



# Debates

WEEKLY HANSARD

Legislative Assembly for the ACT

**TENTH ASSEMBLY**

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**Wednesday, 4 August 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.

## **Petition**

*The following petition was lodged for presentation:*

### **Planning—Red Hill—petition 29-21**

*By Mrs Jones, from 201 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, and requests that the Assembly:

Notes that:

- a) ACT residents have been fighting housing development proposals on the Federal Golf Course and loss of adjacent green space for over 30 years.
- b) This fight led to a petition signed by over 3100 concerned residents in 2017, calling on the ACT Government to develop an Integrated Plan that genuinely protects existing green space in Hughes, GalTan, and Deakin; and protects the Federal Golf course lease area.
- c) In response, a Legislative Assembly Resolution required the Plan limit development to proposals that have a reasonable likelihood of majority community support.
- d) The Red Hill Integrated Plan released in 2021 fails to deliver on the petition or Resolution by including a retirement village on the Federal Golf course, despite the EPSDD's Engagement Report finding the retirement village failed to receive the required majority community support.

Your petitioners therefore request the Assembly to:

- a) Call on the ACT Government to amend the Red Hill Integrated Plan to remove the retirement village on the Federal Golf course and access road off Kitchener Street.
- b) We also request the Assembly reject amendments to the Territory Plan that would enable housing development on the site of the Federal Golf Course.

*The Clerk having announced that the terms of the petition would be recorded in Hansard and a copy referred to the appropriate minister for response pursuant to standing order 100, the petition was received.*

### **Motion to take note of petition**

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

That the petition so lodged be noted.

**MRS JONES** (Murrumbidgee) (10.01): This petition of certain residents of the Australian Capital Territory draws to the attention and requests that the Assembly notes that ACT residents have been fighting housing development proposals on the Federal golf course and loss of adjacent green space for over 30 years. The fight led to a petition signed by 3,100 concerned residents in 2017, calling on the ACT government to develop an integrated plan that genuinely protects existing green space in Hughes, Garran and Deakin and protects the Federal golf course lease area.

In response, a Legislative Assembly resolution required that the plan limited development to proposals that have a reasonable likelihood of majority community support. The Red Hill integrated plan released in 2011 fails, in the petition's view, to deliver on the petition or resolution by including a retirement village on the Federal golf course, despite the EPSDD's engagement report finding that the retirement village failed to receive the required majority community support. The petitioners therefore request the Assembly to amend the Red Hill integrated plan to remove the retirement village and also request the Assembly to reject amendments to the Territory Plan enabling this development.

Between the Assembly e-petition tabled yesterday and the paper petition tabled today, 1,721 Canberrans have signed the petition. I agreed to sponsor the petition because, as a local member, I believe very strongly in the voice of the people. I do not propose that government must always do what is popular. However, I do believe that the people are the power behind our system, and if government are going to disagree with the community, they should do so openly and explain their reasons.

The government has set in train a process for the approval of this project. It involves, as I said, an amendment to the Territory Plan. It also involves the draft master plan. The resolution which led to the creation of the integrated plan states that "only development with a reasonable likelihood of majority community support" should be considered.

The plan to allow the development includes various other changes, including a section of bushland being handed back to the government, to be returned to the Red Hill reserve on the western side of the golf course, the Federal golf club giving up other rights to develop on their site, and the proposed over-55s living facility going ahead, including more plantings and enhanced gardens.

The EPSDD engagement report refers to seven recommendations. It states that recommendations 1 to 6 received majority community support and that recommendation 7, regarding the over-55s development, received what was described on page 4 as “support”. On page 11 it is described as “strong support”.

However, some people who live in the suburb are quite annoyed with this conclusion, and rightly so, because the data used to form this conclusion was, to the best of my knowledge, drawn from the 468 submissions received in support of EPSDD’s preferred option of the current proposal to build on the southern side of the golf club land.

However, local residents are, reasonably, annoyed that 423 of those submissions were from Federal golf club members, meaning that just 45 individual submissions of the 468 in support were from non-golf-club members. Ninety-seven submissions were against the proposal. Therefore, the government should have said that there was majority support from golf club members, not local residents.

On the question of whether the development should go ahead, personally, I am not strongly aligned with either position at this point. However, I do not like the government’s tactics of treating the community as though they are stupid. I have said from the beginning that there is a case all over my electorate for over-55s housing. There are many people living in large houses who would love to downsize within their communities, and there are very few options for that.

In my vast phone canvassing last year, for example, I had this conversation over and over again about people who wanted to live close to shops but do not want to stay in their large houses. So I can understand why, to some, the development seems like a good idea.

I am strongly in favour of the intelligence of the residents of my electorate. I give them a lot of credit for their capacity to think things through and see things from many sides. But misrepresenting their views will not help the community to come to terms with whatever is decided.

The petition, having over 500 signatures, will be sent to the planning committee, and we look forward to people having a say there as well. No doubt there are people in favour of the development who live in Hughes and Garran, many of whom have contacted my office during the period when this petition was being circulated. I thank all members of the electorate who signed the petition and those who contacted my office. I am in favour of difference; we live in a wonderful city, and I look forward to seeing the response from the minister to this petition. At least the people have been able to have their say.

**MS DAVIDSON** (Murrumbidgee—Assistant Minister for Seniors, Veterans, Families and Community Services, Minister for Disability, Minister for Justice Health and Minister for Mental Health) (10.06): As an MLA for Murrumbidgee and a resident of Hughes, I have a keen interest in the Red Hill integrated plan and proposed development at Federal Golf Club.

I note that the Red Hill Regenerators support the recently released Red Hill integrated plan as it provides protection for biodiversity and increases the woodland areas in Red Hill reserve. The Conservation Council confirmed via email on Monday that they stand by these comments made to the *Canberra Times* and published on 24 July:

The Conservation Council is pleased that the Integrated Plan for Red Hill provides protection for the northern end of the Federal Golf course against future commercial and/or residential redevelopment that would have impacted heavily on the ecological values of the nature reserve and woodland.

We continue to advocate for the inclusion of 12.5 hectares of high quality woodland to be rezoned into Red Hill Nature Reserve once the plan is finalised.

The proposed low impact development of the south end of the site will require ongoing monitoring to ensure that it delivers the best environmental outcome for the area, including appropriate buffers between the development and the woodlands.

The Conservation Council have stated they would be concerned if development were to be shifted to the northern end of the course as ecological impacts of development are likely to be significantly higher than at the southern end.

I am a steadfast believer in the principles of grassroots participatory democracy and community engagement in decision-making for our local neighbourhoods. That is why I was pleased to see the Garran Residents Association hold a community meeting on Saturday, where Federal Golf Club provided a detailed presentation on their proposed development, including maps not previously published, and answered questions from local residents. The questions that I heard during the meeting covered a range of concerns, including financial viability of the club, bushfire risks, water use, traffic on Kitchener and Brereton Streets, and biodiversity.

It is my hope that residents and the Federal Golf Club will continue to engage in constructive, respectful and honest conversations about the future of our neighbourhood.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

## **Education—system review**

### **Ministerial statement**

**MS BERRY** (Ginninderra—Deputy Chief Minister, Minister for Early Childhood Development, Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, Minister for Housing and Suburban Development, Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, Minister for Sport and Recreation and Minister for Women) (10.08): I welcome the

opportunity today to provide an update to the Assembly on the government's progress on implementing the agreed recommendations of the Ninth Assembly standing committee inquiries into standardised testing and bullying and violence, and also on the great work being done in our schools.

The government welcomed the final reports from both of these inquiries and agreed to 28 recommendations. Since these two inquiries were handed down in 2018 and 2019 respectively, the government has been taking action on all of the agreed recommendations.

As the Assembly will know, updates on inquiry recommendations are included annually in the directorate's annual report, and I refer my colleagues to the Education Directorate annual report for more detailed reporting against each of the recommendations.

I can update the Assembly that, in relation to the standardised testing inquiry, the government continues to implement the seven "agreed" or "agreed in principle" recommendations, and has completed one of the recommendations at the end of the last financial year.

A number of the committee's final recommendations relate to NAPLAN and the national discussions about the Australian curriculum. NAPLAN testing provides a snapshot of a student's progress at a point in time and is one of many tools used to assess and further their learning. It is a narrow point in time assessment that provides information about only a few subjects among all of the learning happening in our schools. Results are used in many ways to learn more about a student's learning journey, but the aim of this tool is not to compare schools and jurisdictions.

As part of the NAPLAN process, parents and carers receive two reports. One report compares each child's achievement with students in the same year level across Australia, whilst the second report provides information on each child's responses to the skills tested.

This year, student reports will be distributed in September. Parents can use the information as a trigger for a conversation with their child's teacher or principal about their school's approach to learning. ACT teachers know their students, and no dataset can replace visiting your local school, meeting with school leaders, teachers and support staff and learning more about the school culture. The government continues to participate in the national discussions about the Australian curriculum and review of NAPLAN, including encouraging efforts to ensure reports to schools and parents can be provided as quickly as possible.

For some time the government has had concerns about the index of community socio-educational advantage, ICSEA, used in the similar schools model creating a bias in interjurisdictional comparisons of NAPLAN performance for the ACT. Last year education ministers agreed to a project to explore the operation of the socio-educational advantage index in the ACT to determine if there were any anomalies that may affect comparisons with ACT schools. Early signs are that observed differences, which have been widely reported, may be more a measurement

issue rather than a performance issue. The project has not been finalised, so the results of the analysis have not yet progressed to education ministers. I look forward to updating the Assembly on this in due course.

In relation to the agreed recommendations of the bullying and violence inquiry, I am pleased to advise the Assembly that, by the end of June 2020, this government had already completed half of the 21 “agreed” and “agreed in principle” recommendations. We are continuing to implement the remaining recommendations.

ACT public schools are engaging places dedicated to learning, with more than 50,000 students and nearly 4,000 teachers attending ACT public schools every day. Acts of bullying and violence in our schools are not acceptable and never have been. Since the inquiry, we have continued to work to ensure a safe and inclusive school environment for both students and teachers, and I am pleased to talk further about this now.

The government is committed to making sure that schools are places where students love to learn. As members would know, having students at the centre is a foundation of the future of education strategy, as are strong communities for learning.

The Safe and Supportive Schools policy requires every ACT public school to explicitly teach social skills and positive behaviours in accordance with the Australian curriculum. This is undertaken as one of the seven essential features of the positive behaviour for learning framework. Positive Behaviour for Learning is a framework that schools use to get everyone—students, staff, families and the school community—on the same page to create a safe and supportive learning environment for all students.

The majority of ACT public schools have started implementing Positive Behaviour for Learning, and continued government investment will support the rollout to all remaining public schools. All ACT public schools have access to a school psychologist. In 2016 this government committed to an additional 20 school psychologists by 2020. We have delivered on this commitment and, as of June 2021, schools are supported by more than 80 full-time equivalent psychologists.

ACT public schools also have access to a multidisciplinary model of support, including allied health professionals, to complement the work of psychologists and enhance the supports for students and schools. This government has also committed to hiring an additional 25 youth and social workers in this term of government, building on the investment of the previous term.

I can advise the Assembly that, as part of the public mental health system, after-hours support is available through Access Mental Health for children and young people. This service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Information-sharing and linkages between child and adolescent mental health services and school youth health nurses are also being strengthened.

Regarding incident reporting, through enhanced IT functionality, principals are now able to ensure greater consistency in centralised recording of both positive and negative student incidences. Students and parents are encouraged to raise incidents of

bullying and violence with their school. However, there are processes in place that give students and parents the opportunity to raise complaints or concerns, regardless of their nature, with the Education Directorate. This is through an online feedback and complaints form or through contact with the feedback and complaints phone line.

Currently being piloted, on the parent portal there will also be a link to information on how to provide feedback and complaints. For students, a link to information on how to provide feedback and complaints will be published on the digital backpack in term 3 for easy access.

A strong sense of identity or belonging between a student and their school is important. Students who identify with their school are more likely to engage in learning and to behave in line with school norms and values. Similarly, positive staff identification and parent-carer identification with the school has a beneficial impact on wellbeing and school culture.

I am pleased to advise that results of the 2020 school identification measure showed significant increases and exceeded targets in all three measures. Sixty-six per cent of students had strong identification with their school in 2020, up from 60 per cent in 2019; for staff, 92 per cent in 2020, up from 89 per cent in 2019; and for parents and carers, 82 per cent, up from 73 per cent in 2019.

As I have said many times before in this Assembly, I am proud of the free public education provided in each of our 89 schools every day, as well as the strong cross-sectoral partnerships that have been forged across the education system. Once again, I take the opportunity to acknowledge and thank our teachers for their hard work yesterday, today and tomorrow. I present the following paper:

Education system review—Government response to the resolution of the Assembly of 23 June 2021—Ministerial statement, 4 August 2021.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

**MR DAVIS** (Brindabella) (10.17): I would like to thank Minister Berry for her response to the motion passed by the Assembly at our last sitting. All Canberra students should have access to a world-class education system. I would like to take the opportunity to wholeheartedly agree with the sentiments with which the minister ended her statement. I too am a proud product of Canberra's public school system. The ACT Greens will always put public schools first, to ensure equity in access to education.

There are a number of key challenges for our education system that the government is actively grappling with. We have ageing infrastructure and a booming population. We are held to ransom by the commonwealth, who force our students to undertake a standardised testing system that we know cannot capture the richness and diversity of education that students get in our schools.

We know that, like all other jurisdictions around the country, our schools are struggling to recruit and retain teachers due to unacceptably large workloads and the relatively low pay for the high level of responsibility they hold every day. We know that young people's mental health needs can be very demanding and that schools play a central role in ensuring that each student and their families can be supported to ensure their safety and improve their wellbeing.

I am pleased to hear an update on these issues, and I am particularly happy to hear that the minister has been engaging in conversations with her counterparts about NAPLAN and what can be done to better analyse this data.

My amendments to Mr Hanson's motion in June came about after discussions with the ACT P&C association and the Australian Education Union, who expressed to me their desire to see the government prioritise implementing the well-thought-through and evidenced recommendations from previous inquiries and the government's own future of education strategy.

It should be noted that the intention of my amendments to Mr Hanson's motion was to receive a more detailed examination from the minister of the directorate's progress on the recommendations and the status of the future of education strategy. I am slightly disappointed to have been directed to the annual reports from last year, noting that a full year has passed, during which no doubt significant work has been done in our schools. This statement was the opportunity to present the Assembly with that timely update.

The government has a bold vision for our education system, which is why the government has committed to a number of actions in the parliamentary and governing agreement, including rolling out three-year-old preschool for all, investing in new schools and infrastructure, and ensuring our classrooms and learning spaces are climate adaptable. I look forward to working from the crossbench to ensure that these commitments are implemented in an effective and timely manner.

I am proud to be a member of a party and a government that supports all students, inclusive of their backgrounds and experience, to access a world-class education through our public schools.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

## **ACT Emergency Services Agency—cross-border arrangements**

### **Ministerial statement**

**MR GENTLEMAN** (Brindabella—Manager of Government Business, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Industrial Relations and Workplace Safety, Minister for Planning and Land Management and Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (10.20): In response to recommendation 12 of report 1 of the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety on annual and financial reports for 2019-20, the Appropriation Bill 2020-2021 and Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2020-2021, the government agreed to provide a ministerial statement outlining

the actions taken in relation to coordination and training activities with New South Wales and commonwealth agencies, including the Australian Defence Force. I would like to thank the standing committee for its report, and I provide members with the following information.

The ACT Emergency Services Agency (ESA) has always maintained strong cross-border relationships with all of their operational counterparts as well as the services available nationally through the Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council (AFAC) and has a long working relationship across government at a variety of levels to enhance emergency coordination across the ACT-New South Wales border and between the ACT and Australian governments.

To formalise arrangements with external organisations and agencies, the ESA has several memorandums of understanding (MOUs) and mutual aid agreements (MAAs) which are reviewed regularly to strengthen the working relationships with cross-border and national counterparts.

Whilst an MOU is the overarching agreement and provides general guidance to services in regard to operations, coordination, liaison and communications, MAAs outline the operational response to fires and they highlight how operations will be conducted when both jurisdictions are involved. Moreover, MAAs cover the working arrangements when a fire has the potential to cross jurisdictional boundaries.

The ACT Rural Fire Service (ACTRFS) maintains a good, productive working relationship with their cross-border colleagues. This is formally facilitated through an MOU with the New South Wales Rural Fire Service as well as a complementary local MAA.

Similarly, ACTRFS has an MOU with the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service which outlines the operational working arrangements between our two agencies. This MOU also promotes cooperation between the agencies involved in fire detection and suppression.

The ACT State Emergency Service (ACTSES) has an MOU with the New South Wales State Emergency Service which outlines the operational response to storm and flood events, and specifically when assistance may be required from the New South Wales SES south-eastern zone. However, currently the ACTSES is working with the New South Wales SES on the development of a cross-border operations procedural guide, which will cover the working arrangements in more detail.

Each year members across ESA and from within its operational services take part in joint training with their cross-border counterparts to enhance operational skills, practice the use of specialised equipment and share knowledge.

ACT Fire & Rescue have worked closely with Fire and Rescue NSW to participate in various training, including structural firefighting and operational driver training. By sending members of ACT Fire & Rescue to New South Wales, our frontline firefighters are able to continue learning new skills as well as share the lessons with local firefighters through local training opportunities.

New South Wales RFS has participated in and assisted ACTRFS with remote area firefighting team training and their ongoing capability building. ACTRFS are continuing to work alongside New South Wales to conduct hazard reduction burns in the surrounding New South Wales region, which is an integral part of bushfire preparedness and training for members in both services.

ACTSES participate in cross-border training with the local New South Wales SES units, and the New South Wales SES south-eastern zone to upskill local ACTSES members in capabilities not regularly utilised in the ACT, specifically around flood boat operations and vertical rescue. Whilst the skills obtained may not be traditionally used within the ACT, it allows ACTSES to have appropriately skilled membership to support NSWSES operationally when required.

By participating in training and maintaining strong working relationships with their cross-border counterparts, the ESA are better equipped locally and have the support of New South Wales agencies should it be needed. The ESA works in collaboration with the New South Wales parks service, the ACT Parks and Conservation Service and the New South Wales Department of Primary Industries to deliver multi-hazard level 2 incident management training courses that cover the four main streams of the Australasian Inter-service Incident Management System—AIIMS—structure. These courses are run locally and are offered to members from all four operational services within the ESA as well as enabling staff to ensure there is a consistent approach to incident management in both ACT and New South Wales.

In the last few years ESA members have also had the opportunity to attend the level 2 AIIMS training at the New South Wales RFS training academy in Dubbo, New South Wales which has enabled the ESA volunteers and staff to train alongside members of New South Wales RFS to share experiences. Training with and learning from members of New South Wales RFS strengthens the ESA's capability to manage local incidents as well as provide valuable support interstate when required.

The ESA also regularly deploys public information officers to assist New South Wales during times of emergency. During the black summer fires, ESA deployed four public information officers to six different locations across New South Wales. More recently, ESA deployed five public information officers to two locations within New South Wales to assist with the flood response. In the last 24 months the ESA has worked with New South Wales RFS to certify three level 3 public information officers under the New South Wales RFS public information officer training program.

Since March 2020, the ESA has facilitated awareness workshops for Australian Defence Force (ADF) planning and liaison personnel in AIIMS, to ensure that any ADF personnel who may work collaboratively within ESA incident management teams are aware of the systems, processes and terminology used by emergency management personnel.

Further to the various training opportunities both formally and informally, the ESA is also involved in joint scenario exercises and planning activities each year that assist with planning and preparing for incidents. ACT Fire & Rescue, in conjunction with

New South Wales RFS Carwoola brigade, identified an opportunity to exercise and practice the capabilities of their compressed air foam system appliances in an ongoing capacity through participating in hazard reduction burns in the Carwoola area each year. Whilst this is considered a valuable cross-border training opportunity, it also provides members with the ability to exercise the capabilities of their communication systems in a controlled scenario, should they be required in an operational incident.

