitting the ACT to focus on “growing markets”. The 2016 deal that brought GoGet to Canberra was part of the Labor-Greens power sharing agreement in 2012, with the government setting aside 22 car parks in Civic, Russell and Dickson for the company.

The news follows the Liberals’ call for the government to set up a small business ministerial advisory council, which you opposed, saying it would be time-consuming and a burden on small business. Minister, what financial support or subsidies, if any, did the government give GoGet to establish and operate in Canberra?

MS CHEYNE: First of all, I might need to remind the opposition leader of exactly what happened before lunch, which is that I have already made a personal explanation that I did not use those words. Perhaps the opposition might like to think about not repeating things that were never said.

I do not have detail about GoGet, and I will take that on notice.

MS LEE: Minister, when and how did you learn that GoGet was planning to shut up shop in the ACT? What help or assistance did the government provide?

MS CHEYNE: I learned it through the media.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, could a small business ministerial advisory council have helped GoGet by giving the company high-level access to government to be supported and continue operations?

MS CHEYNE: Businesses already have direct access to government through me as Minister for Business and Better Regulation.

Molonglo Valley—community facilities

MRS JONES: My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services. Minister, as you are aware, currently there are not nearly enough community meeting facilities in the Molonglo Valley. At a recent meeting of the Molonglo Valley Community Forum you asked for feedback on which groups need to use such facilities. Meanwhile, in a spectacular failure of planning, there is a large empty community centre in the health building at Coombs which has never been fitted out or rented out for community use, which is what it was built for. The new Evelyn Scott school is not returning calls from the Molonglo Valley Community Forum to use their spaces. Are you able to build a large community facility to be owned by ACT Property Group to serve the community of the Molonglo Valley?

MR STEEL: I am not sure in what capacity Mrs Jones is asking me this question but I can certainly try to answer for her. I am interested, as a local member, in this matter. Certainly we understand the importance of the provision of community facilities, including in our growing suburbs. I did attend the Molonglo community forum to seek feedback on the range of community groups that may need to be using our community facilities.

Of course we have a range of community facilities already in Molonglo, including our two fantastic public schools, which provide a meeting place for many different community groups. To gain a better understanding, I will be sitting down with the Molonglo community forum to get an understanding about at what times community groups need to use space, what sized community groups and what the levels of activity are, so that we can then look at what the options might be in the short term to provide these sorts of spaces, if they are not being met in the facilities provided through the Education Directorate.

Of course, the long-term plan which Labor brought to the election was to commit to co-designing a new community centre and library for Molonglo. That rightly should be located in the Molonglo commercial centre as the major hub of activity in the future. But we know that in the interim, before that is built, there will be the need for the community to have space. So we are going to have that conversation.

We committed to that process. I am not sure that others on the opposite side committed to that but we are committed to getting on and doing that in consultation with the community.

MRS JONES: Minister, do you, as Minister for Transport and City Services, including ACT Property Group, have a policy under which you could purchase the current unfinished large community meeting place in Coombs, or in the long term will Coombs not have a community space because of this failure?

MR STEEL: City Services does not run ACT Property Group. They are in two different directorates. But certainly we are looking at the range of options to provide community space. Property Group manages our existing ACT properties and it is not usually in the process of building new ones. But certainly we are interested in what the interim solutions could be in the Coombs and Wright areas, noting that there is a new community centre that is being built in Denman Prospect. In fact, the roof has now gone on the community centre; so we are looking at what the range of facilities are. Of course we also have Stromlo Cottage as well that is available for the community. There are a range of community facilities.

We want to just work out with the new Molonglo forum what those needs are so that we can ensure that in this interim period before the new community centre is built in the town centre there are solutions available. We will look at all options. I know that there is that existing, privately owned facility that they have not made available for community activities. That may not be the only option. We will look at all the options available to us.

MR HANSON: Minister, when will the new community centre be built?

MR STEEL: Following consultation with the community. We committed to that in the election.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MR STEEL: I do not think you committed to anything, so under the Liberals there would be no community centre at all. We have committed to co-design. It's a deep level of engagement with the community about what they would like to see. I understand the planning minister is working on an estate development plan for the new Molonglo commercial centre. I look forward to that work going on and of course we will be looking, as part of that estate, to have a community facility that will meet all the needs of the current residents of the Molonglo Valley and the future residents as well. That should be located in the town centre, close to public transport—access for everyone in the Molonglo Valley.

Planning—entertainment precincts

MS CLAY: My question is to the Minister for Skills. Will the government include a live music venue and arts precinct in the construction of the new Woden CIT campus?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. The ACT government is committed to building a fantastic, new, modern state-of-the-art CIT facility in Woden. We have engaged architects to start developing the reference designs and then we will be undertaking consultation with the community. Consultation has already been underway in relation to the site and block massing. Further consultation will occur around the middle of the year in relation to an estate development plan for the site. We have been engaging with staff and students already through the CIT directly to talk about their needs in relation to the new facility.

There are, of course, a range of existing arts facilities around Woden. Our government built, in 2014, the new performing arts centre at Canberra College, so there is a space for performing arts very close by at another education institution. The government also has plans underway for a new community centre in Woden, which will also have the opportunity to be a flexible home for the arts. In addition to that, the ACT government is undertaking upgrades, which are under construction at the present time, of Woden Library, which will include a space for some arts, including a recording studio.

We are taking all of those things into account in the design as well as the functional needs that will be required as part of the design of new CIT. At the moment we expect that pretty much all of the functions that were at CIT Reid will come over to CIT at Woden and will be incorporated into the design. That includes the arts-related disciplines. Those facilities will need to be provided as part of CIT Woden, and it will be a fantastic, brand-new facility for them to use.

MS CLAY: Will the government ensure that zoning and noise regulations are set up in the right way to support a live music venue in Woden CIT?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. There certainly will be spaces that are available for the training of students in those related disciplines. We will, of course, ensure that those are appropriately built with soundproofing and the like, if that is required. One of the benefits of building in a town centre is that, while there are some existing residents on the northern side, at Grand Central Towers, it is an area that is primarily for commercial activity. This type of use lends itself very well to the town centre and will be a major part of its regeneration going forward. Six thousand students will be using this area, so there is an opportunity to have more people catching public transport to the area and accessing the facilities, which will contribute to a significant modernisation of the CIT's facilities but also their ability to work with business and industry and innovate within the new Woden town centre campus.

That work is currently underway, but we will be undertaking consultation with the community about the design going forward, and I look forward to inviting all people to have their say, particularly those who are going to be using the new campus—students and staff.

MR DAVIS: Minister, what work has the government done to support live music venues and the establishment of an arts precinct in my electorate of Brindabella?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question. It is just not in my portfolio area, I am sorry. I will just leave it there; I will not even take it on notice, thanks.

Trees—removal

MR HANSON: This question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services. I refer to the recent removal of trees in the western courtyard of the ACT Legislative Assembly. Minister, why is it that when trees affect plumbing in the Legislative Assembly building they can be removed, but when trees affect plumbing in residents' homes across Canberra, the request is so often refused?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question. He might want to get his own federal minister to go and ask the NCA why they approved the tree removal. It is simply not in the jurisdiction of the ACT government in relation to those tree removals. We have—

Mrs Jones: The tree is here, in the Assembly precinct.

MR STEEL: That is right. It is on NCA-designated land. Have a look at ACTmapi; it is very clear. The NCA has given approval for the removal of what I think were birch trees. Please get your facts straight before you ask questions.

In relation to other trees, of course, we look at trees. We do not just remove trees for any reason. There are criteria that we need to look at. We want to make sure that we are protecting our canopy and growing our canopy. We are committed to doing that—30 per cent by 2040. It is something that we think is really important. In each case we will look at what damage has been undertaken through stormwater or to other utilities or private blocks in making that assessment. But if there is a particular house that you want to raise with me, Mr Hanson—

Mr Hanson: I often do.

MR STEEL: Please take it up with me again. If you think we have got it wrong, I am happy to consider it again. But these things are often governed by guidelines and legislation—the Tree Protection Act, in particular—in relation to leased land. As you are aware, we have been undertaking a review of that act. I have already anticipated that legislation will come before the Assembly around the end of the year which will look at tree protection, not only on leased land but on public land as well.

MR HANSON: Minister, why is it that the NCA is willing to remove trees that are damaging plumbing but in many cases you are not?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question. I do not think there is a clear comparison. Each site will be looked at on a case-by-case basis. Obviously, we do not want to remove trees if they are providing a benefit to the neighbourhood. If they are causing a significant problem, sometimes approval is given for them to be removed. It depends where they are, where they are situated and what the level of damage is in the particular case.

MS LAWDER: Minister, why can't your government be more understanding of the concerns of Canberra residents who are trying to get trees removed where the roots continually damage their plumbing?

MR STEEL: We are absolutely considerate of what is happening on people's property in relation to trees. Just this week I met face-to-face at the Assembly with a couple that have had some damage as a result of a tree, to talk through what can be done. We certainly are listening to people, but these are governed by guidelines and legislation. Ultimately, we are not a government that wants to see trees chopped down for no reason. There has to be a very good reason to be able to do so. Often these issues can be managed.

The reality is that trees do grow roots and that does cause damage from time to time. That is something that we have to live with in order to make sure that we have the fantastic canopy that we have in Canberra, that really creates the entire character of our city.

Transport—COVID-19

DR PATERSON: My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services. Minister, can you please provide an outline of the impact of COVID-19 on the territory's public transport system?

MR STEEL: I thank Dr Paterson for her question. It is fair to say that COVID-19 has presented challenges to everyone over the past year, and public transport is no different. COVID-19 saw a significant overall drop in public transport patronage, with patronage dramatically falling in early April 2020 to around 14 per cent of 2019 figures. This probably understates the real impact of the pandemic on patronages. Overall patronage numbers had increased by 7.7 per cent across the first part of the

financial year. I doubt these figures will come as a surprise to anyone in this place, as we saw working-from-home arrangements implemented on a mass scale. Patronage was driven down by school children being taught from home and a shift towards car use by the remaining commuters.

During this time, the ACT government encouraged people to use the public transport system for only essential activities, such as going to work or getting food. We continue to encourage people to use off-peak services as much as possible. Canberrans have been exceptional at being safe for themselves and others during this time and there has been no community transmission on our public transport network.

Patronage numbers have since rebounded to 75 per cent of last year's numbers. This is comfortably ahead of the numbers recorded in most jurisdictions. We are optimistic that patronage numbers will get back to the record numbers we experienced pre-pandemic once the expert health advice says we can strongly welcome people back aboard.

DR PATERSON: Minister, what are the principles that underpin the ACT public transport recovery plan to support the ongoing growth of public transport patronage in the recovery period and beyond?

MR STEEL: I thank Dr Paterson for her supplementary. Traffic volumes in Canberra are currently exceeding pre-pandemic levels overall as people have not yet returned to public transport. Our regular traffic data shows the volumes are up by over three per cent across the city, as much as eight per cent in Woden and higher in other areas on the north side. This is a trend that we need to turn around. I think we can agree that it is in no-one's interests for Canberrans to be spending more time sitting in cars stuck in traffic. As members would be aware, on 29 April I released the ACT public transport recovery plan. The plan outlines how we will set public transport on a growth path as we move beyond COVID-19.

COVID-19 has presented us with many challenges, but it also provides us with opportunities to drive long-term sustainable shifts towards public transport and active travel. Our approach to achieving sustained patronage increases in a COVID-normal world is based upon four key principles. The health and safety of passengers is paramount and we will continue to be guided by the health advice. We will continue to work to restore community confidence by fostering a gradual return to public transport that is complemented by supporting activities, such as the vaccine rollout. Our actions will be data driven and aimed at improving the passenger experience over time. We will continue to invest in our public transport system network and refine our services going forward so that they are convenient, accessible and reliable for all Canberrans who want to use public transport.

MR PARTON: A supplementary, Madam Speaker. Can the minister update the Assembly on the move to a new ticketing system and why its best-possible-case scenario start time is still so far in the distance, despite being promised years ago?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question and note that we are committed to making sure that we transition to a modern, flexible ticketing system for Transport

Canberra. It is one of the key ways that we can help improve access to public transport for all Canberrans and hopefully grow patronage over time.

As the member is well aware, we have been in the market to procure a new ticketing system. We went out to an open market tender and we were then involved in a single source procurement process. As we did not receive value for money, we are now going out to the market again, but we are doing so on the basis of a change in the scope, which I have outlined as part of the transport recovery plan.

We will be looking at maintaining ticket-free transport in relation to the new ticketing system, which will mean that hopefully we will be able to attract a greater number of providers, including some potential local providers, to provide the ticketing system. That process is underway. We will start with the market sounding and then we will move through other stages of the procurement process. But, yes, we are still on target to meet a transition in 2023. It is a major transition and one that we hope will enable us to grow public transport patronage in future.

Roads—Boboyan Road

MR PARTON: My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services. I have received complaints about the poor condition of the unsealed section of Boboyan Road, which connects Canberra to Adaminaby and the Snowy Mountains. The road is becoming increasingly popular as more Canberrans discover it as a shortcut to the Snowy Mountains and interstate visitors from the Snowys discover the same. I am advised that due to heavy rainfall in recent months some ACT sections are in the worst condition they have ever been in and have become quite dangerous. Minister, what procedures do you have in place to ensure that Canberra's rural roads are safe and fit for purpose?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question. We are committed to making sure that our roads are accessible and well maintained. We are undertaking on various regional roads some upgrades. That includes a range of roads that have recently been affected by recent storm damage as well. Those roads have been assessed where necessary. I am aware that there are some issues on Boboyan Road that needed to be assessed and repairs will be made. Certain sections of our rural roads will be sealed, and we have a program to undertake that over a period of time.

MR PARTON: Minister, as you have just indicated that you are aware of the problems on Boboyan Road, will you commit to properly repairing this road as a matter of urgency?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question. We, of course, will undertake necessary repairs with a priority on safety. Going forward, we also are undertaking a range of upgrades to our rural roads. We've recently had correspondence in relation to the Smith Road, where we of course committed to undertake small levels of resealing over time on the non-sealed sections. We continue to look at what improvements we can make to our rural roads. We have had work underway with assessments on Brindabella Road out west of Stromlo as well, which is looking at cyclist safety and improvements to safety on those roads as well. We will continue to implement those

upgrades and of course try to seek federal funding where necessary to ensure that happens.

MS LAWDER: Minister, what consultation and engagement do you undertake with rural communities in the ACT to ensure their views are heard about their roads?

MR STEEL: I thank Ms Lawder for her question. In fact, the upgrades I just mentioned on Brindabella Road and the roads leading into Uriarra were a direct result of me going out to the Uriarra Village in particular and talking to Pedal Power about safety improvements on those rural roads. Yes, we do undertake consultation, and Transport and City Services officials also undertake targeted consultation with the communities and have been in touch with communities in relation to Smith Road, in particular, and our commitments there about gradual upgrades to and sealing of those roads, as well as responding, of course, to any issues that arise as a result of unplanned damage as Mr Parton has mentioned. We will of course look at those as a priority based on safety.

Municipal services—cyclepaths

MR MILLIGAN: My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services. Minister, it has been brought to my attention that a significant amount of broken glass is scattered along the cyclepath on the Monaro Highway and has been for many months. Even when the roads have been swept, the cyclepath has not been cleaned. This is especially noticeable heading city bound between Isabella Drive and Lanyon Drive, which presents a major hazard for road users. Minister, what is your policy for checking that our cyclepaths are free from such hazards?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question. Yes, we do have people regularly out looking at various issues on our roads. That includes the litter picking that occurs in the area that Mr Milligan mentioned. Where issues are identified, they are brought to the attention of Roads ACT and our broader street sweepers so that they can make sure that those issues are addressed. I am happy to raise the issue that Mr Milligan has mentioned and see whether we can rectify that. Of course, we also listen to the community and note any issues that are raised by the community in relation to the cycling network.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, do the road sweepers regularly sweep the cyclepaths on the side of the roads?

MR STEEL: Yes.

