



# Debates

WEEKLY HANSARD

Legislative Assembly for the ACT

**TENTH ASSEMBLY**

**22 JUNE 2021**

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**Tuesday, 22 June 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**

*The following petitions were lodged for presentation:*

### **Roads—safety—petition 17-21**

*By Mr Parton, from 278 residents:*

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

The following residents of the ACT draw to the attention of the ACT Assembly:  
Lawrence Wackett Crescent is the only road in and out of Theodore.

The uncontrolled western intersection of Lawrence Wackett Crescent and Tharwa Drive is extremely dangerous and the site of many and ongoing vehicle accidents.

The 4000 residents of Theodore should be able to safely enter and exit their own suburb without the ongoing high-risk threat of collision when entering 80km/h Tharwa Drive.

The safety risks to residents and visitors to Theodore have been ignored for many years.

Your petitioners, therefore, request the Assembly to call on the ACT Government to:

Implement improvements to significantly increase safety at the western intersection of Lawrence Wackett Crescent and Tharwa Drive.

## **Roads—safety—petition 20-21**

*By Mr Parton, from 31 residents:*

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

This petition of certain residents of the Australian Capital Territory draws to the attention of the Assembly that:

- Lawrence Wackett Crescent is the only road in and out of Theodore
- The uncontrolled western intersection of Lawrence Wackett Crescent and Tharwa Drive is extremely dangerous and the site of many and ongoing vehicle accidents
- The 4000 residents of Theodore should be able to safely enter and exit their own suburb without the ongoing high-risk threat of collision when entering 80km/h Tharwa Drive
- The safety risks to residents and visitors to Theodore have been ignored for many years.

**Your petitioners, therefore, request the Assembly to call on the ACT Government to: Implement improvements to significantly increase safety at the western intersection of Lawrence Wackett Crescent and Tharwa Drive.**

## **Sport—Bonner oval—petition 7-21**

*By Ms Orr, from 153 residents:*

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

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

The Gungahlin Community is the fastest growing community in the ACT;

The demand for cricket, both junior and adult, has also been growing rapidly;

Bonner Oval is increasingly used by the multicultural community in Bonner for social cricket competitions;

The not-for-profit community club Indian Australian Multicultural Sports Association holds many annual events;

These include initiatives to involve women and girls more in cricket and sport in general; and

The Bonner Oval has public toilets, tables and chairs and some other amenities, however it lacks a water bubbler for people playing sport.

Your petitioners, therefore, request the Assembly to call on the ACT Government to:

Fund a water bubbler at the Bonner Oval as part of the August 2021 budget; and  
Prioritise other amenities at Bonner Oval where possible.

## **Planning—green waste—petition 19-21**

By **Mr Cain**, from 2,128 residents:

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

The following residents of the ACT draw to the attention of the ACT Assembly: The ACT government has not renewed the licence for Canberra Sand & Gravel to keep operating the community green waste drop off facility and landscape centre. As such, the facility must close on 30 June 2021. At this stage CSG will stop accepting green waste on 30 June 2021 UNLESS the ACT Government acts to keep the facility and centre open.

Your petitioners, therefore, request the Assembly to call on the ACT Government to:

Keep the community green waste and landscape supplies on Parkwood Road at West Belconnen open.

*Pursuant to standing order 99A, the petition, having more than 500 signatories, was referred to the Standing Committee on Planning, Transport and City Services.*

*The Clerk having announced that the terms of the petitions would be recorded in Hansard and referred to the appropriate ministers for response pursuant to standing order 100, the petitions were received.*

## **Ministerial response**

The following response to a petition has been lodged:

## **Planning—Kippax group centre—petition 8-21**

By **Mr Gentleman**, Minister for Planning and Land Management, dated 16 June 2021, in response to a petition lodged by Mrs Kikkert on 30 March 2021 concerning the expansion of Kippax group centre.

*The response read as follows:*

Dear Mr Duncan

Thank you for your letter on 30 March 2021 providing Petition No. 8-21, lodged by Mrs Elizabeth Kikkert MLA, regarding the expansion of the Kippax Group Centre.

The ACT Government recognises the need for the expansion and renewal of the Kippax Group Centre to support the growing West Belconnen community, with considerable progress made to date on the necessary planning and site investigation works.

In July 2020, I approved Variation 361 to the Territory Plan that implemented key planning and land use changes as detailed in the 2019 Kippax Group Centre Master Plan (Master Plan). Territory Plan Variation 361 provides opportunity for the expansion of the Kippax Group Centre, including commercial, retail, and mixed-use development. The variation also promotes the key planning objectives of the Master Plan to allow for the expansion of the centre, creating a centralised community hub and public meeting places, and better connection of the centre with walking and cycling paths. Territory Plan Variation 361 was presented to the ACT Legislative Assembly on 2 July 2020 and commenced on 4 September 2020.

The ACT Government is now taking the next steps to facilitate the renewal of Kippax Group Centre. Currently, the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (EPSDD) is progressing with the necessary site investigations and has commenced the process for the sale and development of the land.

In the interests of ensuring a fair and transparent process, and to seek maximum benefit for the community in line with the planning principles and strategies outlined in the Master Plan, the development opportunity will be offered through a competitive two-stage sales process.

The first stage is being delivered through an Expression of Interest (EOI) process looking at proponents' interest and ability to deliver the development. The EOI was released on Friday 28 May 2021 and is open for eight weeks, closing on 25 July 2021. Based on the outcomes of the EOI, the best approach for the sale of the land and development of the Kippax Group Centre will be determined and progressed through an appropriate mechanism, such as a Request for Tender process.

I understand the community is keen to see the Master Plan become a reality and acknowledge that planning and development processes take time. I remain committed to progressing this work, through appropriate processes, and look forward to sharing the outcomes of the sales process in due course.

I trust this information is of assistance.

### **Motion to take note of petitions**

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

That the petitions and response so lodged be noted.

### **Planning—green waste—petition 19-21**

**MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (10.03):** I am so pleased to see the Canberra Sand and Gravel green waste facility at Parkwood continued. I know that members of Belconnen have been really concerned about the longevity of this facility. I grew up in Weetangera and I have lived for most of my life in Belconnen. I get why this place matters. Canberra Sand and Gravel has been the go-to green waste facility for decades, providing high quality recycling at a low cost.

I have spent the past weeks listening to and talking to concerned locals; talking to the minister for city services, Chris Steel; and talking to Canberra Sand and Gravel and Ginninderry estate representatives. These conversations have been really fruitful. We all agree that while Canberra's population grows, we need to ensure that we continue to provide essential services like recycling facilities that are practical, easily accessible and affordable. This all ties into the ACT Greens' broader vision of reducing our carbon footprint and moving towards a healthy, waste-free future. Transitioning to a circular economy begins by recognising that our planet's resources are finite and we need to address our unsustainable levels of consumption growth and waste generation.

The new green waste bins are a welcome addition, helping households reduce their garden waste. I eagerly await the scheme being expanded to include food waste by the end of 2023. As an environmentalist and an avid gardener, I know that we need these recycling services. But I am particularly glad we have kept our Canberra Sand and Gravel facility, and I look forward to the permanent Belconnen location for that facility.

I will always try and get the best outcome for my community, working constructively on solutions with the Legislative Assembly and putting people over politics. The ACT Greens share the community's desire for a deeper, more participatory democracy. It is great to see a petition with so many signatures coming before us. We know that involves the government genuinely listening, respecting and trusting the community voice. This is what has happened with the CSG green waste facility. Our community has spoken; we have listened; and I look forward to seeing the next steps for recycling and reuse in Belconnen.

**MR CAIN** (Ginninderra) (10.05): I would like to comment briefly on the green waste e-petition that has garnered significant support from the Canberra community, particularly in my electorate of Ginninderra. This petition was signed by more than 2,000 people, asking the Labor-Greens government to keep the community green waste recycling facility open in west Belconnen. To be precise, 2,128 Canberra residents signed this petition in just under three weeks, and hundreds of others signed a paper petition.

The Labor-Greens government listened to the community and in this case has agreed to extend the lease. This is a wonderful outcome for the people of Belconnen; for local landscaping businesses, with whom I have spoken; and the whole of Canberra. I am proud that I was able to work with my Ginninderra colleague Mrs Kikkert and the Belconnen community to achieve this.

While this is good news, it is only a Band-Aid solution. Canberra Sand and Gravel needs certainty as to how long this extension will be and it needs a fast track to an alternative site. The community and local landscaping businesses also need certainty on this issue. The Labor-Greens government needs to give more consideration to the real needs of the Canberra community.

I will continue to hold the government to account to ensure that there is a long-term green waste recycling solution in Belconnen. I would like to highlight the government's failure to provide a timely solution. This decision was made at the eleventh hour and the closure no doubt would have gone ahead if the community had not been so vocal. I suspect that the government knew that this was not what the community wanted, if they were prepared to close the green waste recycling facility, anyway. The real test now is what long-term solution the Labor-Greens government will implement.

In the absence of such certainty, the reality of a long round trip for many, from Belconnen to Mugga Lane, is still looming, particularly for landscaping businesses. Some of my constituents are worried about their businesses not being able to cope without the local option available to them. Others are simply concerned by the fact that driving to an alternative green waste facility will take more time and increase emissions. And clearly household green bins are not enough on their own.

All these unknowns are causing unnecessary stress for the community. Last week, the Leader of the Opposition, Elizabeth Lee, told the government that they were out of touch and that their priorities were not in line with those of Canberrans. The circumstances that led to this petition are a case in point. Yet again, the Labor-Greens government have comprehensively proven that they are out of touch. But even when the community speaks, they are reluctant to provide a timely and comprehensive solution.

In summary, I ask the government to finally listen to the needs of not only my electorate but the broader community regarding their planning preferences for this growing city. I call on the Labor-Greens government to take note of the community's view, as made clear in this petition, that a permanent green waste facility located in Belconnen is a necessity.

### **Roads—safety—petitions 17-21 and 20-21**

**MR PARTON** (Brindabella) (10.09): I rise to speak on the Theodore traffic improvement petition. When I heard about this petition, I had no hesitation in saying yes to sponsoring it for presentation to the Assembly. I have to say a big thanks to David Mitchell for putting it together; I applaud his work in getting this matter before us in the form of this petition.

When I heard about this petition, I had no hesitation in sponsoring it because my experience with the intersection, and the experience of every resident of Theodore and just about everyone who has ever driven on Tharwa Drive alongside Calwell and Theodore, has led me and others to believe that unless some improvements are made to the western intersection of Tharwa Drive and Lawrence Wackett Crescent, somebody is going to die there. It is inevitable.

I have knocked on every door in Theodore, many of them on multiple occasions. I can tell you that particularly people who live close to that intersection dread the sound of screeching tyres. They can all recall hearing that horrible sound of metal on metal and

the sound of wailing sirens. They are sick of promises. They are sick of inaction. Many of them said that they just do not want their P-plate-driving children to die in an accident just around the corner from home.

The David Mitchell petition does not specify the traffic engineering solution for this blackspot; rather, it calls for safety improvements to the intersection. I would like to refer to the government's own blackspot feasibility study on this intersection that was completed in September last year. The study indicated that in the five-year study period, which was from 1 January 2014 to 31 December 2018, there were 20 collisions at this intersection, including seven resulting in injury. The collision frequency at this intersection is around 0.75 collisions per million vehicles entering. According to the report, this is very high for a T-intersection.

The report suggested five possible solutions, ranging from traffic lights to reducing the speed limit or converting the intersection to a roundabout. The roundabout option was the only one that was absolutely dismissed by the report, purely for practical reasons.

I applaud Peter Philippa, who, coincidentally, was running a very similar pure paper petition on this matter. It is unfortunate that the two petitions are just a little different in their wording. In total, the David Mitchell e-petition and paper petition, together with the Peter Philippa paper petition, have gathered in excess of 500 signatures. Having 500 signatures combined on the one petition would have resulted in this petition being automatically referred to a committee.

Madam Speaker, I seek guidance from you as to whether I can now move, pursuant to standing order 99, that this petition relating to traffic improvements on Tharwa Drive and Lawrence Wackett Crescent be referred to the planning, transport and city services committee for further consideration.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** You need to do it as a separate item after people have spoken on the petitions.

**MR DAVIS (Brindabella) (10.12):** I rise to thank Mr David Mitchell, the petitioner, and Mr Parton, the sponsor of the petition, for calling on the government to implement traffic improvements at the western intersection of Lawrence Wackett Crescent and Tharwa Drive.

My experience of this intersection is both professional and personal. I will speak to the professional first.

During the election campaign, as I doorknocked in Theodore and spoke to our shared constituents, I found that road management in this area, and this particular intersection, was a recurring theme of conversations that I was having with members of the community. A number of people raised with me serious concerns about safety, lights, road management and the like at that intersection. The figures are particularly stark if we reflect on Mr Parton's contribution and reference to 20 collisions during a four-year period, seven of them resulting in injury. Those are numbers that should impel us to give a swift response.

In a personal capacity, as I said in my inaugural speech a few months ago, my first job was as a pizza delivery driver in a 1979 Holden Barina. My very first car accident was at that very intersection. I should have been home from delivering two Hawaiians, a bottle of Coke and some garlic bread. Coming out left, Skippy got me. Skippy came off second-best, unfortunately, but it was a dusty experience for a young P-plater and I am sure it speaks to the experience of many of the young people coming in and out of the suburb of Theodore who Mr Parton cited in his contribution.

There will be a professional and personal sigh of relief and enthusiastic response from me and my team to see some action on that particularly cumbersome intersection.

### **Sport—Bonner oval—petition 7-21**

**MS ORR** (Yerrabi) (10.14): I will be speaking about the facilities at Bonner oval—or, as we refer to it, the Bonner bubbler petition. I was very happy to sponsor this petition for Sanjay Sharma, who is an active user of the oval and organises a lot of cricket tournaments, particularly for the multicultural community. Sanjay's passion has seen a neighbourhood oval become quite a hub of activity, with a cricket tournament all year round, and training on that field, as well as now a women's tournament, because women wanted to get involved. He has now expanded that to include cricket for younger people, boys and girls, so that they can get involved.

It is fantastic to see so much of the community coming together around a passion, driven by Sanjay, for cricket. One thing he tells me that they would really like—he actually has a long list, but one thing at the top—is a bubbler. While they are all out there, playing and running around, they get quite thirsty, and they would really like to have better access to water.

I look forward to working with the minister on this facility, this oval, to see whether we can come up with what, hopefully, should be quite a straightforward improvement to the area.

### **Planning—green waste—petition 19-21**

**MS CASTLEY** (Yerrabi) (10.15): I will be speaking to the petition on green waste facilities in west Belconnen. Madam Speaker, so many times I have to stand in the chamber and explain simple business operations to an out-of-touch government. There are so many times when the Labor-Greens government have overlooked the needs of small businesses and the pressures that operators face, including mounting costs and staffing challenges.

That is why, earlier this year, the Canberra Liberals called on the government to show that it genuinely supports small business by establishing a small business ministerial advisory council. As I have said before, Canberra is a thriving public service town, and we are so fortunate to have such an outstanding public service. But Canberra also has a strong business sector that we must support and grow.

In its wisdom, the Labor-Greens government is closing the Parkwood facility in west Belconnen, and the closure is imminent. This free garden waste facility has been operating for more than three decades. I remember going there when I was a child. My grandfather loved it. Tens of thousands of Canberrans have visited this site to get their much-needed supplies and drop off green waste. Hundreds of small businesses—and we are thinking here of landscapers, plumbers, gardeners and labourers—rely on the Parkwood operation.

Recently, the business minister spoke to the Assembly about her government's Better Regulation Taskforce, which, she said, had the key task of talking to business about how to talk business. I wonder whether the minister, her cabinet colleagues or the task force have taken their own advice by talking to landscaping businesses in the north of Canberra.

One tradie that the Canberra Liberals have spoken to reported that he had recently been working on a site in Florey. He revealed that the closure of the Parkwood facility would mean, for him, a 30-minute round trip to Mitchell, simply to get one load of supplies. What is important to note is that, like many others, he needs to make four of those trips every day. So what does that mean? It means that the effect on this tradie, like others, is to lose a trailer-load of productivity every single day, plus labour costs, plus fuel costs, which, added together, would amount to two hours per day of downtime, lost productivity and so on.

The minister for city services told the Assembly that his government was undertaking a review of the waste facilities and future provision for the north side of Canberra. Where does this leave Canberra small businesses, which need certainty from government and clear rules and direction? When will businesses know if they have to factor lengthier trips and lost productivity into their quotes?

The Canberra Liberals understand small business, which is why my colleague Peter Cain has organised a petition against the closure of Canberra Sand and Gravel, which has collected more than 2,000 signatures. That is such an impressive achievement.

The government's kneejerk reaction to the Canberra Liberals' petition is to keep the enterprise open on a month by month basis, which does nothing for small business except create uncertainty and more confusion. As Mr Cain mentioned, rattling off alternatives that businesses know about, such as Mitchell and Mugga Lane, does not provide solace for small business.

Canberrans are fed up with having to resort to activism to get any sense, any sound direction and any sound decision-making from this government. But the Canberra Liberals will stand with the businesses, solidly backing their efforts to fight for an important facility that they need to rely on. It is not just about residents maintaining their gardens and green spaces; it is about small businesses, which need government support, not opposition.

**MR STEEL** (Murrumbidgee—Minister for Skills, Minister for Transport and City Services and Special Minister of State) (10.19): I rise to speak on the petition in

relation to garden waste facilities in west Belconnen. I would like to start by thanking the community who signed the petition that is before the Assembly today.

I am very pleased to update the Assembly. A temporary extension of the licence for Canberra Sand and Gravel has been approved by the ACT government. This means that residents on Canberra's north side, particularly west Belconnen, will continue to be able to drop off garden waste at Parkwood in the coming months, as current service agreements are temporarily extended.

The priority here is to ensure continuity of garden waste services while a longer term solution is identified for large-scale composting and green waste management. Canberra Sand and Gravel's licence was due to expire on 30 June this year, to allow remediation of the West Belconnen Resource Management Centre, supporting the ongoing delivery of new homes in the Ginninderry region and, indeed, recreational parkland for that community and the broader west Belconnen area as well.

The ACT government has listened to community feedback, including from those who took the time to sign this petition. We will extend CSG's licence on a temporary basis while we continue the work that is already underway to identify alternatives for garden waste management on the north side. Of course, in the interim, for residents who want to dispose of green waste, all Canberra households are entitled to a green bin, with fortnightly collections of up to 240 litres. Residents can apply to get a green bin on the ACT government city services website.

Over the coming months, we will be bringing together stakeholders from across government, Ginninderry, and Canberra Sand and Gravel to look at a phased approach for the future remediation of the site, while ensuring that appropriate waste facilities remain available on the north side.

**MRS KIKKERT** (Ginninderra) (10.21): The Canberra Liberals first proposed green bins in 2012—a policy, I note, that was then opposed by Labor—and they are great for many gardening tasks, but they are not always enough. Trips to the Parkwood green waste facility have been a regular feature for many Belconnen residents and small business owners for a quarter of a century.

I have been seeking clarity from the government on a possible relocation of this facility since the middle of last year. The minister told me then that “a new location for green waste drop-off services provided by Canberra Sand and Gravel in Belconnen is yet to be identified”, but that “a longer term solution for the acceptance of green waste for Belconnen and north Canberra is being investigated”.

As the end of the lease on the current site approached, I again asked the minister for an update. I specifically asked if the government had been consulting with CSG about relocation. Minister Steel's response was no. A good government would have done two things: first, consult with the experts who have been successfully running green waste operations in Belconnen for 25 years; and second, make sure that a new facility is in place before forcing the current one to close. But we are not dealing with a good government here. When further pressed, the minister stated, on 12 May:

... 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 ...

Thanks to Wayne at CSG, this petition has forced the minister to temporarily extend the licence. I remind my electorate that, together, we can stop the government leaving Belconnen without a green waste facility.

Most people would think that having a new site for CSG to run its green waste operation would be an important pre-requisite before forcing it to shut down. But that is not how this government works. This is shockingly bad planning. It also demonstrates a lack of respect for CSG and for the thousands of Belconnen households that rely on its service.

The government have suggested two alternatives for residents—Mitchell and Mugga Lane. If they had consulted CSG, they would know that the Mitchell facility is currently running at 90 per cent capacity and cannot handle the increase from closing Parkwood. Mugga Lane is a 70-kilometre return trip, at least, from west Belconnen and can take nearly an hour each way. One gardening business has calculated that going to Mugga Lane will increase their costs by \$400 each week. Clearly, neither option is feasible.

Thankfully, this petition has temporarily stopped this government's decision to close Parkwood without a suitable replacement. That is a solid win, but the struggle is far from over. When I rang Canberra Sand and Gravel to congratulate them on the news that their lease would be temporarily extended, they had no idea what I was talking about. Clearly, Minister Steel still does not believe in talking directly with important stakeholders. Beyond that, the government has repeatedly stated that it is reviewing options in north Canberra.

I rise today to state that the thousands of Belconnen residents who have supported this petition are not going to be satisfied with a green waste facility that is not accessible to them. I call on the ACT government to make sure that they have respect for stakeholders, and actually talk to them. They should allow CSG to keep its current facility open until an alternative site is found and made ready. Lastly, the new site should serve the needs of the Belconnen community.

### **Sport—Bonner oval—petition 7-21**

**MR BRADDOCK** (Yerrabi) (10.25): I would like to speak in support of Ms Orr's petition for water facilities at the Bonner oval. Water is a glaring omission at this oval. There are covered picnic tables, a playground, an irrigated oval, newly installed lights, barbecues, toilets and park benches, yet not a single tap, not a single bubbler.

The oval is in frequent use for sporting events, particularly cricket, as was mentioned earlier, and kids are also hard at work playing, but there is no way to quench your thirst. You can cook at a barbecue but you cannot rinse things under a tap. I fully endorse this call for water at the Bonner oval.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

## **Planning, Transport and City Services—Standing Committee Reference**

**MR PARTON** (Brindabella) (10.26): Pursuant to standing order 99, I move:

That the petition relating to improving traffic safety in Theodore at the intersection of Lawrence Wackett Crescent and Tharwa Drive be referred to the Standing Committee on Planning, Transport and City Services.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

## **COVID-19 pandemic response—update Ministerial statement**

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH** (Kurrajong—Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Families and Community Services and Minister for Health) (10.27): I rise to provide a further update on the COVID-19 situation in the ACT and the plans, preparations and actions that the government continues to take to protect the health and wellbeing of Canberrans.

The ACT continues to do well with our response to COVID-19, and I would like to thank the Canberra community for continuing to cooperate with the public health directions and advice. These are critical to our ongoing efforts to stop the spread of the virus. The Canberra community has shown their commitment throughout these unprecedented times, including in response to the recent situations in Victoria and New South Wales.

I am also pleased to see more Canberrans now able to book their appointment to be vaccinated against COVID-19 after recent announcements. I thank the hardworking staff at our testing and vaccination centres and our frontline hospital and public health teams in helping to keep the community safe.

Since my previous update on 2 June, the ACT government has been busy responding to the COVID-19 situation in Victoria. The situation has been challenging and we have seen things develop very quickly, which again is a reminder of the need to be vigilant, to stay in front of this virus. I am pleased to report that no positive cases have been detected in the ACT, despite this situation, which is testament to Canberrans heeding the public health and travel advice.

As of 21 June 2021, there have been more than 100 locally acquired cases linked to the greater Melbourne outbreak, but just eight new cases reported over the past seven days. At the height of this outbreak, there were several hundred linked exposure sites listed in Victoria, and a large number of close contacts identified. The ACT kept on top of the newly listed exposure sites by updating our COVID-19 areas of concern notice on a frequent basis and publishing exposure sites on the ACT's COVID-19 website. Canberrans who had returned from Victoria were asked to check the notice and follow the public health advice.

Following the Victorian government's announcement that it would ease stay-at-home restrictions for greater Melbourne from 11 June 2021, the ACT also lifted restrictions, enabling the stay-at-home requirement to be lifted for approximately 900 people in the ACT.

While the ACT's stay-at-home restrictions were in place, non-ACT residents were not permitted to travel from Victoria to the ACT unless they had an exemption approved by ACT Health. Exemptions are only provided in exceptional circumstances, including for reasons such as essential work, compassionate purposes or to receive medical treatment.

Returning ACT residents were required to complete an online declaration form 24 hours prior to arrival. ACT Health received a total of 12,293 self-declarations for travellers returning from Victoria. ACT Health also received 657 exemption applications from non-ACT residents to enter the ACT. Of these, 187 were approved, 147 were rejected, 93 required no exemption at the time of application as the applicant may have been transiting, flight crew or freight transporters. In addition 230 applications were withdrawn, mainly due to the change in public health requirements from 11.59 pm on 10 June which meant an exemption was no longer required to travel to the ACT.

There were a small number of close and casual contacts identified in the ACT associated with the Victorian outbreak. ACT Health identified a total of 46 close contacts and 81 casual contacts linked to positive cases or exposure locations. I would like to thank these individuals for coming forward and contacting ACT Health, and for cooperating with necessary testing and isolation requirements.

Restrictions have now been eased in Victoria, allowing metropolitan Melbourne residents to travel beyond a 25-kilometre radius, including to regional Victoria. Unfortunately, the outbreak continues, with exposure sites being identified regularly. For this reason the ACT is maintaining the requirement for a travel declaration to be completed for anyone travelling from Victoria to the ACT. This requirement will be reviewed again on 24 June. While this measure does not equate to formal travel restrictions, the declaration process enables ACT Health to contact individuals who have travelled from Victoria to the ACT, should the situation worsen.