The ESA has recently undertaken to reinvigorate the cross-border working group for emergency management, to enhance cross-border preparedness and liaison for emergency incidents that occur close to or across the border between the two jurisdictions. The work program for this group is being developed to build scenario-planning activities into an all-hazards preparedness program and is jointly led by New South Wales Police and ESA.

As recommended in the McLeod Inquiry into the Operational Response to the January 2003 Bushfires, the ACTRFS regularly attend Bushfire Management Committee—BFMC—meetings as cross-border liaisons. Held four times a year, the BFMC's objective is to ensure closer collaboration between ACTRFS and the surrounding New South Wales zones in relation to training, operational response, communication systems, hazard reduction strategies and seasonal conditions. These meetings are also attended by the relevant land managers, government authorities and response agencies with a planning and strategic interest in the relevant zones.

Since 2001 the ACTSES have participated in the national disaster rescue challenge (NDRC), which is an opportunity for state and territory emergency service volunteers from across Australia to display their skills in the spirit of friendly competition. The NDRC is an integral part of training and development for ACTSES volunteers and provides opportunities to build stronger working relationships with their cross-border counterparts.

Following the events of the Orroral Valley fire, the ESA has undertaken a secondment arrangement by embedding a New South Wales RFS public information officer into the ESA public information team for 12 months. This arrangement has facilitated cross-border knowledge sharing and assisted in enhancing public information and warnings coordination between the agencies. In October 2020, the ESA invited New South Wales RFS to mentor the ESA public information team during a two-day incident management exercise. This exercise was valuable in better aligning processes and knowledge sharing.

The ESA is also participating in a number of national projects to enhance and further standardise the delivery of emergency warnings and information right across Australia. The ESA aims to deliver the Fires Near Me ACT mobile application, integrated and cohesive with the Fires Near Me New South Wales app, by November 2021. This will enhance cross-border information access for New South Wales and ACT residents.

In the ACT, arrangements have long been in place for the ADF to be accommodated as part of our emergency coordination centre. The ESA regularly meets with appropriate representatives of the ADF through the joint operational support service and, more recently, the joint task group responsible for the coordination of support

and planning of operational support respectively. This liaison includes ADF standing membership on the ESA Joint Operations Coordination Group, which brings together all of ACT government and associated partners who may work together during the preparedness or response to a major emergency in the ACT.

As a result of the longstanding relationship, the ADF personnel deployed to the ACT were able to have an almost immediate impact in assisting our community during the 2019-20 bushfires. Some of the tasks that the ADF assisted in included but were not limited to: fireground surveillance, doorknocking, personnel transport, bus and helicopter, provision of accommodation for interstate crews including catering at ADFA, provision of heavy plant and other equipment along with trained operators, incident management team, emergency coordination centre and planning support, and hand crews for development of helipads and indirect fire attack.

The excellent work of all services, including the ADF, minimised the impact of these fires and ensured there was no loss of life as a result of the bushfires that surrounded the ACT. The ACT government, and in particular the ESA, has undertaken an extensive lessons-learned program with the ADF. These lessons identified what happened nationally in the 2019-20 bushfire season, including the working relationship with the ADF and the extensive use of aerial assets nationally.

The ESA will continue to maintain and develop their relationship with the ADF so that they can understand each other's requirements, allowing better utilisation of the ADF in the future. In this regard, the ESA has exchanged correspondence with the Deputy Chief of Army to facilitate further joint training programs, including incident management training and exercise training. The ongoing relationship with the ADF also extends to AFAC. Significant work has been undertaken by AFAC and ADF to engage across jurisdictions nationally, including the exchange of information and training programs.

The 2019-20 bushfire season saw unprecedented fire activity that heavily impacted large areas along the east coast of Australia. New South Wales fires near the ACT and fires within the ACT were the toughest our region has had to contend with since 2003. A timely coordination and response from all areas across the ACT government, with assistance from other jurisdictions, resulted in no loss of life or residences due to the fires.

A number of reviews and inquiries have been conducted in relation to the 2019-20 season, all with the aim of making improvements for future seasons. Given the history of damaging bushfires and severe storms in the ACT, and recent changes in climate that have further contributed to the threat of flooding and grassfire in the region, the ESA are well aware of the importance of ensuring that they take the best possible approach to preparing for bushfire and storm threats. This includes training and coordination activities conducted with New South Wales and commonwealth agencies.

In closing, I would like to take this opportunity once again to commend all emergency service volunteers and staff across government for their continued protection of our community. Canberra remains one of the safest cities in the world because of their hard work. I present the following paper:

ESA cross-border arrangements in response to natural hazards—Ministerial statement, 4 August 2021.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

## **Planning—Woden town centre Ministerial statement**

**MR STEEL** (Murrumbidgee—Minister for Skills, Minister for Transport and City Services and Special Minister of State) (10.35): I am pleased to provide an update to the Assembly on the new CIT campus in Woden, along with the new public transport interchange and associated infrastructure works. It is exciting to see the integrated CIT Woden campus and Woden interchange project kicking up a gear, with significant work getting underway on construction of the first package and further consultation as design progresses on the other packages of work.

The project comprises four packages in total. The first package delivers new bus layovers and supporting road and intersection upgrades, with the second package of work providing an improved and expanded transport interchange on Callam Street that is futureproofed to welcome light rail. Package three will deliver the new CIT campus itself, with 22,500 square metres of educational and community facilities hosting smart classrooms, state-of-the-art simulated learning environments, commercial kitchens and hands-on training spaces. The fourth package of works will deliver new culturally appropriate facilities for Yurauna, CIT's dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educational centre of excellence; and this will be delivered on CIT's Bruce campus, contributing to the renewal of that campus in the process.

Stepping back for a moment, the coming years are going to be critical for the ACT's vocational education and training sector, of which CIT is an integral part. The combination of the negotiation of a national skills agreement, the impact of COVID-19 on our workforce and the related skills shortages have put a spotlight on the sector. As a government, our priorities are to ensure that the ACT VET system is responsive to the needs of industry and learners and provides quality training and outcomes no matter where or what people choose to study. These objectives have long been features of VET in the ACT, but there is an urgency now to strengthen our system to meet the challenges ahead.

We know that many businesses in the ACT are experiencing difficulties attracting skilled staff, particularly in the construction, digital, health and community sectors. There are many reasons why these skills shortages exist, but the training system must be at the forefront in ensuring that Canberrans have the skills needed to drive the prosperity of our economy and deliver high-quality services to our community.

We have lots of work underway to tackle this including: preparing to roll out a second round of the very successful JobTrainer initiative; working through the new Skills

Industry Advisory Group to identify where the most critical skills gaps are and come up with tailored plans to close them; and supporting CIT to strengthen, adapt and update its offerings to ensure these are well aligned with industry needs.

The new national skills agreement with the commonwealth will have a substantial impact on our ability to invest in and grow VET in Canberra. We will continue to argue for the best deal possible from our colleagues on the hill. As we move into the post-COVID recovery period, Canberra's skills sector will be essential to ensure that we have a strong and highly skilled workforce to keep growing and diversifying our economy.

This is the context that the new CIT campus Woden sits within. It will deliver a new home for the institute and make a major contribution to the revitalisation of Woden. Just as importantly, it is an investment in strengthening our local skills sector and ensuring that we are bringing the best offerings to bear for VET students in the years supporting our broader economy.

The Woden campus will ensure CIT remains a provider of choice and an agile partner to meet industry, business and community needs by delivering quality vocational education and training for the jobs of the future. The campus's smart campus platform and its integration with the CIT cloud campus will support these objectives. The new campus will complement CIT's existing training facilities and networks at Fyshwick, Bruce, Gungahlin and Tuggeranong and help drive the transition to new ways of delivering its courses through cloud-based and digital learning.

Our vision for CIT Woden is a world-leading educational campus, facilitated through digitally enabled learning and innovation spaces. It will provide the future skills and training opportunities required to meet the growing demands of industry and the ACT community. This unique development alongside an enhanced transportation hub will activate the Woden town centre precinct, enabling the transformation of CIT to further support the ACT's reputation as the knowledge capital of Australia.

The new flagship campus for CIT at Woden will be home to around 6,500 students and is planned to open for classes in 2025. Students who attend the CIT campus in Woden will enjoy a dynamic educational experience, from digitally enabled learning spaces to collaboration opportunities with local industry and more.

We are ambitious about what this project can do for CIT, for the Woden town centre and for the broader community. I have been very clear with the architects from the beginning and during the development of the reference design, and to the potential future delivery partners, that this project is seeking to showcase the very best in sustainable building and design for a major public facility.

The ACT government is seeking architectural excellence and showcasing sustainable design in the delivery of the new campus, an exemplar for building and sustainable urban design in a public facility. In particular, we are keen to see an extensive rooftop garden showcased with good solar access to maximise the benefits to campus users while also achieving the ACT government's other sustainability aspirations.

The Woden town centre has a reputation for being a bit of a concrete jungle with cold and hard lines, and this requires a thoughtful architectural response. We are keen to avoid the replication of challenges arising from previous generations of development in the area. With the CIT building there is an opportunity to strongly differentiate the campus from nearby buildings, both built and planned.

The new CIT campus provides an opportunity to usher in the new chapter of Woden's story, bringing a different look and feel through innovation in its design, and introducing warm and soft building elements in the design as a response to the challenging environment. Adding new services and amenities and creating inviting new spaces throughout the campus that people will want to spend time in will be a key feature of the design.

The government has also made it clear that our desire is to create a people-friendly space that enhances the Woden town centre as a safe, attractive and interesting place to live, work, learn and visit. For example, the government has a strong desire to deliver an east-west boulevard as a space that can be used comfortably to dwell in throughout Canberra's seasons; as a place where students, staff and members of the community alike genuinely enjoy spending time because it offers a sense of connection, welcome and sense of liveliness.

Another key focus of the campus is that it is well integrated with its environment, the new public transport interchange and the broader town centre. This integration is at the heart of the design principles for CIT and the Woden interchange project.

Whilst this project is being delivered across three packages in Woden, all of the packages are being designed to deliver a single vision for the Woden town centre that is integrated and works together across transport connectivity, landscaping and sustainability, and public amenities. The next 12 months will be the busiest yet for the Woden CIT project. During this time the procurement of a delivery partner for the campus itself will be finalised and detailed design will get underway.

Consultation continues to inform the project to deliver a new CIT campus and transport and interchange for Woden. As part of package three—that is, the new CIT campus, a reference design has been developed to guide tenderers for the design and construction contract. Hundreds of hours of consultation have taken place up to this point with CIT staff, students, key stakeholders, members of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community including Ngunnawal elders, and the wider community.

From these and many other meetings, our designers have gathered information relating to people's aspirations for the campus, their community, their learning and professional needs, and the ways in which they will use its spaces, all of which are informing the design and layout of the campus. Subject-specific details, such as private meeting spaces, breakout rooms and maker spaces, teaching and learning spaces and storage spaces have all come from workshops and input from the people who will occupy the new campus. This feedback will continue to inform the development of the designs.

The reference design will challenge bidders to design and construct the project to deliver a transformational and architecturally outstanding building while also leaving scope for innovation, creativity and bold sustainability goals. A lot of thought has gone into the reference design in relation to how the floorplates and use of space throughout the building can foster collaboration and innovation and support new modes of learning that meet the needs of today's VET students. We want to maintain the focus on how real people will use all of the campus's public and private spaces as we continue through the design process.

The reference design includes a landscaped and activated pedestrian spine that will run through the centre of the campus, connecting the new Woden transport interchange in the east to the town centre in the west. The public realm will deliver vibrant, green and relaxing spaces for the whole community to use. We are ensuring that the reference design also considers the integration of accessible services, amenities and spaces on the lower floors of the CIT building, to create a welcoming and vibrant environment for the community and industry to interact with the campus. This area will be designed and landscaped to create areas with a unique identity, providing outdoor teaching and learning spaces for CIT while also containing key landscaping themes that ensure cohesion to Woden town square and Arabanoo Park.

Further design and consultation on the campus part of the project will take place over the next 12 months, the next stage in an ongoing series of opportunities for Woden residents and the broader Canberra community to have their say on the design of the campus building and surrounding spaces. This will inform the final brief that is provided to the successful design and construction tenderer early next year, following the finalisation of the procurement for this contract.

To facilitate some of this consultation, I am pleased to announce that Major Projects Canberra are setting up a community connectivity space in Woden town square, which will allow for the community to engage and keep up to date on all the major projects happening in and around Woden, including the new CIT campus, the new interchange, the renewal of Canberra Hospital and the light rail.

Another major part of the regeneration of Woden town centre is the redevelopment of the Woden interchange. The Woden public transport interchange badly needs an upgrade. The current one is now over 50 years old, lacks capacity for the future growth of the bus network and relies on a temporary dirt layover on the former police station site. Many public transport users tell us that they feel unsafe there because of its design and location.

We want the town centre to be as accessible as possible for pedestrians, active travel and public transport. We want an interchange that provides great integration with the future light rail terminus.

The Woden town centre master plan sets the vision for an on-street interchange that upgrades the bus interchange to include the demolition of the existing bus interchange and the building of a new on-street bus station. Upgrades are proposed to the verges along parts of Callam, Bowes, Matilda and Launceston streets. The upgrades allow for

new retail development opportunities facing on to the new bus station and locating rapid transport stops on Callam Street. The government is delivering on the intentions of the Woden town centre master plan in building an on-street Woden interchange, with construction due to commence towards the end of this year.

The new integrated public transport interchange on Callam Street will provide improved wayfinding, accessibility, modern safety measures, improved solar access and better lines of sight than is currently possible. It will include 10,000 square metres of passenger-friendly space and an expanded number of stops at 18, up from the current 11. The new interchange will be futureproofed to accommodate stage 2 of light rail from Gungahlin to Woden, with the light rail stops being built and used as rapid bus stops until construction on the line from the City to Woden is complete. The stops for both buses and light rail will carry through a similar design of the light rail stops on stage 1, which provide good shelter from the elements and which were subject to considerable community consultation.

The Woden town centre master plan also recommended that Launceston and Callam streets be low-speed vehicle environments that provide for public transport and private vehicles accessing the town centre. I am pleased to say that construction has already begun on package one, which involves the construction of a small bus layover on Easty Street and a new Launceston Street bus layover. These layovers are being supported by new traffic signals on surrounding roads to ensure the efficient flow of buses and private traffic in and out of Woden, delivering a lower speed and active travel-friendly environment.

As part of the development of an on-street interchange on Callam Street, the street will be closed from mid-August to private vehicles between Bradley Street and Matilda Street. However, the current bus interchange will remain fully operational until the new interchange is open early next year.

As anticipated in the master plan, traffic will be managed through Hindmarsh Drive and Melrose Drive. Updated traffic modelling confirms that the arterial roads are currently operating under capacity and can divert the approximately 600 to 900 cars that use Callam Street each day to around the edges of the centre and, as a result, adequately perform their role and function within the wider road network. This will mean a different way of moving around the town centre, clearly prioritising public transport on Callam Street and active travel as we build a vibrant, better connected and more sustainable town centre.

When undertaking pre-DA consultation on the public transport interchange late last year, we also heard from the community that they are still concerned about accessibility between the campus and the interchange, as well as the impact on local traffic needing to traverse the Woden town centre after Callum Street is closed. I am pleased that access will be maintained to the town centre for destination and local traffic, as well as people using public transport and active travel.

In response to the community and as part of delivering the campus within package three, we will create a new local access shared zone connection between Bowes and Bradley streets. The local access shared zone will include traffic calming devices,

keeping vehicle speeds at 10 kilometres per hour while providing safe and direct access for drop off and pick up. Major Projects Canberra staff are out in the community right now speaking with residents, commuters and workers about how they might use the shared zone and what inclusions they would like to see in its design. This is an example of how community engagement and consultation has also informed the design of the public transport interchange.

Community consultation has helped bring forward our commitment to active travel by increasing bike-and-ride facilities and bike storage. This supports the government's commitment to see our active travel network and public transport system working together to move people around more sustainably through genuine integration of our transport system with other modes of transport.

The CIT campus will also have a publicly accessible ground floor that will improve access through to Westfield, supported by better wayfinding and signage. This was something else that we knew was important to the community, as well as adequate shelter from the elements in the interchange.

As work progresses on the design of the CIT campus, further consideration will be given to how the design can complement the bus stops in the interchange and provide for sheltered waiting areas. We have heard that users want clean and usable public toilets that are accessible from the interchange. I can announce that we will be including public toilets accessible from the interchange as part of the construction of the new CIT campus.

Ongoing consideration is needed on the landscaping for all parts of the project. The government will be taking the opportunity to increase canopy coverage across the whole footprint of the integrated project, and we will ensure that landscaping treatments are sustainable in the microclimate. This is just one of the examples of how the four packages of work should not be seen as siloed developments. We will maintain a focus on integration throughout the delivery of these projects to ensure that the needs of the community, public transport users and CIT staff and students are met across the entire project and packages of work.

Another important element of the broader project is the development of a youth foyer, creating a safe space for young people to live while completing their education, including through the CIT. It will provide housing for up to 20 young people between the ages of 16 and 24 who are at risk. The design's aim is to build a welcoming, comfortable, secure place for residents that they can be proud to call home.

Linking youth foyers to educational institutions is considered best practice in wrap-around service delivery, and I am pleased that, by locating a youth foyer directly into an educational institution like the CIT, this will further showcase this world-leading integrated model.

The final component of the project is the delivery of a new culturally appropriate building for Yurauna, CIT's dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educational centre of excellence. Community leaders and educators have determined that the Bruce CIT campus provides the most suitable location for Yurauna in a

natural bush setting. This will allow a new culturally appropriate, standalone facility to be developed for the centre so that it can continue and expand the important support services it provides to CIT students from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds and support the renewal of the CIT Bruce campus.

In conclusion, I am looking forward to continuing to update the Assembly in the future on the progress of this project in delivering world-class vocational education and training throughout the ACT, including though the CIT Woden campus project, integrated with an interchange that provides better public transport connectivity and which together are anchoring the regeneration of Woden town centre.

I present the following paper:

CIT Woden and Woden Interchange—Update—Ministerial statement, 4 August 2021.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

**DR PATERSON** (Murrumbidgee) (10.55): Thank you, Minister Steel. I share the minister's excitement about the range of infrastructure improvements occurring across the Woden town centre. It is a time of significant change. With change often comes uncertainty and a period of disruption, as well as great opportunity. I commend the minister and the ACT government on the extensive community consultation that is being undertaken to initially inform these important changes and make sure that they reflect the needs and desires of the community, as well as the communications that are being delivered to keep the community updated about what is happening.

With so much underway, it is great to see it all brought together in one central portal on the Woden renewal website. For anyone who has not yet visited that site or has not done so recently, I encourage you to check it out. It provides an excellent overview, as well as information about consultation opportunities. It is a great example of using digital technology to good effect, with interactive features which clearly map the various projects underway. It provides an intuitive reference point and easy-to-understand information.

The new CIT campus and transport interchange are the current priorities and areas of focus, together with works being undertaken for the hospital expansion. The new purpose-built CIT campus at Woden will help transform and rejuvenate the area, with a sense of vibrancy to be achieved through the steady and constant stream of foot traffic and pedestrian and other movement in the area. Woden is an excellent choice for the location of this important education facility, which will attract a broad demographic and diversity to the area.

The sustainable design of the CIT Woden campus reflects ACT government policies and provides a positive contribution towards modernising our city, utilising best-practice design solutions. I am really pleased that the final design for the campus will see a number of small buildings spread over a larger footprint rather than one

very tall building. I believe that this will contribute to a sense of vibrancy in the area and will provide better place-making outcomes. The 650 jobs created by this project are also very welcome, especially to the ACT, together with all states and territories that continue to suffer the effects of the pandemic.

I also welcome the new transport interchange, which will make it easier, more convenient and more inviting for Canberrans travelling to and from the CIT campus, as well as to other key Woden destinations. The interchange will provide links with existing cycling routes and bike parking facilities, allowing people to seamlessly travel between bus services and active travel, providing easy connections and integration between home, work and play.