MR PARTON: What measures will you take to improve the overall path maintenance performance, given your government's commitment to active travel?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question. We are committed to active travel. That is why at the election it was Labor that committed to investing more in cyclepath and shared path maintenance—not the opposition; the Labor Party. We committed to that at the election and we are absolutely committed to investing more in active travel.

When I released the transport strategy in August last year, we committed to further investment in active travel and public transport and to rebalancing investment towards those areas to make sure that we can encourage more people to walk and cycle in our community. We have those commitments. We are getting on early in the term of our government and delivering them. That is on top of the \$9 million that we invested last year in upgrades to footpaths and shared paths across Canberra.

Planning—green waste

MRS KIKKERT: My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services. The development of Ginninderry will eventually necessitate the relocation of the Canberra Sand and Gravel green waste centre. In answer to a question about the eventual relocation, the minister said that a longer term solution for green waste disposal in Belconnen and north Canberra was being investigated. The minister also stated that the government has had no consultation with CSG about the possible relocation options. I note that my question is not about the Ginninderry development, it is not about how the development will be gas free, it is not about alternative services to dispose of green waste and it is not about the green bin program. Minister, my question is: will the ACT government guarantee that there will continue to be a green waste centre in the west Belconnen area after the relocation, similar to the one currently provided by CSG at the Parkwood site?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. Of course, the ACT government is committed to providing better services for Canberrans and creating a circular economy. That is why our government has rolled out green bin garden waste collection to all households that want it, so every single household in Canberra has the ability to have a green bin and have their garden waste collected from their household.

Mrs Jones: A point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: Resume your seat, please.

Mrs Jones: It is on relevance, Madam Speaker. I understand it is early in the answer, but when the question specifically says that the question is not about green waste bins, even though green waste bins were mentioned, can the minister answer whether he is actually able to guarantee that there will continue to be a green waste centre at west Belconnen?

MADAM SPEAKER: The minister's answer is in order, and you jumped on a point of order within 15 seconds of the minister's response.

MR STEEL: Madam Speaker, I know the words "green bin" upset them, because they fought against them every step of the way. But we are committed to providing those options to people—a range of different options at the household level and at drop-off points across the territory. Of course, we already have drop-off points at—

Mr Hanson: A point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: Resume your seat.

Mr Hanson: Madam Speaker, the minister said in a statement that the Canberra Liberals fought against green bins every step of the way. I believe there was an announcement at the 2008, 2012 and 2016 elections, so I would ask the minister to correct the record or withdraw, so that he is not subject to misleading the Assembly, which he clearly has in this case.

MADAM SPEAKER: I will not ask the minister to correct the record. I will give him the time he has left.

MR STEEL: As part of the Ginninderry development, we made it clear that the west Belconnen drop-off centre will have to close. The licence expires on 30 June and will not be renewed, due to the need to vacate the land so that site remediation can occur. *(Time expired.)*

MRS KIKKERT: Minister, why has the government not communicated with CSG about the relocation, and when will they start?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. I am not sure that we are planning on relocating them. That is a matter for them. If they want to provide services elsewhere, that is fine. We are committed to providing drop-off locations at Mitchell and at the Mugga Lane Resource Recovery Centre, through Corkhill Brothers, for green waste, for people that want to drop it off for free. We are undertaking a review of waste facilities and future provision for the north side of Canberra, which is ongoing. It is not a piece of work that has been finalised. It will look at the further provision of drop-off facilities not only for green waste but for other services in the future. I remind the opposition again that we provided access for every household to garden organics collection, and we look forward to extending that to food organic collection in the future.

MR CAIN: Minister, despite the rather disappointing answer to Mrs Kikkert's question—

MADAM SPEAKER: Go straight to the question.

MR CAIN: will the government consult with west Belconnen's residents and businesses on the relocation of the Parkwood green waste centre?

MR STEEL: We have been very clear and upfront that this would close by the middle of the year. This is not a site that will be ongoing. It is part of the broader development of the Ginninderry area, including the rehabilitation of the west Belconnen landfill, so that these areas can be turned into fantastic recreational spaces for the residents of west Belconnen and for the new residents of Ginninderry as well. This is something that we need to do for the long-term benefit of our city and the growth of our city, to ensure that we have access to those fantastic green spaces and to affordable housing in the area. Many places across Canberra will still be available to drop off green waste. But we will also collect it from your house.

Health—nurse-led walk-in centres

MR DAVIS: My question is to the Minister for Health and it relates to referrals between walk-in centres and the emergency departments. Given that walk-in centres are partially designed to encourage people with minor injuries and illnesses away from emergency departments, can you talk me through the policy in the emergency department when somebody presents with an ailment that could be treated instead in a walk-in centre?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Davis for his question. One of the things we are seeing in relation to walk-in centres—which, of course, the Liberals have belatedly come to the party in supporting having opposed them, like green bins, for many, many years—is that people are understanding the health care they can receive in walk-in centres from our fabulous advanced practice nurses and nurse practitioners. That is why we are seeing a relatively small number of people being diverted from walk-in centres to the emergency department. When that occurs—and I recognise Mr Davis’s question goes to what happens when people are in the ED who could go to a walk-in centre—but just for the information of members, when a walk-in centre client is redirected to the ED for review their clinical notes from the assessment and treatment are available to ED staff through the CHS clinical portal and those notes outline the assessment findings from the consultation and the reason for referral. If the referral is urgent and via ambulance, the ED is contacted at the time of transport for a handover and to ensure that any urgent care need is met. So that is how it works in one direction.

In terms of the emergency departments across our hospital systems—we do, in fact, have two emergency departments—recognising that people could have potentially attended a walk-in centre, that information is not currently provided to people in that specific way. But one of the things we are looking at doing at Canberra Hospital is putting some more information at the very front of the emergency department to let people know the services that are available across the territory. Of course, I would strongly encourage people and encourage members to encourage their constituents to download the ACT Health app which provides information about the waiting times at our emergency departments and our walk-in centres.

MR DAVIS: Minister, what are the barriers in establishing a policy that would see the emergency department refer minor cases directly to walk-in centres upon presentation to allow those with more serious ailments to be treated more expeditiously?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Davis for his supplementary question. It is a question of providing good patient care. So, again, we are looking at providing information to people about the services that are available. But it is not necessarily clear at the time of triage that there is not some underlying reason that people have presented to the emergency department rather than a walk-in centre. It is not the current practice of the emergency department to refer people away from the emergency department once they have arrived. Our emergency department staff—nurses and doctors and all of our support staff—are committed to providing excellent

care for people as they present to the emergency department and will take people as they present. That is their model of care.

MR BRADDOCK: Minister, what work is the government doing to build the profile of walk-in centres among other hospital departments, but especially in the emergency department?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Braddock for the supplementary. I think our staff right across our health services are very well aware of the fact that we have walk-in centres and the things that they can do. One of the jobs we continue to do is increase the understanding of the broader community about what can be treated in a walk-in centre and the fantastic work that our advanced practice nurses and nurse practitioners do in our walk-in centres every day as well as, of course, our allied health staff. We are also looking to increase the capacity of our walk-in centres. We have made election commitments in terms of additional nurse practitioners and expanding the scope of practice with our walk-in centres at the moment.

Our walk-in centres also regularly undertake a review of presentations to determine whether new protocols are required. In addition, they're currently undertaking a small retrospective review of clients who they have referred to the emergency departments. That will confirm whether referrals were appropriate and ascertain new opportunities for the expansion of care in walk-in centres.

I encourage Mr Braddock, Mr Davis and all members here, again, to let their community know about the advantages of going to a walk-in centre where you can get absolutely outstanding care from our fabulous nurses and nurse practitioners for a wide range of minor injuries and illnesses.

Building—proposed developer licensing scheme

MR PETTERSSON: My question is to the Minister for Sustainable Building and Construction. Minister, last term the ACT government announced it would agree to and implement an Australian-first property developer licensing scheme to ensure new multi-unit buildings are built to a high standard, enforce sanctions against dodgy developers and give buyers confidence in one of the most important purchases of their lives. Can you please give an update on where that work is up to?

MS VASSAROTTI: Thank you, Mr Pettersson, for the question. Absolutely the ACT government is committed to developing and introducing a licence scheme for property developers. It was a commitment that was made in the lead-up to the election and it is part of the parliamentary agreement. It really builds on the very important work that has been happening around building and quality over the last term.

We have commenced work in terms of developing this licensing scheme, and what we have been doing to date is scoping this piece of work. We already have some work that is looking at things such as our security of payment system. We need to look at how any licensing scheme fits within that new work, that new payment system that has been introduced as part of the initial element.

We are looking at some key policy areas because this is actually something that does not exist in any other jurisdiction in Australia; so we are really starting from scratch. We are looking at what an appropriate definition of a property developer is, what the interactions are between different parties that are involved in projects, and instances where a builder and a property developer might be the same thing, as well as looking at what accountability mechanisms currently exist in law.

We have commenced discussions with industry in relation to that. We have been talking particularly with the Building Regulations Advisory Committee to get feedback from industry about how this might work and for working at that policy level in terms of what the next steps are.

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, when can the community expect the scheme to be established?

MS VASSAROTTI: Thank you, Mr Pettersson, for the question. Because we are doing this scoping work we are absolutely committed to introducing the scheme within this term. In terms of the complexity of the task, this scoping work will give us a really good understanding of when we will be introducing the new scheme.

MS ORR: Minister, how will a developer licensing scheme ensure quality and accountability in the industry?

MS VASSAROTTI: Thank you, Ms Orr, for the question. In the answer I talked about accountability, and what we really are looking at is ensuring that appropriate accountability sits with the appropriate people. We have licences that are in place for elements such as builders. What we are looking to do is identify appropriate accountability for different parts within the system. A key element of this is actually understanding the relationships in the building process and who is responsible for what, being able to provide information to clients and also the regulator, and also a mechanism that, if there is something that has gone wrong, we actually have levers to ensure that a property developer is a fit and proper person and we are able to respond if there are issues.

Roads—traffic management

MS LAWDER: My question is to the Minister for City Services. Minister, I refer to traffic management concerns around two developments on Cynthea Teague Crescent and Oakden Street in Greenway. I also asked you about this during question time on 31 March. Residents' requests for traffic management measures during construction have been declined; however, those requested by the developers were approved. Why the double standard?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. I am, of course, aware and I did respond to Ms Lawder in relation to the questions that she asked me previously in question time. It is something that we continue, through Transport Canberra, City Services and other directorates, to discuss with the developer and we are looking at how we can deal particularly with the parking issues associated with the increase in

construction vehicles and traffic on Cynthea Teague Crescent. It is going to be a very busy street, I think, even once this particular development has been built. It is in a fantastic area near Lake Tuggeranong. It is something that we will continue to monitor, and we will work to address any issues that arise in relation to that development. Of course we will continue to work with the developer as this construction progresses to make sure that we can minimise the impact of the development on traffic.

MS LAWDER: I have a supplementary question. Minister, when will the government start properly considering the needs of residents as well as the needs of developers in these construction issues?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. We consider all traffic issues associated with a particular development. Those need to be considered thoroughly through the development process at the application stage but also during the construction so that it is monitored and managed. Of course we consider any issues that are raised by members of the community, but these are challenging issues to address. It is in an area where there are going to be a lot more people living, close to Lake Tuggeranong. There already exist large multi-unit properties with large numbers of people living in this area. As there are more people in the area there will be more traffic, and that is something that we will just have to monitor and work to address on an ongoing basis.

MR DAVIS: Minister, has the government taken any meetings with the developer or the subcontractors who are causing the traffic management issues in that area? If so, what have been the outcomes of those talks?

MR STEEL: I will take the specifics of the question on notice, but, yes, the ACT government has been engaging, I understand, with the body corporate in relation to this matter and it has considered the issues raised by members of the community.

Energy—Zero Carbon Certification Scheme

MR BRADDOCK: My question is to the minister for emissions reduction. Minister, why did the ACT join, as a founding partner, the Smart Energy Council's Zero Carbon Certification Scheme?

MR RATTENBURY: The Smart Energy Council's Zero Carbon Certification Scheme is a national industry-led certification scheme for renewable hydrogen, ammonia, and metal manufactures. It is a really important initiative because, as these sectors are growing, customers want to know that their product is coming from a genuinely emissions-free source. There is real market interest in these things.

Unfortunately, in Australia we have seen particularly the federal government seek to promote hydrogen that can be sourced from fossil fuel generation. Hydrogen is made using a lot of electricity. There are a number of ways to generate that, whether it is through renewable sources or fossil fuel based sources. This scheme gives clarity as to where that hydrogen comes from.

The ACT government was pleased to be a founding partner. We were approached by the Smart Energy Council, which is Canberra based. It is involved in a number of projects in the ACT but also does a lot of work nationally. We felt it was appropriate to help get this off the ground to make sure that it could get underway and provide that certification scheme, which I think will have international implications.

It will be another source of reputation building for the ACT. It will be another place where the ACT's renewable energy expertise can play its role. I think it will help create the potential for future jobs here in the ACT.

MR BRADDOCK: Minister, what is the future for hydrogen refuelling in Canberra?

MR RATTENBURY: We recently opened the ACT's—and in fact Australia's first publicly available—hydrogen refuelling station in the ACT. There are a range of projects happening here in the ACT, particularly partnerships at the ANU looking into hydrogen issues. There is also some private sector work taking place here in the ACT.

Whilst I do not think the ACT will ever be a significant producer of hydrogen—I think that will happen much more in places like South Australia and Western Australia, where there is a large excess night-time supply of renewable energy from wind farms and the like and daytime supply from solar farms—I think the ACT can really position itself as a centre of excellence for research in the hydrogen space and also as a customer for hydrogen. Certainly, with our fleet of 20 hydrogen vehicles, the first 20 hydrogen vehicles registered in Australia, we are a place where a lot of testing, research and knowledge development is going on.

MS CLAY: Minister, what is the role of hydrogen in our energy mix going forward, and what do you see as the role of government in that?

MR RATTENBURY: That is a very interesting question. There is some uncertainty. People see a lot of potential for hydrogen. The ACT government certainly does. What the applications will be a matter of both technological development and market supply development. For example, in the transport space there are different views about how much hydrogen will be part of the fleet. Some think that we will see a lot more hydrogen cars; others think hydrogen will play a bigger role in heavy vehicle transport. There is potential for hydrogen to fuel large industrial applications. There are a range of possibilities.

While it is not clear, what the ACT government wants to do is make sure that we are in the game, that we are part of the discussions, that we are capturing the opportunities here in the ACT. As I touched on earlier, I think that will predominantly be in the research, testing and policy development space, but we are very keen to make sure that we are building on our reputation as a centre of clean energy excellence and capturing the opportunities that are there for the ACT.

Parking—delivery vehicles

MS CASTLEY: My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services. We have received concerns over an apparent decline in availability of parking facilities

for delivery vehicles such as those delivering essential supplies and services to suburban shopping centres. In one instance the driver of an Australia Post van was fined \$276 because of an unavoidable need to park his vehicle in a no-stopping zone at Chisholm shopping centre to deliver essential mail and parcels. This is a ridiculous situation. We are aware of a similar issue at Florey shops where you have agreed to undertake a seven-day survey to identify delivery vehicle movements. Minister, will you commit to completing a seven-day traffic survey to identify delivery vehicle movements at Chisholm shops as well?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. We certainly understand the importance of having a range of different vehicle parking spaces to meet the needs of customers at the shops as well as business owners, their employees and also those businesses that serve the commercial premises at each local shopping centre. We are always happy to receive feedback in relation to that. I personally met with Australia Post as well and those issues are raised from time to time. We are happy to consider them in relation to parking arrangements. I am also happy to consider what is happening at that particular shopping centre.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, will you commit to creating a designated loading zone at Chisholm shopping centre as a matter of urgency?

MR STEEL: When we look at changing parking arrangements an assessment is undertaken on the range of existing parking at the shops and what loading zones are already available in what locations around the shops. We can have a look at that in relation to that shopping centre, but I am not going to commit to a particular parking outcome now without that assessment having first taken place.

MR PARTON: Minister, what is your policy in regard to waiving the obligation to pay parking fines that have been given in this sort of circumstance?