On 1 June 2021, New South Wales issued a public health alert regarding a confirmed case of COVID-19 from Victoria, who visited venues in the Shoalhaven and Goulburn local government areas and the Jervis Bay territory while infectious. Given these areas are frequently visited by Canberrans, the ACT responded quickly to advise people in the ACT who had been in New South Wales in the last 14 days to please check for COVID-19 areas of concern. Extensive follow-up of close and casual contacts from these sites did not identify any new locally acquired cases in the ACT.

On 9 June 2021, the Queensland government reported a new positive case in a person who travelled to Queensland, via New South Wales, from Melbourne. A close contact of the first case also tested positive and a number of exposure sites across New South Wales and Queensland were identified from this trip. ACT Health was equally timely

in advising Canberrans who had travelled recently of the need to check updated information on COVID-19 areas of concern and follow the relevant public health advice. Fortunately, no further transmission from this trip through New South Wales was detected.

Over the past week, the New South Wales government has identified several new positive COVID-19 cases, some with multiple exposure locations, in the eastern suburbs of Sydney, and one in the Baulkham Hills area of Sydney, which has a link with the ACT. This case visited Canberra on the public holiday of Monday, 14 June, when he attended the National Gallery of Australia's *Botticelli to Van Gogh* exhibition and exhibition gift shop between 12 noon and 1.45 pm. Anyone who attended this location between these specific times must complete the declaration form on the ACT Health website, get tested for COVID-19 and quarantine for 14 days, even if they receive a negative result.

The positive case also visited the Via Dolce Pasticceria in Civic between 2.45 and 3.15 pm on 14 June. Anyone who attended this location between these specific times must also complete a declaration form, get tested for COVID-19 and isolate until they receive a negative result. They should also continue to monitor for symptoms and get retested if they experience even the mildest symptoms.

While initial test results for this individual showed low levels of COVID-19, and repeat testing failed to confirm that this is a case, we are following New South Wales Health's lead and taking a highly precautionary approach in responding to these exposure locations. Extra staff are being rostered on at existing ACT testing clinics, and we will continue to monitor demand and respond as needed. I encourage everyone to stay up to date by checking the ACT COVID-19 website regularly, as the list of exposure locations will likely be updated as our investigations continue.

I would like to thank the National Gallery of Australia and the owners of Via Dolce for working so positively with ACT Health over the past several days. ACT Health continues to remind anyone travelling to another jurisdiction to abide by all public health restrictions put in place by that jurisdiction. All travellers should be prepared to change their travel plans at short notice. The situation can change quickly, and travellers should be prepared to follow all ACT public health instructions upon their return.

This is also an important reminder to check in to any venue where this is required or where the venue manager has chosen to adopt a check-in process—both in the ACT and in any other jurisdiction people may be travelling to.

Throughout this period the regular, weekly wastewater testing managed by ACT Health as part of our routine COVID-19 surveillance has not detected any fragments of COVID-19. This provides reassurance to our public health officials and our community that COVID-19 is not circulating undetected in our community and confirms the ongoing COVID-safe behaviour demonstrated by the Canberra community.

The COVID-19 vaccination program rollout continues to progress well in the ACT. We are ensuring that the rollout continues in an efficient and, above all, safe manner. I am pleased to advise that, as of 11.59 pm on 20 June 2021, the total number of vaccine doses administered through ACT government facilities was 72,565.

The ACT government continues to work with residential aged-care facilities on ways to increase vaccination of workers and identify workers willing to be contacted directly by the vaccine booking team to make an appointment at the Garran mass vaccination clinic. The Chief Health Officer has written directly to each residential aged-care facility manager to encourage greater uptake of vaccinations for their workforce, and our team continues to liaise regularly with these facilities.

The access and sensory COVID-19 vaccination clinic at Garran has been well received by the Canberra community. Since opening on 27 May, the clinic has administered 320 vaccines to eligible individuals. Feedback from disability stakeholder groups has been extremely warm and encouraging.

Eligible Canberrans are able to make a vaccination appointment online through the MyDHR Digital Health Record platform or by calling the ACT government COVID-19 vaccination phone booking line. Acknowledging that not everyone is able to book online, we continue to operate the phone booking line from 7 am to 7 pm, seven days a week.

ACT residents aged 60 years or older also have the option of contacting a participating general practice to book their appointment for the AstraZeneca vaccine. There are more than 70 participating GP and commonwealth-led respiratory assessment clinics administering AstraZeneca to those persons eligible. I encourage people to use the commonwealth government's online eligibility checker to find a participating provider.

Delivering a safe and effective COVID-19 vaccination program is the priority for the ACT government. We are working closely with the commonwealth government to ensure Canberrans are well informed about the vaccination program, and we are implementing policies and procedures based on expert health advice.

On 17 June, the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation—ATAGI—released advice updating its recommendation on the use of the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine. ATAGI's revised advice is that the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine is the preferred vaccine for people aged 16 to 59 years, whereas previously Pfizer was recommended for adults up to 49 years of age.

ATAGI's new advice means that people aged 50 to 59 should receive the Pfizer vaccine instead of AstraZeneca. The recommendation has been revised due to the higher risk observed in Australia of people in the 50 to 59 age group developing severe thrombosis and thrombocytopenia syndrome—TTS—related to the use of the AstraZeneca vaccine.

Together with all Australian jurisdictions, the ACT has accepted this advice and we have been working to immediately update our COVID-19 vaccination program. We are no longer accepting appointments for AstraZeneca for people aged 50 to 59 years to receive a first dose. All people in this age group who had already booked to receive their first dose of AstraZeneca have been contacted by ACT Health to arrange a new appointment for the Pfizer vaccine.

Importantly, those aged 50 to 59 who have already received their first dose of AstraZeneca without any serious adverse events are strongly encouraged to attend their existing appointment for their second dose of AstraZeneca. This is because the risk of TTS following a second dose is significantly lower than following the first dose.

In recent days, the commonwealth government has confirmed that the ACT will be receiving an increase in Pfizer vaccines over the coming week. This puts the ACT in a good position to open more appointments to eligible Canberrans. Yesterday, the Chief Minister and I announced that from Tuesday, 29 June, the ACT government will open an additional mass vaccination clinic, to be located in the Canberra airport precinct. ACT residents aged 50 to 59 years can now book an appointment for a Pfizer vaccination at either the mass vaccination clinic at Garran or the Canberra airport clinic.

I want to thank everyone who has been involved in the establishment of this clinic, including our partners in Canberra Airport Group, who offered this space and have worked collaboratively to ensure the clinic could get up and running as efficiently as possible. A lot of planning and work goes into these clinics, and I also want to acknowledge the contribution of the Digital Services Division in the ACT Health Directorate, who have worked so hard behind the scenes in supporting the vaccine rollout, as well as continuing to improve the Check In CBR app.

Of course, I would also like to thank all of the staff who are delivering COVID-19 vaccinations in the territory. I encourage Canberrans to visit the ACT COVID-19 website to find out more about the vaccination program and check when they are eligible to book their appointment.

Madam Speaker, the outbreaks in Victoria and New South Wales have been an important reminder to get vaccinated against COVID-19 when you are eligible. Getting vaccinated is an important defence against the serious effects of COVID-19 and can help protect yourself, your family and the community.

The recent developments show that COVID-19 is still with us. If you are travelling anywhere in Australia, please remember that things can change quickly. Regularly check the public health advice of the place you are visiting, follow regular COVID-safe practices and check in at venues using Check In CBR to support contact tracing.

We must all continue to keep Canberra safe and strong by staying home if unwell, getting tested for COVID-19 if experiencing even mild COVID-like symptoms,

physically distancing from people you do not know, practicing careful hand and respiratory hygiene, and using the Check In CBR app when out and about for contact tracing purposes.

I am pleased that we are doing well here in the ACT, and I thank every Canberran for contributing to these efforts. I present the following papers:

COVID-19—Update on Government response—Ministerial statement, 22 June 2021.

COVID-19 Emergency Response Act—pursuant to subsection 3(3)—COVID-19 Measures—Report No 15, dated 10 June 2021.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the papers.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

## **Economy—climate change Ministerial statement**

**MR BARR** (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism) (10.41): The ACT leads the nation on climate action, creating the secure, sustainable jobs that come from this essential transition. We are delivering one of the most ambitious climate action agendas in the world, and we are doing it in a way that does not leave people behind. This government believes that the benefits of a zero-emissions future should be shared, not just available to those who can afford to make sustainable investments.

At this moment in time, governments at all levels have the opportunity, capability and motivation to partner with our communities in an effort to lower emissions. The government knows that an ambitious climate agenda can be an economic opportunity, not a cost. Our role is to set up the mechanisms to encourage uptake, to ensure that the benefits are accessible across the community and to create the jobs of the future. And that is exactly what the ACT government will continue to do.

In 2019, the ACT became the first jurisdiction outside of Europe to transition to 100 per cent renewable electricity. Last year we exceeded our interim target of a 40 per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from 1990 levels, and we did it ahead of schedule. Last month, Canberra was named the world's most sustainable city. This is an environmental and economic transition, which must be equitable, ensuring we do not leave people behind.

Already, we are seeing the benefits that flow from investing in a clean energy future. Canberrans have consistently supported an ambitious set of climate policies that are science based and contribute to our target of zero net emissions by 2045. We know Canberrans want to make individual and household changes to reduce their carbon footprint and the government is committed to helping them do just that. This is where governments have a significant role to play, not only in incentivising the uptake of

emerging technology but also in removing the financial barriers that may otherwise prevent households from investing in renewable upgrades and benefiting from the savings they offer.

Of course, the government's actions on climate change also extend to the labour force and the broader economy. Our climate action policy direction is entwined with our recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, as we focus on strengthening our economy and increasing our employment base to more than 250,000 jobs by 2025. The territory's strong economic position prior to the pandemic, driven by population growth, low unemployment and ongoing investment—as well as our considered and decisive action at the peak of the pandemic—has put us in a better position than most to focus on economic recovery.

Of course, we have not emerged from this period unscathed. However, our actions have meant that the ACT continues to be one of Australia's strongest economies, with the strongest labour market in the country. Unemployment is currently 3.6 per cent, significantly below the territory's decade average and, of course, the lowest in the country by a long way. Youth unemployment is at 5.2 per cent, also the lowest in the country and less than half the national youth unemployment rate of 10.7 per cent.

The economic response to the pandemic has highlighted a shift to expansionary fiscal policy, with the Reserve Bank of Australia urging the commonwealth, state and territory governments to boost public spending and accelerate job creation. Governments can embrace risk and they can seek to drive towards full employment by creating and shaping markets through a combination of strategic investment and an unwavering commitment to the provision of essential public services.

So it is our job to protect and create sustainable jobs in our economy. That is why the ACT's jobs and economic recovery plan identifies the renewable energy sector as one of the territory's key innovative, high-growth industry sectors. Renewable energy jobs are indeed jobs of the future, and they are sustainable, and this is where part of our employment growth will be over the coming years. A significant example of this is the global battery storage market, which is expected to grow to more than \$400 billion in value by 2030. By taking real action on climate change and utilising public investment and regulatory settings to attract and multiply private sector investment, we are ensuring Canberra is in a strong position to compete for these jobs. Continuing to invest in sustainable infrastructure, like large-scale battery storage, is a key component of this strategy.

The ACT government is investing in the infrastructure Canberra needs to ensure it continues to be one of the world's most liveable and sustainable cities. Our infrastructure investment program is the largest in the territory's history and commits over \$4 billion over the next four years across a range of important projects, including a light rail system running on 100 per cent renewable electricity. We know that well-planned infrastructure not only supports a productive economy; it also supports our adaptation to climate change and enhances wellbeing.

As Australia continues to both manage and recover from the pandemic, sustainability and liveability are emerging as significant factors in people's decisions as to where

they live and work. The ACT is already well ahead of the curve here, with our wellbeing framework helping guide policy development and investment, as well as how we measure our progress. Our relative success in managing the public health response to the pandemic has increased our attractiveness as a destination for people to move to, to work in and to visit, unlike some jurisdictions around the world. Whilst the pandemic will continue to restrict overseas migration to Australia in the near term, which will impact population growth locally and nationally, Canberra continues to be a great place to live and work.

The ACT government's vision for Canberra as progressive, inclusive, innovative and sustainable is reflected in our statement of ambition. By investing in Canberra, we are also giving the private sector confidence to invest and keep Canberrans employed. The territory's 2020-21 budget included more than \$300 million over the next five years to deliver on our climate action commitments, creating thousands of sustainable jobs. These commitments include helping Canberra households to invest in renewable energy upgrades through the sustainable household scheme and the delivery of the big Canberra battery.

Madam Speaker, helping households to transition to cheaper and more sustainable energy sources is a key component of the government's emissions reduction strategy. We all recognise the financial benefits from the transition to a cleaner future, but for some Canberra households, the up-front costs are a significant barrier to entry. Offering zero-interest loans for rooftop solar panels, household battery storage, zero-emissions vehicles and energy-efficient electric appliances will mean that more Canberra households can make these important investments in their home.

The sustainable household scheme will save families hundreds of dollars a year, while reducing energy consumption in the territory. Importantly, it will enable households to benefit from these savings sooner without being burdened, or restricted, by large up-front costs. I am pleased to advise the Assembly that more than 5,000 households and 41 businesses have already registered to participate in the scheme. It is a very practical way for the government to partner with our community to share the benefits of a zero-emissions future, whilst at the same time creating more jobs for more Canberrans.

The ACT government is currently in the final stages of the procurement with a loans administrator to manage and administer the scheme. Over the coming days, the first group of home owners who have already registered their interest will be invited to apply for loans to help pilot the scheme before it is opened to a broader number of home owners in the coming months. The government will use feedback on the loans process from the pilot group to make any adjustments necessary ahead of the wider launch. This will help ensure the process is as smooth as possible for the thousands of households who have already registered interest. Around 90 per cent of ACT households will be eligible to apply. This includes home owners of standalone dwellings, townhouses and dual occupancies with an unimproved land value of less than \$750,000 and unit-titled multistorey apartments with a land value of less than \$200,000.

Eligible products that can be purchased under the scheme will be progressively added as the scheme is rolled out. The first products that will be available are household solar and household battery storage. As the scheme progresses, Canberrans will be able to purchase new and used zero-emissions vehicles, electric vehicle charging infrastructure, electric heating and cooling, to replace gas or less efficient systems, hot water heat pumps and energy-efficient household appliances.

The government will also continue to ensure that the transition to renewable energy effectively supports vulnerable Canberra households. That is why we are permanently increasing the utilities concession by a further \$50 a year, to provide direct financial support to around 31,000 low income households, expanding access to the utilities concession and providing an additional one-off rebate in the coming fiscal year, bringing the total concession to \$800 for fiscal 2021-22. This increased concession will cover a significant proportion of the annual electricity bill for lower and fixed income households in the territory. It is amongst a number of initiatives, totalling almost \$10 million over the next four years, that the government announced following the release of the ICRC's price reset for standing offer retail electricity prices for fiscal 2021-22. The ICRC's latest decision comes off the back of a period of significantly lower prices.

However, we recognise that the recently announced price increases will be difficult for some Canberra households. That is why we are providing significantly enhanced concessions. Through the combination of a community awareness program and, of course, the recently passed amendments to the utilities bill, which was supported in this place, the government will be able to ensure that households are getting the best energy deals possible. As I observed at the time of the debate on the utilities bill, around 40 per cent of Canberra households have been on standing offer contracts for a long time. There are better deals available; there are lower prices available. That information will be made available to those 40 per cent of Canberra households who are still on the standing offer contracts.

The ACT government is also getting on with the job of delivering the Big Canberra Battery, an ecosystem of distributed, large-scale battery storage systems to harness an important emerging technology. The Big Canberra Battery will provide at least 250 megawatts of battery storage. When complete, it will be one of the biggest battery storage systems in Australia. I am pleased that there has been such significant industry interest in the program, with 42 submissions from interested parties to a recently completed market sounding process. This is an encouraging and clear signal of the industry's capacity to deliver this ambitious project, which will support the territory's efforts to reduce emissions and maintain a reliable and efficient energy grid for ACT residents and businesses.

The government's investment in large-scale storage will not only support household investment in solar; it will also benefit all Canberrans by ensuring the stability of our electricity network through long hot summers as well as also, eventually, providing a revenue source for the territory. As I mentioned earlier, the global battery storage market is predicted to be worth \$400 billion by 2030, and the high interest in the territory's battery project will ensure that we remain at the forefront of this booming sector, supporting new jobs in an emerging industry.

We know there is already a lot of expertise in the industry and in research on battery storage systems. That is why, earlier this year, the government held a joint industry, research and government co-design workshop process where stakeholders shared ideas and capabilities on the role of the Big Canberra Battery in the ACT's future energy system. The ANU report on this workshop will be released in the coming weeks. The co-design workshop report will formally conclude the government's market sounding exercise. This will be followed by an expression of interest process, which will open in the coming months, and will enable interested industry partners to work with the government on the specific design parameters of the project. I look forward to updating the Assembly as this process progresses.

The government has a large suite of climate action policies in addition to the sustainable household scheme and the Big Canberra Battery. This includes making it easier and cheaper to purchase a zero-emissions vehicle. In May, we announced that Canberrans who purchase new or second-hand zero-emissions vehicles will be exempt from registration fees for the first two years of registration. We also know that an important consideration when purchasing an electric vehicle is where it can be charged. That is why we are also rolling out at least 500 new charging points across Canberra over the next year.

The ACT will continue to lead the country on taking real action on climate change. But we are not alone. Most states and territories around Australia have released ambitious plans to support the growth of renewable and sustainable technologies and lower emissions. However, at a national level, Australia is clearly falling behind our global counterparts, including those with conservative governments, as the commonwealth continues to avoid cementing a national target for reaching net zero emissions. This was again highlighted at the recent G7 meeting in the UK, where Australia was one of the four guest countries invited to participate in the summit.

Through this term of government, the ACT will continue to encourage a collaborative effort to reduce emissions. We fundamentally believe that the benefits of these investments should be shared, whether you own a free-standing home, whether you are renting an apartment, whether you drive to work every day or whether you are a public transport user. Our climate action agenda is designed to not leave people behind.

As this transition occurs across the country, the government will retain a focus on a fair and just transition as we continue to grow and protect jobs for Canberrans in these emerging industries. These actions are part of our broader ambition for Canberra as an innovative, liveable and sustainable city, as we continue to emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic stronger, together. I present the following paper:

Update on the ACT Government's work to create sustainable Canberra jobs—  
Ministerial statement, 22 June 2021.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

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

## **Business—ChooseCBR scheme**

### **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) (10.59): I am pleased to give this statement today to update the Assembly on the ChooseCBR program. This program was a business stimulus program to stimulate local spending with the aim of attracting new customers to businesses and to get them spending more. It has achieved its aims. It has highlighted the incredible range of hardworking local businesses operating throughout the ACT and the diverse, unique, high quality and innovative products and services they offer. It has also highlighted the willingness and enthusiasm of our business community to get behind bold new initiatives.

A digital discounts scheme was first announced in the August 2020 economic and fiscal update before a broader scheme of \$2 million was announced as an ACT Labor election commitment. At the time of the announcement, there was only one other scheme similar to it in existence, the myDarwin stimulus spending scheme. Given the value of the scheme being \$2 million and it being a one-off, the ACT government made considered decisions about the design of the scheme with respect to time and value for money.

Building a new website or an app would have represented a significant cost, particularly when reflected against the stimulus commitment. It would have taken a significant amount of time to do. This would not have been appropriate, because this was about stimulus occurring during the pandemic at a time when businesses have been doing it tough, not years down the track.

I am aware of commentary that the ACT government could have considered a scheme like Dine & Discover in New South Wales, including how it was integrated with an app. I will have more to say later about the differences in scheme design between ACT and New South Wales but, with regard to functionality, Dine & Discover vouchers have been integrated into the Service NSW app. An app of its kind does not exist in the ACT, so this was simply not an option for us.

With all of this in mind—and noting that at the time of the decision no similar scheme existed—a decision was made to purchase the existing, and successful, myDarwin program and the technical support provided by its vendor. Members are aware that we ran a trial of the scheme in December. It was important to do this because this sort of scheme was the first of its kind in the ACT and we wanted to get an understanding of how Canberrans and the business community would respond to it and engage with it.

The trial gave us that very helpful information: 336 businesses of an estimated 2,000 eligible participated in the trial and almost 40,000 consumers registered. Voucher values were two vouchers of \$2.50, one voucher of \$5, one voucher of \$10 and one voucher of \$20, each of these available to the customer each day. Customers had to spend at least four times the amount of the voucher to be able to use the voucher. Of \$500,000 available in the trial, \$310,000 in vouchers were redeemed. About \$30,000 in vouchers were being claimed a day towards the end of the trial.

We received valuable feedback from businesses, consumers and industry stakeholders about the trial. The need for better marketing was a key theme, including enough time and material so that businesses and consumers were aware of the scheme, that businesses had time to learn about the scheme, sign up to it and begin promoting it to customers, and that consumers were aware of which businesses were participating, both through the ChooseCBR website and through the business's own marketing.

Another key theme was about the voucher amounts and the voucher discounts. Businesses and consumers found the range of vouchers and the minimum spend confusing. On this basis, we determined that we had to increase the value proposition, essentially making the scheme more attractive to increase awareness—more attractive for businesses to want to participate in and more attractive so that consumers would use the vouchers with the intended aim of exploring Canberra businesses and spending more in store.

A final key bit of feedback regarded our use of JobKeeper as a criterion. To refresh members' memories, the criteria to participate in the trial was that a business needed to have less than \$10 million a year in annual turnover, that it had received JobKeeper at some point in 2020, that it was an eligible business under the ANZSIC codes—broadly retail, hospitality, tourism, arts and recreation or personal services—and that it operated in Canberra.

JobKeeper was used as a criterion to demonstrate hardship in assisting us to target businesses. However, we soon received feedback during the trial that businesses that had had hard years had been inadvertently excluded by using this criterion. Businesses needed to have been open for a year to receive JobKeeper so, automatically, businesses which opened in 2020 were excluded from JobKeeper and thus ChooseCBR.

We also learned that there were some businesses that had had very difficult years and, while they had been eligible for JobKeeper, they had not signed up to it. Again, this meant they missed out not just on JobKeeper but on being able to participate in ChooseCBR. Essentially, just because a business had not received JobKeeper, it did not mean that it had not been a difficult year for them.

In taking all of this feedback on board and in redesigning the scheme, we engaged on several occasions with industry stakeholders, including the Canberra Business Chamber, the Australian Hotels Association and Canberra Women in Business. Their advice was invaluable, and I want to stress my thanks to them for the time and considered thought they provided in ensuring the successful redesign.

On 18 May, we announced the redesign of the scheme and opened up registrations to businesses, welcoming back those who participated in the trial and wanted to participate again, and encouraging more businesses to get on board. We announced that the scheme would run again on 9 June, providing three weeks so that we could market to and approach businesses, to give them the time and the information they needed to make a decision about whether to participate.

JobKeeper was removed as a criterion, but the other criteria remained the same. We kept the same range of business types. While some sectors of our economy are performing well, others are not, and this has been a somewhat lumpy recovery. Indeed, some businesses within what seems like a well-performing sector might themselves be struggling; so we did not want to reduce the types of businesses available but to ensure that we were still reaching that broad cross-section.

We simplified the number of vouchers but increased the value proposition for businesses and consumers. We still had a range of different voucher types available. This was because we understand that consumers have different spending capacities and because businesses attract different spends. We increased the discount to 50 per cent. This was another measure to make it more attractive but also to make it easier and simpler for businesses and consumers to calculate.

From there, we engaged with businesses through a wide variety of ways, including: the *Our Canberra* entire front page feature in the June edition encouraging Canberrans to use the vouchers, with a different business featured that was linked to the region; organic and paid ACT government social media, including Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter; direct mail letters to businesses located in and around town centres and business districts, which included advice on other supports; ArtsACT Twitter and Instagram, their general newsletter and a specific newsletter; DL flyers being distributed to businesses by the Access Canberra COVID compliance team, the TCCS single-use plastics team and the City Renewal Authority placemaking team; door to door engagement with businesses, including by me; a CPA Australia newsletter to more than 3,000 accountancy and finance members so that they could discuss this with their clients; the Canberra Business Chamber's Canberra Business Buzz post and daily digest newsletter; importantly, a webinar with officials from the ACT government, the Canberra Business Chamber and the Canberra Business Enterprise Centre, which had a high participation rate and the recording was made available, and it explained the program and went through top tips on how to get the most out of it; direct engagement with precinct groups; direct engagement with shopping centre owners for the information of their tenants; direct engagement with community councils; and follow-ups with businesses who applied during the trial but were not eligible then but were this time.

We also ensured that we made a number of resources available which were translated into other languages to assist us in reaching out to as many businesses as possible. We received a very strong take-up from businesses as a result. This included a strong showing in all areas of Canberra. A quick glance at the map on the website reveals this. Registrations grew steadily each day, and then the registration rate increased particularly strongly in the week before the launch. At the time all vouchers had been redeemed, more than 800 businesses had signed up. We provided businesses with a marketing pack, including stickers, posters and badges, as well as social media material, to help them promote the scheme.

Members will recall that we did experience two technical issues during the trial, on the day the trial was announced and then on the day the trial began. This was determined to be an issue relating to the capacity of the server. We anticipated that

demand would be stronger with the full rollout, given the redesign of the scheme, so we ensured that we increased the server capacity. In line with the contingency prepared in advance of the full rollout, further server capacity was implemented on Tuesday, 8 June, the day before ChooseCBR went live, in response to an increase in traffic with consumers logging on in preparation.

I have seen commentary from some members that we should have learned from the trial. We did; that is why those changes were made. No other technical issues were experienced or evident during the trial that we could have learned from. What occurred during the full rollout was entirely distinct. However, before the full rollout, more reasonable testing was carried out on the site. Tests included a suite of functional testing, including account registration, voucher redemption and feedback submission.