The existing bus interchange was built in the mid-1970s and is showing effects of its age. The enhancements underway will increase its appeal and should attract more people to make better use of our public transport network.

Public consultation on various aspects of the CIT campus and transport interchange at Woden remains open until Friday, 20 August. I encourage all Canberrans to have their say. While the projects are located south side and in my electorate of Murrumbidgee, they will be used and accessed by all Canberrans as staff, students and visitors to the world-class facilities being constructed and to the area more broadly.

I look forward to the revitalisation of the Woden town centre and the improved public realm which will be achieved through the pedestrian boulevard and the new Bowes and Bradley streets connection. These are important thoroughfares and it is critical that our community feels safe moving through these areas at all times of the day and night, especially given the interchange's role in transporting people to and from the Canberra Hospital and CIT.

Community feedback that has already been received has highlighted the need for improved safety and connectivity in the area, including clear lines of sight, improved wayfinding signage, lighting and appropriate shelters. I want to help Canberrans—those living in my electorate and those visiting the area—to be able to preference public transport as a primary mode of travel. If we provide the right infrastructure, the right services, the right connections and the right amenities, I believe that we will choose to use public transport more. It is important that not just our transport system supports this approach, but also that the associated amenities and facilities support this.

There are many benefits to using public transport, and I look forward to a time when all Canberrans embrace public transport and active travel options to greater effect. This will transform our lives, our city, our interactions with each other and our health and wellbeing.

Among the benefits of greater use of public transport are reduced emissions as we move away from private vehicles, often with only a single passenger. Community benefits include more vibrant town centres and neighbourhoods as people move about within these areas; and the physical and mental health benefits brought about by walking, cycling and scooting, as well as interacting with others in public spaces, our neighbourhoods, town centres and on public transport.

By its very nature, public transport includes physical movement elements through the first-and-last mile benefits of needing to walk. It is important that these first-and-last mile connections are easy, safe and efficient. The public realm must be designed in this manner with place-making principles in mind.

I know that Minister Steel and the hardworking staff in the relevant directorates of the ACT government will carefully consider the comments made by the community and pair them with their professional expertise to deliver some great outcomes for the development of CIT Woden and the transport interchange.

I welcome the update provided by Minister Steel and I look forward to continuing to work with the ACT government and with members of the community to achieve the best possible outcomes for this important area.

**MS DAVIDSON** (Murrumbidgee) (11.02): The development of Woden's new CIT is an exciting opportunity to bring new energy into the Woden town centre. It will provide employment and education opportunities. It will result in public spaces that feel safer and more inclusive for everyone by increasing activity and visibility in the area after dark. As an MLA for Murrumbidgee, I am very happy to see plans progressing and consultation with community continuing.

There is one very important element that I would love to see in our new Woden CIT—a live music venue. The very successful recent Amp It Up! program to support live music across our city highlighted the fact that we have a real gap in venues in Woden and Weston Creek. It has not always been this way, and, while I do not miss the Henry Grattan, the closure of Beyond Q in 2020 was a real loss to the community.

Losing a live music venue is more than just the loss of employment for the venue staff and one less place for local artists to get a gig; it is also the loss of a place where we can gather to tell the stories that help us make sense of a rapidly changing world. Now more than ever our communities need the arts.

With light rail coming to Woden in the next few years, it will be easier than ever to come from Tuggeranong or Gungahlin to Canberra's geographic heart. As anyone who has spent more time than they should have in the ANU bar or the UC refectory can tell you, student life is enriched through access to the arts, even if that means loud music with questionable lyrics.

While we have a theatre for hire at Canberra College, a bar and live music venue close to Woden's existing night-time economy and the public transport hub will be more accessible and attractive. It will bring more activity into the town centre after dark and make it safer for everyone.

Minister Steel, if you are still feeling unsure about the value to the community and to individual wellbeing that the inclusion of a live music venue would bring to Woden CIT, please consider the range of activities that might take place there. In addition to a band performance, we might see a comedy, cultural performance, dance, panel discussions, poetry slams and karaoke. I hope that you will consider including a live

music venue, such as a student bar in the CIT, as an employment opportunity for hospitality students, a performance space for local artists and to increase activity and boost the night-time economy in Woden.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

## **Arts—Mandy Martin**

### **Ministerial statement**

**MS CHEYNE** (Ginninderra—Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Minister for the Arts, Minister for Business and Better Regulation, Minister for Human Rights and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (11.04): I would like to take the opportunity this morning to recognise Mandy Martin—a highly regarded artist, a generous teacher and a passionate environmentalist.

Mandy Martin was born in 1952 in South Australia—her mother an accomplished water colourist and her father a professor of botany. Mandy’s work boldly and cleverly engaged with social and political commentary from the outset. In 1975, the same year that she graduated from the South Australian School of Art, she created feminist anti-Vietnam War posters. Some of these posters were then acquired for the Australian War Memorial collection, launching her art career in spectacular fashion. Since becoming a member of the progressive art movement in South Australia in the mid-1970s, social justice and the environment informed her practice for her entire career.

Sadly, on Saturday 10 July, after a long battle with cancer, Mandy passed away. Mandy’s early works were primarily on paper, including screen-printed posters. This choice of medium was key to the works being mass produced and thereby having more power to promote change. Her early posters critiqued US imperialism, corruption in big business and the subsequent exploitation of workers. Her work also advocated for women’s fight for equality.

Mandy moved to Canberra in 1978, where she married Robert Boynes, also an artist. Together they had two children, Laura and Alexander, who are both accomplished artists in their own right. Her first of over 100 solo exhibitions was at the Solander Gallery in Canberra in 1980. By this time, Mandy had begun making thick impasto brushwork paintings about the impact that humans have on regional, remote and industrial landscapes—both positive and negative. Remarkably, the expert way in which she conveyed her message in her work never overwhelmed its aesthetic value.

A work Mandy is particularly well known for, and which is familiar to many of us, is the monumental triptych painting *Red Ochre Cove*, commissioned in 1987 for Australian Parliament House, which hangs in the main committee room of the Senate. This 12 metre by three metre major work was made in response to Tom Roberts’ painting of the opening of federal parliament in Melbourne in 1901, which was then hung in the High Court. *Red Ochre Cove* had an influential effect on Mandy’s career, and continues to impact and influence people who have experienced its beauty and power. I have personally spent a considerable amount of time in the main committee

room through many years of commonwealth Senate estimates, and it has left a permanent impression on me.

Notably, Mandy's work is held in most of the major state and regional galleries in Australia, including the National Gallery of Australia, the Art Gallery of New South Wales, the National Gallery of Victoria, the National Gallery of Western Australia, the National Portrait Gallery, Australian Parliament House and the Australian War Memorial. Her work has also been collected internationally by the Guggenheim Museum, New York; the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art; and the Nevada Museum of Art in Reno.

Mandy was not only a high-profile artist nationally and internationally; she also had a talent for bringing together thinkers from a range of disciplines to consider pressing issues. She would gather traditional owners, artists, scientists and educators to use their various skills to highlight pressures on the community and the country. She was a committed collaborator and believed that by sharing these endeavours she harnessed the collective power to generate the best ideas.

In later years she also collaborated with her son and daughter, who, as I mentioned, are both respected artists in their own right. In 1995, Mandy moved to Central West New South Wales, where she lived with her husband, Dr Guy Fitzhardinge. In this setting, Mandy's work referenced the effects of drought, energy generation, coal and gold mining on the land, and the associated threat to endangered ecological communities. Here she continued to make prolific contributions to the ongoing discourse on the current climate emergency.

Mandy was a lecturer at the ANU School of Art for an astonishing 25 years, where she mentored multiple generations of artists. She is remembered for being a teacher who set high standards for herself and her students. She was an inspiration in her fierce dedication to causes and her talent in communicating these in her work. One of Mandy's legacies is inspiring a passion for art and its potential in her students. In 2008 Mandy was appointed as an adjunct professor in the Fenner School of Environment and Society at the Australian National University here in Canberra. Mandy leaves a lasting legacy as a politically and socially engaged artist; an environmental campaigner; a generous and inspiring teacher, partner and parent; and a skilled and passionate collaborator dedicated to influencing change. Her obituary by Sasha Grishin reads:

She felt strongly that it is the role of the artist to inspire others to join in the struggle to restore our faith in the dignity of people and the sacredness of country.

Mandy remained active in the studio until the very end, and her final large-scale collaborative work will premiere in Australia in November this year. Her legacy will live on in so many ways, not least through an artist grant to be named in her honour, which will support creative responses to the climate crisis. It is with the deepest respect that we honour and celebrate her deep passion, ethics and enormous contribution to the arts. We are so lucky as a community to have been able to know and to experience Mandy Martin and to continue to learn from her through the

incredible skill of her art and her teachings, which will always live on. Her creations have enriched our local and national conversations about many important socio-political issues. The messages from these are gifts which will endure for generations.

Her outstanding contribution as an educator ensures that her skill, her technique and her knowledge as a painter live on in the practice of the many artists in our regions whom she taught. My thoughts are with her family and her friends at this very difficult time. I present a copy of the statement:

Recognising a significant contribution to the Canberra region and Australian arts sector—Ministerial statement, 4 August 2021.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

## **COAG Legislation Amendment Bill 2021**

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

Title read by Clerk.

**MR BARR** (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism) (11.13): I move:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

I will say from the outset that this is possibly the least exciting piece of legislation that this Assembly will debate in this parliament. It comes about because on 29 May last year the national cabinet agreed that the Council of Australian Governments, COAG, would cease. It also agreed to form the National Federation Reform Council as a joint forum of first ministers and treasurers from across all Australian jurisdictions and to include the president of the Australian Local Government Association in the Federation Reform Council.

In June of last year, the newly established national cabinet commissioned a review into former ministerial forums and councils to reset and rationalise COAG. In October, national cabinet accepted the review's recommendations, including recommendation 30 that the commonwealth, states and territories should introduce legislation to amend outdated references to COAG councils and ministerial forums. That is why we are here today.

The bill that I am presenting will make amendments to outdated references to COAG and COAG ministerial councils and forums and it will do so in the following acts: Dangerous Goods (Road Transport) Act, the Dangerous Goods (Road Transport)

Regulation, the Health (National Health Funding Pool and Administration) Act, the Planning and Development Regulation, the Utilities Act and the Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011.

Introducing this bill will allow the government to make the necessary changes to references to COAG in ACT legislation as soon as possible, and reduce any potential legal risks posed by these outdated references. The bill has been drafted to include more flexible amendments, which will allow changes to the names of national and interjurisdictional ministerial-level forums over time, and I am sure that this will occur; these names can and do change from government to government, parliament to parliament. This bill will allow this to occur in the future without the need for subsequent legislative amendments like the one I am moving today.

Transitional arrangements have also been added to the bill to include the Health (National Health Funding Pool and Administration) Act 2013 and the Utilities Act 2000. These arrangements are to ensure that any decisions made by COAG, National Cabinet or the National Federation Reform Council, as well as the standing council or any health ministers meetings, have effect after the act commences. In response to the Conran review recommendations—the review that was commissioned by national cabinet—all states, territories and the commonwealth will conduct their own legislative reviews and make similar amendments to state, territory and commonwealth legislation over the coming months. These amendments will provide a necessary update to relevant legislation.

I believe doing it this way will support greater efficiency in the future by effectively futureproofing references to national governing bodies, if and when there are subsequent changes to the federal relations architecture in the months and years ahead. This will ensure that ACT legislation remains current and relevant and therefore I commend this dull but worthy bill to the Assembly.

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

## **COVID-19 Emergency Response Legislation (Check-in Information) Amendment Bill 2021**

**Ms Stephen-Smith**, pursuant to notice, presented the bill, its explanatory statement and a Human Rights Act compatibility statement.

Title read by Clerk.

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH** (Kurrajong—Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Families and Community Services and Minister for Health) (11.18): I move:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

The COVID-19 Emergency Response Legislation (Check-in Information) Amendment Bill 2021 proposes a set of amendments to strengthen privacy protections applying to personal information collected through the Check In CBR app.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, contact tracing teams have been working to respond to positive cases, support individuals who are in isolation or quarantine and to minimise the impact of COVID-19 outbreaks within the community.

The contact tracers in ACT Health have done an incredible job of keeping Canberra safe and strong through their ongoing contact tracing operations. Experiences across the country have demonstrated the importance of ensuring that we are well placed to efficiently respond to outbreaks in the ACT through swift and effective contact tracing efforts. Mandatory check-in has been adopted nationally in response to the recommendations of the *National Contact Tracing Review*, a report for Australia's national cabinet, which set out the characteristics for optimal contact tracing and COVID-19 outbreak management systems.

Check-in requirements are currently detailed in the Public Health (Check In Requirements) Emergency Direction 2021 (No 2), which states that restricted businesses and venues, as well as retail settings, public transport and taxi and rideshare services across the ACT, are required to register for and use the Check In CBR app to collect contact information of anyone aged 16 years and older who enters the premises or uses a service.

The ACT government's Check In CBR app was developed by ACT Health Directorate officials to provide a fast, easy and secure mechanism to record the attendance of individuals who have entered a restricted premise, in line with the Public Health Emergency Declaration. The Check In CBR app has proven to be incredibly successful. Following the launch of the Check In CBR app in September 2020, more than 17,000 venues have registered with the app. The app has been downloaded more than 900,000 times and there have been over 30 million check-ins.

Canberrans have clearly embraced the use of the Check In CBR app and it continues to be an important tool in our defence against the transmission of COVID-19 in the ACT. The personal data collected through Check In CBR is collected and securely stored by ACT Health and deleted after 28 days. Personal information is only accessed if it is required for contact tracing purposes to ensure that health authorities are able to quickly and effectively identify potential close and casual contacts of a positive case. The ACT government recognises the need for strong privacy protections of the information collected through the Check In CBR app. Although the Check In CBR privacy policy clearly outlines the way in which personal information is stored and accessed, this bill provides additional clarity around the security of this information and adds some further restrictions to when the information can be accessed for the purposes of investigation and prosecution.

The amendments will entrench within the Act the key aspects of the privacy policy; namely, that the information is provided directly to, and stored by, ACT Health; that it is stored for 28 days and is then deleted, unless a person is subject to an investigation or prosecution for failing to comply with the public health direction or provides false or misleading information; and can be used only for contact tracing and contact tracing compliance purposes.

Provisions of this bill will effectively displace the ability of a state or territory court or tribunal to compel the production of documents, records or information collected by the app. Information collected through Check In CBR will only be admissible as evidence in a court proceeding for the purposes of investigating or prosecuting an offence for failing to comply with a public health direction relating to contact tracing. This is similar to key components of Western Australian legislation to protect information for COVID-19 contact tracing in relation to the SafeWA app.

The amendments proposed in this bill also seek to establish new offences to safeguard the appropriate use of both the Check In CBR app and check-in information, which is information collected for contact tracing purposes about the presence of a person at a particular place at a particular time. To that end, an offence is included which would prevent persons who are defined as authorised collectors of check-in information, other than an authorised person at the ACT government, from collecting contact tracing information in a way other than through the Check In CBR app or an alternative way permitted under the public health direction or by an exemption by the Chief Health Officer. This is intended to prevent unauthorised third-party systems or persons from being used to collect check-in information. Furthermore, an offence is also included in the bill prohibiting the unauthorised use of check-in information.

The proposed offences in the bill would prohibit the collection of information for contact tracing purposes by an authorised collector other than through direct entry of information into the Check In CBR app or in a way permitted under the public health direction, including any exemption given by the Chief Health Officer; the use of check-in information by anyone other than an authorised person or an authorised collector who discloses check-in information to an authorised person in accordance with the public health direction; failing to take reasonable steps to protect check-in information that is held by an authorised collector from misuse, interference or loss, or from unauthorised access, modification or disclosure; and an authorised collector failing to take reasonable steps to destroy check-in information at the end of the contact tracing period, where it is held by the authorised collector—that is, within 28 days or another period prescribed by legislation—unless the information is required for contact tracing or to investigate a breach of the direction.

The commencement of the offence provisions within the bill will be delayed by 30 calendar days, which will provide for a grace period for government compliance and enforcement agencies to engage with businesses and undertakings, and will allow businesses to modify their operations to bring them into line with the legislation. In introducing this bill today, I acknowledge the public contributions of the Human Rights Commission seeking to ensure the protection of personal information from being obtained through compulsion by a court or tribunal.

We are confident that ACT Policing understands the vital importance of maintaining public confidence in the Check In CBR app. While we are confident in that, the government has considered the concerns expressed by the Human Rights Commission and recent developments in Western Australia. We are therefore bringing forward these legislative amendments to enhance confidence in the privacy protections of the personal information collected through the Check In CBR app. This bill will provide

further confidence for Canberrans that the Check In CBR app information will continue to be used only for contact tracing purposes and to support compliance with public health directions, and that their personal information will be protected.

ACT Health's ability to conduct efficient contact tracing is vital in our pandemic response, enabling the effective management of cases and outbreaks should they arise. We continue to be well placed in the ACT in our response to COVID-19; however, we are reliant upon Canberrans continuing to follow the public health advice, which includes checking in when they are out and about. With the introduction of this bill, Canberrans can remain confident that their personal privacy through the Check In CBR app will be protected in legislation. I commend the bill to the Assembly.

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

## **Crimes Legislation Amendment Bill 2021**

Debate resumed from 24 June 2021, on motion by **Mr Rattenbury**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

**MS LEE** (Kurrajong—Leader of the Opposition) (11.26): The Canberra Liberals support this bill. It makes amendments to several laws, with the aim of improving the clarity and effectiveness of criminal justice legislation in the ACT. I particularly note and welcome the proposed amendments to the Crimes (Sentencing) Act 2005 to mandate that the court consider certain factors when sentencing for a family violence offence.

In May, I, as shadow Attorney-General on behalf of the Canberra Liberals, released an exposure draft open for consultation on the Crimes (Family Violence) Legislation Amendment Bill 2021. Domestic and family violence is a scourge on our society and has significant detrimental impacts on the short- and long-term health and wellbeing of victims subjected to this violence. Whilst, of course, no form of violence is acceptable, family violence perpetrated within the bounds of a trusting relationship is particularly abhorrent and should be treated with proportionate severity under our laws. At the time, I noted with disappointment the delays in this government taking action to address these serious community concerns, which led me to releasing the exposure draft. So today I welcome the Attorney-General's inclusion in this bill of these new provisions. I also thank all the stakeholders, the legal fraternity and community organisations who took the time to provide feedback, not only on this bill but also on my exposure draft.

I note the proposed amendment to the Inspector of Correctional Services Act 2017. This amendment extends the period in which periods of review must be undertaken, from at least once every two years to at least once every three years. This change aims to provide more time to implement, review and evaluate the inspector's recommendations. The Office of the Inspector of Corrections fulfils a vital oversight role in our city. The inspector oversees a facility where detainees are deprived of their liberty and are at their most vulnerable to government negligence. I thank the inspector for his hard work since the inception of the role in 2017. At a time when this

government's mismanagement of the AMC is at such an abhorrent level, the role of the inspector has never been so important.

The inspector has rightfully pointed out the challenges faced by staff at the AMC, including increases in overtime hours, the lack of de-escalation training and the need for further support to correctional officers when dealing with violent riots, such as those we have seen in recent months. Whilst we support the extension of the review period, the Canberra Liberals will be closely following the government's implementation of the inspector's recommendations.

This bill also makes important changes to the Crimes (Child Sex Offenders) Act 2005, which makes provisions around the registering of those convicted of the commonwealth offence of possession of a childlike sex doll or a similar object. It makes changes to the Crimes (Surveillance Devices) Act 2010 and Listening Devices Act 1992, to provide the legality for, and to specify the circumstances in which, body-worn cameras may or must be used by police officers. The key elements are that they must be worn only in the course of police duties, their use must be overt, and they must be used in dealings with members of the public. The bill also makes changes to the Terrorism (Extraordinary Temporary Powers) Act 2006, which extends the operation of that act by a year. Without that extension, the legislation and those powers would expire in November of this year.