MR STEEL: Certainly if someone has concerns over a parking fine they are welcome to raise those. But people need to comply with the road rules and they need to comply with parking policy and parking law.

Mr Parton: And to deliver the mail!

MR STEEL: We need to make sure that is the case, because Ms Lawder has just raised an issue of noncompliance with parking in a different location. So we need a consistent approach across the ACT when it comes to parking enforcement. I am happy to consider changes to make it more flexible for vehicles to park at a particular shopping centre, as Ms Castley has raised, but we need to make sure that in relation to enforcement people are doing the right thing and obeying the law.

Municipal services—tree removal

MR CAIN: My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services. I am aware of a Ginninderra resident whose driveway and retaining wall has had thousands of dollars of damage done to it by a protected tree. They have petitioned the government to have the tree removed. They would be happy to have the tree replaced

with something less damaging. Minister, how is it fair to residents when they must pay sometimes thousands of dollars for damage caused by a tree they did not plant and are not allowed to remove and replace?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question regarding trees. They are a fantastic part of Canberra's city landscape. One of the reasons why we love living here is our fantastic trees. Trees do cause damage. As I have said, I am happy to consider the circumstances, exceptional or not, in relation to a particular case; they will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. Tree roots can cause damage to some infrastructure and the approach that TCCS takes is to try and, where possible, stop that damage from occurring and remediate if possible. It depends on whose tree it is as well. I do not know the circumstances of the case—it may be on leased land; it may be on unleased land. We can consider all those circumstances in relation to a particular case.

Opposition members interjecting—

MR STEEL: There are guidelines and laws, and the member is a member of the Assembly and has a responsibility as a legislator in here as well. We will be looking at outcomes of a review into the Tree Protection Act later on in the year and also further tree legislation. There will be an opportunity for all members of this place to have their say about how trees should be managed in the ACT according to law.

MR CAIN: Minister, what financial assistance does the government offer people who continually have their property damaged by protected trees, irrespective of who owns the tree?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question. I am happy to provide the detail on notice, but there is a possibility that TCCS can consider providing financial support if damage has occurred in particular circumstances. I will outline those circumstances to you on notice.

MRS KIKKERT: Minister, will the government consider reimbursing residents who have to pay excessive costs to repair property that has been damaged by protected trees?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. As I have just said, I will provide that detail to the Assembly on the guidelines in relation on reimbursement for damage that occurs as a result of a tree.

Industrial relations—work safety

MS ORR: My question is to the Minister for Industrial Relations and Workplace Safety. Minister, how is the ACT government protecting Canberra workers?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Ms Orr for her question and, of course, her interest in workplace safety in the ACT. The government is working on legislation to establish industrial manslaughter as an offence under the Work Health and Safety Act. This legislative change will include an increase in scope of responsibility and an increase

in penalties. It will ensure that the families of those killed at work have greater access to justice.

Last month was International Workers Memorial Day, a sombre reminder of why work health and safety laws are so important. They establish an obligation to provide a safe workplace and to ensure that everyone returns home safe at the end of the day. Psychosocial hazards in the workplace can be just as dangerous as physical hazards. That is why the government, thanks to Ms Orr's recent motion, is working to shed light on this important matter and to recognise it in work health and safety laws and practices. Next week, I will be meeting with work health and safety ministers from around Australia and I will be advocating for these important changes to occur nationally in the model work health and safety laws.

MS ORR: Minister, how will the government continue to protect vulnerable workers?

MR GENTLEMAN: The government has a strong record of standing up for work rights and protections of workers. We introduced the nation-leading Secure Local Jobs Code in 2016. The code protects workers in vulnerable industries by holding their employers to high ethical standards. Anyone tendering for a government contract must show that they are doing the right thing by their workers. I am very proud of the code, and I look forward to implementing the recommendations of a recent review of the code to make it even stronger.

The ACT Labor government has a commitment to protecting vulnerable workers. We are working on anti-privatisation legislation to stamp out insecure work and its dangerous and dodgy workplace practices and conditions. Secure jobs and workplace protection are vital to workplace safety, and I look forward to bringing this legislation forward by the end of the year. The government is also introducing a labour hire licensing scheme to protect vulnerable workers in the labour hire industries.

MR HANSON: A supplementary, Madam Speaker. Minister what are you doing in response to statements by the Australian Federal Police Association that their members are at breaking point? Are you doing the right thing by police?

MR GENTLEMAN: We certainly are investing each year in more police for the ACT, more resources for the police in the ACT, and ensuring their wellbeing—

Opposition members interjecting—

MR GENTLEMAN: unlike those opposite, who at each budget have voted against extra funding for ACT Policing.

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

Supplementary answer to question without notice

Government—business support

MS CHEYNE: Just on GoGet: TCCS and the NCA provided GoGet and Popcar with free designated-parking spaces within territory and NCA car parks over a trial period

of two years. The trial was evaluated, and free parking was continued via parking permits issued by Access Canberra.

GoGet is not a local Canberra business, nor is it a small business. GoGet is based in Sydney, with an estimated annual revenue of \$30 million. GoGet reported difficulty managing its small fleet of 27 vehicles in Canberra because it did not have a local staffing presence. GoGet did not request additional support from the ACT government to remain in Canberra. GoGet also removed its operations in Adelaide at around the same time. Popcar continues to operate in Canberra, as does Car Next Door.

Papers

Madam Speaker presented the following paper:

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee—Bill referred—Courts and Other Justice Legislation Amendment Bill 2021—Correspondence to Speaker, dated 28 April 2021.

Mr Gentleman presented the following paper:

ACT Children and Young People’s Commitment 2015-2025—Progress update on the implementation, dated May 2021.

Education—trans and gender diverse students

MR PETTERSSON (Yerrabi) (2.59): I move:

That this Assembly:

- (1) acknowledges that the ACT Government:
 - (a) is committed to ensuring that our education system is welcoming, affirming and inclusive of all children; and
 - (b) has already worked to protect trans and gender diverse students through programs such as the Safe and Supportive Schools Policy;
- (2) notes that school-aged children of our friends and neighbours in the Canberra region, as well as wider NSW, are not being afforded the same care and respect, because:
 - (a) One Nation’s proposed Education Legislation Amendment (Parental Rights) Bill prohibits supporting trans and gender diverse students in the NSW education system as it prohibits recognising their existence;
 - (b) the proposed bill would put teachers at risk of losing their accreditation for acknowledging that trans and gender diverse people exist;
 - (c) the bill would further marginalise children who would have no access to information about who they are and what they are experiencing; and
 - (d) the bill undermines the important role that our education system plays in enabling a child’s development of knowledge, understanding, and empathy towards people from different backgrounds and life experiences; and

(3) calls on the:

- (a) ACT Government to continue its work supporting trans and gender diverse students within our education system;
 - (b) ACT Assembly to write to the chair of NSW Parliamentary Portfolio Committee No 3 – Education, Mark Latham MLC, consistent with the terms of this motion;
 - (c) ACT Minister for Education and Youth Affairs to write to her counterpart in the NSW Government expressing our concern about the effect of the bill debate on trans and diverse children in the ACT and urge the NSW Government to vote down the bill; and
- (b) ACT Assembly to condemn those that support transphobia.

Today I rise to speak about the importance of protecting our young people and ensuring that our education system is as inclusive and welcoming as possible. Trans and gender diverse kids face discrimination day in, day out. We, as leaders and lawmakers, need to do our best to ensure that these kids are safe, happy and included, especially within our education system.

The bill being moved by Pauline Hanson's One Nation in the New South Wales parliament achieves nothing by isolating these students further and denying them the support that they deserve, and sends a terrible message to trans and gender diverse students in ACT schools, many of whom live in New South Wales.

I am proud of what this ACT government has achieved in protecting the rights of our trans and gender diverse students. Since its establishment, the safe and inclusive schools initiative has proved to be a valuable resource in supporting young people that are same-sex attracted, intersex or gender diverse. By advising school staff on inclusion practices, as well as providing individual style support to students, the program has made a positive difference to our young people's wellbeing. This is exactly the sort of program that vulnerable children and young people need, and I am so very proud that the ACT government is a leader in this area.

I am sure that we all remember that in our last term of government we took the necessary steps to ban the practice of conversion therapy in the ACT. We worked to make sure that kids would be protected from these practices, which can have long-term and life-changing psychological consequences. Whilst those opposite pandered to groups like the Australian Christian Lobby, we took the necessary steps to ensure that any and every child can grow up safe and protected in Canberra.

We also legislated to allow our young people to affirm their gender identity more easily on legal documents. This is often one of the most challenging areas for many trans and gender diverse young people to navigate, and we need to continue ensuring that their voices are heard and listened to. The ACT government must continue its great work supporting trans and gender diverse students in our education system. Whilst we have implemented positive initiatives, there is still more to be done.

The recently released *Writing Themselves in 4* ACT report provides some concerning insights as to how young LGBTIQ students feel in our schools. More than half of the

young people who participated in the survey said they felt unsafe and uncomfortable at school due to their sexuality or gender identity and less than a quarter felt that they could safely use bathrooms at their school. Further, only 60 per cent felt that they could safely use their chosen name or pronouns and only 65 per cent felt that they could safely wear clothes that match their gender identity. Those stats are shameful. They show that the ACT government has more to do.

Encouraging schools to support students in affirming their gender will allow students to feel safe, supported and accepted in their educational environment. Supporting school staff so that they best know how to assist their trans and gender diverse students goes a long way to making these kids feel welcome. We need to continue ensuring that all our schools' physical environments promote inclusivity and allow young people to feel comfortable at school because no child can learn effectively in an environment where they do not feel safe.

One Nation's proposed bill being moved by Mr Latham would effectively prohibit supporting or recognising trans and gender diverse students in the New South Wales education system. It would put teachers at risk of losing their accreditation and their jobs if they were to even acknowledge that trans and gender diverse people existed. It would mean that school counsellors could be fired for having a conversation with a student experiencing gender identity issues. Where these counsellors could once help and comfort these students, they would now have to remain silent and turn vulnerable students away. Even sympathetic teachers would be forced into deadnaming a student, pretending that their identity does not exist.

Kids experiencing gender dysphoria would have nowhere to turn to for help, no-one to talk to and no-one to hear them. As Mr Latham stated in his second reading speech:

My bill outlaws gender fluidity teaching, course development and teacher training and ends the accreditation, and thus the employment, of any individual breaking that law.

What sort of behaviour would this encourage? If teachers are not able to acknowledge a trans kid's identity, how would other students react? We have all been through school and we all know that school is not the easiest time for everyone, but it is particularly difficult and tough for LGBTIQ students. As legislators, as leaders, we have a responsibility to look out for these kids and support them where we can and speak out when others will not.

Mr Latham's bill enables bullying, plain and simple. Our schools should be teaching kindness, respect and tolerant attitudes towards every student, regardless of their gender identity. The children who will be impacted by these horrific changes live so close to us, just over the border. Many residents of the ACT region move between the New South Wales and ACT education systems as they age. They deserve to be afforded the same respect and rights, regardless of the education system. But Mr Latham's bill threatens that and should be called out for what it is: discriminatory and shameful.

Time after time we have seen this kind of transphobic attitude from members sitting opposite. We have heard them describe the safe schools program as grooming our young people. We have heard that, instead of teaching our young people how to practise safe sex, we should just tell them not to do it. If these are the kinds of attitudes and beliefs that run rampant in the Canberra Liberals, how can we ever trust them in delivering an inclusive education system! I do know that there are certain members of the Canberra Liberals that are strong allies. I wish that they were more vocal.

What is not going to help vulnerable trans and gender diverse students is a debate in the New South Wales parliament over whether teachers should be allowed to recognise that these students exist, which is why I was so shocked, but not surprised, to see the comments from Andrew Wall, a former Liberal member of this Legislative Assembly, describing the existence of trans and gender diverse people as pursuing an extreme social ideology, when he appeared before the New South Wales parliament recently as a witness to those committee proceedings, as a representative of the Australian Christian Lobby.

I ask those sitting across from me today: how many other Canberra Liberals agree with Andrew Wall's characterisation? How many other Canberra Liberals agree with Mr Wall's statement that we should prohibit an extremist view of gender fluidity? Are these the views of the opposition in this chamber today? I am not sure. I wait for this debate because, if they are, the Canberra public has a right to know. They have a right to know that the views held by members of the opposition are completely incongruent with the inclusive values of Canberra.

Andrew Wall sat in this place for eight years, for much of that time as the opposition's shadow minister for education. Could you imagine if he had ever become minister for education? What kind of terrible message would that have sent to vulnerable young people in our city? What is the role of the education system if not to give children experiences that they would not have within their family, to teach them empathy and understanding, respect of others that might seem different to them on a surface level?

I know that when I was at school I was introduced to a variety of people with different life experiences whom I never would have met if not for the school environment bringing us together. That experience allowed me to become a more empathetic person, understanding people from outside my direct life experience—something that I think we can all agree on we should value.

Today I am calling on the ACT government to continue its work supporting trans and gender diverse students in our education system and to do more. When others do less, I believe that the ACT government should do more. And I am calling on this Assembly to condemn the transphobic and derogatory bill that is being moved in the New South Wales parliament.

This bill from Mr Latham is a blatant attack on the rights of trans and gender diverse young people in New South Wales schools and the Canberra region. It is an attack on the students that move between the ACT and New South Wales education systems

throughout their childhood. It is an attack on the abilities of teachers and school staff to respond in a positive and affirming way towards young people in their care. And it is an attack on our education system. To properly engage in their education, students must be provided a safe and accepting learning environment, and what others say does make a difference. I hope all members of this place can agree on that much.

MR HANSON (Murrumbidgee) (3.09): We certainly will not be opposing this motion today. I thank Mr Pettersson for bringing it forward and I think it makes some important points. I do think though—and I will go into this in my speech—that this is not necessarily the best way that this could have proceeded, given that this is a matter before the New South Wales parliament and currently is in committee there; but that is more of a procedural point with regard to that matter than a substantive one.

This is a bill that has come from One Nation. It is a private member's bill. To be honest, I had not even heard of it before this motion came on. So it is certainly not something that has engaged the opposition. But now that we are aware of it, I have looked through the speech and certainly the submissions. There are 81 submissions that have been provided and obviously there are a range of views.

One that I thought was worth quoting was from the Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations of New South Wales and the comments there. In their submission they say:

Public education in New South Wales was founded on the concept of inclusivity. Under this credo NSW schools educate students from all walks of life, irrespective of cultural or religious background or sexuality. This reflects the core of the principles enshrined in the various anti-discrimination laws throughout this nation.

And you could equally say that of the ACT. They go on:

We remind the Committee that under section 4(b) of the Education Act 1990, the education of a child is primarily the responsibility of the child's parent. We believe this already gives primacy to parents in relation to how their child learns. Parents have always had the right to choose where their child learns, whether that is a public school, religiously focused or even home schooled. Parents also have the right to teach and raise their children in their own views and cultural framework.

And that goes to part of Mr Latham's bill that was not substantively addressed in Mr Pettersson's comments. They continue:

The proposed changes open up the potential for a parent to be able to disrupt any part of an approved curriculum that they object to on moral, political, ethical or personal wellbeing grounds. The uncertainty this would create within education could potentially be catastrophic to the delivery of a uniform curriculum, and place schools and teachers in untenable positions.

The insertion of the "provision of an education that is consistent with the moral and ethical standards and the political and social values of parents of students" is essentially unworkable. Considering Australia is a diverse multicultural society,

this insertion would immediately raise a conflict over whose moral, ethical or political standards a school is expected to conform to.

They continue:

The Bill focuses heavily on the teaching of gender fluidity. There are divergent views on the nature of gender, such as whether it is synonymous with biological sex, and we do not see any utility in legislatively banning one set of views. It is worth noting that there is virtually no information on how widespread the teaching of these matters is in NSW government schools in any case.

They make the further point:

We would also remind the Committee that the adoption of the Bill would potentially be in contravention of section 5B of the Federal Sex Discrimination Act 1984.

We do not consider the Bill necessary or justified. If passed it sets a dangerous precedent for the expansion of bans on specific topics that some may see as offensive or controversial.