The program rolled out on 9 June. It had been difficult to model what we expected the voucher spending to be. With a doubling of the voucher amounts and discounts, it was reasonable to consider that a doubling of amounts claimed a day to \$60,000 might be possible, which would have meant the funding would last for around one month. However, we had also done more marketing and more businesses were participating. Even considering this, the take-up we saw on Wednesday morning was well beyond our expectations, both in terms of voucher redemptions and the number of new customers signing up.

As members are aware, the website began experiencing intermittent technical issues on 9 June. There were different symptoms experienced after each fix was being applied to resolve a previous issue that appeared. Businesses were still able to process vouchers during this time. I am aware of commentary and media reports that the website was 'down for the majority of the time', but because the issues were being experienced intermittently, vouchers were still able to be processed on and off.

At the time we took the website offline \$389,950 in vouchers had been redeemed across 553 businesses. However, because the issues were intermittent, we were aware that this was an increasingly frustrating experience for businesses and customers alike. This was particularly so on Thursday when the website was working very well for customers, but not working for businesses, meaning that the onus was increasingly on businesses to explain that they were not able to process a voucher. This was not fair on business owners nor their staff. This experience was deeply regrettable. It fell short of the expectations we had set, and it undermined the confidence in the system. I apologise unreservedly to the business and broader Canberra community that this was their experience.

We will review how this situation came to occur. However, our immediate priority was to fix the issues and to restore confidence in the system. When the intermittent issues were occurring, the developer team actively sought to apply fixes. However, as I noted, when a fix was applied a new symptom would emerge. This, together, with our very key concern on the impacts this frustration was having on businesses and customers alike, meant it became apparent that we needed time to take the system offline and determine what was occurring. We initially made the decision on

Thursday afternoon to pause the website for maintenance until 7 am last Friday, 11 June.

The developer team carried out further work to improve the site's performance and hoped this would resolve all issues. After working Thursday afternoon and evening on the system it became clear we required more time to investigate the issues. Out of an abundance of caution and so as to not cause further disruption and uncertainty, we made the decision take the system offline for at least seven days to further investigate the issues. This was a difficult decision. However, we made the decision because it was simply not fair on businesses to have to deal with the ongoing uncertainty of the website. We wanted businesses to be having an easy, straightforward experience with their dashboards and not having to manage customers and their own frustrations with the system.

I apologise for the inconvenience in having to take the system offline. I know this was frustrating in and of itself, but doing so gave us the time to diagnose and address the issues and to restore confidence in the system. It also meant we were providing certainty to businesses about when we would be back, and we continued to keep them informed during the time we were offline so that they too could plan.

We also understood that many businesses had manually accepted vouchers with the intention of processing them through the dashboard when the website was back online. We committed to honour those transactions and have been manually processing them ourselves. This work is still continuing with an expectation that it will be finalised this week so the reimbursements can be made to businesses in a timely way.

I want to thank businesses for their incredible patience and generosity while we took the scheme offline. They had every right to be disappointed and concerned, but they overwhelmingly stuck with it. There were erroneous reports in the media that many businesses had withdrawn. This is not correct, and it was unfortunate to see it perpetuated across several outlets with no basis. Six businesses of 767 withdrew. We regret but respect that they did. However, of those six, three returned to the program when the website was back online again. Again, I personally express my thanks to all businesses for their patience and for sticking with the program.

Once we took the system offline, the developer team were able to fully analyse the situation, and it became clear that the issue related to the architecture of the system and how the application logic was communicating with the database. Analysis of the system performing under load in a simulated environment identified the areas where the application logic was causing performance issues.

The system enabled customers to register and access vouchers and for businesses to redeem vouchers. The large volume of users trying to register and redeem vouchers at the same time caused the system to slow and eventually crash as the querying process could not keep up with the volume of transactions in the system during peak periods last week.

Both of these activities require constant querying across an ever-growing database. The technical issues were determined to be performance issues caused by the way the

application logic was communicating with the database. We took the time to work with our developer partners to find solutions, to test them, and implement them. Most of the fixes involved changes to database tables and application logic to improve the efficiency of the activities.

Once the fixes were applied, the developer team tested this in a simulated environment where the site ran solidly at 600 voucher redemptions per minute. This was a significant improvement over the capability of the application logic previously, and it was what we needed to give the developer team and us the confidence that the solution implemented was working. With that load-testing having been carried out successfully, on Thursday 17 June the system was moved out of the testing environment and into the production environment to allow for more real-world user inputs to be observed.

The production environment testing began at 10:30 am on 17 June and included functional testing across the website. This meant functional features like business redemptions of vouchers, customers viewing codes, and businesses editing their profile details, were all tested with a view to identifying issues. The tests were done from desktop and mobile in different browser applications. While two minor issues were discovered during the functional testing, no issues presented that would have had significantly affected the performance or useability of ChooseCBR. These minor issues were addressed.

This was a big effort, and I express my thanks to the many people who put in long hours and late nights to ensure the issues were addressed and that we maintained our commitment to businesses that the scheme would be back on Friday 18 June. Additional developer hours were procured to resolve the technical issues, and these costs are being finalised.

When we had confidence with the testing, we advised businesses then industry stakeholders and consumers that the scheme would be back online the next day, as we had promised—Friday, 18 June, at 7 am. I have seen commentary about the timing of this and that another day may have been better. However, we had communicated we would need a week and businesses and the broader community were operating on that advice. Secondly, there was no ideal time to relaunch the scheme. However, even with spending patterns at double the rate we had seen the week before, we had an expectation that the remaining funding could be spent reasonably quickly. Relaunching on Friday meant we would capture businesses that only traded on weekdays as well as, we anticipated, businesses trading on the weekend.

We anticipated there would be weekend trade. We had seen about \$200,000 in vouchers redeemed on each of 9 and 10 June. Even anticipating a doubling of redemptions to \$400,000 a day, this would have meant the scheme would have gone through until at least Monday. Finally, we relaunched the scheme at 7 am to ensure that some of the smaller businesses that have strongly early morning trade, particularly early morning weekday trade, had the greatest chance of being able to participate.

We were not able to relaunch the website separately for businesses and customers—that is, the website was not able to go live first for businesses and then for customers. This also factored into our reasoning for a 7 am Friday start, as it would provide the majority of businesses with time to come back online and gain confidence that the website was working.

We understood there would be nervousness in both the business and broader Canberra community about the website given the technical experience previously. In our communication to customers, we stressed that it would be up to businesses to determine when they would start redeeming vouchers. We wanted to underline this so expectations were managed and so businesses would have time, if they needed, to become more comfortable with the scheme. It also took into account that businesses open at different hours and customers should not have expected that all businesses would be accepting vouchers at 7 am.

The website was monitored closely. I am pleased to say it consistently performed strongly. We saw that redemptions began well, with about \$30,000 being redeemed in the first hour. As the day progressed, we were seeing redemptions at over \$70,000 an hour. With the amount of vouchers being claimed available in the form of a ticker for all businesses and customers and being updated in real time, those logged in could observe that the take up was large and that it was increasing.

Combined with increasing confidence in the website and consumers and businesses having a smooth and straightforward experience, this meant the redemption rates appear to have had the effect of creating more demand—in a sense, a compounding effect. I acknowledge that the speed at which vouchers were claimed was extraordinary and, in turn, created its own frustrations when all vouchers were redeemed a little after 8 am on Saturday, 19 June.

I appreciate that there is commentary that some consumers and businesses would have liked to have seen the spread over at least a slightly longer period of time, and that is my personal view, too. However, we were consistently clear that there was \$2 million to be spent, and it would be available until it was spent.

In redesigning the scheme, we wanted to create demand to ensure all the available funding was spent and to avoid what we had seen during the trial, where not all funds were expended. We wanted to ensure that the funding would flow to businesses, and that meant ensuring the scheme was attractive and popular to consumers. When the vouchers were available, we emailed registered consumers the evening before and sent out a text message to all registered consumers on the day to ensure there was wide awareness that the scheme was resuming.

To assist with consumers and businesses re-engaging with the program we ensured that Access Canberra was available from when the website reopened at 7 am, and they readily took calls throughout the day, mostly related to password resets. The average wait time was one minute. Once customers logged in, the ticker provided transparency so that customers could make informed and up-to-date decisions on when to make their purchases. We updated the text below the ticker during the day to inform

customers that redemption rates were high. We also provided up-to-date advice to businesses, including emailing them and sending text messages at 7.30 pm on Friday night, when it was apparent that the funds would be expended by Saturday at the latest.

This was to assist businesses in managing expectations with their customers. We wanted to ensure that any business which had been accepting vouchers and keeping a manual record with a view to processing them at a later time were aware that the program would close at \$2 million dollars so that they would redeem those. I am aware of the commentary and comments from the opposition particularly about the times at which vouchers were redeemed.

We are aware that some businesses were redeeming manual vouchers including late at night. This includes if a voucher was submitted to them online, which they then would have needed to process separately. I am also aware of at least one business which was prepared to take online orders late into the night on Friday and publicised this, with a team readily processing them. While this is anecdotal evidence, it points to some of the legitimate business practices that were occurring which saw vouchers claimed at what would otherwise seem to be unusual hours. That said, I am very willing for an evaluation to look closely at these and all transactions.

One of the more common questions I have seen in general commentary is: how could the vouchers have been redeemed so quickly? In addition to the popularity of the scheme and the demand I detailed before, the answer is readily available in the statistics. We are still analysing the data and still have a number of manual transactions to process. So while the numbers I am sharing are not yet final, they paint a clear picture. More than 77,000 customers registered for the scheme and each had access to three vouchers for each day of the scheme being live. More than 30,000 registered customers redeemed at least one voucher, with just under 59,000 vouchers redeemed. More than 800 businesses registered for the scheme, including dozens of businesses on the Friday of the relaunch. Consumers were spoiled for choice when it came to where they could spend their vouchers. These numbers are extraordinary, and they are testament to the enthusiasm of local businesses who embraced the scheme, marketed it, and encouraged old and new customers to come in to spend and to spend more.

With our scheme also requiring customers to spend at least the same amount of the voucher to be able to use the voucher, this meant at least double the \$2 million dollars in funds would be injected into the economy, and our early analysis of the data is that this was more than double, being \$5.1 million dollars. By value, the sector with the highest voucher redemption was food retailing, including locally owned grocers and markets and fresh meat, fish, and poultry retailing. Following this, cafes, restaurants and takeaway food services was the next most popular sector. Third was recreational goods retailing—local businesses offering products like sport and camping equipment, toys, and books. Fourth was pharmaceutical, cosmetic, and toiletry goods retailing. The fifth was personal services and the sixth was clothing, footwear and personal accessory retailing.

Of the 797 businesses whose customers spent with ChooseCBR, the significant majority—619 businesses—redeemed more than 10 vouchers; 267 redeemed more

than 50 vouchers; a further 133 businesses redeemed over 100 vouchers; 19 local businesses redeemed over 500 ChooseCBR vouchers from customers. This is a very good spread. I know there is a great deal of interest from the community regarding which businesses redeemed the most vouchers. We are getting further advice on what can be released, noting the commercial nature of a business. While I am not in a position to comment specifically on individual businesses, I can reveal that the business which redeemed the most vouchers was in Gungahlin. It redeemed 3.3 per cent of all vouchers.

There was plenty of commentary in the media and, in turn, social media about particular businesses and one which received more coverage than any other, including as recently as today, appearing to get more than its fair share. The reporting was unfortunate in giving that impression—in that that attempted to delegitimise these businesses' reasons for participating in the scheme and it took attention away from the hundreds of businesses participating in the scheme. It also undermines that fact that franchisees are small businesses; owned by locals who employ locals.

Importantly, the data shows that no one business was dominating the voucher redemptions. The data shows many businesses were busy, many businesses saw an increase in customers and several have reached out to me directly to report what a huge day Friday especially was for them.

Laura MacKinnon is the owner of Crafty Frog, a small business in Kambah which has been running for many years. She reported to me:

We are absolutely delighted to be involved in this scheme and soon realized that take up rate was way bigger than we'd anticipated. The scheme highlighted small businesses like mine and created lots of excitement.

She noted:

We also chatted to our customers and helped those who wanted to sign up but didn't know. They in turn spent much more. We had a huge turnout—over 110 customers—

on Friday—

which was amazing.

Another business reported to me how customers in store were looking to spend more so they could access a bigger voucher. These are just two examples, but they underline those aims of the scheme—customers exploring more and spending more when they were there.

Two million dollars is a lot, and it did go fast. But once you accept that local businesses embraced ChooseCBR and the scheme encouraged old and new customers alike to increase their spending, it is not a mystery. In addition to the direct injection into the ACT economy of \$5.1 million dollars, the scheme has other real benefits for businesses and consumers alike, and these will be felt for some time.

By encouraging customers to explore more through the scheme and raising awareness of our huge variety and range of amazing small businesses, many have visited a business they may not have otherwise and will have established an ongoing relationship with that business. As one customer noted to me:

It was a great program. I went to a new business last night and chatted to the owner. They said that last week was very stressful for them. But yesterday, the staff knew what to expect, the system was working effortlessly and she was attracting new customers who would not have gone to her store (like myself) if she wasn't registered with ChooseCBR. I'm going to now be a repeat customer because of their great service.

It is my intention to look into establishing a small business directory to continue to encourage Canberrans to explore their community and find incredible treasures.

I want to finish by addressing some of the commentary that I am aware of. The first is around the targeting of businesses for eligibility in the scheme, including the removal of JobKeeper as a criterion. As I noted earlier, while our economy is performing strongly, there are still businesses which are struggling and there were a range of reasons why businesses did not necessarily receive JobKeeper last year.

We consulted with the Canberra Business Chamber, the AHA and Canberra Women in Business regarding the sectors in determining that they should remain the same, for the reasons I explained earlier. If the sectors had been narrowed from the trial, we undoubtedly would have removed businesses who were still struggling, even if their overall sector may have been improving. In removing JobKeeper more businesses could participate and it gave Canberrans more choice, and these businesses did deserve to participate.

The owners of Herbert's at Evatt said to me:

We were very happy to be eligible this time round, as you know we opened our doors when the rest of the world was shutting theirs, which consequently made last year an extremely difficult year for us. I am happy to say that we had our best day of trade since we opened which is definitely due to the vouchers.

This has definitely benefited our little business, while we were booked out for most of yesterday, people we couldn't sit in for dine in, got takeaway and were super impressed and looking forward to coming again. Our beautiful locals and regulars supported us in a way we couldn't be more thankful for. People that hadn't heard of us, have now heard of us.

While some franchises chose to participate in the scheme, they are legitimate businesses. They were eligible under the criteria, and it is not up to any person to make an assumption about whether a business was genuinely struggling.

I have also seen commentary regarding the scheme being eligible for New South Wales residents to sign up to. Again, it is worth repeating that this was a business stimulus measure designed so that money was spent in Canberra businesses. Canberra

is not an island; it is part of a region. Many interstate residents work and spend money in Canberra and it made no sense to exclude them from this scheme when the intention was to increase spends at Canberra businesses.

A common comment has also been about the distribution of the vouchers and that it was inequitable. Again, this was a program designed to stimulate spending in Canberra businesses. It was not a program designed with vouchers for everyone. We committed at the election that it would be \$2 million dollars for the full rollout. You can easily see that this would have been a very small discount amount per Canberran and it would not have met the scheme's aims of encouraging Canberrans to explore more and to spend more in store.

I understand that Canberrans were shocked at the rate and speed of take-up, especially those Canberrans who had planned how to spend their vouchers and were not able to. I know there were high expectations and many Canberrans were and are disappointed that they were not able to use a voucher. But it was simply not designed so that every Canberran would get a discount; it was designed to stimulate spending.

We were as transparent as we possibly could be about the voucher take-up, redemption rates and even announcing that the vouchers were available once the website relaunched, all so Canberrans could make informed decisions about when to use their vouchers.

The scheme has also been compared to the New South Wales scheme, which has 4 x \$25 vouchers and is integrated into the Service NSW app. I have already explained why ours was not integrated in that way. One of my major concerns about the New South Wales scheme is that the vouchers may not necessarily provide extra stimulus; there is no extra spend required on the consumer's part. They may spend the \$25 or less and that is it. In the ACT the scheme it meant at least double was being spent every time a voucher was used.

Where people have commented that our scheme was too generous, I note that the New South Wales scheme has seen low take-up and that it has had to be extended. It will be for others to determine why this is, but it may be due to the voucher amounts. In Canberra, businesses told me that they did not participate in the trial, because the voucher values and discounts were too low for their type of business, but the revised scheme meant it was attractive to them and their customers. Again, this speaks to that value proposition being strong for businesses and customers to participate and engage being strong. We wanted to ensure the funding was getting to businesses.

In response to reports about customer registration, anyone over the age of 18 was able to participate in the ChooseCBR program. When they registered, customers needed to submit a unique email address and mobile phone number and confirm it by submitting a one-time password sent to them via text message. It may have been possible that a person may have registered with more than one email account if they also had access to more than one mobile phone. We have no way of verifying this. But given the value of the program and the effort an individual would have to go to, this risk was considered to be low. It would be disappointing if what has been alleged was true, as this is absolutely not within the spirit of the program. But it is worth stressing that

every transaction required customers to spend their own money, being double that of the value of the voucher they were seeking to claim.

I have seen commentary about the types of products customers were purchasing. Tobacco, alcohol and gambling products were excluded under the terms and conditions. Outside of this, what different businesses choose to sell and what customers buy is a matter for them, so long as the business was an eligible business to participate in the scheme. I note in particular that there were reports of gift vouchers being purchased. This is a legitimate purchase and there are some businesses—such as restaurants which might have been booked out—for whom this might have been a good solution to have available.

I know there is also a great deal of interest from Canberrans about the administrative costs of the program. Some \$203,000 was allocated for both the trial and the full rollout, including one-off establishment of the program, system and hosting capacity upgrades, supports and information for businesses and consumers, and the promotional material I detailed earlier. As I noted, we had to procure additional developer hours to resolve the technical issues. On the other hand, marketing activities were cancelled due to the overwhelming popularity of the system. The final administrative costs are being compiled, and when they are finalised I will share this information publicly.

There is no indication at this point of any misuse of funds. Any specific allegations of misuse should be reported to the ACT government so they can be checked. As part of the program, businesses are required to keep proof of transactions for audit purposes. Businesses must be able to show the total sale value, the value of the ChooseCBR discount applied and the date of transaction. As part of routine checks, businesses are asked for proof of transactions and the government assesses the information provided to determine if it supports the expenditure that we have seen. If any business were found to be in contravention of the terms and conditions, the government could temporarily or indefinitely suspend or terminate a registration.

Now that the scheme has closed, the activity of 18 and 19 June will be checked to see if there are indications of irregular spending patterns. Thirty-three businesses who participated in the trial were asked to provide further information about their transactions. It was found generally there was good compliance with the program terms and conditions. One pattern of questionable transactions was identified across three merchants. The merchants were provided an opportunity to explain their transaction patterns and were not able to do so satisfactorily. The merchants were removed from the program before the full rollout.

I trust this answers some questions in Canberrans' minds. However, it is important that we conduct a thorough evaluation of this program. This was a one-off scheme, but it was also a bold initiative for the ACT. We have never done something of this kind before. We have learnt a lot through the ChooseCBR experience and how the government can continue to use digital platforms in our service delivery, and we want to learn more.

The government will conduct an evaluation of the program, which will include an independent and comprehensive review of the program's design and its implementation. Through this process, the government will analyse the spread of activity across businesses and consumers. The review will also evaluate its stimulus impact to determine if something similar would be appropriate in the event of a further economic downturn. The findings from this process will be publicly released.

The full rollout of the ChooseCBR program opened on Wednesday, 9 June with all vouchers redeemed on the morning of Saturday, 19 June. At its heart, this was a program to get people exploring more and spending more at local businesses. Based on feedback in the trial, we redesigned it to improve business take-up and customer demand. It was not designed to guarantee every customer a discount; it was designed to stimulate spending, and that is exactly what it did.

The technical issues we experienced were unfortunate and hugely regrettable. I am sorry for the distress, the frustration and the inconvenience they caused while they were occurring and while we worked to diagnose the issues, apply a solution and to test that solution. But businesses had embraced the scheme and they stuck with it. We thank them so sincerely. They promoted it, they encouraged their customers to sign up and they benefited from it.

Canberrans shopped with ChooseCBR faster than we thought. There was a strong injection into the economy, not just in terms of the direct financial figures but the goodwill and new relationships it generated between businesses and customers. It saw existing customers spend more, and new customers experience a business for the first time.

Thank you to the entire Canberra community for embracing this new, bold initiative. It was not without issues, but it achieved its aim in stimulating spending with local businesses. Most importantly, let's keep backing the small businesses that back us.

I present the following paper:

Update on Choose CBR—Ministerial statement, 22 June 2021.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

## **Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee Scrutiny report 6**

**MR HANSON** (Murrumbidgee) (11.44): I present the following report:

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee (Legislative Scrutiny Role)—Scrutiny Report 6, dated 15 June 2021, together with a copy of the extracts of the relevant minutes of proceedings.

I seek leave to make a brief statement.

Leave granted.

**MR HANSON:** Scrutiny report No 6 contains the committee's comments on one bill, 34 pieces of subordinate legislation and one government response. The report was circulated to members when the Assembly was not sitting. I commend the report to the Assembly.

### **Statement by chair**

**MR HANSON** (Murrumbidgee) (11.45): Pursuant to standing order 246A, I wish to make a statement on behalf of the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety in its legislative scrutiny role. The scrutiny committee regularly reports on particular aspects of bills and subordinate legislation to inform the Assembly and to enable meaningful and fulsome debate before decisions are made. The committee often asks for government responses to comments made in its reports. However, the standing orders do not require government responses to scrutiny reports to be provided within a specific timeframe.

Although there have been instances in the past when responses have been provided after the bill has already passed, the committee notes that most responses are timely, and this is appreciated. To ensure the Assembly receives all relevant information prior to debating a bill, the committee reminds the government that it is most useful to provide responses before a bill is brought back for debate in the Assembly.

With regard to subordinate legislation, the committee asks that responses be provided by a specific date, being the last of the six sitting days from the tabling of the instrument in which the Assembly may choose to disallow the instrument. Report No 6, which was just tabled, contains two such instances where the committee has asked for responses to its comments on disallowable instruments which were tabled on 2 June 2021 and has requested that such responses be provided by 4 August 2021.

## **Road Transport (Safety and Traffic Management) Amendment Bill 2021**

Debate resumed from 13 May 2021 on motion by **Mr Steel**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

**MR CAIN** (Ginninderra) (11.46): The Canberra Liberals will support this amendment bill, which allows for the operation of mobile detection cameras. The bill intends to reduce serious accidents and ultimately to save lives on our roads, and I can safely say that we all stand as one in trying to achieve that goal. I fully appreciate that, with our busy lives and urgent work and family imperatives, it is extremely easy to inadvertently reach for the phone to answer a call or make a call or pass the phone to a passenger to answer the call for us. The act of handling the phone while driving may appear harmless to some, but it can have disastrous consequences, and while we would like to believe that individuals will do the right thing, it is not always the case.

This amendment bill is about encouraging safer driver behaviour. The Canberra Liberals consulted widely in the lead-up to this debate, receiving a briefing from the office of New South Wales transport minister, Andrew Constance. The feedback from New South Wales is very clear—similar legislation in that state led to an immediate widespread change of behaviour, and it is safe to assume that we will see a corresponding change in behaviour in the ACT.

This bill introduces a radical step in the use of detection systems for proving that a vehicle operator has done the wrong thing. As I understand it, for the first time enforcement technology will be used to capture and store an image of the vehicle operator. It will also record the vehicle number plate, model, travelling direction, location and time the image was taken. So the degree of personal information acquired is a substantial increase compared with that presently captured for a speeding vehicle.

The architects of this bill are certainly aware of the implications for privacy, and in this regard the explanatory statement has gone to some length to explain the considerations taken into account to protect our rights and entitlements to privacy safeguards. The Canberra Liberals will be very keen to see that the practical application of this amendment in fact guarantees the protections to privacy of personal information. This includes the deletion of images not demonstrating a contravention and specifies that images must only show as much of the driver as is necessary to prove a contravention of mobile device usage laws.

While on the subject of people's rights, I also note the bill creates an evidentiary default presumption of guilt with the onus on the defendant to prove their innocence. The explanatory statement refers to this as the evidentiary reverse onus of proof. I hope there will be practical guidance and assistance available for defendants to ensure they are not convicted when actually innocent. I look forward to the minister's assurances in this area.

I also look forward to the minister's assurances, because the scrutiny committee appears quite concerned and has dedicated four pages of discussion to privacy and human rights considerations. These include the possibility of using images for purposes other than detecting mobile phone use, the onus of proof issues regarding the defendant proving they are innocent, and further consideration to provisions relating to protection against undue limitations of privacy being relocated from the current act into associated regulations. The scrutiny committee report has drawn these broad categories of concern to the attention of the Assembly and has asked the minister to respond.

In conclusion, the Canberra Liberals support this bill but seek an assurance from the government that its introduction be preceded by a reasonable period of warning to acclimatise the community to what is coming. This would be a sensible move, in my opinion. I also suggest that, given the human right sensitivities and the potential risk of misuse of captured images, the operation of the act be reviewed in 12 or 18 months.

This review would seek to: firstly, ensure there are no unintended consequences; secondly, ensure reasonable avenues for defendants who wish to prove their innocence; and thirdly, ensure the integrity of all other privacy and human rights aspects. The requests for an adequate lead time and a review of this amended bill are sensible and give an opportunity for community input. As I have said, the Canberra Liberals will support this bill.