The Canberra Liberals support these amendments. They provide greater certainty and legislative clarity for courts during their proceedings and seek to provide protection and support for our valued police and corrections officers. However, as with any legislation enacted in good faith and with good intentions, it is always about the implementation. We need to ensure that these amendments enhance and improve our laws and achieve the outcomes they were intended for. The Canberra Liberals will keep a close eye on the ongoing operation of these laws.

**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) (11.31): I am pleased to speak in support of the Crimes Legislation Amendment Bill 2021. Across my portfolio areas I am acutely aware of the factors that are vital in fostering a safe, human rights-based criminal justice system. This legislation highlights many of these factors and demonstrates the government's ongoing commitment to ensuring that our criminal justice system operates as effectively as possible, provides protection for vulnerable people, supports our police in the field and meets the community's rightly high expectations.

Amendments to the Crimes (Surveillance Devices) Act 2010 and the Listening Devices Act 1992 will support the use of body-worn cameras by police officers in various situations and clarify the circumstances where body-worn cameras may or must be used by ACT Policing. Body-worn cameras are widely used by police nationally and internationally, and they have often been critical to achieving justice for various individuals. Although ACT Policing has used body-worn cameras in various situations since 2019, it is important that there is transparency and clarity regarding the use of this tool, which is something these amendments provide. Under

these provisions, police will explicitly be empowered to use body-worn cameras in a range of different situations. This use must generally be overt; however, there are some exceptions to this, where overt use would cause or increase risk to a person's safety.

The amendments complement existing legal frameworks, including commonwealth legislation that governs the use of devices by law enforcement to make audio or visual recordings in a range of situations and locations. They have been modelled on similar provision in section 50A of the Surveillance Devices Act 2007 in New South Wales, and clarify that a police officer must use a body-worn camera in the course of all of their duties and irrespective of whether the use occurs in public or private premises. Guidelines developed by the Chief Police Officer will include specific requirements about accessing, storing, retaining and using recordings captured by body-worn cameras, to ensure that the right to privacy is protected. These guidelines will necessarily be consistent with the privacy protections established by the amendments to the act.

The footage captured by body-worn cameras will provide evidence to assist all parties in criminal proceedings—including a defendant—therefore indirectly supporting a person's rights during criminal proceedings. These arrangements will promote the safety of police officers and members of the community, increase transparency around police conduct, and aid police in gathering high-quality evidence in a timely and effective way. They will also ensure that the benefits of using body-worn cameras can be extended to all areas of the community policing environment.

The bill also improves protection for children by amending the modernisation of the Crimes (Child Sex Offenders) Act 2005 to include new types of child sex offences in the registration scheme. It adds the commonwealth offence of possessing a childlike sex doll to facilitate registration of offenders convicted of the commonwealth offence. Including this additional commonwealth offence as a potential registrable offence under the scheme allows ACT Policing to protect our community from child sex offenders. This amendment seeks to enable the police to address the potential escalation of offending at an earlier stage—for example, from non-contact offending to contact offending. Evidence suggests that non-contact offending, such as possession of a childlike sex doll, can be indicative of an increased risk of reoffending, often in an escalating way such as the commission of sexual assault. Placing an offender on the register facilitates better visibility of the offender for police and, consequently, increases protection for the community.

The bill also makes amendments to the Inspector of Correctional Services Act 2017 by extending the review period for examining and reviewing correctional facilities, from at least once every two years to at least once every three years. However, this does not prevent the Inspector of Correctional Services from conducting more frequent reviews where appropriate. This sees a more flexible and targeted use of government resources to address specific issues that might arise in relation to the ACT corrections system.

The bill also extends the Terrorism (Extraordinary Temporary Powers) Act 2006 for 12 months, from 19 November 2021 to 19 November 2022, to allow further

consideration of opportunities for enhancing the right to liberty in a way that still supports the security of Canberrans. At this time, the powers in the act have not been used and no preventative orders have been applied for or made by ACT Policing. However, with the passage of time since the act was introduced, it is important that we give careful consideration to the balance of rights in the act and to whether any adjustments can or should be made to simultaneously support national security and protect the rights of individuals.

Finally, the bill makes important changes to the Crimes (Sentencing) Act 2005 in respect to sentencing for family violence offences to better protect victims of family violence and better respond to family violence offending in a way that considers the circumstances of an offender and the offence that they have committed. The government is committed to introducing measures to address and prevent family violence in our community. This amendment reflects the government's efforts to continually review and improve the response of our criminal justice system to family violence offending. Amending the sentencing framework in this way seeks to ensure that the safety, the basic human rights and the wellbeing of all citizens is supported and protected by the criminal justice system and legislation that we have in place.

This bill provides a clear signal that the ACT government is ready and willing to act to ensure that our laws are secure enough to protect members of the community and meet their standards, and is nuanced enough to consider the specific circumstances and situations that individuals in contact with the criminal justice system may be experiencing. I commend the bill to the Assembly.

**MR RATTENBURY** (Kurrajong—Attorney-General, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Gaming and Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction) (11.38), in reply: The Crimes Legislation Amendment Bill 2021 makes changes to five pieces of legislation to support efforts to keep vulnerable people safe, support police in our community and make sure our criminal justice system functions in line with the community's expectations, particularly in addressing matters of domestic and family violence.

I thank the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety for the comments provided in *Scrutiny report 7*, which identified opportunities to improve the explanation of the intent and proposed effect of the amendments. I table a revised explanatory statement on the bill to address those comments. I table:

Crimes Legislation Amendment Bill 2021—revised explanatory statement.

Turning to the subject matter of the bill, firstly, this bill includes important amendments to the Crimes (Sentencing) Act 2005 to address the severity of family violence offences, as has been noted by the other speakers today. These amendments made changes to sentencing laws, to require the courts to consider additional factors when sentencing for family violence offences.

The amendments to this act support various rights under the Human Rights Act 2004, including the right to protection from torture and cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment; protection of family and children; and the right to liberty and security of

person. They do this by putting measures in place to adequately address perpetrator behaviour on sentence and reduce the risk of further physical and psychological harm to victims of family violence.

These amendments aim to consider the nature of family violence and the context of family violence offences. In doing this, they increase protections for vulnerable members of the community by ensuring that the court considers sentencing factors such as whether the offending occurred in a private setting and whether children were present at the time of the offending.

This is the first of a two-stage set of reforms to address issues identified by the Court of Appeal in *R v UG* in February 2020. The government continuously seeks to develop legislation that reflects community standards when dealing with family violence offences.

The first stage, reflected in this bill, creates a requirement for courts to consider family violence as a separate factor in sentencing for a family violence offence. This is to ensure that courts can adequately respond to deter family violence, engage with the need to prevent it, and protect the community.

The second stage will probably require consideration of family violence as an aggravating sentencing factor. Government has heard from stakeholders that there is strong support for the introduction of an aggravated offence approach. We need to ensure that the courts have every appropriate tool available with which to respond to family violence while also acknowledging that a proposal like this is complex and its effectiveness will depend on the detail. This consideration will be complete before the government's bill later this year, to make a range of other family violence reforms.

This bill also amends the Crimes (Child Sex Offenders) Act 2005 to add the commonwealth offence of possession of a childlike sex doll to the schedule of offences that can result in an offender being on the child sex offenders register and having to meet reporting requirements under the act.

The purpose of a registrable offence scheme is to reduce reoffending or escalation of offending and to protect children from potential predators. This reflects the community expectation that the government will maintain laws that support the safety and protection of children from sexual assault and violence. Adding the commonwealth offence to this scheme helps police to monitor registrable offenders in order to protect the lives and sexual safety of children in the ACT and across other Australian jurisdictions, making sure that the ACT is not perceived as a safe haven for people wanting to commit child sex offences.

Given the potential breadth of application of the commonwealth offence, additional safeguards have been included for the courts to consider when making an order to register an offender convicted of the commonwealth offence. The outcome is that people convicted of the commonwealth offence of possessing a childlike sex doll will be added to the register unless they fall within limited exceptions, including where the court is satisfied that the offender is not a risk to the lives or sexual safety of children.

These amendments promote the right of protection of family and children and the right to protection from torture and cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment under the Human Rights Act 2004 by increasing the protection of children and reducing the opportunities for offenders to reoffend.

The amendments engage and limit the rights to privacy of people convicted of the commonwealth offence of possessing a childlike sex doll in a justifiable and deliberate way. However, the amendments do not expand the existing restrictions which apply to registered child sex offenders. The amendment serves to keep children safe from sexual predators, and the addition of the commonwealth offence to the registrable offences scheme is appropriate in the circumstances, particularly when considered with the additional safeguards that I mentioned earlier.

The bill amends the Crimes (Surveillance Devices) Act 2010 and the Listening Devices Act 1992 to support the use of body-worn cameras by police officers who are performing their duties in various situations, including public and private premises. These amendments provide a dual benefit of supporting our law enforcement officials with their capacity to collect evidence in criminal investigations and also strengthening community confidence in police integrity by supporting scrutiny of police activities.

These amendments explicitly authorise police use of body-worn cameras in a range of different contexts. The circumstances and conditions for the use of body-worn cameras include the requirement that police use their body-worn cameras in circumstances where they are dealing with the public, subject to specified exceptions. These exceptions are limited to circumstances where this is not reasonably practicable, could cause or increase a risk to a person's safety, or would unreasonably limit a person's privacy.

Further, police may only use a body-worn camera in the course of their duties, and their use must be overt, including through police advising people that the camera is recording.

There are limited exceptions to this requirement for overt use. These include when a firearm or conducted electrical weapon is drawn or used. The value of this footage is crucial to police accountability, such that it outweighs the increased privacy impact on people who may not be aware that they are being filmed using a body-worn camera, or if it would create or increase a risk to a person's safety. This ensures that if a police officer has activated a body-worn camera, the officer is not required to announce or otherwise draw attention to the camera if it would be unsafe to do so.

The use of body-worn cameras to record these interactions, as well as the retention and use of footage by police, does place a limitation on privacy. However, the amendments comprise a range of measures to ensure that body-worn camera use achieves its legitimate operational and accountability purposes while limiting disproportionate or arbitrary impact on the right to privacy.

Guidelines will be issued by the Chief Police Officer as a disallowable instrument to detail the circumstances in which body-worn cameras can and must be used, including examples of exceptional circumstances where use is not required or appropriate. The guidelines must also contain a statement about how human rights have been considered in their development.

The bill also amends the Terrorism (Extraordinary Temporary Powers) Act 2006 to extend it for 12 months, from its current end date of 19 November 2021 to 19 November 2022. This follows a recent review of the operation and effectiveness of the act which highlighted the importance of striking the appropriate balance between implementing legislation that is consistent with terrorism legislation introduced in other jurisdictions in accordance with the national agreements and promoting the human rights of those who are detained under these laws.

Previously this act has been extended for five years at a time without amendment. This 12-month extension of the act allows for a greater consideration of and consultation on ways to uphold the right to personal liberty while ensuring that legislation supports community safety and security in the face of potential terrorist threats.

Finally, the bill amends the Inspector of Correctional Services Act 2017, which promotes the right to humane treatment when deprived of liberty by extending the time allowed for the Inspector of Correctional Services to undertake periodic reviews of correctional centres and detention places. The Inspector of Correctional Services sought this amendment to allow sufficient time between reviews for the corrections facilities to implement any recommendations from reviews that have already been conducted.

This will improve the way our correctional centres and detention places maintain their conditions and comply with human rights by replacing the current two-year review cycle with a three-year review cycle, to support the effective response and implementation of review outcomes by the Inspector of Correctional Services. I note that, importantly, this does not prevent the Inspector of Correctional Services from conducting more frequent reviews where appropriate.

Extending the review cycle will allow directorates and agencies to fully consider and implement recommendations, particularly ones requiring lengthy implementation processes, before the next cyclical review. It will also reduce the administrative burden involved in preparing for and responding to the Inspector of Correctional Services reports by staggering the review and response time frames, which allows for more efficient management of government resources.

Overall, this bill demonstrates the government's strong, ongoing commitment to improving the criminal justice system and outcomes for the people who are in contact with it. It shows that this government greatly values the human rights of all citizens and that we will continue to listen and work with the community and our stakeholders to ensure that our laws meet the justifiably high expectations of our community. 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.

## **Planning—ACT Infrastructure Plan**

Debate resumed from 23 June 2021 on motion by **Mr Barr**:

That the Assembly take note of the paper:

ACT Infrastructure Plan—Update—Ministerial statement, 2 June 2021—

**MS CHEYNE** (Ginninderra—Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Minister for the Arts, Minister for Business and Better Regulation, Minister for Human Rights and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (11.49): I am pleased to speak on this ministerial statement today. As the Chief Minister said a month or two ago, the ACT Infrastructure Plan is a blueprint for our city’s development and a vision for the future.

The 2019 Infrastructure Plan acknowledges the key role that cultural facilities play in the city’s infrastructure. As our creative industries grow and develop, a strong network of community-level facilities is required to foster talent and build the pipeline of tomorrow’s talented creators and creatives. To respond to this growing demand, the ACT government has been investing in our 13 government-owned arts facilities to ensure that safe and fit-for-purpose creative spaces are available for arts activity to flourish in the region.

The \$15 million stage 2 of the Belconnen Arts Centre opened to the public in August 2020. It includes a new theatre, exhibition space, rehearsal space and events kitchen. The new flexible theatre space can hold up to 400 seated patrons, with the added flexibility of multiple stage and seating configurations to allow for a variety of audience experiences. I have been very pleased to have attended on multiple occasions now and seen the variety of ways that it can be configured. The expansion of the Belconnen Arts Centre is part of the ACT government’s commitment to providing better infrastructure for our growing community. The centre offers an environment that is accessible and engaging to all and encourages the community to interact and participate in the arts.

Projects underway to meet the ongoing demand for creative spaces in the ACT include those being funded under the upgrading local arts facilities program, under which \$1.675 million over three years was allocated in 2019-20.

Safety upgrades at Ainslie and Gorman House arts centres are being funded from this program. The final design for a major refurbishment project at Gorman House arts

centre is also funded from this program. It will provide the documentation required for the construction phase. The government has committed \$8 million to this construction project at Gorman House in the coming years, to celebrate its 50th year as a community arts facility in 2024.

Recent investment totalling \$880,000 over four years in arts facilities, including \$245,000 in the last financial year, has enabled upgrades to five arts centres across the ACT: Ainslie Arts Centre, Gorman House arts centre, Strathnairn Arts, Tuggeranong Arts Centre, and Watson Arts Centre. These upgrades have focused on improvements to aged heating and cooling systems.

In the last financial year, the better infrastructure fund invested \$315,000 in arts facilities. Works have included the replacement of the heating and cooling system in the main theatre at the Street Theatre, as well as the refurbishment of its costume and props storage area.

Works have also been completed at Strathnairn Arts, including upgrades to the kiln shed roof and the public toilet facility. I was at Strathnairn Arts at the weekend viewing the *Squares* exhibition. I will give it a shout out; it is highly worth attending and viewing.

A \$5.9 million investment in a major refurbishment of the former transport depot at Kingston is underway and nearing completion. Upgrades include new roofing, new lighting, a new electrical system, and public toilet upgrades. As I spoke about in the Assembly in early June, the former transport depot will reopen soon, following the building remediation required due to the lead dust found during construction. The first event at the site will be the city's beloved Old Bus Depot Markets. I am delighted to hear that, and I am sure all other Canberrans are too.

The depot is a key community facility centrally located within what will be the Kingston arts precinct. The ACT government's investment in the depot is part of the overall investment being made in the broader site known as the Kingston arts precinct.

Investment in this precinct is the government's next major commitment to arts infrastructure in Canberra, and the biggest commitment to the visual arts to date, at \$78 million. It will include a new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art space; and purpose-built facilities for the Canberra Contemporary Art Space, Craft ACT, M16 Artspace and PhotoAccess, who are joining the Canberra Glassworks and Megalo Print Studio as the founding resident organisations.

Combined with accommodation for visiting artists, a theatrette, workshop space, outdoor event space for 5,000 people, 2,000 square metres of retail activation and a multistorey carpark, the precinct is Canberra's future place for celebrating and strengthening creative and cultural practices. The organisations I mentioned have recently undertaken some facilitated workshops, and some excellent ideas and collaboration came out of that.

In addition to the Kingston arts precinct, a new Canberra Theatre precinct in the city was highlighted in the 2019 ACT Infrastructure Plan. The new theatre precinct is a

priority for the ACT government in the coming years. We are continuing to work on completing the design work and business case to create new jobs and attract bigger shows and concerts to the ACT.

The Cultural Facilities Corporation received a total of \$428,000 in better infrastructure funding in the past financial year. This funding allowed several priority projects to take place during the year.

The major allocation from this amount, \$145,000, was used to purchase new carpet for the Canberra Theatre Centre. This was needed both for safety reasons and to ensure that the presentation of the centre is maintained at an appropriate standard for the region's premier performing arts venue. I was interested to hear that the new carpet reflects the history and heritage of the Canberra Theatre Centre, by incorporating the design used for the original house curtains for the Canberra Theatre, Frances Burke's black opal design. While the carpet was purchased this year, in order to fit in with theatre programming schedules—which I am pleased to say are looking quite busy even with the effects from Sydney—it will be installed progressively during the course of this financial year.

As the Chief Minister stated, 2021 is an opportune time to update the ACT Infrastructure Plan. I look forward to being part of this process to ensure that we continue to provide access to high quality facilities for participating in arts and cultural activities across the ACT. I commend his statement.

**MR GENTLEMAN** (Brindabella—Manager of Government Business, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Industrial Relations and Workplace Safety, Minister for Planning and Land Management and Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (11.57): Our region and our city have changed significantly since the government released the ACT Infrastructure Plan in October 2019. The dry, hot summer which followed the plan's release saw bushfires rage across the continent. Neighbouring parts of New South Wales were destroyed by blazes during the Christmas holiday period, and in January fire swept through our backyard in the Orroral Valley and Namadgi National Park. The Orroral Valley fire was the most serious Canberra had faced since the deadly 2003 fires.

In the aftermath of these fires, the truly devastating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic were being realised across the globe. In March 2020 the ACT declared a public health emergency, and it is fair to say that our way of life has changed. The seismic emergencies of national and global significance remain a threat.

If we have learned anything since the summer of 2019-20, it is that emergencies of one form or another are constant in our lives. While we do all that we possibly can to avoid emergencies, the reality is that we cannot stop them all from occurring.

In my ministerial portfolio, I am pleased and very interested to know how, as a community and government, we respond to emergencies. I could not be prouder. I am proud of the dedication shown by our hardworking men and women of ACT Policing and the Emergency Services Agency, who provide the frontline support to keep our community safe. I am proud of the many volunteers who are so willing to give up

their time to help the community during traumatic times. I am very proud of our corrections staff, who work to rehabilitate offenders and provide them with opportunities to make a life for themselves away from the criminal justice system.

These people make our community a safer and, therefore, a better place to live. The ACT government will continue to support the commitment and dedication of those women and men by investing in the capital works and projects to help them do their jobs effectively.

As the population grows beyond half a million in the next decade, we know that a well thought out plan is needed to ensure that all Canberrans have appropriate access to police and emergency services.

We are already delivering on a pipeline of projects listed in the 2019 Infrastructure Plan. In the 2019-20 budget, the government provided over \$9 million, over four years, to improve the existing ACT Policing accommodation infrastructure. Furthermore, in line with the 2019 Infrastructure Plan, a new accommodation solution for road policing is in the process of being delivered. I have recently announced that a 15-year lease has been signed for the new road policing centre site at Hume. The ACT government provided nearly \$5 million in funding to fit out the modern facility and relocate some 80 police from the current traffic operation centre in Belconnen in March next year. The new facility is on a 6,000 square metre site, which will fit the needs of a growing police force into the future. It will include office space, training rooms, labs, workshops, storage and vehicle parking.

In addition to supporting the growing needs of police, the government is working with the ESA to help it meet community expectation and response times. This includes the support needed for both the volunteer and paid work force. More than \$40 million has been committed to the construction of a joint ACT Fire & Rescue and ACT Ambulance Service station at Acton. This will support the ESA to deliver timely servicing for these critical functions to the city and its surrounds.