I agree with that; and I think that there are some good points made in a number of the submissions. There are obviously those submissions that I would not agree with. It is interesting to note that the Anglican Diocese of Sydney does not support the bill. The Catholic Archdiocese of Parramatta does not support the bill. And, certainly, I am unable to find anyone in the local sphere who would support that bill. Certainly it is not something that I think would be brought into this place by the Canberra Liberals, the Greens or the Labor Party. So it very much is within the remit of New South Wales.

Mr Pettersson has made the point about the Canberra region. I guess that there is a link there. What I would say is that in the motion, he makes comments that the bill undermines the important role that our education system plays in enabling a child's development, knowledge, understanding and empathy towards people from different backgrounds and life experiences. This is a piece of legislation that has been introduced by a private member in the upper house of New South Wales, is in committee and has not yet been debated.

I tend to agree that having these debates, raising these issues, can be harmful. It can be something that would make people who are trans feel uncomfortable about. It is not a debate that necessarily we need to have in the ACT. Perhaps by bringing this forward and bringing attention to this you could argue, in one sense, that it puts our position clear and provides clarity but, on the other hand, if the argument is that we should not be having the debate in New South Wales, it is interesting that we are having the debate here in the Assembly, if simply having the debate itself is harmful.

It is a bit of a procedural point but I just note it because I really think that a submission made to the inquiry, putting the government's position forward, or Mr Pettersson's position forward, might have been a clearer way to do that. But they are perhaps procedural points.

As I said, the opposition will not be opposing this motion. I think that it raises some pertinent points. We are supportive of all children in our school system—in all our schools, public and non-government—and we are an inclusive society, we are an inclusive Assembly, and I do not think that we should allow some obscure private member's bill in another parliament to distract us from that or suggest otherwise here in the ACT. If the outcome of this debate is to make that clear for Mr Pettersson, then hopefully it has achieved his objectives of this debate today.

MS BERRY (Ginninderra—Deputy Chief Minister, Minister for Early Childhood Development, Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, Minister for Housing and Suburban Development, Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, Minister for Sport and Recreation and Minister for Women) (3.16): I, of course, speak in support of Mr Pettersson's motion today. I note Mr Hanson's comments but that is why talking to this motion today is important. It is about reassuring young people in our community that in this parliament that kind of abhorrent behaviour, just across the border, would not happen here because our Canberra community is a community known for its equality—the first territory, the first government, to support marriage equality in this country—and our community values diversity and is enthusiastic about inclusion. We need to continue to say that to make sure that trans and gender diverse young people feel that in every part of their lives.

Every young person deserves to live free of harassment. Every young person deserves to live free of exclusion and judgement. But we know that LGBTIQ+ young people continue to experience hostility in public, in their homes, on the sports field, at school—and this does lead to poorer mental health outcomes for these young members of our community—and by those who might not be as supportive of these young people as we are all saying that we are today.

I ask you to imagine that you are a young person in school, where everything around you tells you that you are either a boy or a girl, pink or blue, if you are a boy you like girls and if you are a girl you like boys, and there just are not any other visible ways of being and you cannot see any other identities or you are prevented from being able to see, but you know. How are you, as a young person, supposed to figure out who you are in that kind of environment? It is no surprise that young people would be thinking very carefully about all this, all the possible negative reactions that would come at you by saying out loud that you are different, that you feel different to that, or that you are treated different to that.

That is why the ACT government is committed to supporting trans and gender diverse young people, including through the capital equality strategy. I do not want the experiences of young people to be like that in our community, especially not in our schools.

I want to talk about some of the things that our ACT schools do to make our young people feel safer and more secure and supported in our schools when they are going through that decision. One is through the safe and inclusive schools initiative. It is an important initiative. It has been funded by the ACT government to provide that advice, support, resources, professional learning for teachers and students and parents. It is

about making sure that our schools are a safe and inclusive place for everybody; that regardless of your identity or who you are, you are welcome and supported in those communities.

Mr Pettersson referred to the *Writing Themselves In 4* national report, which was also funded by the ACT government. It was a significant amount of research, involving 6,400 people. Three hundred Canberrans participated in that, the second largest sample outside the US. I think that that is something we can be proud of: 300 young Canberrans felt that they could contribute and share their stories. We now have this enormous amount of information about the outcomes of LGBTIQ+ young people in the ACT and that will guide us on how we make sure that they feel more supported and inclusive in our schools. We are committed to continuing to improve the experiences of trans and gender diverse people in our schools.

Last month I spent a morning at Gungahlin College with LGBTIQ+ students and their allies from schools all around Canberra to hear about their experiences. It was a truly moving day but it was a happy moment as well because I got to hear from students and young people like Alex and Spencer who said that it is really important for LGBTIQ+ students to feel valued and included in school communities and that sometimes school is the only place that these students feel safe. That is why it is so important that we get this right.

I feel so proud that students and their allies have been working together to set up these safe spaces in our schools. For example, in Yerrabi, the University of Canberra High School in Kaleen has this wonderful Rainbow Connection Club that supports LGBTIQ+ students and allies. These young people advocated for non-binary bathrooms in the school and are currently providing advice on non-binary change rooms. This is just one example of the brilliant work that these young people are doing in schools across Canberra.

It is our job to support these young people to be leaders, and that is what this motion is about: to create that reassurance in our communities, to create the space for their voices and enable them to make the change that they want for themselves. That is why I am committed, and I know now that this Assembly is committed, to continuing the safe and inclusive schools initiative so that schools across Canberra can keep improving their cultures and environments to be welcoming and safe for all students. But importantly, when we hear the kinds of things that we are hearing from across the border in New South Wales, we push back on that and we say, “That is not us, that is not Canberra.”

MR DAVIS (Brindabella) (3.23): I thank Mr Pettersson for putting this motion on the notice paper. I prepared a couple of notes, for no other reason than to refer to some useful and helpful statistics, but I do not need them. This motion does not speak to a particular constituency that I serve. This motion does not speak to a select lobby group who have met with me in my office in the six months since I have been elected. This motion does not speak to a dataset that I am told to reflect on when considering public policy. This motion speaks to friends such as those who I have picked up in the middle of the night because their dad was a Mark Latham. This motion speaks to the

young people I went to school with who spent years not knowing themselves because the world was filled with Mark Lathams.

This motion speaks to the number of friends who have slept on my couch because that seemed, at that point in their lives, to be the safest place in the world for them because they knew that walking out the front door and going to work, school or back home would mean being subjected to more Mark Lathams. There is so much that makes me proud to be Canberran. What we, as a city, have done collectively for years to reinforce the values of diversity and inclusivity are models of global leadership that should make every single Canberran, irrespective of who they voted for, so proud about this city.

I am so proud to represent the ACT Greens, who have had, since their very beginning, an unequivocal and unashamed commitment to supporting the rights and freedoms of trans, gender diverse and non-binary Australians. I am proud to be a member of this progressive government. Where the ACT Greens and the ACT Labor Party disagree on certain issues of public policy has been highlighted this week, but what binds this government is a set of principles and values about how we treat people—most importantly, how we treat people who are marginalised, depressed and different.

I am really proud of that. I am really proud of the heroes of the trans, non-binary and gender diverse movement—not just those who have spoken in front of Mark Latham and bigots like him in the New South Wales state parliament, opposing the legislation they are currently debating, but those who walk out of their houses every day, wearing what they want, with the pronouns they have chosen and displaying a version of themselves that they are proud of, that truly reflects them. I am proud that they do that without fear or favour.

Mr Deputy Speaker, you and I get up every morning and we probably ponder the choice between two ties to wear; it might take us a couple of minutes. I cannot imagine—and frankly I do not think that I am strong enough to imagine—what it takes a trans, non-binary or gender diverse person in our community, each morning when they get ready to go to work or to go to school, to face the world. I am proud that in this city, in our workplaces, in our schools and in this parliament we continue to do everything that we possibly can to make it easier for those people. We are providing, in this city, an example of what every town and city in New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria, in this country and across this world should aspire to be.

Waving the flag and having social media posts with the trans flag might seem a little bit shallow to those who do not know or do not engage in this debate. It might seem a bit woke or a bit leftist, but it is so important, every day and in every way, that we find ways to show solidarity with, and pride for, those in our community who are different, those in our community who are unique and those in our community who are special. I was incredibly proud that the very first time I spoke in this parliament as an elected member, I stood at the lectern and spoke to this chamber to mark the International Transgender Day of Remembrance—a day every year when we stop to reflect on the trans, non-binary and gender diverse individuals across the world who have been taken from us. They were taken from us, not because of anything they did, not even because of who they were, but because of the, at best, ignorant and, at worst,

deeply bigoted views of people who did not seek to learn, understand or get to know them.

I am incredibly grateful for the comments from the Minister for Education about the work that is happening across our schools to support trans, non-binary and gender diverse people. I do not wish to compare the experiences of being LGB to being trans or gender diverse—there is a complexity in that that I do not pretend to understand—but I can empathise ever so slightly with being in places and spaces where everything you do, everything you say and the way you behave—the pitch of your voice and the flick of your wrist—is done with a resting case of anxiety, because at any point those things could be thrown back at you. They limit your contribution or your capacity to contribute. They limit what you say and what you try to achieve, and hinder your ambitions.

I want to give so much credit to the trans, non-binary and gender diverse leaders in our community who are doing all that they can to support Canberrans, because I know that on shoestring budgets—everybody in the community sector does what they do on shoestring budgets—they will look after a young person who buses in or takes a trip from Googong, Queanbeyan, Cooma, Wagga Wagga or Boorowa, to access these services. They always do. I am talking about organisations like A Gender Agenda. I would like to use this time to encourage every single member, if they have not, to go out and check out A Gender Agenda. Invite Sel to come and have a chat with you in your office. Learn about what that organisation does. Learn about the community that it serves. It will truly open your eyes and inspire you.

I really want to encourage everybody to support, in any way they can, the Friday Centre, in particular. The Friday Centre provides more than just supports for trans, non-binary and gender diverse young people. The Friday Centre provides a holistic wraparound service for the parents, siblings and extended family of the young person, and for the workplace or the school community in which that young person is experiencing and expressing varying forms of gender fluidity. It is a tremendous program. It is under-resourced, and I am optimistic that we will continue to do things in the future that embrace and support that particular program.

I want to take the remaining few minutes of my time to speak to the proponents of the New South Wales motion—the Pauline Hanson One Nation political party. Another perfect example of why I am so proud to be a Canberran is that that political party would not dare set up roots here. They know that what they stand for, and their ilk are not welcome in our city. Pauline Hanson knows that, Mark Latham knows that, and their ilk know that. I know that, by virtue of those same right-wing nut jobs making offensive phone calls during the ACT election campaign, trying to smear, disorient and confuse people about what amendments to the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act would mean for trans, gender diverse and non-binary young people. I was proud that Canberrans showed them the door as well. I was proud that people in this chamber showed them the door.

I grow increasingly disturbed, and I know many even from the centre right, right through to us hard lefties—for those who want to use an arbitrary political spectrum to define us—grow a little bit frustrated with organisations like Pauline Hanson's One

Nation. That woman and the people that she preselects for parliament have made a disgusting political profiteering racket for decades out of pushing marginalised Australians further into the corners. First, she told us we had to be afraid of First Nations people, and we told her to go jump. So she came back after a few years and she told us, “Actually, no, it’s Asian Australians you have got to be worried about.” A few people bought that but most of us told her to go jump. It did not take her very long to come back and tell us, “No, it’s actually Muslim Australians—I had it wrong this whole time—that you have to be concerned about.” And another five to eight per cent on the margins of Australia put her and her ilk in parliament based on that. She has not won much from those fear campaigns, so now it seems that Pauline Hanson and her ilk are solidifying around trans, non-binary and gender diverse Australians. I hope we will show them the door again on this one.

I grow frustrated because this is a political movement that has profited for decades by convincing working class Australians who are feeling a substantial change to their social and economic position that it is always the smallest, most marginalised and most vulnerable among us who are responsible for the economic and wealth pressures they are feeling. That political movement is convincing working class Australians that they should not be scared of the mega-rich like the gun lobby—which gave \$6,000 to Mark Latham to help him buy his seat in the New South Wales upper House—or the mega-rich who avoid paying tax and supporting programs to help marginalised Australians—the mega-rich like Alan Jones, who gave \$10,000 to Mark Latham to help him win his seat in the upper House. No, that political movement is trying to convince marginalised, poorer and working class Australians that they should be scared about First Nations people, Asian people, Muslim people, and, now, trans people.

Well, I have had it. I am pleased to see that this parliament has had it and that we are going to make that point expressly clear to the New South Wales state parliament. I hope that more Australians who have thrown their support behind Pauline Hanson, Mark Latham and other right-wing nut jobs because they are growing increasingly despondent about their social and economic position in a changing global landscape, start to ask themselves hard questions about what exactly they are supporting, who exactly they are putting into parliament and what exactly they stand for. Those right-wing people do not stand up for working class people as they profess to. They certainly do not stand up for marginalised and vulnerable Australians. They certainly do not stand up for transgendered, non-binary and gender diverse Australians. And I am incredibly proud that they do not have any place here in the ACT.

MS ORR: (Yerrabi) (3:37): I give my absolute support for my colleague’s motion and I praise the initiative taken to introduce this to the Assembly. First of all, I would like to express my disappointment at the Legislation Amendment (Parental Rights) Bill of Pauline Hanson’s One Nation Party. I have one word for it: nasty. I am truly appalled that we are, yet again, having to defend the rights of LGBTIQ people from being discriminated against under the law—this time defending minors from being discriminated against. This bill affects children who are at an age where feeling condemned, unsupported and hated has lifelong consequences. One can only imagine what it is like to question and struggle with your own identity at such a young age; but

not to have the right to learn and discover who you are as a human being in a safe and supportive environment is appalling and damaging, to say the least.

I know many people who were treated appallingly in schools for being different. Sadly, this treatment is debilitating and has resulted in too many young people, innocent lives, being impacted and even lost. While I acknowledge that the world is maturing and that there are changing attitudes towards transgender people, there is still a lot of discrimination to overcome, and this bill will not help with tolerance in any community.

I fear that if this bill were to pass the New South Wales parliament, there would be a detrimental impact on the lives and wellbeing of thousands of students across New South Wales. These students undoubtedly often face discrimination from their peers and the community, and, unfortunately, it is even common enough for someone to experience it from their own family. To have an official authority figure—in this case, the New South Wales government—added to that list is unacceptable. The bill prohibits schools from teaching that trans and gender diverse people exist. It prohibits school counsellors from affirming a trans or gender diverse student and providing them with support or making referrals to gender-affirming support. It also puts teachers at risk of losing their jobs when they support trans or gender diverse students to affirm their identity. It baffles me that a teacher can lose their job for providing support to one of their students who needs support when it comes to identifying their gender. In summary, it requires schools and teachers to tell trans kids, to their faces, that they do not really exist.

How is any of this okay? Every student in New South Wales should have the opportunity to reach their potential, to learn with their peers and to feel a sense of belonging in their own schools. The introduction of this bill achieves none of that. It goes out of its way to bully students who are potentially already struggling. I praise the ACT government's commitment to ensuring that our education system is welcoming, affirming and inclusive of all children. This is how it should be; no government should go out of its way to ensure that inequality and human decency are lost for students who do not meet certain norms.

I praise that we have already worked to protect trans and gender diverse students through programs such as the Safe and Supportive Schools policy. However, it does not sit right with me that students across the border may be stripped of this basic human right and that there are people in the New South Wales government who actively view some students as lesser. Having our own education minister write to her counterpart in the New South Wales government, expressing our concern about the effect of the bill's debate on trans and diverse children in the ACT, is absolutely essential. The act of having a minister from another government urge the New South Wales government to vote down the bill demonstrates how inhumane the legislation is. Our education system's purpose is to educate and prepare our young people for the world that they will live in once they finish school. It is in their best interests to be allowed, in a safe and supportive environment, to learn not only about the world around them but about themselves. This should be a universal right for all students in Australia and not a right available on a state-by-state basis.