**MR GENTLEMAN** (Brindabella—Manager of Government Business, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Industrial Relations and Workplace Safety, Minister for Planning and Land Management and Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (11.51): I will make some brief remarks to support this excellent bill brought forward by Minister Steel. Keeping us safe on our roads is a collective challenge. As government we need to work to get the policies and the laws right and work with our regulators—Access Canberra and ACT Policing—to support their enforcement efforts.

As a community, we need to take great care on our roads. We all understand the dangers distracted drivers can bring to ACT roads. A distracted driver can easily speed, cross into another lane, miss hazards and have less time to react. Each of these is a danger to the driver, their passengers, other road users and innocent bystanders. With the advent of technology, we have seen a growth in more ways to be distracted while driving, perhaps none more so than mobile phones. Mobile phones are no longer bricks that can just make calls; nowadays these devices are smart computers that can do a range of things. And, as technology and use has evolved, it is important for us to update and modernise our regulatory framework to ensure we are preventing their use in cars to distract drivers but also using technology to help improve road safety. It is important that the reforms proposed in this bill will help tackle the increasing use of mobile phones on our roads, which is an area of concern to ACT Policing.

By proposing this bill, the government is seeking to simplify the road transport legislation, and in doing so, the bill maintains the integrity of the regulatory framework for road safety cameras. If passed, the bill will make it easier for the government to respond to road safety issues by more easily adopting emerging technology that can help improve road safety. For example, another jurisdiction has announced the use of road safety cameras to ensure drivers and their passengers are wearing seatbelts. Using technology to respond to emerging road safety will enhance measures available to government, and I support the balanced and considered approach this bill takes. The bill also seeks to remove the current exemption which permits a driver to pass a mobile device to a passenger. The evidence is very clear that such actions can contribute to driver distraction and pose a serious risk to safety on our roads.

As technology emerges, it is also important to be able to share data with researchers and others seeking to improve road safety. The bill allows the sharing of de-identified data for this purpose. In doing so, it provides privacy protections through strict safeguards. This bill is no silver bullet. Rather, it is a considered and thoughtful public policy which adds to the suite of measures available to government.

In endorsing this bill, the Assembly will enhance measures in the government's ACT Road Safety Strategy 2020-25. The strategy has four key goals: reduce serious and fatal crashes, build a community that shares responsibility for road safety, change road user attitudes and behaviour through education and compliance activities, and strengthen collaboration across government and with stakeholders to improve road safety in the ACT.

I am confident that by implementing this bill we can see a reduction in the use of mobile phones on our roads. This confidence comes from the success of existing road safety cameras, which have assisted in addressing risky behaviour such as running red lights, thereby saving lives and reducing crashes. I also draw confidence from the data in New South Wales. The use of mobile phone detection cameras in that state has seen offending rates decrease by more than 80 per cent.

To help deploy these cameras on our roads, the government's most recent budget provided almost \$10 million dollars. This investment will help in the procurement of the necessary cameras as well as provide for an education awareness campaign. As I said at the outset, improving road safety is a collective task and by supporting this bill today the Assembly can play its part in providing an important enhancement to existing measures to improve road safety and assist in reducing the use of mobile phones while driving. I commend the bill to the Assembly.

**MS CLAY** (Ginninderra) (11.56): I am really pleased to support this amendment bill. The amendment to allow mobile device detection cameras in Canberra is an important legislative change needed to tackle a growing problem on our roads. Looking at your phone for a minute might feel harmless, but if the driver of a car travelling at 60 kilometres an hour is distracted for just five seconds the car travels over 83 metres. It is so important that we tackle the problem of distracted driving to keep people safe. A lot can happen in just a few seconds on the road, as we know, and when we are travelling at tens of metres a second every second, a moment of inattention really counts.

Dealing with distracted driving is fundamentally about reducing serious injuries and deaths, and it is completely in line with the ACT governments commitment to Vision Zero—that is, zero injuries and deaths on ACT roads. We have made progress on reducing drink-driving for decades, and I am hopeful we can beat the growing problem of distracted driving with similar success. This problem is getting more serious, as almost 75 per cent of the adult Australian population own a smart phone.

I am glad the ACT government has done consultation with a broad range of groups on this legislation, and that it has been informed by the approaches taken in other states to the problem of distracted driving and their respective rollout of mobile phone detection cameras. I am confident in the approaches that the ACT government has taken to privacy and expect the government will take on good quality feedback from the community, experts and from other stakeholders as the system is rolled out.

I am glad the ACT government is taking steps to improve safety on our roads across Canberra. It is an important part of large body of work that we as a government are

working on to keep people protected on our roads. The ACT Greens are pleased to support this amendment.

**DR PATERSON** (Murrumbidgee) (11.58): I am pleased to support Minister Steel and the Road Transport (Safety and Traffic Management) Amendment Bill 2021, which addresses the serious issue of driver distraction. I stand here today with a mobile phone, as I am sure most of us do. I can attest to how this little device has made its way into almost every aspect of my life. For the most part, this has improved my life—it allows me to stay in touch with family and friends, keeps me updated on news and provides me with the capacity to work flexibly. The use of these devices has permeated our society. Few people these days do not have a smart device that connects them to the internet, and even fewer still do not have a device at all. The increasing role of mobile phones in our lives shows no sign of abating. However, these devices clearly do not belong in every aspect of our lives—there are some circumstances where they do not improve our wellbeing.

Clear evidence exists that mobile phones present unacceptable risk to us and the people around us if we use them while driving. Unfortunately, despite the fact that it is well known that using a mobile device while driving is dangerous, it occurs around the country and in our community. The decision to use a mobile device while driving is that of the driver. It is a conscious decision to use the device and it is a conscious decision not to pull over. No-one forces people to make these decisions, and those who choose to use their phones while driving do so for selfish reasons and at the expense of other road users.

I am disappointed to say that Canberrans are using their mobile devices while driving at alarming rates. In 2020 ACT Policing issued 1,008 infringement notices and 190 cautions. This means ACT Policing had 1,198 interactions with people who actively chose to use their mobile device while driving. That is more than three times per day. I think we all suspect that the prevalence rate of this behaviour in our community is significantly higher, as these figures reflect offending that was spotted by the officers, and, as much as they try, they cannot be everywhere.

People who use their mobile devices while driving are more likely to speed, diverge from their lane and have a delayed reaction to anything occurring on the road and surrounding environment. These things all directly lead to more accidents. If a person is using their mobile to text or browse the internet, the risk of crashing increases by a factor of 10.

As my colleague has previously outlined, the bill will have significant positive flow-on effects to the community. Automated camera-based enforcement coupled with existing police enforcement has played a critical role in addressing other high risk behaviours on our roads, such as speeding and red-light running. These camera programs have proven to help prevent crashes and reduce road trauma. Mobile device detection cameras, as with our existing road safety cameras, will support existing law enforcement activities undertaken by ACT Policing. They are not a substitute.

The risk and consequences of drivers using their mobile devices are not solely borne by them; others also wear the risk of that behaviour, including other drivers,

vulnerable road users, and people using our road and public transport networks. Every family that has ever had to deal with a crash, serious injury or death caused by a distracted driver has suffered a completely avoidable tragedy inflicted by someone else's selfish behaviour.

I commend the work of the minister to address this issue, and I support this bill which will directly result in a safer road safety system. I commend the bill to the Assembly.

**MR STEEL** (Murrumbidgee—Minister for Skills, Minister for Transport and City Services and Special Minister of State) (12.03), in reply: This bill is an important step towards the realisation of Vision Zero, a strategy outlined in the ACT Road Safety Strategy and the ACT road safety action plan. I have responded at length to the scrutiny committee on the issues it has raised, and the framework outlined in the bill there are important safeguards in relation to security and privacy. I commend the bill to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Leave granted to dispense with the detail stage.

Bill agreed to.

**Sitting suspended from 12.04 to 2.00 pm.**

### **Questions without notice**

#### **Business—ChooseCBR scheme**

**MS LEE:** My question is to the Minister for Business and Better Regulation. Minister, in your statement this morning regarding the problems in the ChooseCBR scheme, you said:

It may have been possible that a person may have registered with more than one email account if they had access to more than one mobile phone.

Minister, why did you not put in place something similar to the New South Wales requirement where people had to use, for example, a licence or a Medicare card to register?

**MS CHEYNE:** I thank Ms Lee for the question. As I noted in the ministerial statement, the risk was considered to be low, particularly in terms of the overall value of the scheme, which was \$2 million. What we did put in place regarding verification was something that is common right across businesses—particularly retail stores, for example—but also in different government departments as well. Given the overall value of the scheme, this seemed to be a reasonable check for us to have in place, especially noting that in New South Wales it is integrated with the Service NSW app. That is how people are providing the details of their identification. We do not have a

similar app—yet, at least—in the ACT. Given the numbers of customer registration and the high demand and interest in this program, the amount of time for manual checking would not have been reflective of the overall value of the scheme and, indeed, may well have cost more than the scheme in terms of the administration value. That was the risk assessment that was undertaken there.

**MS LEE:** Minister, how will you determine how many people registered multiple times, in your review of the scheme?

**MS CHEYNE:** That remains to be seen. That is exactly why we will be commissioning an independent reviewer so that this can be done comprehensively. At the moment, it may not be possible at all for us to be able to verify the individual registrations, but this can certainly be open to being looked at through the review.

**MS CASTLEY:** Minister, can you guarantee that no one fraudulently misused this scheme under multiple phone numbers?

**MS CHEYNE:** As I have outlined in the ministerial statement and through several media interviews already, it may have been possible for a person to have registered with more than one email address and more than one mobile phone. It would have been a considerable effort on these individuals' parts if that is true. But if Ms Castley or anybody in this place has specific allegations, they should raise them directly with the ACT government so that they can be checked.

### **Business—ChooseCBR scheme**

**MRS JONES:** My question is to the Minister for Business and Better Regulation. Minister, your statement this morning said that you were aware that the scheme did “see vouchers claimed at what would otherwise seem to be unusual hours”. One constituent who was tracking the program online shared with the Canberra Liberals that vouchers were being redeemed en masse between midnight and 6 am. Can you categorically rule out misappropriation of funds?

**MS CHEYNE:** I have already addressed this in my ministerial statement this morning. We are aware that there were very genuine businesses undertaking very genuine transactions. I detailed this—

**Mrs Jones:** I have a point of order. Madam Speaker, the minister refers to her statement this morning, but the question was separate to the statement this morning. It was, “Can you categorically rule out misappropriation of funds?” I have read the statement from this morning.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I think the Minister's response is appropriate to the scope of the question. Minister, you have more time.

**MS CHEYNE:** Again, as I noted in the ministerial statement, there is a process underway, where we are looking at the transactions that were undertaken between 18 and 19 June.

**MRS JONES:** Can you categorically rule out misappropriation of funds?

**MS CHEYNE:** That is a matter for the review.

**MS CASTLEY:** Minister, given that you have acknowledged there are serious questions to be answered, when will you give us the answers?

**MRS JONES:** When the review is completed. In addition to that, as you noted, with my almost 50-minute statement this morning I went to some lengths to answer as many questions as I had answers to, but I appreciate that there are most questions out there, including questions that we have. That is exactly why I have commissioned a review.

### **Environment—Monaro Rock quarry**

**MR DAVIS:** My question is to the Minister for the Environment and it relates to the proposed quarry development on Monaro Road, just across the ACT border. Minister, a number of my constituents in Tuggeranong have contacted me about the proposed quarry development on Monaro Road. They have voiced concerns about health, environment and noise issues. What is your understanding of the proposed quarry development?

**MS VASSAROTTI:** I thank Mr Davis for the question. Yes, we are aware of a proposal for a quarry in the Royalla area, which is actually located in New South Wales, and it is about two kilometres away from Tuggeranong residents. We understand that it will probably produce around 750,000 tonnes of hard rock each year.

We do not have any formal information regarding the proposal, but we understand that it has been identified by the New South Wales government as a state significant development, so it will be assessed by the New South Wales Department of Planning, Industry and Environment instead of the Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council.

We understand the planning and assessment process is at a fairly early stage, and that the New South Wales government will issue environment assessment requirements that will describe what the proponent must do and must include in any environmental impact statements. If an application is lodged, it will be notified by the New South Wales department. That will then provide an opportunity for the community and stakeholders to provide comments on the proposal.

We have contacted the council, and they have provided some information that the proposal is likely to require access through territory land, so there will be formal engagement regarding that at the time. We will continue to keep a watching brief and, when the process goes forward, we will be engaging formally, because we know that there will be environmental and other concerns.

**MR DAVIS:** Minister, given that the quarry is, as you stated, just two kilometres away from residential homes in my electorate of Brindabella, and that concerns constituents greatly, what can the ACT government do to respond to those concerns?

**MS VASSAROTTI:** I thank Mr Davis for the supplementary question. When that consultation process occurs, EPSDD will be seeking advice from various parts of the ACT government. That will include the EPA and also the conservator in particular. I have asked the directorate to keep a watching brief on this and engage wherever possible in relation to the environment and the environment protection issues. There are particular issues around dust and noise. It is two kilometres away, so we think that the dust issue will probably be okay, but we will continue to engage in that. In particular, we will work with the conservator around impacts and issues for local residents.

**MS CLAY:** What should constituents do to have their feedback heard, and who should they contact?

**MS VASSAROTTI:** I would encourage local constituents to engage with active campaigns that are happening at the moment. We understand there is a “Royalla hard rock quarry proposal opposition” website, with suggestions about what to do and how to engage with New South Wales ministers. Constituents should continue to keep engaged with the issue. As I said, we will be keeping a watching brief on it and will engage when required.

### **Business—ChooseCBR scheme**

**MR HANSON:** My question is to the Minister for Business and Better Regulation. Minister, in your statement this morning you said, “there is no indication at this point of any misuse of funds”. Minister, have you verified the legitimacy of all ChooseCBR transactions, and how can you claim that there has been no misuse of funds if you have not yet verified all of those ChooseCBR transactions?

**MS CHEYNE:** Without specific allegations, I really do wonder here what the Canberra Liberals are playing at, which does seem to be an attack on businesses as a whole. What exactly do they mean by “misuse”? As I have said repeatedly, if they have specific allegations, they should be putting those forward. We are going through a process. As I said in the ministerial statement, we have not identified misuse. If they have a specific allegation, they should raise it.

**Mr Hanson:** Madam Speaker, under the standing orders, there is a standing order about not answering questions—about not debating the subject. The minister there is debating it in terms of the substance. We asked a very clear question, and I would ask her to be directly relevant and not actually debate the question.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr Hanson. You have more time to go directly to the question, Ms Cheyne, if you want.

**MS CHEYNE:** As I said at the end of my answer just then, we have not identified misuse. We are still undergoing our checks of the transactions that occurred on 18 and 19 June. As everyone is aware, there are a considerable number of transactions. It is the second working day after the scheme closed. That work is ongoing.

**MR HANSON:** Minister, who will be conducting the review into ChooseCBR and when will it be completed?

**MS CHEYNE:** Who has not yet been determined. We will work through that. But, as per my amendment to the motion, which should be circulated in my name, the intention is that the review will be completed and publicly released by the last sitting day of this year.

**DR PATERSON:** Minister, could you please outline what will be included in the review?

**MS CHEYNE:** The review will be independent and it will be comprehensive. It will include a review of the program's design, including technical issues that we encountered in implementation. It will include the spread of activity of businesses and consumers. It will include an evaluation of the stimulus impact, to determine if something similar would be—

*Mr Hanson interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I would not respond to interjections, Ms Cheyne.

**MS CHEYNE:** I do not plan to—would be appropriate in the event of a further economic downturn, and any other relevant matter.

### **Municipal services—Charnwood shops**

**MS CLAY:** My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services. Minister, I was glad to inform hear that you and Minister Berry went to Charnwood shops recently and inspected the pavers at the shops, and it is great to hear that the shops will receive some maintenance and upgrades to the unsafe footpath. When will these upgrades be completed?

**MR STEEL:** I thank the member for her question. I acknowledge that I have been to Charnwood a couple of times recently, mainly to play soccer, but I had the opportunity to go and visit with Minister Berry to look at the shops and some particular issues there that TCCS has been working on for some time. We understand the importance of local shopping centres to the community as important community hubs. We want to make sure that they are accessible and safe for people to use.

The issues that have been caused there have related to the growth of trees. As I've noted in the Assembly in question time before, tree roots can cause significant damage, and that is the cause of the damage with the pavers, some of which have been marked up in a little bit of guerrilla urbanism to show where some of those defects are. Transport Canberra and City Services is, where possible, repairing those defects. However, the reality is that, without significant tree removal, it is unlikely these issues will be rectified in the medium or long term.

We are planning to go out for consultation with the community on the future of the trees there, and how we might be able to manage the problem. We have undertaken significant work in the last financial year with the placement of permeable surfaces around the trees to allow for some of the root growth. But, obviously, it has not provided a longer term solution, so we want to talk to the community about what that might look like, particularly in the area near the Woolworths entrance.

**MS CLAY:** How are constituents kept informed of the progress on their concerns once they have reported a safety issue in their neighbourhood, like an unsafe footpath?

**MR STEEL:** I thank the member for her question. In this particular circumstance City Services will develop options and engagement process with the local community and business owners and then we will engage with them through a variety of ways. We will be doing that through the Charnwood resident associations, we will put out information to the community on posters and the new billboard that we constructed there relatively to provide details about how they can have their say on this issue and how we can make sure we have safe access to this very busy local shopping precinct.

**MRS KIKKERT:** Minister, why did it take WIN News for you to visit Charnwood, rather than before when I and other constituents have raised this issue with you? Can you not think or act for yourself?

**MR STEEL:** I thank the member for her question, but I reject the premise of her question and her political rhetoric. I have been to Charnwood on a number of occasions; this is the most recent occasion. TCCS has been quite responsive to many of the issues there and that has resulted, over the last few years, in tree removal to rectify some of the issues and in the planting of trees which are less likely to have the same problems with roots disturbing the pavement there at Charnwood.

Work has been undertaken over a period of time. However, it is obvious now that that work will not resolve the long-term issues and so we need to have a broader conversation with the community. We will have that conversation with the community once some options have been developed about how we can manage this issue in the longer term. That is the approach that we are taking—not playing politics, like Mrs Kikkert.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Before I give Mr Pettersson the call I remind members that all questions should be asked according to the standing orders and with a level of respect, even those that are jumped from the floor at an impromptu moment.

### **Energy—batteries**

**MR PETTERSSON:** My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, can you please outline how the first loans from the Sustainable Household Scheme will be administered to Canberra households looking to benefit from rooftop solar panels, household battery storage and other sustainable investments?

**MR BARR:** I thank Mr Pettersson for the question. As I am sure members are aware, the scheme provides zero-interest loans of between \$2,000 and \$15,000 to eligible householders which can be repaid in a period of up to 10 years. The scheme guidelines have been released. They set out the objectives and parameters of the scheme in more detail.

As I have flagged on multiple occasions, the scheme will be rolled out in a phased approach over a number of years. In the first phase, eligible households will be able to apply for interest-free loans for household solar and battery storage, with other components, such as EVs and charging infrastructure, heating and cooling systems, and energy-efficient appliances, being progressively rolled out and included in the scheme in the coming months.

In the coming days, the first group of home owners who registered their interest in the scheme and who have participated in an Actsmart workshop will be invited to take part in the scheme. We will seek feedback from this first group before the scheme expands to other eligible home owners in the coming financial year.

**MR PETTERSSON:** Chief Minister, how many households in Canberra will be eligible for the scheme?

**MR BARR:** Approximately 150,000.

**DR PATERSON:** Chief Minister, what has been the community and industry reaction to the scheme so far?

**MR BARR:** There has been significant interest. More than 5,000 households have already registered. I can advise that the most popular products are rooftop solar, with 3,800 registrations, and battery storage, with 3,100 registrations. Interestingly, around 1,600 individuals have now expressed interest in purchasing an EV, which I can report would effectively mean a doubling of the number of EVs currently registered in the ACT. This response from ACT households, along with the 44 registered businesses, demonstrates a high level of enthusiasm for the program.

### **Business—ChooseCBR scheme**

**MR PARTON:** My question is to the minister for business. My question is about how the government calculated spending on ChooseCBR vouchers. Before the government shut down the scheme, the ChooseCBR website stated that \$255,000 out of \$1,689,385 had been redeemed. That totals \$1,944,385, which is more than \$55,000 less than the \$2 million your government allocated. Minister, how come your government's numbers do not add up?

**MS CHEYNE:** Earlier this morning I detailed that throughout Wednesday and especially on Thursday, as issues were being identified, the vendor was applying fixes to those issues. As the fixes were applied, other issues were emerging. One of those issues occurred with the ticker—I think that is what Mr Parton is referring to here—in how the values were appearing on the ticker, which I think we all noticed and

wondered what was going on. There was a rolling amount of back-end fixes, but each fix was emerging with a new problem.

That is what led to our taking the scheme down. Despite what the ticker was showing on the website, the vendor has given us assurances that all transactions were recorded accurately. For those who might not know or did not see the dashboard version of the system for businesses, it did indicate that businesses had to enter the total transaction amount, as well as the discount that they were applying. That is where we have the transaction amount that has come through. Of course, that gets verified through the random checks that we have been doing.

**MR PARTON:** Minister, why did the ChooseCBR website report so many instances of fluctuating spending amounts that increased and decreased at different times?

**MS CHEYNE:** I regret I do not have an answer to that. My advice is that due to the tinkering that was occurring on the back-end, it was affecting the ticker. As to the technical explanation behind that, I simply do not have that answer. I would hope that the review would reveal that to us, probably in quite technical terms.

**MS CASTLEY:** A supplementary, Madam Speaker. Minister, was your government counting the total voucher amount of \$100, for instance, in its voucher spend on the website, or just the 50 per cent government component?

**MS CHEYNE:** I am not sure I understand the question, but I will see if I do in responding to it. The ticker, and how it was calculating, was reflecting the voucher that had been redeemed, not the overall transaction amount.

### **Business—ChooseCBR scheme**

**MR MILLIGAN:** My question is to the Minister for Business and Better Regulation. On day two of ChooseCBR, Deakin IGA posted a note stating:

WE ARE NO LONGER ACCEPTING CHOOSE CBR VOUCHERS.  
THE SYSTEM IS UNRELIABLE AND CAUSES TOO MUCH DISTRESS  
FOR OUR STAFF AND CUSTOMERS  
WE APOLOGISE FOR TRYING TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS PROGRAM.  
PLEASE UNDERSTAND THIS IS OUT OF OUR CONTROL.

Minister, how many businesses across the ACT pulled out of the ChooseCBR scheme because of its litany of areas of failure?

**MS CHEYNE:** I do acknowledge the experience that businesses were going through. Deakin IGA certainly was not alone. It was very well publicised, I think, because the photo that had been taken was distributed and shared widely. I do apologise that that was the experience for businesses, particularly on that day two, because especially the website for consumers was working incredibly well but the back end was not working very well for businesses. That is where I think a lot of this distress and frustration was really hitting a peak.

We understand that just six businesses withdrew from the scheme, but once the scheme was back up and running again on Friday, 18 June, that three businesses returned to the scheme. I have received anecdotal evidence that Deakin IGA was one of those, but I would need to get that double checked.

**MR MILLIGAN:** I have a supplementary question. Minister, how much money did ChooseCBR cost businesses as distressed staff were forced to clean up after your government's mess?

**MS CHEYNE:** I partly reject the premise of the question. I think for many businesses this was a scheme that they willingly took part in. We had set out the terms and conditions of participating in the scheme clearly. But, absolutely, this was not the experience that we had promised them, and I have apologised unreservedly for the experience of business owners and staff.

**MS CASTLEY:** I have a further supplementary question. Minister, have you personally spoken to Deakin IGA and the other businesses and apologised for causing distress to their staff and customers?

**MS CHEYNE:** No, I have not spoken to those individual businesses. However, I have apologised publicly, and we communicated regularly with all businesses, including keeping them up to date on what was occurring. Those businesses that did withdraw were specifically reached out to by the ACT government, acknowledging that we understood and respected and regretted their decision to withdraw but that if, at any time, they wished to come back to the scheme, we would work with them to make that happen. So, while I did not directly get in touch with each of the individual businesses that withdrew, they did receive direct and bespoke communication from the ACT government.

### **Business—ChooseCBR scheme**

**MRS KIKKERT:** My question is to the Minister for Business and Better Regulation. Minister, on page 12 of your statement this morning, you stated that work is still continuing to manually process vouchers which were accepted while the scheme was struggling in its first 24 hours. Additionally, you stated that money was saved by cancelling advertising. You also said that additional money was spent on technicians repairing the problems found during the shutdown and repair of the scheme. Minister, how much extra money was spent on technicians to repair the scheme?

**MS CHEYNE:** This was also detailed in my ministerial statement, in that those costs are still being compiled.

**MRS KIKKERT:** Minister, how much money was saved by cancelling advertising? Was there a fee involved?

**MS CHEYNE:** Again, this calculation is also being compiled. Yes, I suspect there would have been some cancellation fees with our advertising buys, but we had planned, if we needed it, a considerable marketing campaign, so there were savings there.

**DR PATERSON:** Minister, could you detail exactly how many vouchers were redeemed in the full rollout of CBR, and the average voucher value?

**MS CHEYNE:** There were 59,000 transactions that occurred, with 30,000 registered customers, and the average voucher value was \$34.

### **Health—COVID-19 vaccination rollout**

**DR PATERSON:** My question is to the Minister for Health: can you please provide the Assembly with an update on the status of the COVID-19 vaccination rollout from the ACT?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** I thank Dr Paterson for her question. The COVID-19 vaccination program rollout continues to progress very well in the ACT. We are ensuring that the rollout continues in an efficient and, above all, safe manner. Further to my ministerial statement, as of this morning the total number of vaccine doses administered through ACT government facilities was 73,745. Almost 25,000 people have been fully vaccinated through ACT government facilities and more than 31,000 overall in the ACT. Of course, that includes both ACT residents and those from surrounding regions and interstate, so for ACT residents, around 25,000 people have now had two doses of the COVID-19 vaccine.