In addition, the government is looking at improving its police and emergency services footprint in Canberra's north. Work is also progressing to better meet the emergency service and policing needs of communities living in the Gungahlin region.

The focus on investment in corrections is on improving support for detainees and providing the best opportunity for them to be reintegrated into the community. As minister, I acknowledged that reform and improvement are critical to better outcomes in ACT prisons. This is being backed up by the investment in areas to improve the system.

I wish to acknowledge the hard work corrections officers do. I am constantly impressed by the work they do in challenging circumstances, and I assure them that they will be provided with as much support as possible to do these difficult jobs.

Our police, emergency services and corrections staff play an important role in making the ACT such a liveable city. I am honoured to be their minister. As we move towards developing an updated Infrastructure Plan, the focus will be on ensuring a strategic

approach to infrastructure investment to support and sustain these critical services for our community.

The community has a great deal of admiration for our police officers and emergency services and corrections staff. For them to keep doing such a wonderful job, it is important that the government continues to invest wisely so that when the next emergency hits, we are well placed to protect and support the members of our community. The government will continue to invest in the critical infrastructure to protect the community.

The Plan is playing an important role in the growth and development of our city. The Infrastructure Plan is, importantly, linked with the ACT Planning Strategy and indicative land release program that I am responsible for. The Infrastructure Plan is an integral part of delivering on the vision and directions of the ACT Planning Strategy. Conversely, planning is essential in informing and developing a comprehensive and integrated infrastructure plan for the city.

In particular, the strategy supports sustainable urban growth by working towards delivering up to 70 per cent of new housing within Canberra's existing urban footprint. The remaining 30 per cent of new housing is being delivered through greenfield development, with the Molonglo Valley our main greenfield front at present.

As well as providing homes for our growing population, housing infrastructure investment is a cornerstone of job creation. Delivering affordable housing is a particular focus of the housing strategy.

Our environment is also part of the Infrastructure Plan and enormously important to this city, and to Canberrans and their wellbeing. The Molonglo River Park, which winds its way from downstream of Scrivener Dam to where the Molonglo River meets the Murrumbidgee, is a defining natural feature of the new Molonglo Valley development. This government is committed to protecting the river corridor. As part of this, we are progressively investing in endangered species habitat restoration and in new recreational facilities for residents and visitors.

The ACT Infrastructure Plan provides a contemporary and sustainable approach to the growth of our city and the region.

**MS BERRY** (Ginninderra—Deputy Chief Minister, Minister for Early Childhood Development, Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, Minister for Housing and Suburban Development, Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, Minister for Sport and Recreation and Minister for Women) (12.04): I am happy to speak today on the government's infrastructure progress and the priorities in my portfolio responsibilities.

I have recently spoken in this place about the extensive capital works program for public schools, so members will be aware that as the city grows, the government is investing to grow our public school system.

Recently, I was at Gold Creek's senior school campus for a smoking ceremony, ahead of the project to expand the school by 200 places in time for the 2022 school year. The expansion is being conducted by Rork Projects as part of the ACT government's commitment to providing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enterprises with opportunities for government procurement. The students I spoke with at Gold Creek are excited about the expansion and see this as more than just a building project. They see it as an opportunity to further develop their community.

Along with that expansion, we will be opening a new primary school in Throsby and an expansion to Amaroo School for the start of the next school year.

As outlined this week, through my responsibilities as Minister for Housing and Suburban Development, the ACT government is working hard to deliver the growing and renewing public housing program, providing more homes to suit the needs of the ACT community. We understand that one model of housing does not suit everyone.

The growing and renewing public housing program is ambitious. Together with our earlier public housing renewal program, it represents a 10-year investment of over \$1.3 billion from 2015 and the renewal of over 20 per cent of the ACT public housing portfolio. The current program builds on the success of the first public housing renewal program and the ACT's standing as a national leader in the level of provision of public and social housing for the community. Under the parliamentary and governing agreement, the growing and renewing public housing program targets were expanded to deliver 400 new public housing dwellings by 2025, while renewing 1,000 public housing properties.

The government is also committed to providing more dedicated, culturally appropriate, long-term accommodation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, building on the success of Mura Gunya, opened in 2016. Housing ACT worked closely with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body to deliver the second complex, Gundji Gindilan, in Lyons, which opened in December 2020. Work is continuing on the third site, at Dickson, named Ningulangu. Recently I attended a traditional smoking ceremony to witness the cultural cleansing of the Ningulangu site. Ashes from the ceremony will be saved under the foundations to ensure new beginnings for residents.

The ACT government is also on track to deliver the new Common Ground in Dickson. Following the success of Common Ground in Gungahlin, work has been well underway, with an anticipated completion time of the third quarter of 2021-22. The Dickson development includes 40 units—20 supportive and 20 affordable—with a mix of one-, two- and three-bedroom dwellings, as well as communal and community spaces, onsite support services and the provision for social enterprise businesses. Last week I visited the Common Ground Dickson site with Minister Vassarotti to see the progress of construction. The building is really taking shape now. I cannot wait to welcome new residents into the building once it is completed next year.

The ACT government continues to look outside the traditional housing scope to provide social housing options across government and the community in order to increase housing support for Canberrans who need them.

In partnership with ACT Health, Housing ACT built four homes to provide long-term supported accommodation for people living with mental illnesses. The dwellings, constructed to the class C adaptable standard to cater for mobility limitations, have bedrooms with en suites and a dedicated meeting space, enabling tenants to live in a supported environment amongst the community.

The ACT government is delivering on these housing infrastructure programs to address the diverse, changing needs of the Canberra community and to enable us to have a sustainable supply of housing for the individuals and families who need it most.

Finally, I go to my portfolio responsibilities as Minister for Sport and Recreation. The ACT government has committed to delivering more sporting facilities for a growing Canberra, to help Canberrans stay active, healthy and engaged in the sports that they love.

The ACT government committed at the 2020 election to support Dragon Boat ACT as one of the largest water-based sports, with a new home in Grevillea Park. The facility will include a new boathouse, storage facility and spectator area to support events. Tennis ACT, as they continue to grow to beyond 32,000 players, will have a new facility in Gungahlin. The centre will include up to 12 full-size courts, with amenities including LED floodlighting, up to two hot shots courts, a pavilion, a hitting wall and parking. The government will support all the sporting organisations and clubs that use Phillip enclosed oval, with a new pavilion, upgraded grandstands and lights and additional parking. New sportsgrounds will be built in Stromlo Forest Park that will see at least two playing fields, floodlighting, a pavilion and parking—all delivered in this term of government.

The ACT government continues the improvement program to upgrade facilities across the ACT to be female-friendly, to help remove barriers to participation in sport for women and girls.

The ACT government is continuing to deliver on its infrastructure priorities in my portfolio of responsibilities, including delivering modern schools for our school communities, sustainable public housing for Canberrans who need it, and sporting facilities for the future.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

**Sitting suspended from 12.10 to 2.00 pm.**

### **Questions without notice**

#### **Business—ChooseCBR scheme**

**MS LEE:** My question is to the minister for business. Minister, an FOI document obtained by the Canberra Liberals reveals that the government approved an exemption from procurement regulations requiring three written quotes, for spending up to \$200,000 to award a Darwin-based developer the ChooseCBR contract. Brainium

Labs got the job despite a government document revealing that it did not have the capacity to provide 24/7 support, which it said, “may be desirable, should there be system issues or outages”. Minister, why did you give the job to a Darwin-based company that could not provide 24/7 support instead of following procurement rules and allowing Canberra companies to compete for the work?

**MS CHEYNE:** I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. I am aware of the procurement decision that was undertaken. Ms Lee would have seen in those FOI documents that this was a delegation that was within the directorate, and the provider was, on the face of it, value for money for us. It is important that everyone remember here that at the time ChooseCBR was announced—that we would be pursuing a digital discount system like this—this had only been conducted once. I appreciate that there are several other similar schemes that have taken place and all manner of things since, but at the time just the Northern Territory had done this through the City of Darwin scheme, so this provider appeared to be value for money and also had a system that had a template which we could essentially borrow. But this was a decision that was made within the directorate.

**MS LEE:** Minister, what is the point of having government procurement regulations if you do not follow them?

**MS CHEYNE:** I dispute the nature of the question. As Ms Lee pointed out in her very first question, the way this procurement was undertaken was within the rules in terms of seeking an exemption.

**MS CASTLEY:** Minister, what do you say to the local Canberra ICT companies who would have welcomed the opportunity to tender for the ChooseCBR rollout and have provided the 24/7 support?

**MS CHEYNE:** Ms Castley is one of the biggest critics in this place of the administrative support—

**Mrs Jones:** Point of order, Madam Speaker. The member is debating the question rather than answering it. That is against the standing orders.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I don’t think it was long enough into the answer, but to answer the question, Ms Cheyne.

**MS CHEYNE:** As I mentioned in my previous—

*Mr Hanson interjecting—*

**MS CHEYNE:** Madam Speaker, as I mentioned in my previous answers, we were looking for value for money here and we were looking for something that could be done quickly, noting the circumstances of the pandemic at the time. This was a product that had already been issued. It had worked in Darwin. We had reviewed it. We wanted to do something similar. So it made sense to procure something off the shelf.

## **Business—ChooseCBR scheme**

**MRS JONES:** My question is to the Minister for Business and Better Regulations. Minister, FOI documents obtained by the Canberra Liberals reveal you were warned about risks with the full ChooseCBR rollout, including a low take-up by business and ICT security and fraud. The warning noted:

For the full rollout there is the potential for greater financial gain which increases the overall risk of the occurrence of potential fraud or questionable transactions.”

It warned there were limited mechanisms to fully monitor transactions and provide a high level of assurance around information provided by businesses. Minister, given these warnings about the increased risk of fraud and limited ability to detect it, why did you not change the scheme?

**MS CHEYNE:** There are risks with every scheme and, as the opposition will note given they have apparently read the documents—but I am not sure in how much detail—when there are risks we undertake a risk review. That is normal. With a scheme that has money and where we are distributing that money there is a potential risk of fraud, and that is exactly why engaged PwC, to undertake a risk review. We did put in place measures including the spot checking and the auditing that we were doing internally. And, as the opposition well knows, doing that did uncover some questionable transactions, including in one case where we suspended three related businesses.

**MRS JONES:** Minister, given you were warned you could not give a high level of assurance to the community about the integrity of the scheme, why did you persist with it in the way you did?

**MS CHEYNE:** I am not sure what the opposition is trying to get at here in terms of the fraud that they think has occurred here. Risks were identified; risks were mitigated. Given the scheme was a \$2 million scheme—I note that similar schemes in other jurisdictions are in the hundreds of millions of dollars and also have risks—I think, given we were wanting to distribute money and stimulate the economy, on balance that this was a low risk, and that is clear from the documents, and we proceeded accordingly.

**DR PATERSON:** Minister, I was just wondering if you could further outline the risk review around the ChooseCBR rollout?

**MS CHEYNE:** The ACT government engaged PwC to complete a high-level risk review, and that was prior to the trial in 2020. The report did indicate that there were no known material issues or security breaches associated with the platform that we procured. It did identify a number of risks with technical or process mitigations that could be considered. Indeed, one of those was about potentially a malicious actor compromising merchant credentials and financial details.

So we addressed these risks through changes to the system design and through additional procedures, and we do have no reason to believe that the system was

compromised in this way. Undertaking these sorts of risk reviews is standard government procedure, and we were happy to undertake this and respond accordingly.

### **Business—ChooseCBR scheme**

**MR HANSON:** My question is to the minister for business. FOI documents obtained by the Canberra Liberals reveal \$230,000 of Canberra taxpayers' money was budgeted for communications, marketing and administration for the full ChooseCBR rollout. This is despite you signing off on a ministerial brief on 6 May which stated that "the total proposed campaign is \$154,000". The brief noted that "a more significant communications budget has enabled the use of a range of channels to reach more businesses and consumers". Minister, given less than 20 per cent of eligible businesses benefitted from the scheme, why were you so flippant with Canberra taxpayers' money?

**MS CHEYNE:** It is well understood across industry that a communications campaign that is about 10 per cent of an overall spend is pretty appropriate. I know that the Canberra Liberals like to go on about only 20 per cent take-up. Twenty per cent of take-up is very large. We were able to support a huge number of businesses through this. There was no flippancy here. I absolutely dispute that. What we wanted was a strong take-up of the scheme. That is something that the opposition has criticised. This was a strong take-up of the scheme. We actively engaged with businesses. This was money well spent. But, equally, I note that, of the money that was spent on this, we did not need to use all that was budgeted, because the scheme was expended quickly. It did essentially promote itself, and so there were savings. There were savings that were achieved, ultimately.

**MR HANSON:** Do you take responsibility for wasting hundreds of thousands of dollars of Canberrans' money to promote a failed scheme that 80 per cent of eligible businesses did not register for?

**MS CHEYNE:** I do not agree with the premise of the question.

**MS CASTLEY:** Minister, how is that you could so easily increase the budget for communications by \$76,000?

**MS CHEYNE:** Madam Speaker, I will take that question on notice. I need to review the documents.

### **Consumer affairs—right to repair**

**MR DAVIS:** My question is to the Minister for Consumer Affairs. Minister, a few months ago I had the privilege of formally launching the Tuggeranong Repair Cafe organised by SEE-Change, which I understand has grown to become the most popular repair cafe in Canberra. I think it speaks to how important Tuggeranites take our responsibility to recycle, reduce and reuse. Can you please tell me how, as consumer affairs minister, you will advance the right to repair issue so that Canberrans can get products that are properly repairable and we can reduce e-waste and the environmental impact of consumer goods?

**MR RATTENBURY:** The Tuggeranong Repair Cafe is a real success. I met the organisers of it recently, and they were very excited about the fact that they now have to take bookings because so many people want to come along. It speaks to a growing community enthusiasm for the ability to repair goods.

The notion of a right to repair is one that has emerged out of Europe and the US in different ways. It speaks to the idea that you should be able to take your good to get it repaired, to get the spare parts for it, to be able to do that at an affordable cost and without breaching your warranty. These are the sort of issues that have arisen in this space.

The ACT government has particularly promoted this issue. We took a proposal to the Consumer Affairs Forum of ministers from Australia and New Zealand a couple of years ago, and that has led to the Productivity Commission report which is currently in progress. Members may have seen that the Productivity Commission have released their draft report. That was open for consultation until last week. They will produce a final report later this year.

This is really important in terms of empowering consumers to be able to keep their products for as long as they want, to tinker with them, to improve them and, ultimately, as Mr Davis alluded to in his question, to minimise the amount of e-waste. Australia particularly is an incredibly large producer of e-waste, and being able to repair basic products like your phone and various other devices is both good for the consumer and good for the planet.

**MR DAVIS:** Minister, what can the ACT government do to continue to lead the nation on the right to repair?

**MR RATTENBURY:** There are a couple of things. One is that we are continuing to advocate for this issue. It is really important that it is given a national voice because, as a jurisdiction alone, we cannot bring in a national right to repair. We need to get the other consumer affairs ministers on board and probably the national Treasurer. Through the support of the Productivity Commission's report, we can make the case that in Australia there is a market failing here, and we need governments to step in and put requirements onto producers to produce goods that can be repaired, to supply the spare parts and the like.

I was very interested to see that in the Productivity Commission's draft report they canvassed the idea of coming up with alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, including a binding conciliation power. Members may recall that the ACT Assembly passed legislation to that effect towards the end of the last term. That legislation is about to come into effect. Access Canberra will have the ability to compel a business to come to the table with a consumer to resolve consumer matters under \$5,000. We are very pleased to see that South Australia have already done it; now the ACT have picked up some of the recommendations from the Productivity Commission.

I think this helps empower consumers and give them confidence that, even if they have sought a repair, this does not necessarily void the warranty. There are a lot of

consumer myths out there. These sort of powers give consumers better prospects when it comes to making the case.

**MR BRADDOCK:** Minister, what can our constituents do to support this work?

**MR RATTENBURY:** There is real enthusiasm in the community for people to get involved. I have been so impressed by the rise of repair cafes in the ACT. We have the one at Tuggeranong, which Mr Davis asked about, and the one at the Canberra Environment Centre, which is the original one here in Canberra. In some ways I think that our men's sheds are the classic repair cafes, where people are taking things, fixing them, putting them back together and zhooshing them up, whatever! There is that really practical element to it. But there is a national movement.

For our constituents who are motivated by this, there are groups who are pushing this case. There is the opportunity to contribute to the Productivity Commission's ongoing processes and to make the case to various of our parliamentary colleagues, particularly at the federal level, that it is important that we see reform in this space in Australia. Certainly, in the European Union they are increasingly adopting standards which require manufacturers to produce goods that do not have built-in obsolescence. They cannot be designed in a way that means you cannot open them and you cannot repair them. In the US there has been a slightly different focus. It has been much more about farm machinery and the like, as well as auto vehicles.

I think this is very much a consumer-led campaign. For those who are motivated by it, there is a lot of research online and it is well worth getting involved in some of those campaigns.

### **Economy—performance**

**MR PETTERSSON:** My question is for the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, can you please update the Assembly on the latest economic data for the territory?

**MR BARR:** I thank Mr Pettersson for the question. Yes, I can. Gross state product for the territory grew by 2.4 per cent in the most recent data in a period when the Australian economy, in fact, went backwards by 0.3 per cent. Our state final demand grew by 2.1 per cent over the year to March 2021. That is slightly above Australia's GDP growth in that period of 1.8 per cent. Retail trade turnover is up 7.3 per cent over the year to June 2021 and retail spending is around 17½ per cent above decade average levels in the March quarter.

Housing finance sees the number of owner-occupier commitments up 47½ per cent over the year to June 2021. The number of first home buyer commitments is up 41 per cent and the number of investment commitments is up nearly 110 per cent in the most recent data. On building approvals, the total number of residential dwellings approved increased by 31.3 per cent in June 2021.

I note that the Property Council put out their office market report. The Property Council advised that the latest report for the ACT reveals strong market demand, with

the highest net demand of any commercial leasing sector in the country and the lowest vacancy rate the territory has seen since 2009.

Of course, a strong public health response is essential to maintaining this economic activity and protecting and creating jobs. That is why the government is committed to delivering the vaccination rollout as effectively as possible—subject, of course, to supply of vaccines from the federal government. We know that vaccines are the only way out of this pandemic. Yesterday we opened vaccination bookings for Canberrans in their 30s and nearly 21,000 bookings were made in a single day. That is four times the previous record. *(Time expired.)*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** A supplementary, Mr Pettersson.

**MR PETTERSSON:** Chief Minister, will the ACT government seek to partner with the commonwealth government to strengthen our economic recovery?

**MR BARR:** In short, yes, we will. We have been able to partner with the commonwealth on a range of important infrastructure projects, such as light rail stage 2A, the duplications of Gundaroo Drive and William Hovell Drive, the upgrades to the Monaro Highway, the Tuggeranong Parkway and the Molonglo River bridge crossing.

Looking beyond these projects, we look forward to working with the commonwealth to see a consolidation and revitalisation of the Australian Institute of Sport at Bruce, a boost to housing supply for the territory at the former CSIRO Ginninderra site, the rejuvenation of Commonwealth Park, the Commonwealth Avenue bridge renewal project and the next stage of the Acton waterfront development.

**DR PATERSON:** A supplementary.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Dr Paterson.

**DR PATERSON:** Chief Minister, have you raised any specific new proposals with the commonwealth?

**MR BARR:** Yes, I have, and I thank Dr Paterson for the question. I have written to the federal Treasurer and the minister for tourism requesting a nationally consistent approach to support tourism and hospitality businesses and workers that have been affected by lockdowns outside of their state or territory.

I have asked the commonwealth to consider further extending the COVID-19 disaster payment to eligible employees in the tourism and hospitality sectors, including those in the ACT who have lost income as a result of outbreaks in other jurisdictions. We have been able to secure this support for workers in this context where they were exposed interstate but undertook their isolation in the ACT. We have got them eligible for these payments, but we want to see this extended. The government will also continue to monitor impacts locally on our economy as a result of the interstate lockdowns, and we will consider additional support if required.