I would also like to note just how disappointing it has been that a former member of this place has weighed into the debate, in his capacity in his new role. I will not go into what this person and his colleagues have said, but it was not nice, it was not supportive of trans kids and it was completely supportive of Mark Latham's damaging bill. I am glad that we do not have to listen to these views in this place, but I am still concerned that those views are being given voice.

It has also been asked in this discussion why we are discussing something that is happening in New South Wales and what relevance it has to the ACT. I think that point has been answered by a number of my colleagues in the speeches that they have made today, and I include Mr Davis in that. When you are a member of a community that for decades has had to fight for its equality and you see that being stripped from people somewhere else, you wonder whether it is going to happen here next. Today's debate is important to let everyone in Canberra know that it will not happen here.

MR PETTERSSON (Yerrabi) (3.43), in reply: I appreciate the very serious nature of the debate that we have just had—people talking about their own lived experiences and experiences they have had interacting with LGBTIQ members of the community. I think it has been a very important conversation for this place to have. One of the things that came to me as we were having this debate, from some of the messages that many members expressed in their speeches, was that the ACT is a very progressive and very accepting place, but it is not entirely progressive and it is not entirely accepting. There is still discrimination in our city and in our territory, and that is not right. We must work every single day to address that. I am glad to hear that all the members who have spoken—and, I think, all political parties—seek to achieve that objective. When I see statistics saying that only 60 per cent of kids feel safe at school to use their chosen names or pronouns, that breaks my heart. School is not an easy time for anyone. I think everyone goes through school with a few scars of certain descriptions, but to go through school not feeling safe to use your name is incredible.

The thing that Mr Hanson raised in his speech that gave me some pause—it is something that I want to address—is that this is an item of business in the New South Wales parliament. I, for the most part, do not follow closely the work of other parliaments. There is enough going on in this place that is keeping me busy, so I do not particularly observe other jurisdictions. But sometimes certain things do pop out. Things like this pop out because the ACT is part of greater New South Wales. When you turn on the news, here in the ACT, you get the nightly news from Sydney. When I turn on the nightly news, I see stories like this. And if I see it, then kids are seeing it as well. That is why it is so important that we, in this place, stand up and say that it is not right and things like that will not happen in our parliament.

The other reason it is so important for us in the ACT to talk about this issue is that students in ACT schools are often residents of New South Wales. These students at ACT schools have to watch their elected representatives entertain this debate—they do not smack it down from the get-go; they entertain it. So I am very proud that as we run an education system in this place, we stand up for those students even if they are not residents of the ACT. I know that when I was going through school, many of the students that sat alongside me in class did not live in the ACT. A fair chunk of them

came from New South Wales. To try to distance them from ACT students is wrong, but, on the whole, I am very proud of where this Assembly sits on this matter. I think the residents of the ACT would be very proud of this Legislative Assembly for the way that we have conducted this debate, and I thank all members for the way they have contributed.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Yerrabi electorate—Yerrabi Pond

MS CASTLEY (Yerrabi) (3.47): I move:

That this Assembly:

- (1) notes the Government drew up plans eight years ago for more parking to support Yerrabi Pond foreshore businesses but no extra parking has been provided;
- (2) further notes:
 - (a) Gungahlin is Canberra's fastest growing region and Yerrabi Pond is the only major community recreation area;
 - (b) Yerrabi Pond has been neglected by the Government with insufficient and inadequate community services and facilities. In some areas it is an eyesore and unsafe particularly at night;
 - (c) a petition with more than 1 000 signatures was lodged in April 2021 detailing the poor state of Yerrabi Pond and the urgent need for better parking, toilets and lighting as well as improved community facilities such as barbecues;
 - (d) there is a particular need for more parking for customer access to support struggling businesses on the foreshore;
 - (e) in 2013, the ACT Government did planning work for extra parking at Yerrabi Pond with up to 28 new spots in the grassed median area of Nellie Hamilton Drive. This was in response to limited parking for patrons of Curves fitness centre and other businesses;
 - (f) the Government also did community consultation and acknowledged it was a priority issue;
 - (g) eight years later, local businesses and the community are still waiting and have little confidence in the Government to heed their calls for more parking and amenities;
 - (h) business owners have been forced to relocate or shut due to lack of parking; and
 - (i) the Gungahlin Community Council listed extra parking at Nellie Hamilton Drive as a priority issue in its 2013-14 budget submission; and
- (3) calls on the ACT Government to
 - (a) immediately explain why extra parking along Nellie Hamilton Drive planned in 2013 has not happened; and
 - (b) provide a timeline for when and how it will occur by no later than the last sitting day in August 2021.

As is so often the case, I rise on behalf of the residents of my electorate of Yerrabi to implore the government to do something for them. By that I mean action on an important issue for business—parking. The notice of motion that I bring to the Legislative Assembly today calls on the government to provide parking to support businesses at the Yerrabi Pond foreshore. I refer to parking which the government planned for eight years ago—back in 2013. Eight years on, the government is still in power, yet nothing has happened—nothing! So I am on my feet to urge this government to act. No more talk. We have had so much talk from our politicians—from our ministers, in particular—but the irony is that while there are truckloads of talk, there is often very little action.

Too often, reviews, consultations and task forces are used as excuses by government to be seen to be doing something when it is actually doing very little. My message to government is show that you back businesses by providing the parking that you planned for eight years ago. I have spoken several times in this place about the Labor-Greens government neglect of small business. The fact that the government recently opposed the Canberra Liberals' call to establish a small business ministerial advisory council speaks volumes about that. Their attitude to a small business—

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Ms Castley, there is a point of order.

Ms Stephen-Smith: Mr Deputy Speaker, under standing order 52, a member cannot adversely reflect on a vote that has occurred in the chamber. Ms Castley is repeatedly doing that by commenting on the vote that occurred three weeks ago. I suggest she should withdraw.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Ms Castley, I remind you of standing order 52. A member may not reflect adversely upon any vote of the Assembly. I think we can move forward from there. Just reflect on that, please.

MS CASTLEY: Certainly. Can I refer to the *Hansard* transcript where Minister Cheyne said that—

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Yes, of course.

MS CASTLEY: —a ministerial advisory council for small business would be a burden and time consuming?

Ms Cheyne: I did not say that.

MS CASTLEY: Page 1,154.

Mrs Jones: Listen to your quote.

MS Cheyne: I have read it. I never said, “time consuming”. Point it out.

MS CASTLEY: Okay. You pointed out that it would take a lot of time.

We have ministerial advisory councils for women, multicultural communities, young people and the LGBTIQ+ community, but not for small business. Instead, Minister Cheyne has served up the Better Regulation Task Force, which is currently hard at work on a discovery phase to understand the world of small business and what makes it tick.

A quick read of Minister Cheyne's ministerial statement this morning, on the Better Regulation Task Force, offers further proof that when it comes to small business, this government is way out of touch. Her statement tells us that "one of the task force's first and most critical initiatives has been talking to business about how to talk to business". After 20 years in power the Labor-Greens government is still working out how to talk to business, and has set up a task force to investigate this pressing matter.

Minister Cheyne also shared with us in her statement the key principles underpinning the Better Regulation Task Force. The first is that we know that everyone is busy; the second is that we recognise engagement is a two-way process; and the third is the principle that government is engaging directly with business owners. If Minister Cheyne wants to understand and support small business, she and Minister Steel could visit with me the businesses along Yerrabi Pond foreshore that are desperate for more parking to bring customers through their doors—the restaurants, cafes, hairdressing salons. There is no need for a task force or a discovery phase; just a walk along the strip and a chat with each business owner. It does not have to be complicated, even though this Labor-Greens government insists on making it so.

The issue of parking is so important because it concerns the livelihoods of small businesses. Businesses such as Curves Fitness and Thai Herb Restaurant have relocated from the area because of insufficient parking. Others have closed. Several cafes have shut-up shop. Minister Steel, the Canberra Liberals do not want any more businesses to be forced to relocate or shut because your government refuses to put in the parking you planned for eight years ago. Is that what your Labor-Greens government wants—small businesses to be forced to relocate or to shut their doors?

Eight years after your government planned for up to 28 parking spots for patrons, nothing has happened. Gungahlin businesses are still waiting. We must support those businesses. That is the government's job. We do not want to lose any more businesses from the Yerrabi Pond foreshore because this government continues to sit on its hands with respect to parking that was planned for eight years ago. When is a priority issue not a priority issue? When this Labor-Greens government is on the case. Speaking about the Yerrabi Pond foreshore parking issue in 2013, Territory and Municipal Services boss Gary Byles labelled it a priority issue. But Mr Byles added that it was a priority issue among other priority issues.

As I have mentioned, the Labor government did the planning for up to 28 parking spots in the grassed median area of Nellie Hamilton Drive at Yerrabi Pond so customers could access businesses on the foreshore. The Standing Committee on Planning, Environment and Territory and Municipal Services discussed the issue at a 6 November 2013 meeting attended by the then Minister for Territory and Municipal Services, Shane Rattenbury. They confirmed that a project had been designed for parking on the median strip and that there had been community consultation.

Mr Byles explained that the specific issue of parking is a priority, but that it is a priority along with many other priorities—the minister will make the decision. It is a bit like a *Yes Minister* episode. The issue has also been raised several times by the Gungahlin Community Council, which identified it as a priority in its 2013-14 budget submission. As they say, the greatest force in politics is inertia. We see that often in the ACT in this tired old Labor-Greens government. And we see that again with this example of parking, which was planned to support businesses at Yerrabi Pond foreshore eight years ago, but which never emerged.

The Canberra Liberals wait in hope. Yerrabi businesses wait in hope. The Canberra Liberals get small business. We respect and applaud our business warriors across the ACT, who feel completely shut out by this Labor-Greens government. While the government continues procrastinating with its task forces and discovery phases, the Liberals will keep raising important issues on behalf of our small business sector which remain in the government's blind spot. We all know that issues like parking and toilets in local shopping centres are vital for small business. For whatever reason—completely foreign to me and the Canberra Liberals—this government does not get it or chooses not to.

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee—Minister for Skills, Minister for Transport and City Services and Special Minister of State) (3.56): The ACT government recognises the importance of parking for residents and businesses, including the need to maximise efficiency in the usage of existing parking in particular. We understand the importance that Yerrabi Pond is as a recreational precinct, as well as a dining and hospitality area for the businesses around it. Managing parking supply and demand effectively is a key consideration for an efficient and sustainable transport system.

It is important to encourage people who are able to make the switch from driving to take up public transport and active travel. I have already outlined to the Assembly what we are doing in relation to active travel connections in Gungahlin by looking at a feasibility study about how we can make sure that there are improvements in connections, particularly between Gungahlin town centre and Yerrabi Pond.

Other mechanisms to manage the supply and demand include the ACT government's significant and ongoing investment in the administration and enforcement of parking arrangements that are in place. As Ms Castley notes in her motion, the ACT government commissioned a report to investigate the feasibility of additional parking, specifically in the median on Nellie Hamilton Avenue. I am aware of the previous study and that observations on site in 2020 suggest that there is limited availability, with parking areas occupied for the majority of the day in the area. Parking along Phyllis Ashton Circuit and Strayleaf Crescent is time restricted to two hours from 7.30 am to 6.00 pm Monday to Friday. Recently TCCS has implemented no stopping signage at various locations on Phyllis Ashton Circuit to prevent parking outside of the marked bays and allow for the free flow of traffic.

As members would be aware, a recent petition brought to the Assembly titled Yerrabi Pond Recreational Area received 1,109 signatures. Whilst car parking is not specifically sought as part of that petition, it certainly came up as part of the debate in

the Assembly. I recognise how popular the recreation areas around Yerrabi Pond are and I encourage the community to provide their feedback on how they use these spaces and what future improvements they would like to see.

The ACT government has launched a consultation portal on the YourSay website and we are seeking community feedback via a survey on the ACT government's website. Pop-up sessions at Yerrabi Pond were held on 1, 6, and 11 May so that people could have the opportunity to provide feedback and talk with officials from Transport Canberra and City Services, including opportunities for business.

We want to know how people use the Yerrabi Pond recreational areas, how often they visit and what improvements they would like to see. That includes the issue of car parking if they would like to raise that. The government has invested \$300,000 in improvements to Yerrabi Pond and we are keen to hear from the community about how that funding should be used, as well as additional improvements in the future.

A variety of improvements have been suggested already. These will be ranked as part of the community survey, with examples including upgraded paths; improved parking arrangements; more facilities such as seating and bins; enhanced landscaping; amenities the community wants; and access to power for social events. The consultation commenced on 23 April and closes on 4 June, so there is still time for businesses to come forward and present their views, and Ms Castley is certainly doing that through her motion.

To date, 700 YourSay surveys have been received, which indicates significant community interest in providing feedback on this important recreational area. The feedback in Ms Castley's motion and the petition lodged by Mr Pettersson will be considered as part of the YourSay consultation process. The results of the survey will then be published on the YourSay page, following the closing date.

Given the consultation happening as we speak on improvements to Yerrabi Pond, which is receiving high levels of engagement from the community, the way forward is to continue to consult with the community on the upgrades they want to see at Yerrabi Pond. This may include parking; it may include other improvements as well. The government will listen to what the community would like to see and invest in Yerrabi Pond based on those priorities. I thank Ms Castley for her motion, and I move:

Omit (2) (a) to (i) and (3) (a) to (b) and substitute:

“(2) further notes:

- (a) Gungahlin is Canberra's fastest growing region and Yerrabi Pond is a key community recreation area;
- (b) the Gungahlin community greatly values Yerrabi Pond and is eager to see increased community facilities there, including those addressing amenity and safety;
- (c) a petition with more than 1 000 signatures was lodged in April 2021 detailing the need for better parking, toilets and lighting as well as improved community facilities such as barbecues;

- (d) there is a particular need for more parking for customer access to support local businesses on the foreshore;
 - (e) in 2013, the ACT Government undertook planning work for extra parking at Yerrabi Pond with up to 28 new spots in the grassed median area of Nellie Hamilton Drive;
 - (f) the Government also undertook community consultation and acknowledged it was a priority issue;
 - (g) eight years later, local businesses and the community are waiting for the parking issue to be addressed;
 - (h) parking remains a challenge for business owners, some of whom have chosen to relocate; and
 - (i) the Gungahlin Community Council listed extra parking at Nellie Hamilton Drive as a priority issue in its 2013-14 budget submission; and
- (3) calls on the ACT Government to:
- (a) continue consulting with the Gungahlin community on improvements to Yerrabi Pond including parking and improvements, with design and construction to follow; and
 - (b) continue to invest in Yerrabi Pond, based on priorities identified through community consultation.”

MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi) (4.00): I also thank Ms Castley for bringing forward this motion. It seems to be another day and another discussion about Gungahlin, which is absolutely fantastic. Yerrabi Pond and the businesses that abut it are much loved and frequented. I have spent much time down there and I can particularly recommend the sublime lamb shanks at Da Nunzio’s; they are very nice.

The Greens took a substantial package to the election to revitalise the Yerrabi Pond area. This included an investment in, amongst other things, lighting to improve the safety of people to use Yerrabi Pond to exercise, connect and play at all hours, not just during daylight; public realm infrastructure, including toilets, park benches, playground facilities and signage for the pathways; and economic activation through more eating options.

The \$300,000 announced in the recent budget is welcomed but only represents the start. As the population of Gungahlin dramatically expands, the demand for quality green space and those businesses that abut it becomes unstoppable. Quality green spaces are essential for community health, both physical and mental, particularly for those that live in apartments—and that is one thing Gungahlin has a lot of. Therefore, the Greens see that investment as an initial down payment that only goes so far in meeting the community’s expectations.

The issue of parking in this area has come to my attention from the efforts of the local residents, and I thank them. But the question is: where in the priorities for investment in the Yerrabi Pond area does parking come? To answer this question I will refer to the Friends of Yerrabi Pond who, after surveys and discussions with hundreds of regular users of Yerrabi Pond, have provided the government with a prioritised list. I will read the top 10 from that list: number one, replace existing toilets at Yerrabi

Pond District Park; number 2, new toilets at the play area on the Amaroo side of the pond; number 3, shared path signs indicating pedestrians have right of way on the pathways; number 4, more bins, especially on the Amaroo side of Yerrabi Pond; number 5, extend lighting to cover all pathways around the pond; number 6, more parking to service businesses, the matter we are debating today; number 7, more seats, especially on the Amaroo side of the pond; number 8, dog-doings bags and appropriate signage; number 9, resurface to bridges across Yerrabi Pond; and number 10, water quality. I note that there were another 13 items on the prioritised list, but I will not bother reading further. That provides a good picture in terms of where we need to spend our money, and these items, ranked as being more important, will be the focus of my efforts in the Assembly.