We know that older Canberrans are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19. The ACT government continues to work with residential aged-care facilities on ways to increase vaccination of workers and on identifying workers who are willing to be contacted directly by the vaccine booking team to make an appointment at the Garran mass vaccination clinic. The Chief Health Officer has also written directly to each residential aged-care facility manager to encourage greater uptake of vaccinations for their workforce, and our team continues to liaise with residential aged-care facilities to ensure that this very vital workforce is getting the opportunity to be vaccinated and is encouraged to do so.

We also know that people with disabilities can be particularly vulnerable to COVID-19. As a result, we have made arrangements for an access and sensory clinic at Garran, which has been very well received by the Canberra community. Since opening on 27 May the clinic has administered 320 vaccines to eligible individuals, and feedback has been extremely positive.

**DR PATERSON:** Minister, following yesterday's announcement, what impact will the additional Pfizer clinic have on the rollout?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** I thank Dr Paterson for the supplementary. Of course yesterday I was pleased that the Chief Minister and I were able to make the announcement about the new Pfizer hub at Canberra Airport. This additional hub is another important step in ensuring that eligible Canberrans are able to access vaccinations as soon as possible.

The new Pfizer hub at Canberra Airport will open on Tuesday, 29 June and will initially be able to offer about 1,500 doses a week, and this number will rise to around 3,000 in the coming weeks. The opening of the additional Pfizer hub is particularly welcome given the recent advice from the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisations, or ATAGI, and the Therapeutic Goods Administration, which recommended that people aged 50 to 59 years should now receive the Pfizer vaccine if they haven't already received a first dose of AstraZeneca.

People who are aged 50 to 59 are now able to book their Pfizer vaccination, and I encourage them to do so. Eligible Canberrans are able to make vaccination appointments online through the MyDHR digital health record platform or by calling the ACT government COVID-19 vaccination booking line. We, of course, acknowledge, that not everyone can book online, and we continue to operate the phone booking line from 7 am to 7 pm seven days a week.

ACT residents who are 60 years and older also have the option, of course, to contact a participating general practitioner to book their appointment, and there are more than 70 participating GPs and commonwealth-led respiratory clinics administering AstraZeneca vaccines to those people eligible in the ACT. Of course, we have seen some cancellations at Calvary clinic as well, so anyone who does want to book an AstraZeneca vaccine, I would encourage them to do so and now is a good time to get on with that.

**MS ORR:** Minister, what advice would the ACT government give to those people who have already received one dose of AstraZeneca who may now be hesitant about receiving a second AstraZeneca vaccine?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** I thank Ms Orr for her supplementary question. It is a really important question. The ACT, of course, is currently implementing the advice of the Australian government for people who have already had the first dose of the AstraZeneca vaccine without any serious adverse effects. It is important that individuals receive the second dose of the same type of COVID-19 vaccine, including adults aged under 60 years of age. ATAGI noted in their advice on 17 June that people who have had the first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine from AstraZeneca without any serious adverse effects can be given a second dose, including adults under 50 years of age as well and under 60 years of age.

The ACT government, following national cabinet and advice from states and territories, has accepted the advice of ATAGI that the use of the Pfizer vaccine is generally now recommended in adults under 60 years of age who have not had that first AstraZeneca dose. But we have also accepted ATAGI's further advice that people who have had the first dose of AstraZeneca without any serious adverse effects can be given the second dose to complete their course. That includes all people aged under 60. This is supported by data indicating a vastly lower rate of thrombosis and thrombocytopenia syndrome—or TTS—following a second COVID-19 AstraZeneca dose compared to what was already a very small risk associated with a first dose.

Regarding mixing of vaccinations, including AstraZeneca and then to Pfizer, which we know is a question that is being asked, ATAGI has advised that there is not yet the requisite evidence on the effectiveness of mixed schedules for different vaccines, but ATAGI and TGA will continue to review the evidence object that issue. I note that ATAGI does not have any current approvals in place in relation to that.

**Business—ChooseCBR scheme**

**MS LAWDER:** My question is to the Minister for Business and Better Regulation. Minister, you have repeatedly stated that the ChooseCBR scheme was a business stimulus program, yet of the 4,000 eligible businesses only 797 made any money. Of those 797 businesses which benefited, almost 180 businesses redeemed fewer than 10 vouchers and so would have made an average of about \$150. A further 200 businesses redeemed fewer than 50 vouchers, so would have made approximately \$750. Minister, wouldn't it have been simpler, smarter and cheaper to divide the \$2 million between all eligible 4,000 businesses so that each received \$500?

**MS CHEYNE:** As Ms Lawder rightly points out, it is a stimulus scheme. Stimulus is not defined as just the minimum voucher transaction that occurred in store for these businesses. It achieved a raft of things, including that it allowed people a greater awareness, I think, of businesses—both near to them and far—that they might not have otherwise been aware of. There were people who were exploring more, which is exactly what we encouraged them to do. There were people who may not have had a chance to use their voucher during the quick time of the uptake of the scheme but still used the map function and the search function to understand what other businesses are out there.

In addition to that, the people who were able to get to those businesses and use those vouchers may have been spending more. We already know that the overall economic impact was more than double—it was about 2.6—with \$5.1 million injected into the economy. I think that those relationships—the new relationships between businesses and customers—even if they have not quite started yet, will be ongoing. The scheme was not just to do with the immediate financial injection of the voucher but was also about these ongoing relationships and the ripple effect.

**MS LAWDER:** Minister, beyond the \$2 million of taxpayer money that less than 800 businesses benefited from, what was the total amount of taxpayer dollars forked out on ChooseCBR?

**MS CHEYNE:** It is a bit exasperating that I spent quite a lot of effort on a ministerial statement that seems to have not been listened to or read. As I stated, we are \$203,000—

**Mr Hanson:** Madam Speaker—

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Minister, resume your seat.

**Mr Hanson:** The health minister just answered a Dorothy Dixier that was the subject of a ministerial statement she made this morning. I have many examples—and I am happy to bring them into the chamber—of where ministers have read verbatim in answer to—

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Your point of order?

**Mr Hanson:** To be directly relevant, and that to try to bat a question away by simply saying “I made ministerial statement this morning” is not appropriate. She needs to answer the question, not refer to a previous statement which members may or may not have been present for.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Given that you were on your feet within 20 seconds, Mr Hanson, I am sure the minister would have got to the point. She is just making reference to information currently available.

**Mr Barr:** Ten seconds.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Ten seconds.

**Mrs Jones:** It was not about whether she was going to get to the point.

**MS CHEYNE:** I made the ministerial statement. It is a comprehensive ministerial statement to answer questions that people have.

**Mrs Jones:** Point of order.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Minister, please resume your seat.

**Mrs Jones:** The question was about how much money has been spent on the program. We have not yet heard a single thing about how much money was spent on the program.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** No, because most of the time has been consumed with points of order. Minister.

**MS CHEYNE:** I could simply refer the opposition to the ministerial statement.

**Mrs Jones:** It was not in the statement.

**MS CHEYNE:** It is in the statement—\$203,000 was allocated to the scheme, including for the trial and the full rollout. I have said already, in answers to other colleagues, that the full costs are being compiled.

**MRS JONES:** Was the stress and cost of being in the scheme worth it for the 178 businesses that would have made an average of about \$150 out of the scheme? And how much money will the review cost?

**MS CHEYNE:** I appreciate that there are two questions in that. I do not have an answer yet about how much the review will cost. I commissioned that in the last 24 hours. When I have more detail on that, I will share that detail. I am happy to share that detail.

If Mrs Jones could perhaps tell me what the first part of the question was, that would be useful.

**Mrs Jones:** Was the stress worth it?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** There is a tad of being hypothetical in that question.

**MS CHEYNE:** Madam Speaker, I addressed this in response to Ms Lawder's question. There are broader benefits here to businesses. As I stated in my ministerial statement this morning, one of those is increasing awareness of businesses right across the city so that people can look, explore, find more, engage more and develop more of those relationships, which does seem to have been one of the key benefits of this scheme.

### **Business—ChooseCBR scheme**

**MS CASTLEY:** Madam Speaker, my question is to the minister for business. The Canberra Liberals understand that during the trial in December, your government discovered there were a small number of businesses who were doing the wrong thing. Minister, what did those business do wrong, and what action did you take?

**MS CHEYNE:** There were 33 businesses who participated in the trial—I will get to the specifics of your question but just to give the broader context—who were asked to provide further information about their transactions. Generally, compliance was very good with the terms and conditions.

There were three businesses in the Belconnen region where a pattern of questionable transactions was identified. The combined value of the vouchers from this questionable pattern of transactions across the three businesses was \$5,355, and the total value of the vouchers redeemed across the three businesses was \$6,156. We did not recover this funding because the cost of recovering the money outweighed the actual amount of money in question, but we did make the decision to exclude these three businesses from the full rollout.

**MS CASTLEY:** Minister, what measures did you put in place following the trial to ensure that businesses did the right thing when ChooseCBR was relaunched?

**MS CHEYNE:** There was considerable communication with businesses about how the scheme worked, what they needed to record and have available and, under the terms and conditions which businesses agreed to—just like consumers did when they signed up to it—they had to keep a record of transactions for the purposes of checking.

As I identified during the trial, our process of auditing and doing these checks was a useful exercise, in that we did see patterns of questionable transactions. We did

approach businesses, and businesses readily responded, for the most part, and provided that evidence of transactions. We continued doing that through the full rollout of the scheme, and we are continuing to look at those transactions that occurred over 18 and 19 June.

**MRS JONES:** Minister, given that a pattern of questionable transactions occurred in the trial, how can you be so absolutely certain that \$5.1 million has been injected into the economy, yet you have no idea what the stuff-ups of the scheme have cost?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Ms Cheyne, do you want her to repeat the question? Perhaps without the colourful language, Mrs Jones.

**MS CHEYNE:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, I don't know what the question is.

**MRS JONES:** How do you know \$5.1 million has gone into the economy when you do not know how much the stuff-ups have cost?

**MS CHEYNE:** Because we know what the overall transaction value was, compared to the voucher value. As I explained in a previous answer, this is what businesses had to put forward in their dashboard to claim the voucher. So we were able to keep a record of that, and that is how we have determined these calculations. Businesses are asked to verify these transactions, and compliance is high.

### **Business—ChooseCBR scheme**

**MR CAIN:** My question is, unsurprisingly, to the Minister for Business and Better Regulation: this morning you revealed for the first time that less than 20 per cent of the 4,000 eligible businesses actually made money from the scheme and benefited from ChooseCBR customers coming through the door. You claimed that this was “a very strong take-up from business”. Minister, what do you say to the 80 per cent of eligible businesses in the ACT who did not receive any benefit from this scheme?

**MS CHEYNE:** Twenty per cent take-up is high, and it is consistent with schemes that have occurred elsewhere, including with our neighbours in New South Wales in terms of business take-up.

*Members interjecting—*

**MS CHEYNE:** To the businesses that did not participate in the scheme, my message to them through you, Madam Speaker, is please know we did make every effort to advertise the scheme. I detailed that at length in my ministerial statement this morning, including business-to-business engagement and ACT government-to-business engagement. It was widely advertised through government and other marketing material and we did seek to reach out to businesses so they could participate.

*Members interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Resume your seat, Minister. Members at the central table! Mr Barr and Ms Lee!

**Mrs Jones:** Madam Speaker, I ask Mr Barr to withdraw the inference that he made across the chamber that Elizabeth Lee has never done anything with her life.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** One, it was not across the chamber because I did not hear it.

**Mr Barr:** I did not say that.

**Mrs Jones:** He inferred it.

**Mr Barr:** And Mrs Jones should withdraw. I said, “You have not done anything in government.”

**Mrs Jones:** That is not what you said.

**Mr Barr:** That is what I said.

**Mrs Jones:** You said she has not done anything. That is total nonsense.

**Mr Barr:** And then you jumped in before I could even finish saying, “in government”. And that accusation is unparliamentary. You cannot use a point of order to make an accusation like that.

**Mrs Jones:** I did not make a point of order. I said I asked the minister for her opinion. I did not make a point of order.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mrs Jones, enough! Sit down. I did not hear Mr Barr. I was trying to get both Mr Barr and Ms Lee to remain quiet because I was having difficulty hearing the minister respond to Mr Cain’s question. So let me see what I can hear on *Hansard* and if I can come back. But I certainly remind people, whether it is through supplementary questions or the argy-bargy across the chamber, to have respect and regard for each other. With that, I will call Mr Cain.

**MR CAIN:** Minister, why do you think that more than 80 per cent of businesses voted against ChooseCBR by not bothering to participate?

**MS CHEYNE:** I reject the premise of the question. We had really good participation rates from businesses. I detailed this morning how excited businesses were to participate, including one particular business that Mr Cain talks about in here all of the time, which he has conveniently chosen to ignore. We had good participation rates, particularly for the size that the scheme was and particularly given that this was a one-off scheme. I absolutely reject the premise of that question.

**DR PATERSON:** Minister, can you outline why ChooseCBR was an important program for Canberra businesses?

**MS CHEYNE:** As I have noted, ChooseCBR was a business stimulus scheme. Its primary purpose was to stimulate spending in businesses. It had two aims: to get customers exploring more, visiting businesses that they might not have been aware of or otherwise spent their money with, and, when they were in store, to be spending

more as well. It was not a voucher scheme where we sought equitable distribution of vouchers or vouchers for everybody. What it was was a scheme where we wanted to ensure that money was flowing to businesses but also at a rate of stimulus where people had to spend their own money to use the voucher.

Our economy is performing very well; all of the statistics point to that. But it has been lumpy and there are some sectors doing better than others, and there are some businesses within what otherwise seem to be highly performing sectors which report that they are struggling. So this scheme, as identified through some of the quotes I used this morning, generated excitement for our small businesses. It generated greater awareness, it generated new spending and it generated spending above the \$2 million of the funding that we had put to the scheme—being a \$5.1 million injection into the ACT economy into local businesses and local jobs.

### **Work health and safety—psychosocial hazards**

**MS ORR:** My question is to the Minister for Industrial Relations and Workplace Safety. Minister, what is the ACT government doing to prevent psychosocial injuries in the workplace?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** I thank Ms Orr for her question, for her strong interest in workplace safety across the ACT, and also for the work that she did in bringing the motion on workplace sexual harassment and psychosocial hazards to the Assembly a few months ago. Work is progressing well on this motion because, unlike the Federal government, we do not promote people who have been accused of sexual harassment. Instead, we are working to develop a culture of safety and accountability in workplaces across the ACT.

PCBUs have an obligation under the work health and safety legislation to provide safe workplaces, and this includes providing protections for psychological health as well. This duty requires, where practical, the elimination of exposure to psychosocial hazards, including sexual harassment. However, we must also work to focus on addressing our psychological health risks or hazards under supporting work health and safety regulations and the codes of practice.

At the recent meeting of workplace safety ministers, I was pleased to vote in support of amending the regulations under the model work health and safety laws to deal with psychosocial hazards. This was an important first step in moving towards protection against psychosocial hazards, as Ms Orr has mentioned in her motion. This was a key recommendation of the Boland review—an important win for workers across Australia.

**MS ORR:** I have a supplementary question. Minister, has WorkSafe ACT implemented any measures to assist workplaces regarding psychosocial injuries?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** I thank Ms Orr for her supplementary question. WorkSafe ACT is taking psychosocial hazards very seriously, and this work is being led by the work health and safety commissioner. As part of the joint initiative by work health and safety regulators, WorkSafe has contributed to the development of the People at Work

risk assessment tool. People at Work is Australia's only validated and evidence based psychosocial risk assessment survey tool, with benchmarking that measures psychosocial hazards and factors. People at Work can help workplaces comply with their health and safety duties, better manage work-related psychosocial hazards and factors, and prevent psychological harm. It is a free online tool that helps people understand their rights and obligations around psychosocial hazards in the workplace.

WorkSafe also works closely with the national regulator Safe Work Australia on the development of guidance materials. Safe Work Australia has published a guide to preventing workplace sexual harassment to provide detailed information for employers on practical ways to prevent sexual harassment at work. The commissioner and her team at WorkSafe are doing an excellent job in keeping Canberrans safe at work.

**MR PETTERSSON:** Minister, how is the government improving workplace safety in the building and construction sector, including in residential construction?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** I thank Mr Pettersson for his interest in workplace safety across Canberra as well. The government has always stood up for workers and their rights to come home safe from work. We know that the building and construction industry can be dangerous. This is why we need strong workplace protection laws. The government has committed to establishing industrial manslaughter as an offence under the Work Health and Safety Act. WorkSafe ACT has also recently hired two new inspectors to increase their capability in dealing with the serious safety issues in the construction industry.

I am aware of the work being done by industry groups in conjunction with WorkSafe ACT about safety on residential construction sites. This follows the deaths of two workers on residential sites last year, and it has come about because of dangerous and dodgy practices still being rife within the industry. It is pleasing to see these industry groups speak out on this important matter, and I look forward to their support as this government works to strengthen workplace safety. Improving safety in the sector will assist in improving the building sector itself, and I will continue working to achieve this aim and acknowledge Mr Pettersson's strong passion in this area.

I thank those who advocate for workers' safety, as well, and stand strong in solidarity with workers to ensure safety for everyone. I am proud to say that I will always be on their side and on the side of workers.

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

### **Supplementary answer to question without notice Business—ChooseCBR scheme**

**MS CHEYNE:** During question time there were questions and answers back and forth between me and Mr Milligan that concerned a particular business, being Deakin IGA. I want to clarify that Deakin IGA never withdrew from the scheme. I believe they stopped accepting vouchers in store, but they advised that they would wait, so they did not withdraw from the scheme.

Also, in my ministerial statement this morning I advised that the business that redeemed the most vouchers—being 3.3 per cent of all vouchers—operates in Gungahlin. This is correct, but, for clarity, that business has outlets in the city and Gungahlin, and the total vouchers redeemed was a combination of those redeemed at both those outlets.

## Papers

**Madam Speaker** presented the following papers:

Auditor-General Act, pursuant to subsection 17(4)—Auditor-General’s Report No 5/2021—Management of Closed-Circuit Television Systems, dated 18 June 2021.

Inspector of Correctional Services Act—Pursuant to subsection 30(2)—Report of a Review of a Correctional Service by the ACT Inspector of Correctional Services—Report of a healthy centre review of Bimberi Youth Justice Centre 2020, dated June 2021.

Planning, Transport and City Services—Standing Committee—Bills referred but not inquired into—Loose-fill Asbestos Amendment Bill 2021—Correspondence to Speaker, dated 10 June 2021.

Standing order 191—Amendments—Courts and Other Justice Legislation Amendment Act, dated 3 and 7 June 2021.

**Mr Gentleman** presented the following papers:

Human Rights Act—Pursuant to subsection 43(1)—Protection of Rights Services Review—Final Report, dated February 2021.

Government response.

Planning and Development Act, pursuant to subsection 79(1)—Approval of Variation No 374 to the Territory Plan—Kaleen Indoor Sports Club: Kaleen section 89 block 4—Zone change and amendments to the Kaleen Precinct Map and Code.

### **Subordinate legislation (including explanatory statements unless otherwise stated)**

Canberra Institute of Technology Act and Financial Management Act—

Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT Board Member) Appointment 2021 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-86 (LR, 1 June 2021).

Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT Board Member) Appointment 2021 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-87 (LR, 1 June 2021).

Electoral Act—Electoral (Fees) Determination 2021—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-88 (LR, 1 June 2021).

Public Trustee and Guardian Act—Public Trustee and Guardian (Fees) Determination 2021—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-85 (LR, 27 May 2021).

Road Transport (General) Act—Road Transport (General) Applications for Registration—Written-off Vehicles Declaration 2021 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-89 (LR, 28 May 2021).

## **Protection of Rights Services Review Final report—government response**

**MR GENTLEMAN** (Brindabella—Manager of Government Business, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Industrial Relations and Workplace Safety, Minister for Planning and Land Management and Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (2.59): Pursuant to standing order 211, I move:

That the Assembly take note of the following paper:

Human Rights Act—Pursuant to subsection 43(1)—Protection of Rights Services Review—Final Report—Government response.

**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) (2.59): I am pleased to speak to the final report of the Protection of Rights Services Review, conducted by Insight Consulting Australia, and the government's response to the review. The review indicates that our protection of rights agencies—being the Human Rights Commission and the Public Trustee and Guardian—continue to provide a high quality service to the ACT community. The review highlights the commitment and professionalism of the Human Rights Commission president and commissioners and the Public Trustee and Guardian and their staff.

Back in 2016 the legislation that underpins the Human Rights Commission and the Public Trustee and Guardian was amended. These amendments brought in a range of reforms to the structure, leadership and operation of the commission and the Public Trustee and Guardian. The reforms were intended to strengthen the leadership, governance and coordination of key rights protection services in the ACT. They were designed to improve accountability of these agencies while ensuring that service accessibility was maintained.

It was also anticipated that the reforms to the Public Trustee and Guardian would result in a more joined-up service for clients and bring a wider range of experienced staff together to act for Canberrans with impaired decision-making. The review considered and consulted with stakeholders and the broader community on the extent to which the 2016 protection of rights services reforms achieved their intended aims.

I am pleased to report that the review found that to a great extent these goals have been achieved. This is attributable in part to the architecture of the 2016 reforms and in part to the professionalism and capabilities of the office holders and their teams who make it work. The Human Rights Commissioners, the Public Trustee and Guardian and the staff who support them are a credit to their organisations.

The final report outlines 31 recommendations, and the government either agrees or agrees in principle to all 31. The recommendations are primarily directed at the commission and the Public Trustee and Guardian. Several recommend the commission continue with what it is doing because it is working. A significant

number prompt minor adjustments to internal work practices or suggest consideration of issues in the context of strategic planning that is already underway at the commission and the Public Trustee and Guardian. A handful of recommendations warrant engagement between the government and the commission or Public Trustee and Guardian, and this consultation is already underway. This speaks to the collegiate and effective working relationship between the Justice and Community Safety Directorate for commission and the Public Trustee and Guardian.

Minor legislative changes have been recommended to the Public Trustee and Guardian Act 1985 to enable the delegation of decision-making guardians to financial managers. The report found that such an amendment would be consistent with other jurisdictions, would expedite decision-making and would reduce vulnerabilities associated with key senior staff being unavailable.

The review also considered the recommendation of the Our Booris, Our Way review that the ACT establish an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's commissioner. The concept of the commissioner role was included in the review's terms of reference so it could be properly considered in the context of other protection of rights agencies. The review confirmed the strong community support for the establishment of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's commissioner and considered that this role would complement the work of the other commissioners.

The government is committed to establishing this new role and welcomes the review's recommendations in this respect. These recommendations will inform the co-design process that is underway. We hear the urgency from the community calling for an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's commissioner. We want to deliver this new role with the full trust and support of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. We recognise that hearing from the community through a genuine co-design process will be key.

The government therefore agrees or agrees in principle with all the review's recommendations. Where the government agrees in principle to the recommendations relating to the establishment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's commissioner, this is purely to ensure we do not pre-empt the conclusions of the co-design process.

I am pleased the current arrangements of the Human Rights Commission and the Public Trustee and Guardian are serving the Canberra community. This government continues to value the experience, expertise and exceptional work of each office holder and all their staff. I take this opportunity to thank them for their ongoing commitment to the protection of human rights of all Canberrans. I thank each of our stakeholders and community organisations who contributed their time and their input to the review. They are also an indispensable part of Canberra's rights protection system. As Minister for Human Rights, I look forward to continuing my relationship, whether well-established or emerging, with all of you.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

## **Road Transport (Safety and Traffic Management) Amendment Bill 2021 (No 2)**

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

Title read by Clerk.

**MS CLAY** (Ginninderra) (3.06): I move:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

I rise today to table the bill that is in my name, the Road Transport (Safety and Traffic Management) Amendment Bill 2021 (No 2). This bill will protect vulnerable road users and contribute to a culture of care on our roads. We are all vulnerable road users. Every single one of us is a vulnerable road user at one point or another in our lives, often every day—a dad walking to school with his child, a person heading to the shops in a wheelchair or a weekend motorcyclist. Even if you drive most places, when you get to your destination and hop out of your car, you become a vulnerable road user.

The good news is that our roads are getting safer. For most groups, our road death toll has been going down over time. New cars are more robust. We are getting better at building infrastructure. We have reduced drink driving and lowered suburban speed limits through Slower Streets but, tragically, road safety is not improving for everyone. For instance, in Australia more cyclists died on our roads in 2020 than in 2010.

Death tolls are no mere statistic. They are a shocking loss of life that affects children, friends, family and the whole community. But counting deaths alone omits a lot of the damage. Many collisions leave those involved with serious and long-lasting injuries. When one of the victims is a vulnerable road user, the consequences are even more severe.

There are lifetime injuries, permanent psychological harm, surgery, and loss of work. A few seconds of negligent driving can be a life-changing event for someone else. Data from the federal Office of Road Safety found that pedestrians suffered around seven per cent of serious injuries. Motorbike riders suffered 22 per cent and bike riders 18 per cent. Almost half of the serious injuries on our roads and more than one-third of road deaths are suffered by vulnerable road users. Vulnerable road users are being injured and killed.

The ACT government does not accept this. The government is committed to Vision Zero and acknowledges that we should not regard death and serious injury as acceptable or inevitable. But while road safety is increasing for motorists, it is lagging for vulnerable road users. Being in a car is safer than ever before, but being near a car is not. A motorist is surrounded by armour, but a vulnerable road user is surrounded by air. A pedestrian does not have airbags. A wheelchair does not have a crumple zone. A helmet does not help much when two tonnes of metal are headed your way at

70 kilometres an hour. The situation is even more dangerous as our vehicles get larger and heavier.