**Roads—speed limits**

**MR PARTON:** My question is to the Chief Minister. Last Friday morning on Chief Minister's talkback on local ABC Radio you said that thousands of warnings had been issued to the motorists exceeding the 40 kilometre per hour speed limit in the new speed restriction areas in Civic. Chief Minister, had thousands of individual warning notices been issued to motorists exceeding the new speed limit prior to 5 July?

**MR BARR:** I do not have direct responsibility for that.

**MR PARTON:** No, I understand, but it is based on your—

**MADAM SPEAKER:** The minister responsible can answer the question. Ms Cheyne.

**MS CHEYNE:** Sorry, could you repeat the question?

**MR PARTON:** It was in its entirety to the Chief Minister. I said, "Last Friday morning on Chief Minister's talkback on local ABC Radio you said that thousands of warnings had been issued to the motorists exceeding the 40-kilometre-per-hour speed limit in the new speed restriction areas in Civic. Chief Minister, had thousands of individual warning notices been issued to motorists exceeding the new speed limit prior to 5 July?"

**MS CHEYNE:** The short answer to that is no. From 5 July until 26 July—that is the latest data that I have—18,437 infringement notices have been issued. However, in the two-week grace period there was a considerable communications campaign, and I will go into the detail of that communications campaign. That followed nine items had covered the new 40-kilometre-an-hour zone before the grace period; 11 media items covered the grace period; and since then there have been at least seven media items. Variable messaging signs have been used in the area between May, June and July. We have also had radio ads across multiple time slots and either side of the news during peak hour to alert motorists to this change.

I note the change came into place in March. We did not start enforcing until July. There was a very long lead period. We had the grace period to alert as many Canberrans as possible. We had a social media post on our own ACT government channels, and I note they have been on other channels, including Canberra Notice Board Group and including on Reddit, where there have been 1,400 comments just on an ACT government social media account alone. But to send individual warning letters—(*Time expired.*)

**MR PARTON:** To whoever wants to answer it: why did the Chief Minister tell the public that thousands of warnings had been issued if that was, in fact, not the case?

**MR BARR:** My understanding was that there had been communication, extensive communication, from the time the speed zones changed in March to when infringement notices were issued. If I made an error, I apologise for that. Obviously in the context of Chief Minister talkback there are potentially thousands of issues that

can be raised. I do not have instant recollection of every single thing. I do recall a discussion in relation to this matter. If I got it wrong, I apologise. Nevertheless, the point stands that there have been months and months of discussion, warnings, speed signs and debate on this issue. And the fact that the speed has changed in that area has been very well canvassed throughout the community for a period of a third of a year now.

**MS LEE:** Chief Minister or the minister: why do you not waive the low-range speeding fines incurred by thousands of Canberrans, given that there were no warnings given and given how clearly ineffective the safety and speed advisory measures appear to be?

**MS CHEYNE:** That is a pretty extraordinary question, I have to say. There are 17 signs around the three cameras—17. For Ms Lee to take that approach—this is about road safety. This is about an area that has high pedestrian activity. That is exactly why we reduced the speeds. This is an area that I think the member for Kurrajong should be interested in enlivening. When we have had months and months of communications about this, when we have offered a grace period, when we have communicated regularly during the grace period about the number of people who were speeding—this had an extraordinary amount of media take-up, something that the Liberals can only dream of, I suspect—and to then take that approach, it is not usual practice to issue warning letters for drivers with 20,000 people speeding through that time—

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Members!

**MS CHEYNE:** With 20,000 vehicles detected committing an offence, sending a warning letter to every single driver would have been a manual process which would have been a significant diversion of resources.

*Mr Hanson interjecting—*

**MS CHEYNE:** Sending a warning letter, we would have immediately had you criticising it. You cannot have it both ways, Mr Hanson.

### **Business—ChooseCBR scheme**

**MR MILLIGAN:** My question is to the minister for business. FOI documents about ChooseCBR obtained by the Canberra Liberals reveal that “all reasonable load tests were carried out on the site when the vouchers were deployed”. However, an internal treasury directorate ministerial brief dated 3 May states that “the schedule allows a short window for user testing of the voucher redemption process”. The brief also reveals, “The short timeframe between decision and program launch means development and user acceptance testing timetables are compressed”. Minister, do you take responsibility for failing to properly test the system, which saw it crash after just one day?

**MS CHEYNE:** There was a lot of testing done on the system, but there was also an extraordinary take-up of the system—far beyond anything that we had seen in the trial, by a factor or at a rate of knots that we just had not seen in the trial. There had been significant testing. There also was quite a lot of communication with the developer, including past tests and making sure that it was at a standard that we were ready to hit go on.

Given the amount of interest and communication about this, and that I had personally gone to businesses about this, I was confident about the launch of it. I have said repeatedly that I am sorry that it was not able to hold up to the sheer volume that we had on those first few days, but we did do that further work that did increase the amount of load that we were able to have on the website. That is exactly what resulted in the relaunch of it a week later, where we saw an even higher number of transactions where there were no issues reported, something that the opposition conveniently forgets.

**MR MILLIGAN:** Minister, why did you rush the ChooseCBR scheme and compromise testing, making the program such a shambles?

**MS CHEYNE:** It was not rushed.

**MRS KIKKERT:** Minister, why didn't you allow more time for testing, given you were warned that the short window of time meant that testing would be compressed?

**MS CHEYNE:** All reasonable tests were conducted in that time.

### **Environment—Lawson grasslands**

**MS CLAY:** My question is to the Minister for the Environment. Minister, I recently went for a walk near Lawson grassland and learned about the critically endangered grasslands, box gum woodlands and certain species on the site, like the golden sun moth, the striped legless lizard and the Perunga grasshopper. The Lawson grasslands are on national land and they are marked for future development by Defence Housing Australia. What consultation has the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate conducted about this proposed development with the National Capital Authority, Defence Housing Australia, the Department of Defence and their contractors?

**MS VASSAROTTI:** I thank Ms Clay for the question. As Ms Clay noted, it is actually National Capital Authority land. So the ACT government is not the decision-maker on this site. We do know that Defence Housing Australia, who are the administrators for the site, are proposing to put a housing development on that site. We also note this is a really important site in relation to the conservation values that it has, particularly around native temperate grasslands. They are very precious. Certainly on ACT government land we have protected a number of sites that have similar ecological values.

In relation to consultation that has happened to date, ACT government conservation officers have actually undertaken a site visit on 30 June 2020 to discuss the proposed development in Lawson with Defence Housing Australia. Future development that will occur will be subject to environmental approval, particularly under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act and planning approval by the national capital act. The ACT government will be able to provide consultation but will not be the decision-maker in the matter.

**MS CLAY:** Do you think Lawson Grasslands should be protected?

**MS VASSAROTTI:** Certainly, with the ecological values that have been identified on the site, particularly in terms of ecological communities of the temperate grasslands and the woodlands threatened communities as well that have been confirmed on the site, it meets criteria that if this site was on ACT government land I think we would absolutely look at protecting the site. We do know that it does have elements on the site that means that it does need to be looked at in terms of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act. Sadly, because it is national land there is not an opportunity to have any approval, but it certainly contains elements that we could consider would be important to protect.

**MR BRADDOCK:** Minister, is EPSDD actively working on any feedback on this development at the moment? If so, what are they working on?

**MS VASSAROTTI:** Thank you for the question. As noted, because it will go through an approval process through the EPBC Act, we know that the relevant government department, the commonwealth Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment, will be contacting EPSDD for comment. We do not have access to the use of a bilateral agreement, because it is on national land, but we certainly have been engaging in terms of understanding what is on the site and we will be very active in that approval process in terms of providing information.

### **Discrimination—sexual harassment**

**DR PATERSON:** My question is to the Minister for Women. Minister, what is the ACT government doing to prevent and respond to sexual harassment in our workplaces and across the community?

**MS BERRY:** I thank Dr Paterson for her question. Of course the ACT government is making great progress against its commitments to prevent and respond to sexual harassment across the ACT community. Members will recall that in June, I announced the appointment of the chair of the overarching Steering Committee for Sexual Assault Prevention and Response program, Renee Leon, who is an experienced CEO with over 15 years in senior roles, including as departmental secretary in the Australian Public Service. In her role as the chair, Ms Leon will work with the steering committee representatives and the working groups and reference groups in this program to drive prevention responses for sexual harassment and assault in the ACT, and to advise on new priorities for action by the government.

Led by the sector, this work will be inclusive and intersectional about experiences from across the community, including from people with disability, children and young people, the LGBTIQ+ community, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, and communities that are culturally and linguistically diverse.

A reference group has been set up focusing specifically on sexual harassment and assault in the workplace, and this group will provide input to all the working groups to represent the perspectives of workers and workplace safety. Within the working groups and reference groups, a steering committee chair will now be moving forward as meetings have occurred within all those working groups. I know members in this place, the Leader of the Opposition Ms Lee and Dr Paterson have already presented to the law reform working group, and I know that there are more presentations to come along. As well, the ACT government has set up in our own workplace, here in the Legislative Assembly, the parliamentary women's group and the government women's caucus as well as a support network for staff. So I am confident that the ACT government is well positioned to deliver an evidence-based approach to sexual assault that places victim-survivors at the front.

**DR PATERSON:** Minister, how is sexual harassment a gendered issue?

**MS BERRY:** I thank Dr Paterson for the supplementary question. This week—yesterday, in fact—I tabled the ACT government's response to the Australian Human Rights Commission's *Respect@Work* report on the National Inquiry into Sexual Harassment in Australian Workplaces. The ACT government's response provides a position on each of the 55 recommendations in the *Respect@Work* report. The ACT government acknowledges that gendered power imbalances in the workplace and across society are key drivers of sexual harassment, and that other forms of discrimination, disadvantage and harassment—such as sexuality, cultural background and disability—intersect to compound the impact of sexual harassment. These gendered power imbalances go to the root of mainstream and harmful understandings of gender—the way we misunderstand gender as a binary, with set roles and ways of behaving.

I can say anecdotally that psychosocial hazards such as sexual harassment are more prevalent in traditionally female industries such as nursing, education and hospitality, and these hazards lead to risks which can result in long-lasting psychological injuries. These types of injuries present a workplace safety issue, yet they can be more hidden and can develop over time. They can also go untreated and unacknowledged, and this presents another workplace gender gap. The ACT government is committed to continuing primary prevention work and doing that work across our ACT public schools, as well as, importantly, across the community to challenge harmful gender norms and to prevent and respond to sexual harassment.

**MS ORR:** Minister, what would the ACT propose should be implemented across the country to address gendered violence?

**MS BERRY:** I thank Ms Orr for the supplementary question. Everyone has the right to feel safe—safe in the community, safe at home and safe at work. The Australian

Human Rights Commission's *Respect@Work* report demonstrates that for far too many people this is not the case. Thirty-nine per cent of women and 26 per cent of men have experienced sexual harassment at work in the last five years. This reality stems from gender inequality and unequal power structures, where employers fall short by not holding perpetrators and harassers to account. Workplace sexual harassment warrants a national response, and the ACT government encourages action by the commonwealth to protect workers and to take steps to advance women's safety and gender equality. The Sex Discrimination and Fair Work (Respect at Work) Amendment Bill 2021 responds to some but not all of the recommendations from the *Respect@Work* report, and the ACT government is encouraging the commonwealth to reconsider its position with regard to delaying broader amendments to the Fair Work system. The delay in the introduction of counterpart amendments to explicitly prohibit sexual harassment under the Fair Work Act limits our ability to clearly demonstrate our rejection of discrimination in any form.

As a government committed to upholding the rights and entitlements and protections of workers—I want to acknowledge the work of Minister Gentleman in this space—it is our position that the commonwealth should be taking advantage of the opportunities provided by the bill to ensure that sexual harassment and discrimination on the grounds of sex are expressly prohibited under the Fair Work Act. To do this, we would need to provide the strongest evidence possible to the federal government to ensure that it can do this work.

### **Roads—speed limits**

**MRS KIKKERT:** Chief Minister, when you incorrectly told the Canberra public that thousands of warnings had been issued to motorists exceeding the 40 kilometre per hour speed limit in the new speed restrictions area in Civic, did anyone from your office or directorate advise you of this error?

**MR BARR:** There was no question to me there, but I will take it that the question was—it was not asked. But nevertheless, no. But I am aware now and have apologised.

**MRS KIKKERT:** Chief Minister, why did your office or directorate fail to alert you to this error, and why does it take questioning from the opposition to bring the truth to light?

**MR BARR:** I do not know that this would be the top issue that we have been dealing with at the moment, frankly, in the middle of a pandemic with massive implications and a lot of other issues on my desk at the moment. I apologise—

*Mr Hanson interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mr Hanson, enough.

**MR BARR:** I apologise for the error. There were a lot of warnings given, but it would appear not individual warnings to individual motorists by way of letter. I apologise if there is any misunderstanding in relation to that matter. What is very clear is that there were months and months of warnings, signs, media coverage, social media

commentary and debate in the community about the initiative and its substance. Right at the moment I have a lot of things on my plate, not least of which is leading this territory's response to a global pandemic. I apologise for getting it wrong on this issue. But right now, of all the things that we face, this is not in the top 10.

**MS LEE:** How much was spent on all the new and variable signage and the public information campaign, and how does this compare to the cost of sending out warning letters?

**MR BARR:** I will take that on notice.

### **Economy—employment**

**MS CASTLEY:** My question is to the Chief Minister. On 22 June you gave a ministerial statement and said:

... 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.

Just one month later, on 26 July, the *Canberra Times* ran a story with the headline "ACT's job market is weakest in the nation," with the quarterly CommSec report revealing unemployment had climbed to 4.9 per cent. ACT Treasury said 5,900 Canberrans had lost their jobs. Chief Minister and Treasurer, why have 5,900 Canberrans lost their jobs in the last month under your watch?

**MR BARR:** The monthly unemployment data is subject to considerable variation. It is a very small sample size and it is often back-cast and adjusted. A movement of that size is unprecedented. We looked at other sources of data, including the single touch payroll data, that indicates that there was a decline in employment, but not to the extent registered in that single month's figure.

We are looking, obviously, at the situation. The unemployment rate in the ACT, according to that one single month snapshot, is the same as the Australian unemployment rate, so whilst the Canberra commentary would reflect the fact that normally unemployment in the ACT is lower than the national average, there is this one rogue figure. We will need more data to confirm that that is actually the case. I suspect there may be a downward revision. I do not know yet, so when we get the next set of unemployment data, which is due in a couple of weeks, we will have a better sense of whether this is a one-off anomaly or in fact a developing trend. If it is a developing trend then the government will seek to respond by creating more jobs, including in our budget in August.

**MS CASTLEY:** Chief Minister, how will these 5,900 unemployed Canberrans be able to find work, given the unemployment rate is well above the decade average?

**MR BARR:** Several weeks ago, before the Sydney lockdown commenced, the biggest single complaint from most industry sectors in the ACT was an inability to find

workers. This remains the case for nearly all industry sectors within the ACT economy, except for those that are tourism exposed, because, clearly, with the lockdown in Sydney, the Victorian lockdown and the Queensland lockdown, our tourism industry has lost about 85 per cent of its market. It is not experiencing a supply-side shock—all of the businesses are able to trade with no restrictions. It is experiencing a demand-side shock as a result of pandemic-induced lockdowns in the three biggest Australian states.

The issue from here will be whether, in our local economy, given Canberrans cannot really travel many places, we will see our local spend pickup. The June retail trade figures are encouraging in that regard. For hospitality, for example, in June it was the third highest spend ever in the history of that dataset, coming from May, which was the highest ever spend in the history of that dataset. It is showing that Canberrans will spend their money locally when they cannot travel overseas or interstate.

**DR PATERSON:** Chief Minister, in addressing the unemployment rate, what is the ACT government doing to create more jobs?

**MR BARR:** Obviously, we are the second largest employer in the city ourselves, so we have taken on the responsibility of promoting employment growth and securing local jobs through a range of initiatives that the government undertakes, as well as support of key industry sectors that are large employers. We will continue that focus. As we project beyond the immediate lockdowns along the eastern seaboard of Australia, we would anticipate the sort of economic rebound that we saw after a similar wave of lockdowns in 2020. The evidence appears to be that short, sharp lockdowns have the least economic cost, and then we will see a rebound.

We hope that the short, sharp lockdowns that have worked in Victoria will work in Queensland. It is now, obviously, too late for a short, sharp lockdown in New South Wales, so they are in for several more months, it would seem, of lockdown and restrictions. We are factoring that in to our economic thinking, given that Sydney and the greater Sydney region represent about 20 per cent of the national economy.

### **COVID-19—multilingual communication**

**MR BRADDOCK:** My question is to the Minister for Health. The repeated lesson from COVID is the need to communicate effectively with all parts of the community, in particular, those for whom English is not their first language. In what languages has ACT Health produced materials to provide information about COVID?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** I thank Mr Braddock for the question. I will take the detail of the question on notice. I can advise Mr Braddock that the COVID-19 website has materials available in 15 languages, but I do not have a list of those languages on me; it is probably available on the COVID-19 website.

The Public Information Coordination Centre for COVID-19, which has been running for some time now, takes very seriously the importance of communicating with culturally and linguistically diverse communities in the ACT. In fact, a liaison officer from the Community Services Directorate works with the PICC to help identify

opportunities to communicate with CALD communities. I know that has really been appreciated over time.

COVID-19 media statements detailing key changes in travel and restrictions are also provided in audio format to two Canberra community radio stations, and these stations collectively broadcast in more than 20 languages spoken in the ACT. Public health advice is also provided through proactive interviews and community radio in response to particular issues and circumstances—for example, the celebration of Eid while remaining COVID safe, and tips on how to comply with public health directions like completing declaration forms.

The COVID-19 media statement is also provided to the RiotACT Chinese edition team to disseminate information to approximately 8,000 Canberrans who read Chinese. And, from this month, Facebook campaign advertising will include a language translation option, which allows both the user and moderator to see the content in a number of languages. Officials are also looking at how this can be applied to broader communication activities.

**MR BRADDOCK:** What is the vaccination rate for culturally and linguistically diverse communities in the ACT?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** I will take the detail of that question on notice. I am not sure that we are going to be able to provide a specific figure for Mr Braddock in relation to that. I just do not know that our data will capture all culturally and linguistically diverse communities in the ACT. But if there is specific information that Mr Braddock is after he can always ask our office and we will do our best to try to get that specific information to him.

We do know in terms of vaccination, again, as per the broader public communications around COVID-19 that engagement with culturally and linguistically diverse communities has been a key priority. We are seeing that right across the community. Indeed, it is recognised as one of the challenges in the vaccination of the aged-care workforce for which, of course, the commonwealth has primary responsibility. Overcoming vaccine hesitancy and ensuring that people in those frontline workforces are able to come forward and confident to come forward and get vaccinated is about addressing insecure work—the consequences of potentially having an adverse reaction to a vaccine, a short-lived reaction, that will mean needing to take a day off work and people being remunerated for that—but also ensuring that people can hear from people they trust, their community leaders and people who speak their language about that. That is something we have been working very closely with the commonwealth and their providers on to ensure it is happening in that aged-care workforce.

More broadly, paid community radio ads have been running in 10 languages, and social media ads have been targeting both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and culturally and linguistically diverse communities. Radio scripts are provided to the Canberra Multicultural Community Forum to read out in different languages through their community radio shows, and resources are available on the COVID-19 website,

as I said, in multiple languages. We really work closely with community leaders as well.

**MS CLAY:** What is the vaccination rate for First Nation peoples in the ACT?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** Again, that data is available in our weekly vaccination update, but I do not have that with me at the moment. So I will take the question on notice and come back to the chamber. I will be able to provide that information potentially directly after this.

The vaccination rate is lower for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community than it is for the rest of the community. We have been working with that community. Obviously Winnunga Nimmityjah is a vaccination centre and they can provide both AstraZeneca and now Pfizer vaccines as well. They have been doing a great job in reaching out to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to get vaccinated.