In the meantime, I call upon the Minister for Transport and City Services to focus on the enforcement of the parking rules in the immediate location to ensure that rules are followed by those looking to drive to Yerrabi Pond to relax by the lake, have a meal at a restaurant or attend a dance school so they can do that using a two-hour park spot without worrying that someone has permanently parked their car in it.

We need to look at active travel links between Gungahlin town centre and Yerrabi Pond so that, instead of having to take their lives in their hands crossing Gundaroo Road, people and families can walk or bike safely towards the pond. Alternatively, instead of having to drive they can enjoy the benefits of active travel. Numerous studies have shown the investment in active travel has far greater economic benefit than providing car parking outside of businesses. When you think about it that makes sense. Consumers no longer have to spend their hard-earned money on expensive vehicles built overseas and instead spend it in local businesses, supporting local employment and broadening our local tax base.

People who have walked and cycled are also more likely to stay longer, have a dessert or a second coffee and enjoy the views over Yerrabi Pond while chatting with their friends for a little longer. These are all things that I wish to encourage. This is what Greens want to see for Yerrabi Pond—a quality green space where the community comes together to exercise, talk and play.

MR MILLIGAN (Yerrabi) (4.05): Firstly, I thank my colleague Ms Leanne Castley for bringing this important motion to the Assembly. Leanne has worked really hard to highlight the many issues of neglect in our electorate and also shares my passion for business. The fact that the residents of Gungahlin have been complaining about this issue for many years—the longstanding neglect of Yerrabi Pond, the Gungahlin side in particular—has resulted in a significant community reaction to a petition recently presented to the ACT Legislative Assembly. Strangely, this was heavily supported by local Labor members of the ACT government. That seems highly hypocritical to me, given that it is this Labor-Greens government who are the ones guilty of this neglect.

I thank Ms Castley for raising this matter because the need for more parking in this busy area has never been more evident. Not only has this government approved the construction of five to six multistorey residential apartments in close proximity to this community park but it has also profited significantly from the land sales in our electorate.

Gungahlin's massive population growth is well known; we are one of the fastest growing regions in Australia, and this growth should be of no surprise to this Labor-Greens government. Many of the residents, like me, have a dream of starting a business, working hard for themselves and building a better life for their families. This is where the neglect of Yerrabi Pond is even more frustrating—surrounding businesses have suffered from the lack of parking impacting their patronage and bottom line. The ACT government levies significant taxes on local businesses but has not made the required level of investment in this area. The area once proposed for additional parking has not been improved since the original road was completed. It is poorly maintained, even an eyesore.

This is the same theme applying to many of the small businesses in the outer areas of the Gungahlin town centre. Once the basic infrastructure has been provided and the area has been developed, improvements are rare and non-existent. Let's look at how hard we had to fight to get parking upgrades at the Palmerston shops. Let's look at the current state of parking at the Kaleen shops. Look also at the disaster facing businesses along Anthony Rolfe Avenue. Clients have major difficulties in finding parks, yet median strips are very poorly maintained.

Yerrabi Pond is a primary water body in the region, and to the many living on small residential blocks or in apartments it has become their backyard. It attracts more and more visitors; for a region lacking in outdoor recreation spaces, Yerrabi Pond provides somewhere to go and undertake sport and recreation. Some people can walk there but many need to drive. They might want to meet friends to walk around the pond after work, perhaps pack the kids' scooters to play in the skate park or transport party supplies to host a birthday celebration. Whatever the reason, residents deserve the basic amenity of parking and so do visitors and local businesses. There are some great restaurants and service providers in the Yerrabi Pond area that are run by hardworking mums and dads—people like me and Ms Castley—that take the risk of starting a business only to be bunkered down with red tape, taxes and lack of government support.

I commend this motion and I commend Ms Castley for bringing this important issue to the Assembly. I ask that the government provides support for local businesses in the area and looks at addressing the parking issues that have caused the problems these businesses are facing.

The motion asks the government to explain why a parking upgrade has not occurred since 2013. Given that nothing has been done, the community and businesses deserve some sort of response from this government. A guarantee that this government will invest into businesses will give businesses the confidence to invest and create more employment opportunities. This government is dropping the ball on this and businesses are really suffering. It would be good to see that the government support Ms Castley's motion and the businesses in the electorate.

MR PETTERSSON (Yerrabi) (4.10): It is with great pleasure that I rise today. I always enjoy the opportunity to talk about Yerrabi Pond. It is definitely the focal point of the Gungahlin community, so it makes my day every time we get to talk about it in this chamber. In recent times there has definitely been a lot of community

focus on the current state of Yerrabi Pond and what local residents want this space to provide for them. Just recently I sponsored a petition that received over 1,100 signatures, which was a great delight to present to the chamber. After presenting the petition I also moved a motion, supported by all political parties in this place, calling for consultation and future upgrades to be considered.

I am very excited about these developments, and in light of these events I am very happy to see Ms Castley continue in this space. I think that it is a good thing for our community. Yerrabi Pond needs more car parks, and the businesses on the waterfront promenade need more car parks too. Any regular around Yerrabi Pond would know that finding a car park can be challenging at certain times. On Saturday, when I am often trying to find a park, I struggle. In the evenings around the waterfront promenade it can definitely be a wild place to navigate and find a park. So yes, we need more car parks, and I think that the appropriate way to address the issues is through the YourSay survey that is currently running.

I paid close attention to what Mr Braddock had to say in the debate and I was waiting for the magic words that the ACT Greens support more car parking, but I could not quite hear it. Members of the Gungahlin community would be very interested to hear from the ACT Greens on whether they support more car parking at Yerrabi Pond. Paying lip-service to and dancing around the issue can be misleading. All residents have a right to know how their representatives feel on an issue that is important to them. If given the opportunity at any future time, Mr Braddock, I think Gungahlin residents would like to know that.

It is particularly interesting on this issue of parking at Yerrabi Pond that there was such hesitation in offering support for it. We all know that the ACT Greens, in general, do not like new car parks and they do not like new roads. That is fine; that is their view of the world and, generally speaking, that is how they operate. That is fine; that is their view. But what most Gungahlin residents would find very interesting is that the ACT Greens actually support certain new car parks in Gungahlin. Right now, the ACT Greens support building a new surface-level car park in Gungahlin town centre while DV364 is being considered. On one hand, the ACT Greens will very quietly support one surface-level car park but they will not support another one. Gungahlin residents deserve to know why they support one and not the other.

Back more specifically to Yerrabi Pond, it is wonderful that we are talking about Yerrabi Pond. I want to see more car parking and I hope that through the YourSay process they will be able to deliver that diligently in a way that is supported by the community.

MS CASTLEY (Yerrabi) (4.14): I was hopeful that by raising this motion and reminding the Labor-Greens government of its plans to provide parking eight years ago to support businesses at Yerrabi Pond foreshore that it might now actually do it. Sadly that is not the case. Expectations are seldom realised, particularly with this government. What we see in Minister Steel's amendment is the minister serving up what we have all come to expect—more consultation. His amendment calls on his own government to continue consultation with the Gungahlin community.

As they say, the greatest force in politics is inertia. We see that often in the ACT with this tired old Labor-Greens government. I read Minister Steel's amendment in despair. Should I be grateful that the minister acknowledges the history of the issue and that parking is needed and, in his minister's words, "remains a challenge for business owners, some of whom have chosen to relocate"? Does it concern you, Minister Steel, that some businesses have relocated because your government has failed to provide the parking that was planned for eight years ago?

I heard members discuss active travel. That is all well and good during the day, but if you are a woman alone in the dark at Yerrabi Pond with no lighting and people are at restaurants so all the car parks are full, I would not want to be walking home at night just because the government has been unable to provide us with the parking we need.

I ask the question because the minister's choice of words is important to note. Minister Steel refers to business owners who have chosen to relocate. These are the words of a minister who is out of touch with the reality of small business. The fact is that if dollars and customers are not coming in, if parking is insufficient and patrons go elsewhere and if the government refuses to provide the parking it planned for eight years ago, business owners reach the stage where you have no choice but to relocate. That is difficult to do; it costs a bunch of money to wait for leases, going broke in the process.

I suggest that it is Minister Steel and his ministerial colleagues who need a discovery phase for small business to discover what running a small business is like—the constant demands, the stress, the worries. Perhaps then this government would not be so out of touch. Minister Steel's amendment clearly acknowledges that the parking problem still exists and still plagues local businesses. But just like back in 2013 and the eight years since, nothing will happen. Well, that is strictly not true—the government will continue consulting with the Gungahlin community. What that means in plain English is anybody's guess.

While the government continues procrastinating with its task forces, consultations and discovery phases, the Liberals will keep raising important issues on behalf of our small business sector, which this government is blind to.

Question put:

That the amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 15

Noes 9

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

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

Mr Cain
Ms Castley
Mr Hanson
Mrs Jones
Mrs Kikkert
Ms Lawder
Ms Lee
Mr Milligan

Mr Parton

Amendment agreed to.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

Revenue Legislation Amendment Bill 2021

Debate resumed from 31 March 2021, on motion by **Mr Barr**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (4.24): The amendments in this bill make provision for changes to a range of taxation legislation. The Canberra Liberals will be supporting its passage.

The amendments in the bill include changes to the Duties Act. The bill will rectify an error in drafting in 2014 that applies duty to acquisitions of interest in long- and short-term commercial leases. Further, the bill will clarify when duty must be paid on the acquisition of an option over dutiable property and provides a conveyance duty exemption for pensioners who have a disability purchasing residential shares in not-for-profit supportive housing properties.

Regarding the Land Tax Act, the bill will exclude corporations and trustees from exemptions on land tax involving an owner's principal place of residence, consistent with the longstanding application of land tax to holdings of land by companies and trusts. The bill will remove the current expiry date of 30 June 2021 for the affordable community housing land tax exemption, which provides less than two months notice for land tax which is imposed quarterly.

Regarding the Land Titles Act, Unit Titles Act and Planning and Development Act, the bill will make clear that a notice of assessment reflects the lease variation charge liability of the lessee and that an obligation to pay that liability arises when a variation of a crown lease is executed. The bill will require a payment date for a deferred lease variation charge prior to registering a unit plan. This will support compliance and provides a currently missing element to allow the lease variation charge to be deferred. The bill will also change the current annual requirement to provide valuation advice to the treasurer for codified lease variation charge determinations to a three-year requirement.

The bill harmonises the payroll tax reporting requirements for lodging of an annual tax reconciliation.

Regarding the Rates Act, the application of penalty tax provisions under the Taxation Administration Act will apply to overdue and unpaid rates on land owned by corporations and trusts. The bill will clarify the application requirements for the operation of provisions allowing for a parcel of mixed-use land for development to have rating factors applied based on the intended proportion of residential and commercial development. The bill will align reporting requirements for the commissioner to provide information on airport rates, with processes for rates in

general. The bill will allow the minister to determine an alternative time period for property owners to lodge objections for valuations, consequential to actions to improve transparency evaluation processes. Finally, the bill will amend the Taxation Administration Act to include land rent charges under honest purchaser liability protections where a certificate of tax and other charges is provided to a purchaser.

The bill will improve the operation of debt recovery provisions relating to charges over lands and tax debts by clarifying the separate operation of certain provisions and confirming the creation of a statutory charge on other land.

Finally, for the purposes of the Tax Administration Act, the bill will facilitate permitted disclosures under secrecy provisions for entities to uphold the integrity of the tax system and to uphold the integrity of law enforcement.

I support the many rectifications and clarifications in this bill.

MS VASSAROTTI (Kurrajong—Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, Minister for Homelessness and Housing Services and Minister for Sustainable Building and Construction) (4.28): I rise to speak in support of the Revenue Legislation Amendment Bill, particularly the provisions that extend previous government actions to provide a land tax exemption for affordable housing. The bill aims to extend the scheme by removing the time limit for this exemption. I note that, in doing so, the cap on the number of properties has already been increased from 125 to 250.

I would like to acknowledge the work of Ms Caroline Le Couteur in the Ninth Assembly. She brought this idea to the Assembly. Her original motion called for an exemption of the land tax to be provided for residential property investors who rent their property to low- and moderate-income households at a discount to market rent through a not-for-profit community housing provider. This led to the introduction of a pilot scheme that has now been extended.

This proposal comes at a time of increased concern about housing affordability in Canberra. It is an issue that has only increased in urgency over time.

The CoreLogic rental review for the March 2021 quarter showed that Canberra is the most expensive rental market in Australia for both houses and units, with median rental prices sitting at \$600 per week for houses and \$500 per week for units. The annual rental affordability snapshot released by Anglicare late last month found that there was a distressing lack of affordable housing rental options.

Government plays a key role in responding to the affordability issue. While we are disappointed that the federal government has again decided not to invest in much-needed social housing, we remain committed to doing all that we can to ensure access to housing for all Canberrans.

It is recognised that this issue needs a range of responses. This scheme is one of the ways that a broader response can be undertaken. It recognises that there are members in our community who wish to respond directly and have the means to do so. By

working with established community housing-based programs, people can rent out their properties at less than 75 per cent of market rent to eligible households and, as a result, receive an exemption for land tax.

As Ms Le Couteur noted at the time, we know that many people are socially minded and may see a scheme such as this as an opportunity to directly help their community.

Many people who own a second dwelling did not purchase it to maximise income. Sometimes people own a second house because of a new relationship or an inheritance. We have people going overseas for two- or three-year periods on DFAT postings and the like. These families have their rent paid on posting and they just want to move back into their home when they return. In each of these scenarios, property owners might be incentivised to forgo some rental income in exchange for having their land tax waived.

It is now two years since the scheme was introduced. It is clear that there are landlords in our community who are keen and able to play a part in responding to the rental affordability issues faced here. We now have two community housing providers operating schemes: HomeGround, operated by CHC, and Rentwell, operated by YWCA Canberra. They report significant interest and have been able to provide homes to 54 households across Canberra, to date.

I would like to share the story of someone who has been housed through Rentwell. It is important to remember the human realities when making even technical amendments such as this. Rentwell was able to house a single mum with two young children who had moved to Canberra to escape a domestic violence relationship in Queensland. After uprooting her family for their safety, her family was able to find an affordable home in Canberra. This is just one of 54 stories.

I would like to use this as an opportunity to remind those who sometimes complain about the charges of land tax in the ACT that this scheme exists and to remind everyone that landlords do not have to pay land tax so long as they rent out their property affordably. We hope that changes such as this will help to transform the view of housing to be a right and a community good rather than a vehicle for wealth generation.

This is one of the reasons that we were keen to ensure that this approach was supported and extended through this term of the Legislative Assembly. It is fitting that this is one of the early deliverables of the parliamentary and governing agreement for the Tenth Assembly.

The remaining provisions of the bill are minor and technical amendments across a range of tax and duty related acts. One useful clarification is an amendment of the Duties Act which ensures that conveyance duty concessions are available to pensioners who have a disability purchasing residential shares in not-for-profit supportive housing properties. This ensures that a person with a disability who would have been exempt from duty if acquiring the property directly is not subject to duty through indirect acquisitions of interests—for example, using a company title—in supportive housing. It is a complicated but important and necessary clarification to

close a loophole and ensure that the concession extends to these people in this less common purchasing arrangement.

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (4.34): I am keen to put some words on the record pertaining to this bill and in particular pertaining to the removal of an end date for the land tax rebate for affordable and social housing. It gives me the chance to reminisce about my time here with Caroline Le Couteur. It was a wonderful time, Mr Assistant Speaker Davis. I know that you share a love for Ms Le Couteur.