My family and I are keen on active travel. I ride my bike to the Assembly most days. My daughter rides to school, with me or my partner walking or riding behind her. I have never been on a motorbike, but e-scooters are a lot of fun and I went e-mountain biking last weekend. I have been walking and riding around Canberra for 30 years without incident, but not everyone has this experience.

I would like to talk about one story in particular. On 3 October last year, there was an incredibly serious collision in Belconnen, quite close to my house, at an intersection I have ridden and driven down many times. A car towing a trailer knocked a cyclist off their bike. The victim of this incident was left with lifetime injuries. Out of respect for that person and their family, I will not go into the details, but I imagine many of you remember it in the media at the time.

It took months for a penalty to be handed out, despite dash cam footage clearly showing that the driver was at fault. That driver received a \$393 fine. The community was outraged. I will read out a few of the comments made. That driver was in charge of a “lethal weapon”. It was “negligent or even malice”, “attempted manslaughter”, “aggravated assault” or “vehicular homicide”. The penalty sent the message that in the ACT you can nearly kill a bike rider riding lawfully on our roads and only receive a relatively light fine. A fine of \$393 for driving negligently and seriously harming another human being! This does not meet community expectations. It sends a bad message to drivers, it makes vulnerable road users feel as if our lives are worth less than other people’s and it discourages people who might otherwise choose active travel.

This is a terrible outcome for our vulnerable road users, but it is equally bad for all of Canberra, Australia and the planet. Driving a car has become an ingrained habit, to the point where many people get behind the wheel to pop to their local shops instead of walking there. There is a consequence to that for all of us. I remember when I was a kid we laughed at Sydney friends caught up in morning traffic and we heard with horror their tales of one-hour commutes. That is true for Canberra now. We are a growing city, and cities choke on cars.

It is not possible to solve congestion by building more roads and car parks. They only fill up with more traffic. The way to solve congestion is to get as many people as possible out of cars. Every single person that you see on a bike, walking to work or catching the bus or the light rail is one less car you will wait behind at the traffic lights. It is one less car you have to compete with for parking.

I welcome our move to electric vehicles—my family have an Ioniq—but we still need more people out of their cars. Canberra will not work if most people drive for most journeys.

As well as solving congestion, active travel cleans up our air. We breathe in less diesel and less petrol pollution from combustion engines, as well as less particulates from the tyres and the brakes. Most importantly of all, we tackle climate change. Now

that we are powered by 100 per cent renewable electricity, we need to deal with our transport. Transport represents over 60 per cent of our carbon emissions. Active travel is the original zero emissions travel.

The ACT government understands this really well. In 2015, the government released a report called *Building an integrated transport network*. The active travel framework highlighted targets for participation and barriers to active travel. Our 2026 targets included seven per cent of trips to work by walking, seven per cent by cycling and 16 per cent by public transport. They are great targets, but we are not yet meeting them. There is so much more that we can do to get there.

When Canberrans were asked what would encourage them to start riding, the most common answer was better off-road cycle paths, and the second most common answer was improved driver awareness of bicycle safety and road sharing. A culture of care on our roads is essential if we want more people using active travel. We have to make it fun and convenient. We also have to make it safe.

I have been working on this problem in different capacities for two decades. Since getting elected, I have been listening to regular active travellers and victims of collisions. I have consulted with Pedal Power, the Motorcycle Riders Association, the Australian Federal Police Association and various other community stakeholders. It has shown us a lot of opportunities to improve active travel and road safety, and this is merely one of the first steps.

Today I am tabling an amendment to our road laws that creates a proper penalty when a negligent driver harms a vulnerable road user. This amendment is an important step. It shows that our road rules should take people as they find them and not treat all road users as if they were the same. There is a hierarchy of road users. Motorists have a duty to look after those who are more vulnerable when we all share the road.

This amendment fits a body of work that already recognises vulnerable road users. Section 7A of our existing law defines and recognises vulnerable road users. We already have increased penalties for speeding in a school zone because we know that children on their way to school are more vulnerable and they need special protection.

My proposed new offence is a middle ground between some of the existing offences. We already have negligent driving but the penalty is low—a maximum of 20 penalty units or that famous \$393 fine. That might be acceptable when no-one is hurt, but when someone has been seriously injured it falls short.

We also have high-level offences where negligent driving causes grievous bodily harm or death. These come with serious penalties and they are not traffic infringements, and nor should they be. Fortunately, most accidents fall short of grievous bodily harm or death, but that does not mean most accidents should be accepted. We can and must do better. We must create a culture of care on our roads.

I am proposing a new offence that lies somewhere between these two points. It recognises that driving negligently and harming somebody is more serious than a moment of carelessness that harms no-one. This new offence comes with a maximum

penalty of 50 penalty units. It is also open to a traffic infringement notice of \$1,600 plus three demerit points. That will allow for easy enforcement and simple road safety education.

Community consultation is an essential part of any lawmaking. I have already conducted some consultation and I look forward to further consultation on this issue. We actually ran some media this week and we had comments from quite a lot of people who regularly use our roads as vulnerable road users, including quite a few victims of collisions who came forward, and they were all quite positive about this change. It changes things when you actually listen to the impact a crash has had on somebody. It makes you realise that it is really important that we take effective action on this.

This amendment bill will not come back for debate until August, at the earliest, and I welcome the conversation until then. I know that one new offence will not change our road culture overnight. That is why this offence does not stand alone. It is one small part of a broader suite of changes that I would like to see introduced over the next few years.

As well as working on this amendment bill, I am working with the community and stakeholders on other measures to improve active travel. This will include education, driver training, and construction of more separated paths and cycleways. I welcome the minister for transport's comprehensive review of road laws and rules, and I think there are many more improvements we can make to protect those who are most vulnerable.

I invite anyone and everyone to get in touch with my office and chat about active travel and this amendment bill. The problem affects us all and the solutions will benefit us all, so let us build that culture of care together. I commend the bill to the Assembly.

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

## **Business—ChooseCBR scheme**

**MS CASTLEY** (Yerrabi) (3.18): I move:

That this Assembly:

- (1) notes the Government's ChooseCBR scheme has been plagued with problems with serious questions about its integrity and how it has been monitored;
- (2) further notes:
  - (a) following a failed trial last December, the Government revamped ChooseCBR saying it was designed to support small businesses hit hard by the pandemic;
  - (b) only 336 small businesses participated in the failed trial and less than one quarter of eligible businesses signed up for the revamped scheme;
  - (c) despite the Business Minister telling the Assembly on June 3 the Government had made ChooseCBR "as simple as possible", after only

- two days it was forced to shut it down with the Minister saying the Government had underestimated demand and there were problems with the system's database and capacity;
- (d) pressure tests were conducted to check if the crashed scheme could be revived;
  - (e) businesses pulled out of the scheme saying the system was unreliable and had caused too much distress for staff and customers;
  - (f) just 24 hours after ChooseCBR was relaunched last Friday, the allocated funds were exhausted;
  - (g) serious questions have been raised about the scheme's integrity such as how it was monitored to ensure vouchers were not misused and people were doing the right thing;
  - (h) before the launch, the Canberra Liberals raised concerns with the Minister's office about how auditing would be conducted so Canberrans could have confidence in the scheme's integrity;
  - (i) it is unclear if the \$2 million went to businesses that genuinely needed support;
  - (j) some businesses put in more than 15 hours of work to be eligible for the scheme only to receive \$20 or \$50 benefit; and
  - (k) the Canberra Liberals support measures that genuinely help our 30 000 small businesses which employ one in four Canberrans, but the Minister must be upfront with the community about how the scheme operated; and
- (3) calls on the ACT Legislative Assembly to write to the ACT Auditor-General by the end of this sitting week requesting he conduct a comprehensive audit of ChooseCBR including but not limited to:
- (a) which businesses benefitted and by how much;
  - (b) how many people benefitted and by how much;
  - (c) any misappropriation of funds;
  - (d) what times of the day and night vouchers were redeemed; and
  - (e) administrative and marketing costs as well as the costs of designing the website and fixing the raft of technical problems.

Mr Assistant Speaker, with apologies to Charles Dickens, the tale of ChooseCBR reads like a tale of two schemes—one last December, the failed trial, and one this month, the apparent success story. When you reflect on what we know, with a healthy dollop of government spin thrown in, it does not pass the sniff test, as some might say.

Let us start with last December's trial. I labelled it a dud and a harebrained scheme when only 336 businesses signed up for the program, and with just \$310,000 redeemed, even though the government had allocated half a million dollars over three weeks. You cannot accuse the government of not promoting the scheme, given the spend on administration and marketing costs was a staggering \$123,000.

Fast forward to June 2021 and you have the government's revamped ChooseCBR scheme, which the government would have Canberrans believe was a raging success.

Yet what the minister revealed this morning was that in fact more than four in five eligible Canberra businesses did not participate in the scheme. I will repeat that because it is an important point that the government certainly does not want Canberrans to know: more than 80 per cent of businesses eligible to register did not bother. What a huge vote by our small business sector of no confidence in this tired Labor-Greens government.

The fact is that business uptake of ChooseCBR was incredibly low, with less than one-fifth of businesses participating. Surely, you would imagine that a business would jump at a scheme to help them, but many business owners clearly decided that it just was not worth the stress and effort of signing up. Others which did register, such as Deakin IGA, stopped accepting vouchers, apologised to staff and customers for the distress the scheme had caused, and rightly said that it was not their fault.

Under the relaunched ChooseCBR initiative, almost \$390,000 of vouchers were claimed in the first two days alone, despite the fact that the system was down for much of that time. When the scheme was finally resurrected after its seven-day hiatus, the rest of the \$2 million disappeared like water down a plug hole, all gone in the space of one day, with vouchers apparently being redeemed well into the night.

Given the government hype around the revamped ChooseCBR, it is interesting to note the spin when things did not go to plan—in other words, when the business minister hugely underestimated how popular the scheme might be for customers.

While to most Canberrans the system crashed because the government failed to properly load-test it, with the government then forced into damage control while frantically working out how the scheme might be revived, the 11 June media release issued by the minister put it in more soothing tones when it stated that the program had merely been “paused”. The soothing words continued. The release stated:

We are very conscious of the inconvenience and frustration this has caused to both businesses and customers, despite our best efforts to fix the problems to date.

The world of small business is vastly different to what most people in this Assembly would know about. As a former small business operator, knowing success and failure, I know the fear that small business owners live with, the toll that family-run businesses have on relationships and family life, the constant grind and the fact that there is no respite. So when the best that a government can do when its \$2 million program is failing is talk about “inconvenience” and “frustration”, it just does not go down well.

The government might get away with it because it is not their money, but business does not have such a luxury. Any business owner knows that if you cause inconvenience and frustrate your customers, you suffer the consequences—the customers disappear. There is no such accountability from this tired and out-of-touch government, which seems too used to power and increasingly takes the support of Canberrans for granted.

In the children's storybook *A Fish out of Water*, the boy does not listen to Mr Carp at the pet shop and feeds his fish, Otto, too much. Poor Otto; he grows and grows, and the frantic boy runs out of places to put him. But the boy did not listen. After the failed ChooseCBR trial, the Canberra Liberals urged the government to conduct an independent review before the expanded version was implemented. In February, I said that I was loath to call for a review, as Canberrans are rightly cynical about reviews, but the government had \$2 million for ChooseCBR in the budget and I did not want to see that money wasted. Just like our boy in *A Fish out of Water* who did not heed Mr Carp's advice, the business minister did not listen to the Canberra Liberals, saying that an independent review was unnecessary. "We do not need an expensive consultant to conduct a review." That was how the minister put it, even though no-one was suggesting that.

This morning, the minister told us several times that ChooseCBR was a business stimulus program. It is important to ask how the government defines "stimulus" and equally important to crunch the numbers to understand the size of that stimulus for Canberra's small businesses, and whether their participation in the problem-plagued scheme was worth it.

Not only that, there was a massive spend of Canberra's money, not just the \$2 million in vouchers but the huge marketing, administration and IT costs, plus the costs of buying the program in the first place. Was it worth it? Did it represent value for money? That is the number one question that small business must always ask itself.

A close look at the figures on page 21 are revealing. We know the following facts. While the minister has repeatedly told us that more than 800 businesses registered for the scheme, we know that less than 800—the number is actually 797—benefited from the ChooseCBR customers coming through the door. So of the 4,000 Canberra businesses eligible for the ChooseCBR scheme, less than 800 made any money. To put it another way, less than one in five of the eligible Canberra businesses participated in the scheme and turned a dollar; less than 800 Canberra businesses made a buck.

What else have we learned from the minister's statement this morning? We know that, of the 797 businesses which made a dollar, most of them—619—redeemed over 10 vouchers. In fact, 419 businesses redeemed more than 50 vouchers, including some which redeemed more than 100. And there were 19 businesses which redeemed over 500.

If we look at those 419 businesses and estimate that each redeemed around 75 vouchers, pocketing approximately \$30, we see that those 419 businesses could have made \$2,250 from ChooseCBR. But if we turn to the 200 businesses which redeemed more than 10, yet less than 50 vouchers, and we estimate that they redeemed 25 vouchers with a value of \$30, that would mean that those 200 businesses made only \$750 from the scheme.

Finally, we know that there were 178 businesses that redeemed less than 10 vouchers. Let us say that each of those redeemed maybe five, worth \$30 each. That would give

those 178 businesses a return of \$150 for participating in ChooseCBR. I wonder whether they thought it was worth it.

What we have also learned today—for the first time—from the minister’s statement is that the Labor-Greens government bought the MyDarwin program, as well as, according to the minister, “the technical support provided by its vendor”. The questions are many. How much did the ACT government pay to buy the MyDarwin program? How much did the government pay for its technical support? What was the nature of the contract, particularly given that the system crashed here in Canberra and needed massive surgery?

Before concluding, I wish to raise a few other points from the minister’s speech defending the government program that has been riddled with problems, flaws and mistakes. No 1: on page 3, the minister tells us that ChooseCBR was about “stimulus occurring during the pandemic, at a time when businesses have been doing it tough”, yet the program was provided this month, a very long time after the pandemic initially hit businesses hard.

No 2: on page 9 the minister makes the claim that there was a very strong take-up from business, yet, as I have already said, less than 800 businesses made any money from the scheme, while 4,000 were actually eligible. It seems to be a stretch to describe this as a very strong outcome for business.

No 3: I cannot conclude without drawing the Assembly’s attention to the minister’s words on page 11, when she said that “this experience was deeply regrettable” and that “it undermined the confidence in the system”. I beg to differ. This is not about confidence in an IT system; it is about confidence in this government’s ability to get the basics right.

Canberrans are losing confidence in your government, the Labor-Greens government, to do its homework, avoid big blowouts and costly stuff-ups, spend Canberrans’ money wisely, ensure integrity in a program so that money goes where it is meant to go, and run a program smoothly that genuinely provides targeted and valuable support to our small businesses which need it most.

Audits are not uncommon in politics, and nor should they be. In politics, they matter because people have a right to know how their money is spent and whether they are getting value for money. The media reported that the government was conducting a “routine audit” of ChooseCBR after a two-day spending spree racked up almost \$400,000. A government spokeswoman said that “the audit process has not indicated any misuse”. There are serious questions about the conduct of the scheme which can only be properly examined by a comprehensive and independent audit by the Auditor-General. Nothing less will suffice.

**MR DAVIS** (Brindabella) (3.29): I wish to speak to the motion brought forward by Ms Castley concerning the ChooseCBR economic stimulus program. The ACT Greens will be supporting the amendment to be moved by Minister Cheyne this afternoon, which reflects the commitment of this government to review and improve on any similar stimulus programs that may be pursued in the future.

Minister Cheyne and her office have made a genuine effort to engage with the value of this motion. The commitment to an independent, time-bound and publicly released report on ChooseCBR demonstrates not only the understanding from the current evidence base of the success of the program but also the government's commitment to accountability and transparency.

We know that supporting small businesses is vital in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, and I commend Minister Cheyne for her efforts to support the sector through the ChooseCBR program. The economic impacts of the last 12 months have disproportionately impacted small business, and this direct cash injection is part of the solution that Canberra small businesses needed. I know that in my electorate of Brindabella businesses were hit hard by the pandemic, and I am proud of the uptake of this opportunity by 63 Brindabella small businesses. The information that has been provided through the minister's office indicates a healthy distribution of stimulus across the territory, including in my electorate, in these businesses.

If there is anything that the response to the launch of the ChooseCBR program shows, it is that Canberrans have heard about it and they have liked what they have heard. Contrary to the implication by the Canberra Liberals, the revamped program widened the scope for eligible businesses; as I understand it, it oversaw at least a 65 per cent increase in participating businesses. I believe Minister Cheyne has indicated that that number would be higher on final figures. More than that, Canberrans have rushed to the shops over the course of two days and utilised the program to the best of their ability. That averages out to \$1 million on each of the two days of the active program.

The opposition has come up with a list of subjective shortcomings of the trial, seemingly compiled with no evidence base other than the comments section of Facebook posts. Opposition for opposition's sake makes fools regarding a project that has achieved its end goal—\$2 million going directly into the bank accounts and the tills of Canberra small businesses.

As Minister Cheyne described in this place earlier today, it would have been irresponsible to allow the program, which was having technical issues, to go on without fixing it. The reality is that that happened. The minister and her team accepted that and were transparent in their conversation with the community, they took the program offline for a few days to limit the burden on small business and they committed to repairs. Mr Assistant Speaker, I am not sure about your view, but that certainly seems reasonable to me, and I think that sounds reasonable to most Canberrans.

I am also pleased to hear of Minister Cheyne's interest in establishing a small-business directory for Canberrans, and I look forward to discussing how this would look, particularly for businesses in my electorate of Brindabella. As a small-business owner and operator myself, prior to my election to this place, I understand the highs and lows of trying to turn a profit while producing something unique, local and valuable to the community.

Last week I had the pleasure of visiting the CBR Innovation Network, in my capacity as the ACT Greens small-business spokesperson. That network is a not-for-profit launched in November 2014, as a collaboration between Canberra's world-class education and research institutions. Its mission is to empower entrepreneurs and small businesses to make an impact and to change the world. I was excited and moved by the inspiring and innovative work being undertaken right here in our city, and by the number of small businesses in the network who are driven not only by profit but by a genuine environmental and social justice motivation. These businesses turn a profit while they contribute and give back to our community. The network is a testament to the power of collaboration, creativity and critical thinking in our city, which our government is committed to investing in, with new methods and new opportunities to build Canberra as a destination city for small business.

In the 2020-21 ACT budget, the government committed a further \$607,000 to ensure the growth of the CBR Innovation Network, which is just one example of the commitment that this Labor-Greens government has to small, medium and family-size businesses. I thank Peter and Josh from the network for giving me a tour of their space, and I look forward to collaborating and working with them in supporting the innovation that takes place. Just as I look forward to spending more time in the CBR Innovation Network over the coming months, I look forward to working with Minister Cheyne to ensure Canberra small businesses continue to have access to our nation-leading economy.

Throughout the election the Greens made several commitments to small, medium and family-size businesses. Mr Assistant Speaker, you would expect nothing less, because while other political parties and political candidates are awash with the donations of major multinational corporations, the Greens have small, family and medium-size businesses running through their veins.

I am particularly excited about a \$10 million commitment we made for interest-free seed funding for loans from cooperatives. This is a really exciting opportunity that the Greens took to the last election to support cooperatives. When working together, businesspeople can minimise expenses, build relationships and achieve meaningful social, economic and environmental change.

Certainly, I welcome any government review that could find ways to improve the CBR program. In fact, I encourage and am enthusiastic about any review of government policy or service provision, because honesty, transparency and accountability in government expenditure and how they do things is integral to good governance and is a founding principle on which my political party is based. If there are still questions about how to improve the program, let us answer those questions, and let us continue to engage in an honest and open conversation with our community.

Once again, I thank Ms Castley for bringing this motion to the Assembly. While we will continue to have debates around the factual reality for small business in the ACT, I cannot question her genuine commitment to achieving better outcomes for small business. I also thank Ms Cheyne and her office for the hard work in this sector, and I trust they will continue the work of this Labor-Greens government to support local business into the future.

**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) (3.36): I do not intend to speak for long on this motion, given my ministerial statement this morning, but I will respond to some of Ms Castley's claims.

In my statement this morning, I answered as many of the questions as I could, including many of Ms Castley's accusations. I often comment in this place that the opposition is internally incoherent. Whether it is Mrs Kikkert tabling a petition demanding that the government expand Kippax immediately, while you, Mr Assistant Speaker Cain, are at the same time promoting a survey that suggests that the government should go back to the drawing board on Kippax, or the contradictory comments that just one shadow minister makes; the lack of internal coherence can sometimes be breathtaking. That has been common today.

Ms Castley is criticising that at least 797 businesses participated in the scheme. In the same breath she criticises how quickly the \$2 million was spent. Given the speed of the take-up of the vouchers, 800 businesses gaining something from the scheme in that amount of time suggests that these were good figures. That Ms Castley is hell-bent on casting doubt on small businesses and people spending locally is, frankly, beyond the pale for a shadow business minister. Without specific allegations, her claims are, at best, spurious; at worst, they undermine the reputations of our hardworking small business community.

I welcome Ms Castley's and the community's broad interest in the scheme, and the scrutiny that should be applied to it and will be applied to it. But without specific allegations, with just broad statements, business community reputations are being besmirched. I implore each member of this place, and the broader community: if you actually have specific allegations, share them; but if you do not, perhaps reconsider the rhetoric.

This was a bold, new initiative for the ACT. We had never done anything quite like this before. It was wholeheartedly embraced by Canberrans and businesses. The demand begets the demand in a compounding way. But it was intended to be a one-off, and that reflected some of our decisions. We learned a lot from this, and we still have a lot to learn.

As I noted, there are questions out there from the community about the scheme, including its design and implementation, noting the technical issues; the distribution of spending; the stimulus impact; and whether it would be appropriate to run it again, or something like it, if another economic downturn were to occur. And there are other matters that should be considered, too.

I welcome independent and comprehensive scrutiny, and that the findings be made public. It is for this reason that the ACT government will procure a review of this nature and, as detailed in the amendment to the motion, this will begin soon. The intention, as flagged, is that it will be completed by the last sitting day. It will include all of what Ms Castley called for in her original motion and more.

I acknowledge Ms Castley's specific calls for the Auditor-General to audit the scheme. However, the facts are that the Auditor-General Act 1996 is abundantly clear that the Auditor-General cannot be directed regarding which audits to undertake. That said, I repeat that I welcome scrutiny. The aim of the amendment is to be true to the heart of the call in Ms Castley's motion, while not asking for the Auditor-General to do something that cannot be done, as per the legislation.

If the Auditor-General determines that an audit into the ChooseCBR program should form part of the audit program, now or in the future, the directorate and I stand ready to engage with him and his office. I have written to the Auditor-General to that effect.

I also advised the Auditor-General of our own comprehensive review which will be shared with the Auditor-General once completed, whether or not it is at the same time, or whether or not the Auditor-General has decided to conduct an audit into the scheme. For the benefit of the Assembly, I will table that correspondence. I present the following paper:

ChooseCBR independent review—Correspondence to the ACT Auditor-General, from the Minister for Business and Better Regulation, dated 22 June 2021.

I do agree that there are lessons to be learnt and there are questions to be answered. The approach that we are taking, as detailed in the amendment, ensures that this will be achieved, and in a timely manner, without having to rely on an organisation which cannot be directed but which may well choose to conduct an audit. I commend the amendment that has been circulated in my name. I move:

Omit all words after "scheme" first occurring and substitute:

"has resulted in over \$5.1 million being spent in Canberra small businesses;

(2) further notes:

- (a) 797 businesses redeemed at least one voucher;
    - 619 businesses redeemed 10 or more vouchers;
    - 267 businesses redeemed 50 or more vouchers;
    - 133 businesses redeemed 100 or more vouchers; and
    - 19 businesses redeemed 500 or more vouchers;
  - (b) the top six business types for voucher redemption were food retailing; cafes, restaurants and takeaway food services; recreational goods retailing; pharmaceutical, cosmetic and toiletry goods retailing; clothing, footwear and personal accessory retailing; and personal services; and
  - (c) more than 30 000 customers redeemed vouchers;
- (3) further notes that the Government will procure an independent and comprehensive review of the ChooseCBR program including:
- (a) program design and implementation;
  - (b) the spread of activity across businesses and consumers;
  - (c) an evaluation of the stimulus impact to determine if something similar would be appropriate in the event of a further economic downturn;

- (d) any other relevant matter; and
- (e) that the review will be publicly released by the last sitting day of 2021;
- (4) further notes that as per the Auditor-General Act 1996 section 7 (2), the Auditor-General cannot be directed in relation to whether or not a particular audit is to be carried out but that he seeks input on the audit program, including from members of the Assembly; and
- (5) further notes that the Minister for Business and Better Regulation has written to the Auditor-General advising that:
  - (a) an independent review of the ChooseCBR program will be undertaken;
  - (b) the results of this review will be shared with the Auditor-General for his consideration; and
  - (c) the Minister welcomes engagement with the Auditor-General regarding his work program, including, but not limited to, if the Auditor-General made a decision to undertake an audit into the ChooseCBR program.”

**MRS KIKKERT** (Ginninderra) (3.41): I thank Ms Castley for bringing this very important motion before the Assembly today. This motion does a good job of addressing the broad range of concerns that have been reported to me personally. I have heard from constituents who were excited to try a new business using the ChooseCBR scheme when it was first relaunched but, after receipt of the service and when they went to pay, they were charged full price because the scheme had been taken offline. Others who work during the day told me of plans to use a voucher on the weekend only to find that the scheme had ended before they could get to the shop. I have heard of people walking out of restaurants and other business when they realised they could not use the vouchers they had downloaded.