I can say the vaccination rate in the older age group for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is high, so for those over 65 it is actually very high. But for those in younger age groups—Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are eligible down to the age of 16 and from next Monday will be eligible down to the age of 12—the vaccination rate is not as high as it is for the wider community. Obviously we will continue to work with Winnunga and we will continue to hold community engagement sessions.

I can advise that ACT Health has had face-to-face sessions throughout the COVID-19 response, and not necessarily specifically in relation to vaccination, with the ACTCOSS Galunga program, with Gugan Gulwan and with Yeddung Mura Good Pathways as well working very closely with Winnunga to try and increase vaccine take-up in that community.

### **Economy—performance**

**MR CAIN:** My question is to the minister for business. In June, the Canberra Business Chamber revealed that Canberra has the lowest long-term business survival rate in the country, with only 62½ per cent of ACT businesses trading after five years, compared to more than 65 per cent nationally. This surely challenges the government's goal of reaching 250,000 jobs in Canberra by 2025. Minister, why are more businesses failing in the ACT compared with the rest of the country?

**MR BARR:** I will take this one. The government is aware that there is a minor statistical difference between the national average and the ACT average. That is less than three percentage points. Given the total number of businesses we are talking about, it really comes down to dozens, in actual reality, in terms of the number of businesses.

I note that Mr Cain excluded from his question that we also have the most new businesses. Every month, we get an update on business entries and exits in the ACT. I can advise the Assembly that in every single month there are more business entries than there are business exits. The number of businesses in the territory continues to grow month on month.

Questions in relation to the detail of why certain businesses survive and others do not are the subject of some discussion and debate. There is some national research, I understand, into this matter. A little bit will depend on the nature of the business—as to whether it is sole trader, for example. There is a higher degree of sole trader and micro businesses in the ACT, where people register an ABN to undertake some additional income-earning activity that is secondary to their main job. That is one factor that is clearly the case in terms of both entries and exits in the ACT that appears to be somewhat different from other parts of Australia.

But the statistical difference between the ACT and the national average is not so great as to suggest that there is a massive gulf between what happens here and what happens elsewhere in Australia.

**MR CAIN:** Minister, how many of the new jobs required for us to reach the target of 250,000 will be created directly or indirectly by commonwealth government spending?

**MR BARR:** The commonwealth accounts for one in four jobs in our economy at the moment in terms of direct employment. If you then extrapolate commonwealth funding to public institutions like the universities, for example, that would see the level of commonwealth-generated job activity increase to close to perhaps one-half of all employment. That would be higher in the ACT, clearly, than any other economy in Australia.

I guess it depends on how far you extend the reach of “commonwealth-created”.

**Mrs Jones:** They do give us a fair bit of money.

**MR BARR:** Governments at federal and state and territory level are obviously significant employers in and of themselves, and there is an amount of money that is churned through the economy by governments to support other industries. For example, in recent days the commonwealth has put hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars further into the aviation industry to protect employment. We could have a philosophical debate about whether jobs in the aviation industry are commonwealth supported or not. To some extent, they are, and they certainly have been extensively during the pandemic.

**MS CASTLEY:** Minister, why isn't your government providing direct financial support to help businesses survive?

**MR BARR:** Our government is providing direct financial support to help businesses survive in a number of different ways across a number of different industry sectors, from grants to support business activity in the export field and grants to support business activity in the domestic market, tourism and otherwise. We continue to support a variety of different industry sectors.

Almost every part of the ACT economy has a degree of public subsidy, one way or the other. This city would not exist without government. This economy is artificial to the extent that it would not have generated \$41 billion of activity if there was not

government intervention, government support and a deliberate decision more than a century ago to have an administrative capital that was wholly contained within New South Wales but a certain distance from Sydney. Canberra would not and this economy would not exist without those decisions. Almost everything that happens in Canberra clearly has a degree of government influence, be that federal or territory, although over time, as the population has increased and the economy has diversified, there is more activity that might be sustainable outside of the public sector ecosystem that is the basis of, and the reason for being, the city of Canberra.

### **Parks and conservation—World Ranger Day**

**MS ORR:** My question is to the Minister for Planning and Land Management. Minister, what is the significance of World Ranger Day?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** I thank Ms Orr for her question and, of course, her interest in the management of ACT parks and reserves. Last Saturday, 31 July, was World Ranger Day. As the name suggests, this occasion is celebrated around the world. It provides a chance to reflect and thank those whose job it is to care for the environment that we live in.

It is also a time for acknowledging rangers around the world who sometimes face life-threatening situations and to commemorate those who have died in the line of duty. It is a day to recognise those who stand up to protect wildlife and ecosystems, sometimes on the front line of conservation. This may include active protection from poachers and illegal logging. Although it seems like an amazing job—and it can be—it can also be dangerous. Here in the ACT our rangers deal with dangers including venomous snakes, rescuing lost hikers and battling bushfires.

World Ranger Day is a time to pause and reflect on those working around the world who are killed or injured at work, but it is also a time to celebrate the wonderful work of our rangers and dedicated staff, who love their jobs and love our bush capital.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Ms Orr, a supplementary.

**MS ORR:** Minister, how are Parks and Conservation staff protecting our bush capital?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Madam Speaker, as you and I know, from our many years in this place, our rangers in the ACT are extremely dedicated to their jobs. They have worked especially hard over the past year to give Canberrans more opportunities to enjoy our parks and reserves. During COVID restrictions, the ACT's parks and reserves have been more valuable than ever for Canberrans.

Our rangers have worked tirelessly to maintain and improve them, including carrying out substantial repairs from bushfire damage. These efforts meant that Namadgi National Park was able to reopen to visitors earlier than expected. They have worked very hard to prepare for the upcoming bushfire season—

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Your time has expired.

**Mr Barr:** There is something wrong with the clock.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Members, given that there was clearly a problem with the clock, can we give a few more seconds to the minister?

**Mrs Jones:** Yes.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Madam Speaker, they have worked very hard to protect our including within the Mulligans Flat and Tidbinbilla sanctuaries, and at the new grassland earless dragon breeding facility.

They have also done great work in planning for the future of our bush capital by developing management plans, carrying out strategic operations and taking great care in conservation practices. I thank everyone in the ACT Parks and Conservation Service for that important work.

**MR PETTERSSON:** A supplementary.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mr Pettersson.

**MR PETTERSSON:** Minister, what other ways is the ACT government caring for our parks and reserves?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** I thank Mr Pettersson for his question too. The government has supported volunteer groups through a number of years and I am proud to have been involved in delivering funding and support for these groups. They do excellent work across the many parks and reserves in the ACT as land managers and custodians.

Volunteers have been involved, along with Parks and Conservation staff, in bushfire recovery in Namadgi National Park. They also work on weed management and seasonal restoration, as well as plantings and clean-ups. Their support for the work of the Parks and Conservation Service, of course, is invaluable.

I am extremely pleased that the groups will have continued funding from the ACT government for the next four years. This support from the government is a reflection of the hard work and dedication of those volunteers. Our volunteers work closely with our rangers to care for the unique environment in the ACT. They share a passion and a dedication to conservation in our bush capital as well as the love of the outdoors.

Canberrans love our bush capital, and I would encourage all of those who are interested in conservation to get involved in our local land management groups.

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

## **Paper**

**Madam Speaker** presented the following paper:

Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty—Copy of letter to the Speaker from the Chief Minister, dated 2 August 2021, in response to the resolution of the Assembly of 2 June 2021.

**Business—COVID-19**

**MS CASTLEY (Yerrabi) (3.09):** I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) Canberra’s hospitality and night-time economy has suffered greatly due to severe lockdowns across the country, particularly in NSW, with some restaurants, bars and cafes closing and many others reporting a huge downturn in trade and revenue;
- (b) the impact on hospitality workers who have lost jobs while others face job losses, reduced hours and continued uncertainty and anxiety; and
- (c) the ACT’s job market is the weakest in the nation with unemployment surging in June to 4.9 percent from 3.6 percent in May, which ACT Treasury says represents 5900 people who have lost their jobs; and

(2) calls on the ACT Government to introduce a hospitality support package for hospitality venues, in line with tourism industry support, including:

- (a) an emergency cash grant for hospitality businesses which have suffered a 30 percent (or greater) downturn to help them cover operating costs;
- (b) extending the full rebate on the water and sewerage fixed charge component of their Icon Water bills for the first two quarters of 2021-22 to hospitality venues;
- (c) extending the waiver for outdoor dining permit fees until the end of 2022;
- (d) extending the scheme to allow pubs, bars and restaurants to sell takeaway alcohol until the end of 2021;
- (e) waiving food business registration fees until the end of 2022; and
- (f) working with hospitality businesses on other support measures as the pandemic and restrictions continue.

Canberra’s hospitality sector is in dire financial straits. Our unemployment situation is also of enormous concern. The situation is bleak and the future looks bleaker. In the late June sitting week, in this chamber the Chief Minister was boasting about Canberra’s unemployment rate of 3.6 per cent, “the lowest in the country by a long way”. Seven weeks on, we are far from that. That is why I am here today—to move a motion calling on the Labor-Greens government to urgently introduce a hospitality support package for a sector that has suffered greatly due to severe lockdowns across the country, particularly in New South Wales. The sector is crying out for support.

On 26 July the *Canberra Times* carried a headline declaring that the ACT’s job market is “the weakest in the nation”, referring to the new CommSec report. The unemployment rate surged to 4.9 per cent in June and we now have the weakest job’s market in the nation.

We know that Canberra’s winter is always a difficult time for our hospitality sector, our restaurants, our bars and our cafes. We tend to rug up and stay indoors and

business cops the downturn. But that loss of patronage is nothing compared to the thumping that businesses have taken due to severe lockdowns across the country, particularly in Sydney and much of New South Wales. The situation is ever-changing, and harsher measures continue to be imposed. Now is the time for the government to act. The hospitality sector needs a survival plan before more businesses go broke and more jobs are lost.

On top of the severe restrictions across the border hitting our economy hard, Canberra's own period of mandatory mask-wearing also took a toll on hospitality venues. It caused anxiety, with the effect that some Canberrans put a break on plans to venture out and enjoy a drink and a meal. The reality is that some of Canberra's hospitality venues have closed, others are contemplating closure and most have suffered a severe hit on takings.

We know of the job losses, reduced hours and worry. And I fear that there is worse to come. That is why I am calling on the government to immediately implement a hospitality support package which includes emergency cash grants for hospitality businesses and a range of other measures to help venues stay afloat.

It is one thing to read statistics and articles about business downturns and job losses, but it is far more disturbing and compelling to learn people's stories, which reveal such pain and struggle. Last week, I spoke to a Kingston business owner who had suffered a 30 per cent drop in business since early June. He believes the threat of restrictions in Canberra and mandatory mask-wearing scared a lot of people to be cautious about their spending. He went on:

I have let staff go and cut my casual hours significantly. When you let a full-time staff member go you have to pay out leave entitlements. So you have leave entitlements building up, tax obligations building up, it's going to be a shock down the track.

In three to six months from now businesses are going to close. It's something I have to consider; do I continue to run the business in an insolvent fashion because I cannot reduce my fixed costs? But running insolvent you are putting those staff entitlements at risk, and then you have super to consider.

We are in a precarious situation. A lot of businesses think it will be short term and they can trade through it but for me it's about how much more you can comfortably take on board before you say "enough's enough".

I've been in business over 30 years and I've always paid my bills and staff wages and I don't want to be put in that position."

It is a sad story.

A bar owner in Belconnen has laid off five staff members and now runs his business solely with his family. His monthly turnover has halved from \$30,000 to \$15,000 while his rent is \$5,000 and operating costs are \$10,000. He said, "We have a month-to-month lease and if things don't improve we are going to close." The business owner said his electricity alone is \$800 to \$1,000 a month, and he called on the

government to provide financial support for overheads as well as a survival plan for the next three years.

Recently, the owner of Parlour in New Acton wrote to the Chief Minister asking for support for the restaurant and function industry. Dr Ross Sydney wrote:

Our Parlour employs 22 permanent staff. As a direct result of the uncertainties caused by the pandemic in NSW, to date we have had \$40,000 worth of forward function bookings cancelled for the period from mid-July to the end of August.

Dr Sydney said the New South Wales lockdown extension until the end of August would mean more cancellations into October. He wrote:

Overall, compared to the same period in July 2019 before the pandemic Parlour's July 2021 turnover has declined more than 20 per cent.

We know what a boost it is to Canberra's tourism and hospitality sector when the federal parliament comes to town. Canberra is full of MPs, senators and staffers—not to mention an army of lobbyists—who flock to our restaurants and bars. This is a lucrative time for our many hospitality venues who rely on the pollie trade. It did not help to have the ACT Health Minister in the media last week warning politicians in Canberra for federal sittings this week to avoid pubs and clubs.

Let me be clear, I understand completely the real health challenges that we all face, and the community needs to fight this pandemic and be safe. However, actions have consequences, and the government needs to understand that. If it makes rulings or requests urging people to stay away from our hospitality venues, our businesses actually feel that loss in a very real way. And the government should acknowledge that impact and respond with financial and other support.

Just two days ago the *Canberra Times* splashed the headline, "Parliament rules a big hit to business." This is what concerns the Canberra Liberals. Almost 65,000 Canberrans are employed in small business, including tens of thousands in our hospitality sector, and many are being hit hard.

The article says that Canberra businesses fear being crippled by the COVID-restrictive parliamentary sitting period. What the article failed to mention was that many hospitality venues are already there. They are already crippled. The Australian Hotels Association reported that the situation for hotels is dire, and we know that. This is why the government last month announced that hotel and tourism operators could claim up to \$75,000 in rebates, which Chief Minister Barr said should help about 90 per cent of providers and 20 privately owned tourism venues. But accommodation, tourism and hospitality work hand in hand. So it beggars belief that the government can unveil a support package for tourism and accommodation while ignoring our hospitality venues.

Just yesterday the *Australian* newspaper had an article in which Homelessness Australia said that families and small-business owners who had lost their livelihoods in the pandemic were a growing group of people seeking homelessness services.

I have been in business and I know that smart businesses save for a rainy day. But this one has been the longest rainy day that we have seen. “It’s too tough,” a business owner said to me last week, “we’re hitting an emotional wall.” I know firsthand what it is like. You feel like you are drowning, like an elephant has just taken up residence on your chest. The thing we have to remember here is that it is not out of mismanagement or stupidity; it is this pandemic which has thrust it upon these hospitality businesses. They are doing well to stay afloat.

We know that the ChooseCBR trial and the scheme wasted taxpayers’ money. Fewer than 20 per cent of eligible businesses participated. The system crashed. We have heard it all. And the government is yet to reveal the full extent of the questionable transactions. The Labor-Greens government needs a plan for business—in this case, today, the hospitality sector. That is what business needs, a government that understands them, supports them and delivers a plan that will genuinely help businesses to get through the tough times ahead.

That is why the Canberra Liberals are calling on the government to immediately implement a hospitality support package to show the sector that government has their back, which is something we all question, as well as emergency cash grants, money straight into the bank accounts of our hospitality venues, to put towards the operating costs like power bills, rent, supplier bills.

The Canberra Liberals are also calling for:

- (c) extending the waiver for outdoor dining permit fees until the end of 2022;
- (d) extending the scheme to allow pubs, bars and restaurants to sell takeaway alcohol until the end of 2021;
- (e) waiving food business registration fees until the end of 2022; and
- (f) working with hospitality businesses on other support measures as the pandemic and restrictions continue.

The Labor-Greens government should do what it has been elected to do: provide support to our hardworking hospitality venues, our restaurants, cafes and bars, and genuinely give them a helping hand at a critical time of need.

**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) (3.20): I move the amendment circulated in my name:

Omit all words after “notes” (first occurring), substitute:

- “(a) tourism exposed sections of Canberra’s hospitality and night-time economy has been impacted by severe lockdowns across the country, particularly in NSW;
- (b) the impact on some hospitality workers in tourism exposed venues, such as the National Convention Centre, face reduced hours and continued uncertainty and anxiety;

- (c) the ACT's labour market has remained resilient overall with many industry sectors still experiencing skills shortages;
  - (d) retail trade increased by 0.9 percent in May 2021, with the main contributors to the increase being food retailing, cafes, restaurants and takeaway food services, and clothing, footwear and personal accessory, including to a record \$79.5 million spend in cafes, restaurants and takeaway food services;
  - (e) the ACT Government continually monitors key economic indicators and will consider additional or extended supports as the situation evolves; and
  - (f) the Chief Minister has written to the Commonwealth Treasurer and Tourism Minister requesting expansion of the COVID-19 Disaster Payment to include hospitality and tourism workers across Australia that have been adversely affected by lockdowns in other geographical locations;
- (2) further notes that the ACT Government has provided a range of supports for hospitality venues, including:
- (a) allowing on-licence venues to sell takeaway alcohol;
  - (b) waiving food business registration fees; and
  - (c) waiving fees for outdoor dining permits fees; and
- (3) calls on the ACT Government to continue to work with industry stakeholders and the Commonwealth Government to increase support for hospitality and tourism businesses and workers across the country.”.

Throughout the pandemic, the government has moved quickly to provide targeted support where it is needed and when it is needed. In doing so, we work closely with industry, we pay close attention to market and economic factors and we respond where it is needed. Indeed, the bulk of what Ms Castley has called for are things we have done or are already doing. It is pleasing to know she thinks they are good ideas! Examples of these initiatives include allowing on-licence venues to sell takeaway alcohol, waiving food business registration fees and waiving fees for outdoor dining permits. These were implemented quickly last year.

But we have made further announcements, including in the February budget. Food businesses which had prepaid their licence automatically had it extended for an additional 12 months, until end of March 2022. General licensees received an additional 12-month waiver until the end of June 2022.

Initially, last year from 25 March until 24 March this year, commercial liquor permits were issued to on-licensees with the application fee waived, which allowed for the takeaway sales and home delivery of liquor. In response to the Sydney lockdown and a bitterly cold winter here, at the beginning of July this year we reintroduced that on-liquor licensees would be able to sell takeaway alcohol and to offer it for home delivery. To make it as easy as possible for businesses, permits were issued automatically for those that had taken up the same opportunity in 2020. Businesses that did not take up this opportunity last year and now wanted to were advised how they could contact Access Canberra to request it.

When we announced this in July, initially we offered this for one month but, having continued to monitor the situation, we have extended it for another month until the end of August. Late last week all current on-licence holders who had a permit to sell takeaway alcohol were emailed noting the extension until the end of August. And earlier this week all other on-licence holders who have not yet taken up the initiative were emailed to again highlight that the takeaway opportunity is available to them. If there are businesses still interested, they should contact the Access Canberra liquor licensing team. This is easy via email at [ACliquor@act.gov.au](mailto:ACliquor@act.gov.au) or by calling 6207 2343, and I give my assurance that this will be turned around very quickly.

I absolutely support what the Minister for Health and indeed the national Chief Medical Officer have said about federal parliamentarians not going out and about, for all the reasons that have been canvassed. But there is nothing stopping them engaging with businesses by ordering in, and we absolutely encourage them to do that while they are here.

There are other initiatives too which have been encouraging Canberrans who can to get out and about and have been providing them with entertainment options like Amp It Up!—an important stimulus to the broader sector but one intrinsically tied to the night-time economy and to the hospitality sector.

As a government, we have been consistently employing the levers to encourage Canberrans to support local and to provide that support to businesses and then the levers to encourage Canberrans to spend local, providing incentives to get out and about but also recognising that if Canberrans do have some hesitancy with that or simply cannot then employing other measures like the off-licence permits so that they can still support local.

We will continue to engage with industry stakeholders on what they need and we will continue to be responsive to conditions. And it is for this reason that we have removed the dates Ms Castley included in her motion for how long initiatives should be in place. This is firstly because several of these are already in place and because the dates she has included appear to not be based on any industry data or forecasts; so they are nothing more than arbitrary. We need to be responsive, and that is what this amendment allows for.

What Ms Castley's motion touches on is that when any major area goes into extended lockdown, like Sydney has, this does have broad impacts on the entire national economy, which are out of our immediate control. What that means is that, when Sydney locks down, it is not just Sydney that is affected. It means that the largest domestic pool of tourists are not travelling. This has obvious impacts.