I listened to Ms Vassarotti talk about the process that led to the land tax rebate—or at least a part of the process; we would be naive to believe that it was not being worked on by other pieces of the machine at the time. Ms Vassarotti was correct that both I and Ms Le Couteur were independently working on the same motion at the same time. She beat me to it and got that motion to the chamber. I was the one who brought it to the chamber as a bill. That would have been in late 2018. As members who were here would recall, it was decided that the Assembly would not debate my bill because it involved appropriation, so it was shelved. I was pleased to see the majority of it appear in a government tax bill six months later.

One of the things that has always limited this measure's effectiveness, as was pointed out by Ms Vassarotti, has been the end date. It has always appeared to be a bit like a trial.

Mr Barr interjecting—

MR PARTON: It has, Mr Barr. Mr Cain made the point that the end date at this stage, prior to this amendment, is only two months away. The certainty for people in this space has been non-existent. People have never had certainty with this measure.

Like all members here, I would like to see much greater take-up of this option with community housing providers and landlords. They are the ones that have to come to the party in the coming weeks. I will be sitting down with CHPs in the coming weeks to discuss ways that we can promote this incentive to the market. I know that Ms Vassarotti, through her channels, is doing that, but it would be good if we can do it through as many channels as possible, because it will, hopefully, provide more affordable rentals to the market. That is what we are trying to do.

I recall Mr Barr, in one of his angry tirades in the chamber in recent weeks, talking about this measure in rather uncomplimentary terms. He said words to the effect that those on the good side of the chamber—that is us—were always suggesting that rates and land tax are the problem when it comes to rental affordability. Mr Barr asserted that the fact that there had not been a massive take-up of this option was proof that rates and land tax were not a barrier at all.

I know that those were not the words that Mr Barr used, but it was a rubbish claim from the Chief Minister because he was not comparing apples with apples. Sure, under this land tax rebate, the land tax is not paid, but the trade-off is that the property goes to market at 75 per cent or less of market rent. That is how it works. The mathematics of this scheme do not provide a positive outcome on anything other than

old standalone houses in the inner north and inner south. They will be where we get most of the traction, but even then the positive outcome is not great.

What we are really seeking here is for landlords to come to the party with a heart and say, “I would like to offer my house to the market as an affordable rental, understanding that if I enter this scheme it is not going to make money for me. I am not going to make an additional profit out of it and in some cases I am not going to make a profit at all.”

Just 10 or 12 kilometres away, thousands of mum-and-dad investors are bringing rental properties to market without paying a single cent of land tax. They are benefiting from the New South Wales land tax threshold. The big difference is that they are not forced to offer their properties to market at 75 per cent or less of market rent. If we are looking at it on a macro level, their presence in the market in such great numbers is one of the things that brings the rental market down to a more sensible level, at least in some jurisdictions over the border—not all; there are serious problems in many rental markets in Australia.

I felt I had to make that point. Credit to this government for making this adjustment. Let us do what we can to encourage more take-up of it and let us not kid ourselves into believing that the relatively small numbers in the scheme thus far are somehow an endorsement of government policy on rates and land tax.

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism) (4.40), in reply: I have introduced a number of revenue legislation amendment bills in my career in this place. Not all of them have been unanimously supported. I thank Mr Cain, Mr Parton, Ms Vassarotti and everyone who has indicated their support for this legislation.

We will routinely undertake reviews of revenue legislation to ensure that we maintain the integrity and effectiveness of the territory’s tax laws. As colleagues have spoken about, the bill achieves a number of these important ends, including improving housing affordability and providing better housing outcomes for the community, in addition to the range of other amendments that have been touched on in my introductory speech and by other speakers.

I cannot let Mr Parton’s comments go without stating that he has illustrated my point in his remarks. Were government rates and land taxes the decisive factor, then the situation in New South Wales and the take-up of this scheme would indicate that you would have a massive impact: no-one would want to rent a property in the ACT; everyone would want to rent properties in New South Wales as landlords and everyone would rush to take advantage of a zero land tax option.

That is obviously not the case—nor will it ever be the case—because there are a range of other factors that impact on the market rent for a particular product. They include the location of the property, the size of the property and the quality of the property.

Something that I do not think has been understood well enough in the ACT—none of the aggregated figures from data point analyses shows it; perhaps this could be the next level of data that they provide—is that one of the reasons that Canberra’s properties are the most expensive to rent is that they are the largest properties, not just in Australia, but often in the world. The average size of a Canberra house is up to 240 square metres. That is way bigger than comparative properties in other parts of Australia and certainly way bigger than elsewhere in the world.

We have also just been through a period where hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars have been invested by Canberra property owners in their properties. A lot of that is owner-occupier, but some is rental stock. Why? Because they were in lockdown and everyone decided to go to Bunnings and do a home reno project or get professionals in to do something to improve bathrooms, kitchens et cetera. They spent hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars.

Rent prices are going up everywhere. That is where I am going, Mr Parton. We have bigger houses and we have better houses. When people invest, as they have done, supported by \$25,000 grants from the commonwealth government if you spend \$150,000, they are going to be expecting a return on that investment, and the return on that investment flows through into the rental price.

As is often commented upon in this place, the cheapest rentals in Canberra are the lowest quality housing. That is the market operating. But we have to face up to a reality here: if we have the biggest houses, and they are the best equipped and we are spending even more money on them, then rents are going to go up. It is not the only reason, but it is a factor, and you cannot deny that it is a factor.

Equally, land taxes applied by the ACT government are fully tax deductible as an expense against the income that a landlord earns in their rental.

Mrs Jones: Thirty per cent.

MR BARR: It is fifty per cent, depending on the income of the landlord. It is a considerable amount back.

This is a much more complex set of economic interactions than is often considered. Ultimately, what is necessary is a dramatic increase in the supply of permanent rental properties. Unfortunately, that is not going to be achieved, one at a time, off the back of mum-and-dad investors. To get our rental stock from about the 40,000 to 45,000 properties that we have at the moment to over 50,000 in a hurry is going to require large-scale institutional build-to-rent projects, and there is a need for at least 200 to 300 dwellings in order for them to be viable. That is the path that the government is pursuing in addition to initiatives like the one we are discussing today.

Yes, we will seek to incentivise more mum-and-dad investors to utilise this scheme to have properties in the affordable space. But if we want to get another couple of thousand rental properties into our rental market in the next two to three years, that is only going to be achieved through large-scale build-to-rent projects. That is going to

require capital. We are going to source that capital principally from our superannuation funds, which stand ready to invest in this sort of long-term build-to-rent projects. The great advantage of that is that they will always be rental properties—the government can mandate that—so from a tenant’s perspective, you are not—

Mrs Jones: So whole towers?

MR BARR: Not whole towers: precincts, land releases that are all build-to-rent. The private sector have already delivered a number of them in Canberra, but we need to see more.

From a tenant’s perspective, that gives you long-term security of tenure. It will not be a situation where you find that the landlord wants the property back. Perhaps they have come back from their overseas posting, or their life circumstances have changed, and you, the tenant, are out. You get long-term certainty in a build-to-rent project. Depending on the nature of the service provision associated with it, you may get a US-style concierge service; this is a wonderful service, a very popular model in many parts of Australia now. It could be a UK-style key worker housing build-to-rent model. It could even be more supported accommodation with wraparound social service provision, similar to what we see in the community housing sector or the public housing sector.

There is the ability to offer build-to-rent in a number of different ways, but it needs to be done at scale. That is the direction the government is going in, but it is not the only policy response here. The purpose of this legislation is to see further growth in this area. But it is not the only policy response. There needs to be more. We have to move the debate beyond just rates and land tax in what has been a pretty tedious process over the last decade. We have got beyond it on light rail. We have got beyond it on debt and deficit. Maybe we can get beyond it on this issue. Time will tell.

Mr Parton: We are quite enjoying it, though.

MR BARR: Indeed. The cheap politics are too easy. I know; I understand. I have been Treasurer for a decade. I know that whacking the Treasurer every year when taxes and charges have to go up is the most popular sport. It does not matter if it is a Labor or Liberal Treasurer or whether it is here or in any other state or territory; that is how politics is played. But we want to get beyond that on some issues, and this might be one where we could.

I will conclude on this note. If we can get unanimity in support of this legislation and get behind some innovative models to increase the rental supply, that is how we will make a difference for the community that we have all been elected to serve. I commend the legislation to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Leave granted to dispense with the detail stage.

Bill agreed to.

Adjournment

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

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Multicultural affairs—Sri Lankan new year events

MRS JONES (Murrumbidgee) (4.49): On 10 April it was an honour to attend the Sinhala and Tamil new year festival at the Sri Lanka Buddhist temple in Kambah. All children of the Sri Lankan language school participated in this cultural festival. As it was a cultural festival involving children in particular, I brought along four of my six kids to participate in the fun-filled activities on offer.

Established in 1996, Sri Lanka Buddhist Vihara Canberra is served by three resident bhanthes. The temple serves the needs of the Sri Lankan Buddhist community and all other Buddhist communities living in Canberra and surrounding areas. The bhanthes also participate in religious activities in other states in Australia. The Dhamma school and language school are important community services offered by the temple. Daily gilapasa pooja, weekly meditation programs and a monthly atasil program are some of the many religious activities conducted at the temple.

I would like to thank the vice-president of the association, Namal Gamage, for organising the event. I also thank the president, Rohan Weliwita, and other members of the committee for what was a truly beautiful autumn day event in Canberra celebrating the new year for the Buddhist faith.

The event kicked off with a beautiful commitment ceremony blessing the many children present. I was honoured to address members outlining the importance of this truly special occasion for the Buddhist religion as they celebrate the new year. Mr Gamage was kind enough to give us a fabulous tour of the temple, including the main prayer room; it was very interesting to learn the history of that.

It was then time for the kids to have some fun. There were plenty of activities on offer, including balloon popping and a doughnut eating challenge, which I am sad to say my son Leo got right into, with his amazing enthusiasm on full display, as usual.

We gathered inside with many other members of the Sri Lanka Buddhist community for the candle-lighting ceremony before enjoying the festivities and the beautiful food on offer, which was absolutely delicious. Thank you again for all the work put into that.

Lastly, it was an honour to witness all the male children of the Buddhist faith present getting their special blessing with holy oil on their forehead in what is truly a significant day in the Buddhist calendar. I wish everyone from both Sri Lanka Buddhist Vihara and the wider Buddhist community a happy new year.

On 24 April I was pleased to attend Sri Lankan new year at Commonwealth Park. The event included an introduction by organisers Ruvu Lecamwasam and Kavinya Welikala. I was privileged to be part of the lamp-lighting ceremony. It was good to see Ms Orr, as well as our leader Elizabeth Lee, there. We received a Buddhist blessing by the chief incumbent of the Sri Lankan Buddhist temple, Soratha Thero, and a Hindu blessing by Sri Kalikambal Devasthanam from Wanniasa.

We enjoyed a welcoming speech by the ALSA president, with a great deal of information about the long-term relationship between Australia and Sri Lanka, and an introduction to new year customs and traditions by the comperes in both English and Sinhalese. We were addressed by His Excellency the Acting High Commissioner of Sri Lanka and we enjoyed seeing the children once again dressed and partaking in their traditional dances. Now that the pandemic is under more control, it was a happy occasion to see these dances again after more than a year of people not being able to gather together.

We thank the organisers, Savi and Surangani Luck. We give a special thanks for the wonderful curry and traditional Sri Lankan sweets. They were a big hit.

I wish a happy new year to all Sinhalese, Tamil and Sri Lankan originating Canberrans: may this new year be filled with blessings for you.

Seniors—scams on the elderly

DR PATERSON (Murrumbidgee) (4.54): I would like to bring the Assembly's attention to scams in our community. As we are sitting here this afternoon, the Australian Federal Police have issued a warning on an Australian Taxation Office scam that is currently going through our community. These scams are highly targeted and not unusual, but this afternoon I want to bring specific attention to how these scammers target older people in our community.

This year alone, 17,836 scams have been reported targeting Australians over 55. In January to March this year, older Australians have lost over \$17 million combined. That is a staggering amount. This is particularly devastating when you consider that these abuses take place at a point where people often look to retire and enjoy the superannuation they have worked hard for.

The most prevalent scams are related to technology, investment and dating. Dating and romance scams take advantage of the elderly when they are emotionally vulnerable, often after they have lost their life partners. Scammers leverage the socially isolated and prey on the lonely, leaving a devastating financial and emotional impact.

Investment scams, including fake and fraudulent financial advisers, have the capacity to erode the financial security of older people, due to their direct access to the older person's bank accounts. Another big one is internet and technology-based scams, where older people are taken advantage of due to their lack of education and familiarity with digital technology.

The use of cryptocurrencies, gift cards and international fund transfers are some of the common methods by which these scammers escape responsibility and circumvent attempts to recovery.

Older Australians are also the prime target of door-to-door and maintenance scams, which allow fraudsters to charm or frighten the victim into their scheme. We have some actual examples of this in our community at the moment, with a regular doorknocker very well known in Weston Creek, targeting households in the early hours of the morning, requesting money. Often, it is older people who are more likely to fall victim; they are vulnerable, intimidated and frightened, and they are not on Facebook platforms.

Further to this, current scams include COVID-19 scams. Since the beginning of the year, Scamwatch has received 6,415 reports of scams in relation to COVID-19 and reported more than \$10 million in losses.

We need to place an emphasis on prevention. We need to look out for our older family members, friends and neighbours. We need to help them recognise when they are being scammed. Educational programs, such as those run by the Council on the Ageing here in the ACT, as well as the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission's Scamwatch program, seek to level the playing field and provide resources.

This Thursday, 13 May, volunteers from COTA ACT are hosting a drop-in session at the Queanbeyan seniors centre to assist elderly people in our community with digital support. Details are available on their Facebook page and website.

I call on everyone to check in on older family members, friends and neighbours. Make them aware of how these scams are working and happening in our community. Help them to recognise what to look out for. Encourage them to speak out if unsure, and to connect with organisations for information.

Arts—COVID-19

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (4.58): I want to take this chance to have a bit of a chat about the arts and entertainment sectors. We all understand that those sectors suffered more than any other sector during COVID. Performing artists, musicians, actors lost their ability to perform overnight, altogether. A lot of artists lost their marketplaces; they were not able to place freelance articles because there was no room in the market for anything except COVID-related content. That happened across the board. The artists were hit really hard by COVID. A lot of artists have secondary incomes, but most of those secondary incomes are in the entertainment sector, so they also lost that secondary income.

The federal government support we saw immediately after COVID showed that our federal government simply does not understand the arts sector. JobKeeper was written by people with salaries and was based on salaried work. That is not how the arts sector works at all. The arts sector is full of freelancers and gig workers, and most of

them were not able to prove eligibility for JobKeeper, even if they were professional practising artists. A lot of the Australia Council funding also simply did not work. I have been a practising artist for 15 years; I have a lot of friends in the sector, and we were pretty shocked at the kind of support that was being offered when that support was so needed.

Unfortunately, what we have seen in the federal budget just handed down is more of the same—there is almost nothing for the arts. There is a little bit for some organisations. It is targeted at big productions and international films, but most of our sole traders, our practising artists and most of our small arts businesses have been left out. I am particularly annoyed at the Support Act funding, which offers funding to a charity that supports musicians. I think that tells you everything you need to know about what the federal government thinks of the arts—they think that it is a hobby or is a charity; they do not think that it is real work.

The problem is that this is a bad outcome for our artists and for our culture and our communities, but it is also a really bad outcome for our economy. The arts sector in Australia employs almost 200,000 people—that is a lot more than coal mining, but you see where the money is going. It produces nine times as many jobs per million dollars in turnover as the construction industry, but that is not where the money is going. The arts sector grew from \$110 billion to \$115 billion between 2017 and 2018. It was increasing up until COVID, but as a result of COVID the jobs dropped away and they have not rebounded yet.

This is all about federal government funding, and I understand that that is not really what this Assembly does. But the problem is when we do not have leadership at the federal level, we have to step in and help out ourselves. Once again we are seeing states and territories lead the way, those that have vision. I have been really pleased to see some of the announcements that Minister Cheyne has made. I really like the \$750,000 Amp It Up! fund. That is very well targeted for musicians and for live music venues and is fantastic to see. I was also really pleased to see HOMEFRONT, which came out so fast during COVID, that was more targeted and better suited to that sector.