It has been a headache for nearly everyone. Business owners have let me know that attempting to participate in the scheme cost them more money in setup costs than they ever received from voucher-supported purchases. Others noted that they had brought extra perishable stock for the relaunch of the scheme which they then lost when the site was forced to be taken down. Other business owners tried to register for the scheme but could never get it to work, nor could they get the customer care they needed to make this happen.

Both business owners and residents have raised serious concerns with me directly that the scheme did not successfully target businesses most impacted by COVID-19. Instead, it created free-for-all that benefitted shops that were actually doing fine. There seems to be a consensus that the government did not get the balance right when it comes to eligibility or what vouchers could be used for.

In many cases, the scheme was so poorly thought through that it actually did more harm than good for many Canberrans. As one constituent said, it is essential that the government is fully transparent with the data generated from the scheme instead of hiding behind made-up privacy concerns. The economy will recover but it should not be at the expense and the heartache of Canberrans.

Those opposite frequently speak of the importance of government transparency. This government has proven time and time again that their real priority is about money and not so much about people. I have seen it in their dealings with child protection, the AMC and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. When their motivation is driven by money they are poorly selling themselves short and showing that they are tired, old and incompetent. Ms Castley's motion is the perfect opportunity to find out if they believe what they say when they say they want to serve Canberrans. I commend this motion to the Assembly.

**MS LEE** (Kurrajong—Leader of the Opposition) (3.44): I commend Ms Castley's motion and thank her for her tireless advocacy for small businesses in Canberra. I take this moment to also acknowledge our hardworking Canberra local businesses who not only have had such a tough and challenging period through the pandemic but have now had the additional burden of a failed scheme that was designed specifically to help them.

Earlier the Chief Minister made a snide remark to me that the government does not always get things perfect. Perfection is not what the community is after, but it is absolutely fair and right for the Canberra community to know where \$2 million dollars of their hard-earned dollars is going, how it is being spent and whether it is achieving the purpose for which it was used.

This is not the first time this government has tried the scheme. Only this morning the minister in her very long ministerial statement talked about the ACT Labor election commitment to a scheme such as this. And only this morning in the ministerial statement the minister talked about how it was referenced back as far as the economic and fiscal outlook in August. We are talking 10 months down the track.

Let's not forget the abysmal performance of the trial that occurred in December. We now know that not only was the take-up not going to help many of the small businesses but there were some questionable transactions as well. When asked questions in question time, no further information was given and no more enlightenment on what some of those transactions were and how the issue has been addressed to ensure it does not happen again.

It took six months for the scheme to be revamped, but as the *Canberra Times* said

... the government did not prepare its website to handle the greater volumes. By some strange calculation, it appeared to assume that doubling the voucher amount would simply double the pressure on the system. It's a bizarre way to calculate potential demand for a scheme. It raises the question, what modelling did the government use to anticipate the spending volumes before stress testing its website? Right now, the numbers seem to have been pulled out of thin air before the second stage of the scheme.

Ms Castley's motion calls for this Assembly to refer the ChooseCBR scheme for a full, comprehensive and independent review by the Auditor-General. According to their website, the Auditor-General's role is to:

- provide an independent view to the ACT Legislative Assembly and the community on the accountability, efficiency and effectiveness of the ACT Public Sector;
- foster accountability in the public administration of the Territory; and
- promote the efficiency and effectiveness of public services and programs provided by the Territory.

With the numerous questions about implementation of this scheme—so numerous that the minister tabled a 32-page ministerial statement this morning and prompted the minister to commission what she said is an independent review of the scheme—the Auditor-General is the appropriate office to conduct this full, comprehensive and independent audit.

In question time earlier today the minister confirmed she had commissioned this independent review less than 24 hours ago. Why was it not announced when she commissioned it? She also said in question time that the findings of the review would be made public by the final sitting day this year. She confirmed that again during this debate. But if you have a look at the amendment, there is no mention of that whatsoever. There is no mention of timelines and how the review will be undertaken. If the minister says a review has been commissioned, where are the terms of reference? The minister has refused to provide information the public has every right to know. She says the independent review will answer more questions than what Ms Castley calls for in the motion and yet there is nothing further she can provide to us.

Let us not forget the failure not once, not twice, but three times in trying to implement this scheme. Having a minister who refused to answer questions for days, what confidence does the Canberra community have in a so-called independent review that apparently has already been commissioned?

I commend Ms Castley for bringing this very important motion to the Assembly. The Auditor-General is the right office to undertake this full, comprehensive and independent review. If we rely on this government to undertake an independent review, just like how we relied on them to implement this ChooseCBR scheme, then it is the Canberra community that will be let down.

**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) (3.50): I seek leave to speak again on this motion.

Leave granted.

**MS CHEYNE:** I am not sure what Ms Lee is trying to get at. If the Auditor-General wishes to conduct an audit into this scheme, I welcome that. But given Ms Lee is the shadow attorney-general, perhaps she should familiarise herself with the Auditor-General Act 1996. Not only should she familiarise herself with that, perhaps she should also familiarise herself with my amendment to the motion which details this. It will detail the appropriate section which she might want to get across—sometime soon I would suggest, and it also details in paragraph (3) exactly what we intend our review to cover.

As I said in my speech, which I am not sure she listened to, we welcome that scrutiny. If the Auditor-General chooses to conduct that audit, we welcome that, but not one of us in this place can direct the Auditor-General to conduct an audit. The Auditor-General can reveal a proposed program, can ask for comment and we can suggest, but no-one one can direct the Auditor-General to do this..

Despite what Ms Lee was going on about—which I am still honestly baffled by—there is no guarantee the Auditor-General is ever going to review this. I welcome it if the Auditor-General does so, and I have written to him on that basis. But because there is no guarantee and because there are still questions, I want to reflect the heart of Ms Castley’s motion and note that we are doing a review regardless of whether the Auditor-General conducts his own review.

Ms Lee said that I have avoided questions for days. She has got to be joking. Anyone can see across all of my social media that I spent hours and hours and hours responding to people. I have conducted two radio interviews today and a press conference. I have given a 32-page ministerial statement, as she noted, providing an incredible amount of detail and answering as many questions as I possibly could. To make those sorts of accusations about me that are frankly untrue is unbecoming of a leader of a party.

**MS LAWDER** (Brindabella) (3.53): I had not planned to speak to this motion, but I am compelled to point out a few inconsistencies in what we heard so far. As Ms Cheyne commented on Ms Lee perhaps not reading her amendment, I remind Ms Cheyne that she should read Ms Castley’s motion in the first instance, which is that we request the Auditor-General to undertake an audit. Anyone can request an audit. Ms Cheyne may recall—she has been here for more than one term now—that the Auditor-General writes to all members of this place asking for suggestions for audits. The Auditor-General writes to all committees of this place asking for suggestions. This is a common piece of work, and anyone can do that.

The Assembly itself can request an audit. That is not directing the Auditor-General; it is not compelling the Auditor-General. It is a perfectly legitimate and allowable request under the Auditor-General’s Act, which Ms Cheyne has tried to reference, but she obviously has not quite grasped the intricacies involved here. Ms Castley is making a very legitimate request about referring the matter to the Auditor-General and requesting an audit.

I have not read the words “compel”, “direct” or “order” the Auditor-General to conduct a review, because that would be inappropriate and no-one in this place would do that. Perhaps Ms Cheyne feels she is able to do that, but that is not what this motion says.

Rather than trying to criticise imagined or made-up wording in the amendment, perhaps Ms Cheyne could read it and constrain herself to the words in the motion. She is trying to muddy the waters by bringing in something completely unrelated and irrelevant. I do not want to use the word “misleading”, but she is trying to say we are

asking for something that cannot be asked for. That is not the case at all. I commend Ms Castley's motion to the Assembly.

Amendment agreed to.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** The question now is that the motion, as amended, be agreed.

**MS CASTLEY (Yerrabi) (3.56):** In closing, obviously I do not support the amendment—

**Ms Cheyne:** But it's been agreed. You can't reflect on a decision—

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Ms Cheyne.

**MS CASTLEY:** I want to remind everybody here that I have a motion here, and I fully support my motion. I truly believe the Canberra business community deserves a comprehensive audit. I am not directing the Auditor-General; I know he is the expert. His job is to improve government accountability, and that is all I am asking for. I am not casting any kind of doubt on our Canberra business community. They are the warriors that I stand up here and fight for at every opportunity that I get. I am raising serious questions that they have brought to me, and I truly believe they deserve to have a comprehensive report done so they know where the government's money has gone.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

## **Transport—electric scooters**

**MR PETTERSSON (Yerrabi) (3.58):** I move:

That this Assembly:

- (1) notes the Dockless Shared Micromobility Guidelines and Policy announced by the ACT Government in July 2020 that enables an e-scooter share scheme to operate in the ACT;
- (2) notes the commencement of an e-scooter share scheme in September 2020 operated by Neuron Mobility and Beam that provides 1,500 devices across central Canberra and Belconnen for short term use;
- (3) further notes that the ACT Government is currently undertaking a review of the e-scooter share scheme;
- (4) acknowledges the recent YourSay Community Panel that found that:
  - (a) in total 65 percent of Canberrans support the shared e-scooter scheme in the ACT with the highest levels of support among users of the scheme and younger Canberrans;
  - (b) support for expanding the scheme to other areas of Canberra was at 63 percent which followed the same characteristics as the primary support question; and

- (c) Gungahlin residents have the highest support for expansion to their region at 80 percent of local respondents; and
- (5) calls on the ACT Government to enhance the e-scooter share scheme. This could include, but not be limited to:
  - (a) expanding the geographical coverage of the share scheme to cover more districts, including Gungahlin and Mitchell;
  - (b) increasing the number of permitted e-scooters in the scheme and providing more designated parking areas;
  - (c) exploring opportunities to use the scheme to improve commuter connections to our public transport network;
  - (d) continuing to run public safety campaigns to ensure that e-scooters are used in ways that promote safety for riders and all members of the community; and
  - (e) continually assessing the operators of the shared scheme to ensure that their offering is safe, price competitive and responsive to the needs and priorities of the Canberra community.

I call on this Assembly to expand the e-scooter share scheme throughout Canberra. I am sure every member of the Assembly agrees that Canberra is a vibrant and innovative city. We Canberrans embrace change and are excited by what new ideas can improve our city next. The introduction of the e-scooter share scheme has been an exciting way to improve our city, and it has been a success. It is almost like Canberra was built for e-scooters with wide roads and footpaths, extensive bike lanes and pedestrian zones throughout our town and city centres. Canberra has adapted smoothly to their introduction and Canberrans are on board.

Feeling the cool wind on your face while you zoom past people and buildings is a feeling many Canberrans have experienced at least once since the launch of the e-scooter share scheme. For many Canberrans the e-scooters have become a part of their daily life. The scheme has been a huge success. Canberrans have embraced this addition to our city, and now many Canberrans want the scheme expanded.

Almost two-thirds of Canberrans support the scheme and at least one-third of us have used a scooter since they were introduced. Our city's young people have embraced the scooters more than anyone. Younger Canberrans are using the scooters to get to and from school, university and work. They are using the scooters to get to the shops, to visit friends and to go out to local hospitality venues. Young Canberrans have embraced this quick and convenient technology, which is environmentally friendly, powered by the ACT's 100 per cent renewable energy. Younger Canberrans between the ages of 16 and 34 often report the most appealing aspect of the scooters is that they are environmentally friendly.

Working Canberrans have also embraced the scooters—31 per cent of Canberrans have said they use the scooters to get to work or a meeting. The scooters provide a quick, cheap and often more convenient option than public transport, driving or ride share. The convenience of being able to travel door to door without getting stuck in traffic or having to look for a parking spot is very appealing. And almost everyone has found it easy to find an e-scooter when they need one.

E-scooters have inspired many Canberrans to start looking into electric transport technology. Now more than ever Canberrans are interested in buying their own e-scooter or e-bike. Canberrans prioritise the environment and modes of transport that are clean, cheap and efficient. That is why our city embraced cycling and then e-bikes, and now e-scooters into our mix of daily transportation.

E-scooters have also helped boost our economy back into gear, with most e-scooter users making purchases at a shop or hospitality venue shortly before, or shortly after using an e-scooter. The revenue e-scooter users bring to the local economy is another argument for why we should expand the scheme to town centres outside the CBD, like the inner north, inner south and Belconnen.

Currently those who use e-scooters are far more likely to be located in central Canberra than any other part of the city. Overwhelmingly, those who live in other areas of Canberra want the scheme to be expanded to include their area. In every region around Canberra locals support the scheme coming to their area at more than 60 per cent. In my electorate this support is the highest, with 80 per cent of Gungahlin residents supporting the expansion of the scheme. By far the biggest reason for people not participating in the scheme is that they just have not had the opportunity to use it yet. Let's change that by expanding the scheme to include more of our town centres.

Many Canberrans are using scooters to link them to public transport, like light rail or the bus. Today I am calling on the government to explore ways we can improve these connections and encourage even greater uptake of our public transport system. Creating more parking areas for scooters around our light rail stops and bus stops is just one way that we can improve these public transport connections.

If we incentivise local communities to use e-scooters to connect them to local public transport, we also need to make sure there is adequate parking for the scooters so that users are incentivised to correctly park them in a way that is safe for the rest of the community. Creating more parking areas for scooters close to light rail and bus stops, ensures we are considering the safety of other community members who use the footpaths.

By increasing our e-scooter network, we are increasing access to public transport from the less-connected developing suburbs in Canberra. Bringing scooters to Gungahlin and Mitchell will encourage more local active travel in the surrounding suburbs and provide a boost to the local economy. It will incentivise those that live or work in the surrounding suburbs to take public transport instead of driving. Not only is this better for stimulating the local economy but the greater number of people opting for public transport over driving is good for our environment. E-scooters will reduce congestion as fewer people will drive through our town centres.

When talking about expanding the reach of e-scooters in Canberra, it would be irresponsible not to acknowledge the concerns that some members of the community have. While the absolute majority of users have been safe while they use e-scooters, there is no denying that some injuries have been caused by a lack of e-scooter safety.

From the misuse of scooters by some intoxicated users, to the eyesore some people see them as when they are scattered about our cityscape, there are some valid concerns expressed by the community.

To encourage scooter safety, the government has rolled out an extensive safety campaign, particularly on social media. I know I get targeted by those ads flat out. It has targeted a younger demographic, and we need to continue doing this. I am calling on the government to continue the safety campaigns and to increase the number of designated parking areas, particularly around the boundary zones and in high traffic suburban areas. We need to make sure people park their scooters safely

A larger network of e-scooters across a larger region of Canberra will contribute to a more cohesive and convenient connection right across Canberra. However, with a larger network comes a need to continually assess the scheme to ensure we have the safest, the most price competitive and responsive network of e-scooters. That is why I am also calling on the government to continue to undertake reviews of the e-scooter share scheme to ensure we have the best performing scheme right here in Canberra.

The ultimate purpose of the e-scooter share scheme is to provide Canberrans with a cheap, easy and efficient mode of transport. Our role as a government is to ensure this scheme will continue to benefit everyone who lives in our city. I am calling on the government to expand the e-scooter scheme to Mitchell and Gungahlin, and to grow the scheme to other areas of Canberra as well.

Gungahlin residents are eager for e-scooters to come to Gungahlin. Gungahlin businesses and employers are eager to see more people use them. The Gungahlin community is eager to share more of our wonderful district with the rest of Canberra. I hope all members of this Assembly join me in calling for this expansion.

**MR STEEL** (Murrumbidgee—Minister for Skills, Minister for Transport and City Services and Special Minister of State) (4.06): I welcome the opportunity to respond to Mr Pettersson's motion and his call to expand our successful e-scooter share scheme.

The ACT government welcomes the interest shown in expanding the e-scooter share scheme. I note Mr Pettersson's particular interest in expansion in Gungahlin and Mitchell, although his motion is very clear that he wants to call on the ACT government to expand the geographical coverage of the shared scheme to cover more districts, not just the districts listed expressly.

As Mr Pettersson has noted in his motion, since last year the ACT government has facilitated a two-year pilot of shared e-scooters in the ACT. Neuron launched on 19 September 2020 and Beam launched on 22 October 2020. We have been keen to understand the role that micro-mobility plays in linking with public transport and active travel as well as improving how people move around our CBD and town centres. The share scheme that has rolled out has presented a great opportunity to understand what people want, need and value from micro-mobility as part of Canberra's overall transport mix.

We have seen now almost nine months of operations. It is clear that e-scooters are turning out to be a popular transport choice for Canberrans, particularly amongst younger Canberrans, under the age of 35, who have responded to this new form of transport with a lot of enthusiasm. Canberrans are using e-scooters for a range of different reasons, mainly for leisure but also to connect with public transport and get to and from education and work.

I can advise the Assembly that Canberrans have taken more than one million rides since the e-scooter scheme launched. To be exact, between 1 September 2020 and 31 May 2021, Canberrans took a total of 1,076,571 e-scooter rides, with a median of 4,000 daily trips. These numbers are very encouraging, especially as the scheme currently operates only in central Canberra and part of Belconnen.

The most common length of a trip is less than a kilometre, and most trips go for less than 10 minutes. Trips are more popular in the afternoons, with the afternoon peak having about 2.5 times more usage than the morning peak. I do not think it will surprise anyone that there is a strong correlation between usage and good weather—like other seasonality across our public transport statistics. We also know that e-scooters are particularly popular in and around our dining and recreation precincts, such as the city centre and Braddon.

The ACT Transport Strategy 2020 has a vision for a transport network that supports a compact, sustainable and vibrant city. Micro-mobility, potentially including e-scooters, will play an important role in achieving this. E-scooters provide a new way for people to connect to public transport and mean that fewer people need to get into their cars and move about our city.

We also should not underestimate the potential role that e-scooters can play in reducing emissions. Transport currently accounts for around 60 per cent of the ACT's emissions profile. Most of these emissions are from private vehicles. The climate strategy has focused on reducing transport emissions by reducing car use and encouraging a shift to active travel and public transport. E-scooter usage is an emissions-free way of achieving this.

The emerging success of the shared micro-mobility scheme is not supported only by uptake numbers. As Mr Petterson referred to in his motion, in April 2021, we undertook a community survey through the ACT online YourSay panel. This was completed by 1,907 people. The results show a high level of support for the e-scooter scheme, with 65 per cent of the community in favour of it. The survey also found that 63 per cent of Canberrans feel that the scheme could be extended into other areas of Canberra. Preferred areas for expansion were broadly similar across regions of Canberra and strongly related to the area in which people live. The majority of respondents strongly favoured expanding the scheme into whichever region they live in. Mr Petterson's motion today is an example of local advocacy building on that feedback.

That said, the survey clearly highlighted some areas that we can improve upon. Issues raised included unsafe behaviours, such as riders scooting while affected by alcohol;

people not wearing helmets; and concerns about the personal safety of pedestrians who walk in locations where e-scooters are common and parked. Some people are also concerned about where and how the scooters are parked around Canberra, and the impact of this on the accessibility of our footpaths and public spaces for other users. We have heard these concerns and we are considering options to address these as the scheme goes forward.

We are also delivering a campaign that targets these unsafe behaviours. Our new education campaign focuses on critical safety and amenity issues such as not wearing helmets, poor parking, and drinking and scooting. I encourage members to see these campaigns for themselves. Some are quite amusing and have found new ways of targeting particularly the younger cohort that is predominantly using the scooters.

We are currently undertaking a formal review of the e-scooter share scheme. The review will be looking at the e-scooter scheme as it has been running over a number of months. The consultant, Curiyo, has been engaged by Transport Canberra and City Services to undertake the review. The review started on 19 April this year and the final report is expected in the coming weeks.

The review has focused on a range of different issues, including the safety issues that have been raised with us by members of the community. The reviewer has been provided with the data that can help inform them, as well as any data they have requested, not only on patronage and trips taken but also on any crash statistics that may be relevant—any statistics that may be relevant coming out of presentations to the emergency department, for example—so that they can inform their review and any recommendations they may make to government.

I have not seen that review yet, because it has not been completed. It is in its final stages. I am looking forward to receiving the review so that we can look at how we can inform improvements to our e-scooter share scheme in the ACT, including any legislative amendments that may be required to support it into the future.

We are particularly interested in the review looking at how e-scooters are supporting the community. It will provide recommendations on areas to improve policy, procedures, compliance and data collection going forward. The review is also considering how and where the scheme should be expanded. The review will be supported by data analysis along with commentary and insight from stakeholders. The motion today will help inform our decision-making in relation to the review about further expansion into the future.

The review brings together a range of data sources to identify potential locations with unmet demand for micro-mobility services. This includes consideration of expanding the scheme to a range of districts across Canberra, including the ones specifically mentioned—Gungahlin and Mitchell—as well as other parts of Canberra. It is appropriate for the review to be completed before I give firm commitments on how future expansions will be managed, but I am pleased that the Assembly is engaged with the scheme and the opportunity it creates for more connected and cleaner transport in Canberra.

Pre-empting the proposed amendments to Mr Pettersson's motion by Mr Parton, I can say that the government will not be supporting his amendments, because Mr Pettersson's motion already comprehensively calls for expansion into other areas of Canberra, although he has specifically mentioned Gungahlin and Mitchell. It already covers off on that. I do not think Mr Parton's amendments to expressly mention Woden and Tuggeranong affect that. There is the old legal maxim *expressio unius*: the express mention of one thing is at the exclusion of another. There are many other districts in Canberra that have not been expressly mentioned in the amendment. The capture-all part of Mr Pettersson's motion covers that off well.

As I have mentioned, the review is having a very significant focus on safety. In fact, that is its primary focus. There is no need to undertake another review or get the reviewer to stop what they are doing in finalising their review and undertaking another review. We have got that underway; it is being finalised at the moment. We do not think it is necessary to support Mr Parton's amendments, even if the general thrust is in alignment with where we are already heading under the commitments that we have made under the review and looking at the expansion.

I thank Mr Pettersson for moving the motion and providing the opportunity to speak on this important issue. The e-scooter share scheme has been very well supported in the ACT community. There have been some safety issues. I look forward to finalising the review and updating the Assembly on the next steps for shared micro-mobility schemes in Canberra.

**MS CLAY** (Ginninderra) (4.16): The ACT Greens will be supporting Mr Pettersson's motion to encourage the expansion of e-scooter share schemes right across the ACT. E-scooter share schemes are an excellent way for people to get around Canberra. The residents of the inner north, inner south and, in my electorate, Belconnen town centre have embraced these schemes. They are a great option for moving around our growing city.

We know that getting people out of cars and onto active and public transport is essential for fixing congestion, curbing our carbon emissions, and improving the liveability of our cities. Multi-mode trips and providing options for that last kilometre are an essential part of this. E-scooter sharing is an excellent way for people who might ordinarily drive to try a new option and use a much lower impact method of transport. I know many people who have tried e-scooter share schemes and have since decided to purchase an e-scooter. That is a great adoption of non-car travel options.

An expanded e-scooter share scheme is an opportunity to allow those in other parts of Canberra to ditch the car and reduce traffic and parking pressure in our increasingly busy town centres. I will be pleased to see that expanded to all group centres all around Canberra. I am pleased that this motion names a couple, but, as has been noted, we will be looking at every group centre around Canberra that would like to have the e-scooter share scheme. The expansion of e-scooters and active travel to our town and group centres fits really well with the ACT government's slower speeds and our expanded 40 kilometre an hour zones in built-up urban areas.

Road safety is very important, and having fewer cars in our busier urban areas will help us to improve that. Research shows that when we have more people riding, drivers become more aware of cyclists and take more care. I am hoping that the adoption of more e-scooters across the city does the same thing. It might make Canberrans more aware of pedestrians, wheelchair users, cyclists and skateboarders as well as e-scooter riders.

I am glad to see the ACT government and the scooter companies themselves running public safety campaigns. I had the pleasure of attending one of these. It was really good fun. We got to weave around. We had slow races where the prize was awarded to the person who could ride the slowest. It is a really good engagement strategy, and more of those will help our culture of care.

I am pleased to see the government review of the e-scooter scheme and to find that we will be hearing more about safety and collisions and we will all get a chance to look at that data and have a really good think about how we can improve our e-scooter usage and make sure that it is safe as well as great active travel.

As we continue to explore non-car options for getting around Canberra, we need to increase our infrastructure and our maintenance spend to accommodate all the extra people who are walking, riding and scooting around the shared path network. We need to build more paths, we need to fill in the missing links and we need to maintain these to really good standards. If we want people to take active travel seriously, we need to take that infrastructure seriously. Active travel brings many more benefits than car use. It improves our mental and physical health; it improves our air quality; it reduces our emissions; it reduces congestion. We need a network of paths that is as comprehensive and as well-maintained as our roads network.

I have spoken to my colleagues Mr Davis and Mr Braddock. They are very keen to see this scheme expanded to Gungahlin and Tuggeranong. As was noted by other colleagues, we would like to see this scheme expanded all around Canberra in all suitable areas.

When we are rolling out the e-scooter scheme to new suburbs, we need to make sure that we include community consultation. The Greens are strong believers in community engagement and neighbourhood democracy. We know that local communities understand their area best. We need to really listen to locals in an area and make sure we are hearing the range of voices. And we need to acknowledge and accommodate any community reservations and make sure we are dealing with those concerns properly.

While I have heard of a few concerns about the expansion, I have mostly heard overwhelmingly positive comments. I was pleased to see that the recent survey showed that most people are in support of e-scooters. I am confident that with increased public education, driver and user awareness, and increased active travel infrastructure, we can grow into a city that learns to love new and exciting ways to get around. The ACT Greens are pleased to support Mr Pettersson's motion.

**MRS KIKKERT** (Ginninderra) (4.20): I thank Mr Pettersson for bringing this motion before the Assembly today. I am not surprised by the large percentage of Canberrans who support the introduction of shared e-scooters into Canberra; I personally love them. Nor am I surprised by the fact that many would like to see the scheme expanded to other areas of Canberra. I would like to see that as well.

I am happy that, when the scheme was first introduced, a portion of my electorate of Ginninderra was included. But currently the use of shared e-scooters is limited to Belconnen town centre and small parts of neighbouring suburbs such as Bruce and Macquarie.

This motion calls on the ACT government to enhance the current scheme by expanding its geographical coverage. Gungahlin and Mitchell are mentioned by name, but I rise to add my request that the areas where the scheme operates in the Belconnen district also be increased. This could include expanding the area of usage from around Belconnen town centre towards the ANU or Civic. It could also include other areas of Belconnen that could profitably support shared e-scooters. This expansion would require increasing the number of permitted e-scooters in the scheme, a request in this motion that I likewise support. I commend the motion to the Assembly.

**MR PARTON** (Brindabella) (4.22): We will not be opposing this motion from Mr Pettersson, though I will be moving some amendments.

I cannot speak on behalf of the Prime Minister, but I am sure that if Mr Morrison had a ride on one of these scooters, he would say—I can almost hear him saying it—“How good are e-scooters?” That is what he would say. How good are they? They are easy to ride. They are a lot of fun.

I know that a lot is made of emissions reduction from this new transport innovation, and I think at some stage we will get there. I would say that the early numbers are not really showing that. The government’s own survey on the Neuron and Beam rollout showed that 84 per cent of trips were purely recreational. And without wanting to put a dampener on things, it is possible that there could even be in part a health negative from e-scooter use in that those who are using them for mainly recreational use may be doing so instead of walking or riding a bike.

That aside, the early going on this new transport innovation has been extremely positive, and it has been solidly embraced by the community. That showed up in a survey that the Canberra Liberals did through Elizabeth Lee’s office. The Lee office survey showed majority support by Canberrans for the scheme to continue; however, it also showed that there are major safety concerns for many Canberrans around e-scooter use.

The survey received a diverse range of views with some common themes, including near misses with cars and pedestrians and a call for lower speed limits at all shopping centres in high pedestrian areas. The survey was used to get good insight from the broader community about what works and what needs to be improved so that Canberrans can get the most out of e-scooters. A lot of older Canberrans said that they

feel unsafe at shopping centres. Not only do they have to worry about trip hazards or uneven footpaths, but now they need to look out for speeding e-scooters. It is strange that you can scoot through an arcade in Manuka at 25 kilometres an hour but you are restricted to 15 kilometres an hour around the lake. I do not think that those concerns can just be dismissed.

The government, which has—I do not know—a hundred times the budget and capacity of the Lee office, did its own survey through YourSay, as mentioned in Mr Pettersson’s motion. The government survey suggested strong support for expanding e-scooter availability to other town centres. I am on the same page as Mr Pettersson in regard to expanding the scheme, but I do not believe that we can ignore the concerns from Canberrans over safety. Notwithstanding the safety program that has been run out, I think more has to be made of safety concerns. That is why I propose some amendments to this motion. I move:

After paragraph (5) (c) insert new paragraph (5) (ca) and (5) (cb) as follows:

- “(ca) undertake a review of e-scooter accidents and collisions with a view to creating a safer environment for both users and pedestrians;
- (cb) ensure centres in Woden and Tuggeranong are included in expansion plans for e-scooter services;”

The Canberra Liberals do not believe that it is up to us to suggest specific safety solutions for the successful e-scooter scheme, but we do not believe it is possible for us to move forward without a full investigation of the collisions thus far and an assessment of that data.

In other jurisdictions internationally, there is growing concern about safety associated with e-scooters. Three days ago, Shakur Pinnock became the second person in the UK to die as a result of an e-scooter accident. He spent a week on life support in Birmingham after a collision with a motor vehicle nearly a fortnight ago in Wolverhampton. He was 20 years of age. These are not the headlines we wish to see here—or anywhere else, for that matter.

Seoul in South Korea is one of the biggest markets for Beam scooters. During my meetings with representatives from Beam, they mentioned that Seoul was a wonderful market for them and that, generally speaking, South Korean users were much more compliant than users in other jurisdictions. However, just today there was a report in the *Korea Times* suggesting that the number of accidents involving e-scooters has tripled in Seoul in the last three years. It has tripled.

Just 12 hours ago, *Global News* in Saskatchewan in Canada reported that there were calls for a review of the laws around e-scooter use because of an explosion in accident numbers.

ABC7 Eyewitness News from New York reported this seven days ago:

- 7 On your Side Investigates uncovered a new disturbing trend—e-scooter accidents are on the rise in the New York City area, and oftentimes, it’s not the scooter driver who’s the one getting injured.

In 2021, there have been 588 e-scooter accidents in New York City, with a total of 538 people injured in those accidents and at least three pedestrian deaths.

From Britain's LBC website 12 hours ago:

A man is in a critical condition in hospital with a serious head injury after falling off a hired e-scooter.

The 55-year-old was travelling through Newcastle city centre with a group of ... 12 people when the incident occurred.

From the *Liverpool Echo* in the UK two weeks ago:

There are calls for an 'urgent review' of a pilot scheme of e-scooters which is currently running in Liverpool.

From *The Times* in London 10 days ago:

War is being waged on e-scooters in Russia after they were involved in a series of accidents, including one that put a dancer from the celebrated Mariinsky Ballet into a coma.

I quote Mr Pettersson himself from ABC radio this morning or yesterday. He said, "I think for many Canberra residents, witnessing people using scooters inappropriately is quite clearly alarming"—quite clearly alarming!—"but I do not think that precludes us from expanding and making the service available to more people." Mr Pettersson has described the safety breaches and the recklessness as quite clearly alarming, but he says, "What the hell; let's just roll it out further because it is such a good idea." Mr Pettersson is right; it is a good idea. But we have seen in the last fortnight what happens if you roll out what looks like a great idea without ironing out the kinks.

I know that the government are towards the back end of a review of this scheme. They have pretty much already announced that this is going to be extended to Mitchell and Gungahlin. I do not think that the review as it was announced is robust enough. I want to see something that absolutely focuses on accident statistics. I want to know how many accidents involved intoxicated riders. I want to know how many accidents involved more than one passenger on a scooter. I want to know how many injuries resulted from no helmets being worn.

I know that Mr Steel has already said that this review is being done, but I want firm assurances that this review will have a focus on collisions and will include accident information. I do not want a PR puff job here. That is what I fear. I am not the only one who fears that. I quote Phil Creaser from letters to the editor in the *Canberra Times* from three weeks ago:

If ACT Transport and the government are serious about surveying people about the impact of e-scooters, perhaps they should also survey residents of areas where e-scooters infest the footpaths, much like the current plague of mice. What we need is a study of the impact of the scooters with proper terms of reference including the number of accidents they cause.

I mentioned some international headlines a little earlier, but we are creating our own headlines in Canberra. This is from the *Canberra Times* three weeks ago:

A scooter rider has been transferred to Canberra Hospital following an incident with a car in Turner.

The car and the scooter are believed to have collided just before 1pm on Thursday. Police arrived on scene not long after.

And this from the RiotACT late last year:

Recently released data shows nearly 60 Canberrans have presented to the emergency departments at Canberra and Calvary Hospitals with scooter-related injuries in the first few months since their introduction to the Territory.

Seven people attended Calvary Hospital, while more than 50 presented to Canberra Hospital.

They went on to quote specific cases. Those cases were just the ones involving people who presented to hospital. I would suggest that it underestimates, by some way, the number of collisions in that very short period.

All I am saying is that I am not sure that the government is seriously tackling the safety issues of e-scooters. I look forward to being proven wrong when the review is released. I look forward to much of it being released publicly so that we can have a look at that. As Mr Steel suggested, we are essentially heading in the same direction on this and I hope that we can meet up in the middle somewhere.

Going to the second part of my amendment, I understand that according to Mr Pettersson Canberra pretty much ends at the end of the parliamentary triangle, but there is a whole side of the city south of Parliament House. Those of us who live in the south often get left behind by this government. This strikes me as another example. I know that Mr Steel has already pointed to this and said, "Just because we have mentioned Gungahlin and Mitchell does not mean that we are excluding these others." Then why single them out? Why just go with Mitchell and Gungahlin? (*Time expired.*)

**MS ORR (Yerrabi) (4.32):** I want to speak on Mr Pettersson's substantive motion. As a member for Yerrabi, I feel that this is quite a positive for our electorate. People in Gungahlin in particular have embraced new transport methods and mixed modal methods in how they take their transportation. We have seen the great uptake of light rail and the continual support of buses. This is a good addition to our transport mix in the area and will complement what we already have in place.

I know that the Mitchell traders will be quite excited by the prospect of e-scooters and how they will help their business precinct. Overall, this is a positive addition to our electorate and I thank Mr Pettersson for bringing it forward.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** The question is that Mr Parton's amendment be agreed to. Do you wish to speak in closing, Mr Pettersson?

**MR PETTERSSON (Yerrabi) (4.33):** Yes, Madam Speaker. I want to thank all members for their contributions today. I want to take a couple of moments to quickly clarify my comments on the radio. It is alarming when people misuse e-scooters. That is correct. It is also alarming when people misuse cars. It is alarming when people misuse bicycles. People can misuse all forms of transport, and it is dangerous whenever they do it.

I also want to reflect very quickly on the examples that Mr Parton gave. They are all accurate observations; bad things can happen when people use e-scooters. But it strikes me as reminiscent of the way the Canberra Liberals approached roads in this city; they claim to support a technology but do everything they can to undermine it. I ask all members to reflect on that observation.

E-scooters have become an integral part of our cityscape. Many Canberrans have embraced this very quick, convenient and environmentally friendly form of transport. While young Canberrans have engaged the most, scooters also benefit working Canberrans, 31 per cent of whom have used e-scooters to get to work or travel between meetings. E-scooters are a great way for Canberrans to experience an alternative form of transportation, with more Canberrans having looked at buying their own e-scooter or e-bike since the launch of the scheme.

This push towards alternative transport has shown our city's desire for more eco-friendly forms of transportation. The ease of e-scooters being available for users who live just a little too far away from their local bus stop or light rail stop has resulted, and I think will continue to result, in higher engagement with public transport. Creating links between Canberra residents and local public transport make opting to catch light rail or a bus more accessible for more people.

As the fastest growing region in Canberra, it is understandable that many scooter users would want the scheme expanded to Gungahlin. That does not preclude other regions. I explicitly call for more regions. Bringing e-scooters to Gungahlin and Mitchell will not only allow for more engagement with local public transport but also help the local economy. By expanding the e-scooter share scheme to Gungahlin town centre and to other town centres, we are helping to establish accessible links to public transport and boost economies.

I want to be very clear that I do not think Mr Parton's amendment is needed. It is already covered in the original motion. My motion today calls on the government to expand the e-scooter share scheme to more areas of Canberra, including Gungahlin and Mitchell. The more the merrier, in my opinion.

This motion also calls for the continuation of the public safety campaign to encourage users to ride and park safely. This is fundamentally important. We have all seen people misusing e-scooters. We need to reduce that. That is not a reason to not expand the scheme.

I am confident that this motion will bring the benefits of this scheme to more Canberrans. The ACT government embrace and value ways in which we can improve our city. Bringing e-scooters to more Canberrans is a sure way to do that.

Amendment negatived.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

## **Adjournment**

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

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

## **Legislation—Crimes (Consent) Amendment Bill 2021**

**DR PATERSON** (Murrumbidgee) (4.37): I wish to talk about a draft exposure bill I released publicly yesterday—the Crimes (Consent) Amendment Bill 2021. This is an important law reform regarding sexual consent. This bill introduces a communicative model of consent in the ACT, something that the community and stakeholders have been calling for. I commend Ms Berry, as Minister for Women, on her establishment of the ACT's tripartisan, collaborative and coordinated sexual assault prevention and response program.

Law reform is one of the three important components of this program, the other two being prevention and response. The program will include a specific and dedicated focus on cultural change, community education and awareness across the three working groups. The purpose of the proposed legislative amendments is to introduce a new statutory definition of consent in line with contemporary and community standards and expectations—one that is based on free and voluntary agreement.

The amended definition brings about a more nuanced definition of consent, shifting it from a position of consensual sexual activity being something that is presumed and can be negated, to something that is unassumed and must be given. The amendments shift the current legislation from the point of sexual assault being a violent act to a much more nuanced and defined set of parameters, around which consent is and is not.

The bill outlines principles of consent in that every person has a right to choose whether or not they participate in a sexual activity, and it involves ongoing and mutual communication, decision-making and free and voluntary agreement between the people participating at the time of the act. The bill also provides a definition of consent—that is, freely and voluntarily saying or doing something to communicate agreement to the act at the time of the act. The bill clearly articulates a set of circumstances under which consent is not deemed given. This is a non-exhaustive list that has been updated from the current Crimes Act 1900. It changes the nuance of the set of circumstances to ensure that consent is something that is not assumed.

Lastly, the bill introduces a concept of reasonable belief. Our current legislation provides that an accused person is guilty of an offence if they know another person does not consent to a sexual act or is reckless as to consent. These are subjective standards. This bill will introduce the principle that any belief an accused person may hold that another person's consent must be reasonable under all the circumstances, according to an objective standard. In cases where an accused person does nothing to ascertain another person's consent, they will not be able to rely on a defence of genuinely, by mistakenly, having believed the other person consented. Ultimately, these changes are about cultural and behavioural change. They create clarity for a common-sense approach to respectful relationships.

Sexual assault is a notoriously under-reported and under-convicted crime. National statistics suggest a three per cent conviction rate. This is incredibly low for a crime that has lifelong impacts on survivors. For years there have been calls for reform in how we address sexual assault in our community. This draft legislation released yesterday goes a long way in strengthening and simplifying consent in the law. Ultimately, it is intended that we will see an increase in perpetrators brought to justice. I welcome comments on the exposure draft until close of business on Friday, 16 July. Comments can be made via my website, email or phone. I intend to table the bill in the Assembly in the coming months.

### **Mr Neil Hermes—tribute**

**MR HANSON** (Murrumbidgee) (4.42): In rising tonight, I must say I am a bit disappointed to farewell my good friend Neil Hermes from the Assembly. He has been my senior adviser on and off since 2013. Many of you would know him. He joined me in 2013, back when I was the leader. He was my senior adviser for health and a number of other portfolios.

When you lose the leadership you go from about eight staff down to two. Sadly, Neil did not make the life raft of survivors; he was floundering around in the ocean. Luckily, he was picked up by my old mate Steve Doszpot, who gave him a job. That did not end well either, sadly. He then worked with Nicole Lawder. So he has spent a lot of time working for members of the Liberal Party here. He then had a bit of a sojourn at the 2020 election, with the Belco Party, I believe. I am not sure what happened there. "Shame!" I hear members say. Realising the error of his ways, he came back to the Liberal Party earlier this year and rejoined me.

He has been a fantastic person to work with. I know all of you would realise that the people that work in your office are not just people that work with you; they become your friends, your allies, your mentors—a whole bunch of things. No job was too big or too little for Neil.

I remember once during estimates hearings the then health minister, Simon Corbell, said that they were not going to build the Canberra Hospital as planned. I ran upstairs to Neil and said, "Mate, we are building a hospital." Neil looked at me and bolted all that together. When you are in opposition, coming up with a comprehensive plan to build a hospital is not an easy thing, and Neil did it. Equally, he would do any little

task that I gave him. Even though his name did not appear on the education strategy that we released last week, a lot of Neil's work, blood, sweat and tears was in there.

Neil is retiring. I know he looks a lot younger than you might imagine, members, but he is retiring! But, for Neil, that will not mean retirement. He will be moving on to his next adventure. Neil started off as a scientist, doing zoology at university. He has done a myriad of things. If you ever have a yarn with Neil, he has got a million stories. Luckily, we are both gentlemen of the same age. I have heard most of his stories many times, but I have forgotten them and just learn them again when he tells me the next time!

He is a bird lover and he is the president of the Canberra Ornithologists. He has written 20 books. I am not sure if you are aware that he is a published author of some renown. His latest book has gone into reprint; it is so popular. I will just read the bit off the back cover:

Neil Hermes—

he probably wrote this himself—

has been an avid birder since childhood. He has had over 40 years' association with the Canberra Ornithologists Group having variously served as President, Editor and Field Trips Organiser. He has written over 20 books including *Birds of Norfolk Island* and *Australia's Endangered Species*.

In the early 1980s on Norfolk Island, Neil was responsible for rescuing the Norfolk Island Green Parrot, the rarest species of parrot in the world.

There was one small declining population of fewer than 15 to 20 surviving birds. Neil took some of the remaining parrots into captivity, started controlling feral pest birds and eradicated rabbits from a nearby island. As a result of his efforts, the parrot now numbers about 200 birds in two separate locations. It continues:

For nearly ten years he was Deputy Director of Australia's National Science and Technology Centre (Questacon) and has an Honours Degree in Science (Zoology) from the Australian National University.

It is a great book. I do not want to get in trouble by encouraging you to read it or buy one, but it is a great book. He is a business operator. He had a business out at the rock, a very successful business that went broke. That is a whole story, a tragic story, but it is not one that is unknown to a lot of people that go into business. He has a business again, Canberra Guided Tours, and runs that business whilst working here.

At the nub of it, Neil is a family man and that is the thing that is most dear to him: his beautiful wife, Margaret, who is also a dear friend of mine and Fleur's; his four children Lindsay, Nick, Alex and Alice, all so different but all wonderful people; and his three grandchildren Zachary Hermes, Summer Hermes and Lily Hermes.

Neil, I will miss you. Many people here will miss you. But we all look forward to what adventure comes next for you and I look forward to being part of that journey in some way, I hope.

**Architecture—sustainability**

**MS VASSAROTTI** (Kurrajong—Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, Minister for Homelessness and Housing Services and Minister for Sustainable Building and Construction) (4.46): I rise today to reflect that on 4 June I had the pleasure of attending—virtually this time, though I look forward to attending in person next year—the ACT Architecture Awards and announcing the winner of the prestigious 2021 Canberra Medallion. I was excited to see such a strong theme of sustainable architecture in most of the projects throughout the night.

One stand-out example, which won the Derek Wrigley Award for Sustainable Architecture, was the Little Loft House by Light House Architecture and Science. This house was extended by only 13 square metres to 136 square metres to create a comfortable energy and space-efficient home which consumes just 20 per cent of the total energy of a typical Canberra family home. Given that in 2019 the average house size in Canberra was 250 square metres, this house reminds us that bigger is not better. It is about the quality of space.

Architects know that good building design can positively shape our mood and work culture. This is why I was really happy to see the Northbourne Avenue ACT government office building, which now houses EPSDD staff, was awarded the John Andrews Award for Commercial Architecture. This building, which was also Canberra's first net zero carbon office building, features curved, swooping balconies that wrap around an internal atrium with a glass roof. It can really lift your mood to walk in there and creates a place for people to interact as well as a work culture of connection. I had the pleasure of experiencing a beautiful moment in this building when the Wiradjuri Echoes performed to the EPSDD staff in this atrium to mark the start of Reconciliation Week. The acoustics were amazing and it was really special to look up and see all the staff on the balconies.

I was pleased to see the Sir Roy Grounds Award for Enduring Architecture was given to Clem Cummings for his design of approximately 480 of Canberra's concrete bus shelters that were installed from 1975 to 1995. It was great to see these bus shelters being recognised for their lasting mark on the character of Canberra.

I was delighted to announce the winner of the Canberra Medallion, which went to architect Anthony Knobel for the design of House for Hiroko. This modest private home is an exemplary project which balances the client's heritage with a sense of place.

The Canberra Medallion is awarded to architecture which is designed to stand the test of time. It does sadden me to reflect that, while the Anzac Hall received the 2005 Canberra Medallion, it is set to be demolished against the wishes of the Canberra community and the Royal Australian Institute of Architects, to make space for the War Memorial expansion.

My final congratulations from the night and directly related go to architect Clare Cousins, who was awarded the 2021 President's medal at the ACT Architecture

Awards for her defence of the value of architecture and commitment to the Institute of Architects' members. As spokesperson for the 'Hands Off Anzac Hall' campaign, Clare has led a public interest campaign to fight for a building of not just national significance, but one of immense importance to the fabric of our city, Canberra.

Clare was awarded for upholding the highest possible standard of professionalism throughout the three years of the campaign, collaborating with other key interest groups, and explaining to the community, through extensive media and social media outreach, why buildings such as Anzac Hall matter.

In conclusion, this evening was a wonderful reminder of the important role that architects play in shaping our built environment so that it is sustainable, improves our quality of life and preserves the fabric of the city that we love. Our next step as a community is to ensure the benefits of this design flow to all.

### **Mr Neil Hermes—tribute CEO Sleepout**

**MR PARTON** (Brindabella) (4.51): Firstly, I would like to echo the thoughts of my colleague Mr Hanson regarding Mr Hermes, who has left the gallery now. Nevertheless, I think most people here have seen Mr Hermes around the place, particularly those of us who have been here for a while.

I just wanted to mention a couple of things that you may not know about Mr Hermes. He has probably got the world's biggest collection of ties with birds on them. Every tie he ever wears has a bird on it or multiple birds. Furthermore, when you drive past Clarrie Hermes Drive up on the north side, that is his dad. So there you go. Often when I drive past Clarrie Hermes, I ring Neil, just because it reminds me. That is not what I rose to speak about, though, Madam Speaker.

This is an amazing city, full of wonderful people. I rise today to applaud Canberra, to applaud each and every Canberran who contributed to the Vinnies CEO Sleepout, which was held last week at locations all around Australia, including our own National Arboretum.

We have collectively displayed our heart to the rest of the nation by absolutely leading the way with donations to this extremely worthwhile cause on a pure per capita basis, by a mile. Across the nation in this fundraiser, we have raised nearly \$9 million. But more than one million of that came from Canberra. We have done more than 10 per cent of the fundraising on this but, with 430,000-odd residents, we only comprise 1½ per cent of the nation's population. That is absolutely staggering. We punch above our weight at least sixfold. We raised almost as much as Queensland.

So many records were broken on Thursday night, on a windy and bitterly cold night stuck up on a hill in the elements of a Canberra winter. It was my fifth Vinnies CEO Sleepout. I managed to sleep around five hours under a park bench, despite the friendly mouse rummaging through my bag soon after midnight.

I want to mention the top five fundraisers. At No 5, with \$29,000, Neville Tomkins from Scouts Australia. Neville was with us for the 10th time. At No 4, Peter Dascarolis from Terracon Legal doing his first sleepout. Peter raised \$40,000. At No 3, Mirko Milic from Canberra Toyota. It was his 10th appearance. He raised just over \$40,000. At No 2 was first-timer Dimitri Nikias from Nikias Diamond, with a staggering \$63,000 and, at No 1, another first-timer, Nick Georgalis from Geocon, raising in excess of \$65,000.

So well done Vinnies on another successful CEO Sleepout around Australia but specifically here in Canberra. As the shadow minister for housing, I have seen firsthand the amazing work that they do on the ground supporting people, not just the homeless, but people that are living on the margins. I know that this money will be exceptionally well spent. So much applause to all those who participated and all those who dug deep and donated. Thank you.

### **Murrumbidgee electorate—Molonglo Valley Community Forum**

**MS DAVIDSON** (Murrumbidgee) (4.54): I would like to share with you today a fantastic example of genuine open conversation, neighbourhood democracy and civics engagement run by the Molonglo Valley Community Forum.

Earlier this week, I attended a specific forum that was about young people and what they want for Molonglo Valley. The event was led by young people, year 6 students at the local primary school. These were student leadership members and they all had minister titles. So we had a minister for fundraising and a minister for communities. It was really quite interesting.

The people that came and participated in this event included a diversity of ages, cultural backgrounds, socioeconomic backgrounds and interests. I noticed how engaged everyone was in listening to each other's perspective and understanding the different services and places that we all access in our neighbourhood and what happens when we have to leave the local area to access the places that we need to go to.

There were some common themes raised at this meeting around what services and facilities people are looking for in their community as it develops. These were, of course, local shops, community meeting rooms, sports and recreation facilities including soccer fields and basketball courts—there was one very keen contender for an ice rink—and public toilets. But there were also things people talked about in their community that they really love and that includes proximity to forests, the great cycle and walking paths in the area and access to the river.

I just wanted to say thank you to Ryan Hemsley, Monique Brouwer, Amardeep Singh and the Molonglo Valley Community Forum and the student leaders at Charles Weston Primary School in Coombs for the most enjoyable and interesting community council meeting I have ever attended.

## **Umbagog District Park**

**MR CAIN** (Ginninderra) (4.56): This afternoon I would like to talk briefly about a beautiful part of Belconnen I visited on Saturday, Umbagog District Park. I met with some constituents from Ginninderra and members of the Umbagog Landcare Group at the park so they could show me the lovely walking spots and recreational areas that it contains.

The park is a large bushland park of over 50 hectares, with walking trails, playgrounds and bridges. Ginninderra Creek meanders through it, and it is bordered by the suburbs of Latham, Holt, Higgins, MacGregor, Charnwood and Flynn. Unfortunately, the three bridges over Ginninderra Creek are closed to public access at the moment, with no timeline nor clarity on when they will be repaired and reopened. This morning I wrote to the minister for city services requesting an update on the progress of repairs to these bridges.

In closing, I would like to see more effort from the government to let the community know what is happening to essential family and community infrastructure. From the conversations I have had, many of the residents in my electorate are very appreciative of their green spaces and very keen for them to be maintained and even enhanced.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

**The Assembly adjourned at 4.58 pm.**