I am interested to see some even bigger funding pots are coming out of other states. Victoria has just announced a multibillion dollar creative economy investment of \$288 million. It is quite an interesting approach; I intend to have a little look at what they are doing and see what we can learn from it. They are taking a multiyear investment approach because they understand that one of the problems for arts funding is that we tend to go from grant to grant and project to project and there is no long-term career pathway. They have decided to tackle that head on.

Victoria are focusing on long-term opportunities for their creatives, and I suspect that it will cure quite a lot of problems at once. It will stop their talented artists from bleeding interstate. It will give artists some funding certainty and the dignity that their years of training and their work merit. And it will build their economy because arts funding contributes a lot more to the economy than funding channelled in other directions.

It would be great if we could get some really good long-term ambitious funding for the sector in Canberra, which makes us so vibrant and so creative. I am really looking forward to working further with our government and with our artists and art sector to see what we can come up with here.

Family violence services—funding

MRS KIKKERT (Ginninderra) (5.02): I rise to speak about our domestic and family violence front-line services. In my position, I am privileged to work with and hear from people involved in those services, and I have been receiving two consistent messages: front-line domestic and family violence services are underfunded and the money going toward training every single ACT public servant is a questionable priority. At the time of the announcement of the safer families levy, the news received widespread support. Nowadays, certain aspects of the levy were met with suspicion.

The first phase of the levy included \$770,000 for the training of front-line staff across community and emergency services, health, and education to support identification of family violence and early intervention. This was a worthwhile initiative. Employees in these sectors work closely with a broad segment of the population and are much more likely to encounter people who may be victims of abuse. More recently, it was announced that the government would commit an additional \$2.4 million to train all 21,000 ACT government staff. This is what has caused many community organisations to now regard this training program with the degree of mistrust.

While the initial spend of \$770,000 to help practitioners and community and emergency service employees was wise, there is a fear that the government's desire to expand this training to every single ACT government employee is not about domestic and family violence awareness and has been contorted instead to be a part of standard work health and safety training within their own directorates. If this is the case, it is the government's responsibility to fund this training from existing revenue rather than from the dedicated and purpose-raised safer families levy.

Taxes are taxes; they are a way of life and are used to address many issues. The safer families levy, however, is not like other taxes; it is a dedicated life-saving gift to anyone interacting with this space. The funds must be treated carefully, transparently and, dare I say, sacredly, so that they are used in the most effective way. We owe this to all Canberrans.

We know that there are women's refuges who see children who are victims of domestic violence, yet there is no psychological support for these kids after seeing the trauma. I remember when I witnessed a vehicle accident, I was offered counselling by ACT Policing. Yet when a 10-year-old sees violence in their home and then flees in the middle of the night for safety, there is not the same offer of psychological help and support that was provided to me. It is clear that we are doing something wrong, and it needs to change immediately.

Similarly, for women who are still experiencing trauma after years or months of fleeing domestic violence, there is a lack of support. When I hear that our front-line

services are being underfunded and they fear that the levy is not being used for what it should be, I become deeply concerned. I urge Minister Berry to make sure that the crisis centres are receiving sufficient support through the levy for both victims—parents and children.

I thank all our front-line community service providers for all their hard work and personal sacrifice. I know they do not think of their positions as just a job, like many other people; they all give a large part of themselves and willingly share the pain of the people who come to them for aide. The nobility of their work cannot be understated. We owe it to them to be responsible with this money.

Disability—Women with Disabilities ACT

MR DAVIS (Brindabella) (5.07): When I get to my office first thing on a non-sitting day, I do tend to be a little bit resentful of my party-room colleagues for inflicting on me such a very broad array of policy responsibilities for the Greens, but by the end of the day, after I have had the pleasure of meeting with six, eight or 10 Canberra groups, all with very interesting things to say about the interesting things they do, I end up leaving with a great sense of gratitude.

One of those wonderful groups that I had the pleasure of meeting with last week was Women with Disabilities ACT. The reason I think it is important to highlight Women with Disabilities ACT is that they are working in a space where many of the groups that we are accustomed to hearing from are those who are delivering services in a real, tangible way to people in their sector.

The Women with Disabilities ACT organisation has a slightly different purpose; that is, to engage in systemic advocacy. Rather than case-by-case management of different women with disabilities trying to navigate the public or private sectors, this organisation gets to the root of problems and works with government and the community to try to develop solutions.

I had the pleasure of meeting their CEO, Kat Reed, who came in to meet with me last week and gave me a little introduction to their organisation, which I would like to share with you today. Women with Disabilities ACT is a youth-led systemic advocacy and peer support organisation that they stress is for women, girls and non-binary people within the ACT—that is, women, girls, feminine identifying, and non-binary people with a disability—that they say experience multiple disadvantage due to the intersection of gender discrimination and disability discrimination.

Women with Disabilities ACT's experience and advocacy spans over 25 years in areas of violence prevention, housing, training, equity and representation. They follow a human rights philosophy based on the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Their motto is "Strong women, strong voices".

I will give some broad statistics on women with disabilities in the ACT that may be of interest to you, Madam Speaker. There are approximately 41,200 women in the ACT with a disability. Fifty-three per cent of people in the ACT with a disability are female, yet they make up only 34 per cent of NDIS participants in the ACT.

Women with disabilities in the ACT have a significantly lower labour force participation rate, at 65.1 per cent, compared to men with disabilities at 80.1 per cent. Women with disabilities are, unfortunately, 40 per cent more likely to be the victims of domestic violence than women without disabilities. Women with disabilities experience sexual victimisation at a rate four to 10 times higher than non-disabled women. Women with disabilities are substantially more likely to experience insecure housing.

There are some core strategic goals of Women with Disabilities ACT, including representation on ACT government policy and advisory groups, civil society organisations and businesses, and empowering women with disabilities to act as representatives within their community.

A case in point would be their CEO, Kat Reed, who was recently appointed Young Canberra Citizen of the Year, in part for Kat's focus on the intersectionality facing LGBTQIA+ people, people living with a disability, and those from culturally and ethnically diverse backgrounds. They have a focus on health, violence prevention, urban development and safety, and housing—a very broad brief that they have given themselves.

One of the key programs that Women with Disabilities ACT are currently working on is the parenting support group for parents with a disability. Parents, particularly women, face stigma from health services, family, friends and society for having children, instead of receiving extra supports that enable them to appropriately care for their child alongside their disability.

This support group has a membership of 45 parents. Women with Disabilities ACT are currently developing a policy on the barriers that parents with disability face. They regularly participate in forums and government consultations, and make submissions at both state and federal levels. They have been very involved with COVID and recovery research on the issues that impacted women with a disability, in particular, and are very engaged in the disability royal commission engagement and outreach.

Their work is so valued in the ACT, and so valued by the ACT government, that they were recently awarded a commendation at the 2019 Inclusion Awards for excellence in championing human rights and equality. Back in 2015 they were awarded the Chief Minister's Inclusion Award for excellence in championing human rights.

It was a pleasure to meet Kat, and Women with Disabilities ACT. I look forward to working with them as they continue to advocate for systemic equality for women with a disability in Canberra.

Arts—recent achievements

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra—Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Minister for the Arts, Minister for Business and Better Regulation, Minister for Human Rights and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (5.12): I rise this afternoon to provide an update on some of the incredible arts activities and achievements in Canberra recently.

First, I want to congratulate local musician and Belconnen resident Jack Biilmann on the release of his album *Full Circle*. *Full Circle* is number six on the ARIA jazz and blues albums chart, joining the likes of Norah Jones. It is number four in the top independent albums, just behind Sticky Fingers, Lime Cordiale and *Bluey: the Album*. It debuted at number eight on the iTunes chart, and had 10,000 streams on Spotify in its first week alone.

Full Circle came about during the shutdown last year, with support of a HOMEFRONT grant. Jack channelled that difficult time into a powerful album, with *BMA Magazine* describing it as “a combination of raw emotional energy and swirling dark hues”. Jack has kicked off a national tour, and it was brilliant to see him play on Saturday night at our own Street Theatre before a crowd of passionate supporters.

I also want to congratulate Free-Rain on its sold-out season of *Mamma Mia* at The Q, which has just finished. *Mamma Mia* was a long time coming—18 months in the making—with it having first been scheduled to open just after the pandemic hit. I was pleased to be there on opening night, and I loved its boldness and ambition. I think that I can speak for the entire audience there. Free-Rain truly embraced being back in theatres, with a run of more than 20 shows.

We have also just concluded Australian Dance Week and the Canberra International Music Festival. Both were incredibly thoughtful programs, showing off some of our nation’s best dancers and musicians. Importantly, both were accessible programs—accessible in being spread across our city, accessible in the sheer variety of what was on offer, and accessible in offering free performances and workshops.

I say it often: art is central to our wellbeing, and art has an important way of helping us make sense—something that we need more than ever after the pandemic and while we continue to go through the pandemic. Art has incredible restorative healing power.

I absolutely commend Ausdance ACT and the Canberra International Music Festival for what they have done, with the nature of their programs, and ensuring that as many people as possible could enjoy them and receive the benefits from them.

Of course, these are just a small handful of the achievements in the arts across the ACT in the last few weeks. There are so many high quality and diverse offerings. I encourage all Canberrans to support the arts, because they support us.

Ginninderra electorate—SMILE nature-based playground

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (5.15): This afternoon I want to provide an update on SMILE—I would like to see you all do so—the support Melba inclusive learning environment. This fantastic community initiative is being driven by two Ginninderra constituents, Tim and Hector. Last Saturday they held an event at the run-down site in Melba, next to Melba Copland Secondary School, where they and many other families in the area would like to see an inclusive nature-based playground.

These two local dads have done a lot of initial research on the ways this site could be used. It is so impressive to see this kind of grassroots initiative coming out of Ginninderra. As I said at the gathering on Saturday, our democracy works best when the community speaks to government; so a big shout-out, especially to Melba IGA, which provided sponsorship to the SMILE event by donating bread, sausages and onions for the sausage sizzle. I would also like to acknowledge my fellow MLAs at the event, Mrs Kikkert, Ms Clay, and Ms Cheyne.

Tim and Hector have started an e-petition to the Assembly. I would strongly encourage all Ginninderra residents, and of course any other Canberrans who would like to see this initiative receive ACT government funding, to support it.

Seniors—Silver is Gold Festival

MS DAVIDSON (Murrumbidgee—Assistant Minister for Seniors, Veterans, Families and Community Services, Minister for Disability, Minister for Justice Health and Minister for Mental Health) (5.16): I rise this afternoon to talk about the Silver is Gold Festival. This is the newly branded Seniors Week, which has been reconfigured to provide events throughout the year rather than all the events occurring in one week. This presents more opportunities for community members to celebrate older people. It is especially important given that last year’s Seniors Week events were all cancelled due to COVID-19. This festival is being wonderfully managed by the Council on the Ageing ACT, also known as COTA ACT.

While the Canberra community is still cautious about conditions around COVID-19, Jenny Mobbs, the CEO of COTA ACT, aims to encourage community connection. She says, “There are two very important messages for everyone living in Canberra regarding this new brand. The first is connection. We are keen to see the whole community take responsibility in reaching out and building a cooperative spirit, particularly with our older folk. The second is re-imagining ageing. Many people in our society have a negative opinion of older people, ageing and the aged. We are all living longer, seniors are active, and they contribute hugely to society, be this through volunteering, looking after grandchildren or being in the work force. It is time for everyone to re-imagine older people and ageing. Contributing to a community that welcomes and nurtures our seniors is a far better place for everyone to live.”

The range of events for Silver is Gold will encourage our community to do just that. They focus both on how we would like to age and how we would like to be treated as we mature. The Silver is Gold Festival was launched on 28 April, when I had the privilege of issuing awards for the community art and photographic competition. There was a terrific array of entries and winners, ranging from children as young as three to those who were in their 70s.

All of the artwork and photography depicted positive visions of ageing. One of the winning entries was a series of stunning photographs of Jill diving from the top tower at civic pool. Jill resumed diving after 50 years, at the age of 65. There was such joy in those images, particularly for those of us who are younger and perhaps not as fit. The photos were taken by Paul Durack, who, as I subsequently learnt, is the kayak

cameraman. I was very excited to meet him. The exhibition is now travelling to all town centres and then on to various aged-care facilities, which enables so many more people in our community to see these creative and positive images of ageing.

The next day saw the Chief Minister's Silver is Gold concert at the Canberra Theatre, a fabulous performance put on by the Duntroon RMC Big Band, conducted by Captain Shane Gillard, and attended by more than 750 members of the public. The Silver is Gold Festival will continue throughout the year, with a seniors expo on 16 September and culminating in a picnic and a performance day for grandparents and grandchildren on 31 October.

I would like to congratulate Jenny Mobbs and her team for their creativity and inspiration in pulling this festival together. Expanding Seniors Week out into a series of events which take place throughout the year is such an important step towards rebuilding our sense of community and stitching together our social fabric in the wake of the disconnection and uncertainty brought about by COVID-19.

There is power in community events such as these that bring us together, enable the sharing of stories, spark conversations and connection. The Silver is Gold Festival recognises the important role that older people play in making Canberra the city we love. If we value our seniors and the contributions they make, then we all benefit.

Debate interrupted.

Standing orders—suspension

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

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

Adjournment

Environment—swift parrot

MS VASSAROTTI (Kurrajong) (5.21): I rise today to speak about the critically endangered swift parrot. If you are lucky enough to see one, the flash of green and crimson as a swift parrot flies past is a sight to behold. Last Friday morning I visited the Callum Brae Nature Reserve in Symonston, where more than 50 swift parrots have been sighted. With fewer than 300 swift parrots left in the wild, this was a once in a lifetime opportunity. Sadly, by the time I got there they had moved on, leaving me to wonder how many people will get to see these beautiful birds before they become extinct.

The Australian National University ecologist and swift parrot expert Dr Debbie Saunders describes swift parrots as the larrikins of the forests. They get excited. They get a bit high on the sugar load. They scramble around amongst the branches and they love the wild weather. They are, after all, Tasmanians! The swift parrot does have a story to tell, but unfortunately it is not a pretty story at the moment. It is a story of environmental devastation, of governments failing to protect one of its own, and of

habitats being razed to the ground for profit. The swift parrot breeds in Tasmania and migrates to the mainland each winter, stopping over in the ACT for a couple of weeks. Thankfully, they find habitat here, at Mount Ainslie, Callum Brae and even in gardens across Canberra.

Outside the ACT their habitat is under attack, with breeding grounds in southeast Tasmania and important winter habitat on the New South Wales south coast being logged. The ACT has taken proactive steps to conserve habitat for these parrots and other woodland dependent species. We are managing and conserving the most intact woodlands in Australia, including the critically endangered yellow box-Blakely's red gum woodland. Logging represents the single biggest threat to the survival of the swift parrot in the wild. If there is no change, this species is on a ten-year track to extinction. The plight of swift parrots is a prime example of why the federal government needs to urgently improve the National Environment Protection and Biodiversity Act—the EPBC Act.

Inexplicably, logging is largely exempt from the EPBC Act under a series of regional forest agreements between the federal government and states. Scientists and conservation groups have said for years that the forestry exemptions favour industry over the environment. The federal government's own review, conducted by Professor Graeme Samuel AC, found that the EPBC Act had comprehensively failed to protect our wild species and threatened ecosystems. It recommended a host of changes, including the removal of the logging industry's special exemption from the national environment laws.

We must have stronger national environment protection laws to protect native forests and swift parrots, as well as other endangered species. This is an issue that I have been working hard to profile and advocate for. The swift parrots sum up our Australian character of enjoying nature, but they can only be as resilient as nature allows them to be. No one state or territory alone can save the species. It takes a united approach, and one that I hope to see. I also hope that I might sight one of these larrikins of the bush as they head home after the winter. To conclude, I would like to thank Margaret Blakers, who alerted me to the presence of the swift parrots here in the ACT, and to Dr Debbie Saunders, for her past and ongoing work to save these wonderful birds.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 5.25 pm.