It has always been the federal government's role to provide the bulk of financial support across Australia for employers and employees suffering hardship due to the pandemic. It took them a while but we have seen the federal government finally start to step up to that effect in Sydney and some regional areas, but they need to acknowledge that millions of residents locked down for months is affecting tourism, and thus accommodation and some hospitality providers right across the country, including the ACT. The amendment reflects that fact.

The Chief Minister has written to the commonwealth Treasurer to urge the federal government to do its bit, and I am sure the Chief Minister will talk about this in more detail. The federal government should be developing a nationally consistent approach where the COVID-19 disaster payment is extended to eligible employers and employees who have been affected by a lockdown in another jurisdiction.

It is pleasing to see the Canberra Liberals make such a clear statement on their belief in the role of government—surprising perhaps, but welcome! The role of the ACT government is to use the levers we have available to us to provide effective and targeted support. We have done that and we will continue to do that, engaging with industry and within the reality in which decisions on support measures are made.

As a government, we have worked and will continue to work with industry stakeholders to tailor measures that are appropriate, are proportionate, are targeted and do reduce the administrative burden on businesses—one of the many reasons why automatic fee waivers and automatic extensions are such a great tool. But the federal government must realise it has a role in this and respond appropriately, and we look forward to the commonwealth Treasurer's response to the Chief Minister's letter.

I trust that as an Assembly we are united on the federal government's role, and I commend my amendment to the Assembly.

**MR DAVIS** (Brindabella) (3.26): I rise to speak to the impact of COVID-19 on Canberra's business and tourism sector. The ACT Greens will support the amendment from Minister Cheyne to the motion from Ms Castley. I thank Ms Castley for her motion and giving me yet another opportunity to rise in this house and profess the ACT Greens' strong support for Canberra's small, medium and family-sized businesses.

As a previous small business owner and a small business employee throughout my pre-parliamentary career, I feel deeply for those who have lost their jobs and those who have experienced a downturn in trade over the last 18 months since the beginning of the pandemic. I commend the ACT government, particularly the Minister for Business and Better Regulations and the Treasurer, for their swift, innovative and strategic work to ensure the ACT's unemployment rates remain low and our retail turnovers remain strong. This is especially worthy of praise considering the significant and sometimes abrupt changes to trade that our businesses have experienced both from our lockdown last year and the impact of other jurisdictions having to continue to lock down.

The amendment we are supporting today strengthens Ms Castley's motion by providing the government with the flexibility it needs to appropriately respond to the economic challenges that lie ahead. Importantly, by supporting this amendment the ACT Greens are amplifying the call from the Chief Minister to the federal government to design their disaster relief packages around business turnover, not just geographical location.

As Ms Castley's original motion rightly points out, while we have—with a fair bit of luck and a lot of good planning, I daresay—avoided a lockdown here some of our local businesses, particularly those that provide accommodation to overnight visitors, have seen a downturn in their situation due most likely to those lockdowns in New South Wales.

Recently I met with several important stakeholders in our small business and tourism sectors, including the Canberra Innovation Network and the Canberra Region Tourism Leaders Forum. These organisations have discussed with me the impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak in New South Wales on the ACT economy and on our operations.

Prior to COVID-19, residents from New South Wales made up between 60 and 70 per cent of Canberra's domestic visitors, with four million of our closest neighbours coming to the ACT every year to stay in our hotels, visit our national and local attractions and eat our unrivalled local produce. At the height of the pandemic in June last year the percentage of visitors coming from New South Wales rose, evidencing the significant contribution that they have continued to make to our economy even during the pandemic. While we are not locked down, we benefit from the trade of those who are. Therefore we are impacted by these people being in lockdown. A more nuanced, comprehensive approach is needed to respond to this appropriately and sufficiently, as this is a responsibility that should be led by the federal government.

The ACT Greens will be supporting this amendment, which reflects evidence obtained through the Australian Bureau of Statistics monthly retail trade data from May and the work of government to support the hospitality sector. Today the ABS released their latest updates to this data for June. We were pleased to see in the jurisdiction-by-jurisdiction comparison the ACT is performing the strongest of our counterparts, with a 1.3 per cent upturn in retail trade from May to June. While not the big picture, this data is telling a very promising story about our economic recovery to date. This data is important in assisting the government to develop and target specific supports to those parts of the local hospitality industry that have been most affected.

There is no denying that some businesses in Canberra continue to do it tough. The amendment we are supporting today allows the government to undertake this analysis and ensure that our responses are targeted and strategic, rather than an unmeasured cash splash suggested by the Canberra Liberals that would see some businesses that have done quite well in recent months receive the same amount of support as those who are struggling.

It is worth noting that some businesses in Canberra, particularly those in the dining and takeaway sector, have done very well, thanks in part to the government's measured and appropriate response to date and to the support of the local Canberra community who have chosen to spend their money locally instead of taking their money up the road to Sydney. Our food businesses have seen an upturn in trade in both May and June. I am pleased to say that I played my part in my own electorate.

I have many friends in Sydney and I feel for them right now as they are experiencing yet another lockdown. A few months ago when things in Sydney still seemed

manageable I had intended to travel away from the lofty heights of Tuggeranong to Sydney to see those friends. But as is the nature of this pandemic, the situation changed quickly and my plans were cancelled. My team, my office and I took the opportunity to enjoy a meal at Street of Asia, followed by a night of Zone Bowling in Tuggeranong. Anecdotally, I know many Canberrans who have chosen to spend their money in local businesses and entertainment venues instead of travelling interstate.

Can I encourage those who can to plan this weekend and next weekend to go out for dinner and head to Limelight Cinemas in Tuggeranong for a film. You will never know who you might bump into. Even Murrumbidgee's own Minister Davidson had the good taste to take her family out for a night at the movies in Tuggeranong a few weeks ago, when I bumped into her, in my Tuggeranong best—that is to say, track pants and Ugg boots!

In honouring my commitment to the electorate to be the first member of this Legislative Assembly to open an electorate office, a regular and accessible place for my constituents to meet with me and discuss matters of concern, I have partnered with a local business in Jindebah Cafe on the ground floor of Flax House on Cowlishaw Street. I was proud to support this business with the purchase of daily chai lattes while I was a student at Lake Tuggeranong College and now, as an adult with a slightly different job, Lisa and Dale are known to have the biggest coffee they can possible pour ready for me every Friday morning.

It would be remiss if I did not share the attachment that the Brindabella Greens team has with the Lazzari Bros' Espresso on Carlton Street in Kambah. Throughout the election campaign it was Lazzari Bros' that doubled as our base of operations, supplying quality, homemade vegan snacks and soy and almond milk coffees fuelling the enthusiastic volunteers who worked so hard to give me the privilege to even make this speech.

When I bought my first home, Fiona, who owns the markets in Wanniasa, gifted me an awesome new piece of embroidery, which I recently shared with my followers on Facebook, which reads "Homo Sweet Homo". Those on the opposition benches and even some in the government may dispute how sweet I am on occasion! But I am always committed to doubling down on the homo and my support for small businesses in Tuggeranong.

Regular followers of the My Tuggeranong Facebook page have been watching and waiting with bated breath for the grand opening of that pasta place, Alfredo, at the Lanyon Market Place. I was delighted to see that yesterday their grand opening 2.0 was a success and I can assure them I plan on carb-loading with them tomorrow night as a personal reward at the end of a busy sitting week. It speaks to the strong resilience of the ACT economy through a global pandemic that small businesses feel confident to open in Canberra and, as a proud local member, I am particularly humbled when those small businesses choose to open their doors in Tuggeranong.

On Sunday, 12 September the Tharwa Preschool will host the 2021 Tharwa bush fair. I was delighted we were able to secure the future of the Tharwa Preschool in the parliamentary and governing agreement. Many local businesses have thrown their

support behind the bush fair—Territory Tanks and Plumbing, Synergies Four Service, Earth Moving Creations and Aquatic Achievers swim school, just to name a few. I am incredibly impressed by small businesses who, in these trying times, continue to take their social contract so seriously and put up their hand to support community initiatives. I encourage Canberrans to engage with and spend their hard-earned money in businesses that have a proven track record of giving back to this local community.

So many creative, progressive, entrepreneurial Canberrans have created ways to support small business and stimulate our economy without excess consumerism, which we know has an impact on our planet. In collaboration with the Mura Lanyon Youth and Community Centre and the YWCA, Sea Change recently hosted a sustainable south side upcycling market. I was pleased to attend these markets last week and I picked up some homemade goodies and hearty homemade soup from the Gordon community centre. I have come to rely on the good folk of Tuggeranong to help me balance out my otherwise indulgent diet.

To end, I thank our health minister and congratulate all Canberrans on yet another donut day. Keeping our communities COVID free has meant that we have avoided the worst of the economic outcomes and job losses that others around the country are currently experiencing. But more importantly, we have kept our community safe. The exceptional vaccine take-up and rollout in this city is testament to our healthcare workers and health service planning as well as our community sense of shared responsibility. It is important that we remember that behind these economic issues there is a significant health crisis unfolding not far from our border, where just today someone in their 20s has lost their battle with COVID-19.

Failing to treat the health crisis extremely seriously and quickly leads us to the worst situations like those that are unfolding in New South Wales. This lockdown is necessary to protect the health of people who live in Sydney, and we will always support a health-first approach to this crisis.

Managing the impact on us of Sydney's delayed lockdown involves careful analysis and planning, strong communication and relationships with business, and targeted advocacy to the commonwealth. The ACT Greens support Minister Cheyne's amendment, and we encourage Ms Castley, as a strong small business spokesperson in this place, to consider writing a not dissimilar letter to her federal counterparts.

**MS CLAY** (Ginninderra) (3.36): COVID-19 had a devastating impact on hospitality and our night-time economy, but let us not forget the industry that goes hand in hand with hospitality, and that is the arts sector. The arts sector includes all performers: our dancers, our singers, our DJs, our poets and our musos. Any place we go for the atmosphere—whether it is a restaurant with a live jazz band, a pub with a live rock band or a poetry slam at Smiths—is made better by the arts. Art makes hospitality better. The two are intertwined and we need to support them both.

I love the arts. I come from a family of musicians, painters and writers. I understand how important the arts are to our community wellbeing. I also know how hard it is to make a living—or to make any money at all!—from highly skilled and professional arts practice.

Many of our artists were not eligible for federal funding like JobKeeper due to the nature of their gig work. Most artists have a second job to get by. Many of our performers work the bar or front of house at a show. In addition to losing live gig work, many artists lost their second income in hospitality at the same time in. I am pleased to see that the ACT has shown much greater understanding and compassion for our arts sector than the federal government, but life is still hard for many of our practitioners. For instance, not all of our live events have been included in ACT recovery measures. Flazeda in Belconnen is one example. Minister Cheyne and I have both been in touch with Rachel, who runs Flazeda.

I am really pleased with the sensible COVID measures taken in Canberra. They are keeping us safe. I am also pleased that some exemptions were made to help out live music. I was pleased to see Amp It Up! as well. But the current COVID exemptions for live music exclude other live performances. Flazeda are not classified as a live music venue. They host dancing, which is in fact a lower risk activity for COVID than singing, but this means that they are not eligible for those live music exemptions. They are continuing to operate, but they have to do so with very low audience numbers—currently only 33 people. They have tried to access exemptions but they have not been successful. Flazeda are home to burlesque, circus, belly dance, pinup, drag, comedy, cabaret and much more. I have seen some of my friends perform there, and it is a great night. They host award winning artists and community classes and they have a real focus on body positivity. As well as a great local business, they are providing exactly what we need to help boost our spirits through this latest crisis.

In a similar vein, I note our long-running policy to establish entertainment precincts. Eleven years ago, the planning committee made recommendations about entertainment precincts to support the live music scene. There have been many reports since, including the government's Entertainment Action Plan 2019. When I asked about this in the last sittings, I was pleased to hear from the Minister for Planning and Land Management that implementation is underway. I understand the need to look at long-term planning over quick fixes and I understand the delays caused by COVID, but we need to get on with this project if we are going to have live music in future.

We need to implement all the actions in the entertainment precinct plan. We need to trial the temporary special entertainment area in the city centre. We need to make sure that festivals like the National Multicultural Festival will not risk closure if those in newly built hotels and apartments lodge noise complaints. In any of the steps we are taking to help out hospitality sector, I urge our government to make sure we help our small business venues, follow through on our previous commitments and remember the artists who perform in these small businesses. No-one understands the notion of a “work in progress” better than an artist, but let us adjust our measures where we can in response to community feedback and feedback from our arts sector. Let us keep working on our COVID responses and our assistance measures and make sure we are getting them right.

**MR BARR** (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism) (3.40): I thank colleagues for their contribution to the debate today and particularly Minister Cheyne for the amendment that she has moved.

Undoubtedly, we have had the opportunity over the last 18 months to discuss the range of measures and supports that governments can provide during significant economic shocks. Some have proven to be more effective than others. I note, with a wry smile in light of some of the debates of last year, that the original motion before us today largely endorses the approach that the territory government took last year during the lockdowns in the ACT in terms of being able to deliver support. As Minister Cheyne has identified in her amendment, there are many areas of agreement in the amendment and the original motion in terms of both the nature of support that could be provided as well as the reality that, in fact, that support is in place.

What might be useful in terms of this debate and for the broader understanding of the government's thinking and the sorts of data and metrics that will drive future decision-making is a bit of a deeper dive into what is occurring in terms of retail trade and turnover for businesses, and diving down into particular industry sectors. The headline figures are obviously very strong for the ACT, both across the year and in the most recent data. As the government has indicated, by decisions taken already and acknowledged very publicly, there are some sections of the ACT economy that are doing exceptionally well and, in fact, achieving all-time record levels of turnover. There are others which are much more exposed to tourism, which are having amongst the toughest times they have had—certainly since the first wave of the virus.

Looking at each industry sector and what is occurring and the actual data is what is driving the government's decision-making. That is why we have provided support particularly targeted at accommodation and tourism providers. As I indicated in question time, 85 per cent of the available domestic market has been lost to those businesses. Obviously, the other part of the market that remains is somewhat reluctant to travel at this time, in spite of the ACT's relatively long-term COVID-free status. That necessitated an assistance package. I take it that no news is good news in terms of the opposition's reaction to that. They have not criticised it, so I presume they are comfortable that the government has taken the appropriate response. We tend to hear, of course, when the opposition is unhappy with measures that we take.

**Mrs Jones:** They do not tend to publish our positive comments very much, Mr Barr.

**MR BARR:** That is possibly also true; opposition agreeing with government is not necessarily—

**Mrs Jones:** A newspaper seller?

**MR BARR:** a front-page newspaper story. I do acknowledge that.

**Ms Lee:** It happens from time to time, as you know.

**MR BARR:** It can, yes. Sometimes it will surprise the media that there is agreement, and then it is a story—there is no doubting that. I think it will be useful, in addition to Minister Cheyne's comments, to have a bit of a deeper dive into what is happening in hospitality, particularly as there has been a lot of discussion today about cafes, restaurants and takeaway food services bearing the brunt of a difficult period.

I think it is best to look at a baseline year that was pre-COVID, and that is 2019. In that year, the turnover for this sector of industry was \$866½ million, or \$72.2 million a month or about \$2.4 million a day, to give some context. In 2020, particularly during the lockdowns of April and May, that monthly turnover of about \$70 million fell to \$38 million and \$47 million in April and May last year. It recovered as the year went on and reached nearly \$75 million in December 2020. The year total turnover was \$746 million, or \$62.2 million a month. The impact of that two-month lockdown in that period that was the worst of the first wave, April and May, took an average of \$10 million a month off the turnover of those businesses.

As we look to 2021, so far for the six months it is \$446 million and an average monthly turnover of \$74.4 million—so, in fact, more in the first six months of 2021 than the base year of 2019. To put it in a daily context, it was \$2.4 million a day in 2019. It dropped to \$2 million a day in 2020. It is now sitting at \$2.5 million a day for the first six months of 2021. Now, it is my expectation, based upon the July data that I understand we will get at the end of August, that that number will reduce. I do not think, based on the current settings in the ACT—now that the month of July has indeed passed—that it will fall from the \$77-odd million that was the June original data to \$38 million. Clearly, if it did then that would undoubtedly trigger a very significant government support package, because that would be more than a 30 per cent turnover reduction in that industry sector.

Again, I note from the original motion that there appears to be agreement on 30 per cent or greater as a threshold. As we look at this particular sector, that clearly was crossed in terms of a reduction in turnover for April and May last year. But from the vantage point of the data for the first six months, we would need to see that number fall from the mid-70 million that it is now. I note that the May data was the highest ever month in the history of all record keeping. So the most money spent ever in the history of the ACT in restaurants, cafes and takeaways occurred in May this year. The equal second-highest monthly figure ever occurred in March this year and the third-highest monthly figure occurred in June. So three of the four highest trading months in the history of the ACT for this industry have occurred in the last six months.

What that tells me is that, in the absence of the capacity to spend money overseas or interstate, as a result of activity, people are spending it locally. That is a good sign. I have that in mind in the context of decision-making for future government support. I hope that gives people a sense of what will trigger an ACT government decision.

I also need to observe the shared responsibility as part of national cabinet agreements and what has occurred in terms of shared responsibility between the commonwealth and the state governments that have COVID disaster zones declared. There are a number of jurisdictions—the ACT, Tasmania, the Northern Territory and South Australia—now who are not in that disaster declaration who are experiencing impacts because the big three states have been either locked down or are in extensive lockdowns. This is the area that we are focusing on. It is not just the ACT calling for a more consistent approach. This is on the agenda for the Treasurers' meeting this month. I have raised it twice in national cabinet, and the commonwealth have been moving on this issue. Aviation is a recent example. Just this week the commonwealth

have provided an additional support package for aviation, reflecting its role in tourism and the fact that it is significantly impacted by decisions beyond its control.

I am optimistic that we can forge a sensible partnership between the territory and the commonwealth. I have spoken to Treasurer Frydenberg on a number of occasions in the last couple of weeks, indicating that we would provide the tourism support package that we have, but that I would need to talk to him further if the Sydney lockdown was prolonged. That was before the most recent extension, extending the lockdown out to the rest of this month.

**MS LEE** (Kurrajong—Leader of the Opposition) (3.51): I thank Ms Castley for bringing forward this motion and I commend it to the Assembly. I also thank other members for their contributions to this debate. It is an important one. I think no-one would like to be anywhere but Canberra during this time. In response to the pandemic, whether by good luck, good management or good compliance—it is probably a combination of all three—we have done very well. I take my hat off to not only the frontline health staff but also the small, local family businesses that have kept this city moving when everything else seemed to stop. These are the businesses that we are talking about.

Whilst there has always been talk that the federal government need to take responsibility, it is important to note that they have done the lion's share of the heavy lifting, with \$700 million in Jobkeeper payments to the ACT and over \$500 million in cash flow boosts to ACT businesses, in addition to the income tax cuts and the record investment in infrastructure in the ACT. Let us not forget that, whilst of course this is a global pandemic and the lion's share of the management and financial support has come from the federal government, we are talking about businesses that are run by Canberrans for Canberrans. These are the people who we, as a legislature, have responsibility for and have a loyalty to. It is also incumbent on the ACT government to step up when it is most required.

The figures that the Chief Minister has just mentioned in this debate are very interesting. They do actually highlight how well the ACT has done, but—and this is a big but—when you look at the figures from that perspective and in that big picture, on paper, it looks like we do not need any further assistance. It looks like we are doing really well—actually, in fact, better. We know that individually there are businesses that are doing better; we know there are businesses that have actually done better throughout this pandemic.

I want to make two points. The first is that, whilst there are businesses that have done better, there are so many others that have not. That is why Ms Castley's motion specifically says, "support for the businesses that have seen a downturn of 30 per cent or greater". This is not a call for the ACT government to hand out money like lollies. This is about supporting, in a targeted way, the businesses that are suffering and are continuing to suffer. There is no doubt that the ACT does rely on a lot of tourism, especially from the domestic market. With the lockdowns that we see in the big states, that is what it is missing out on.

The second point is that the figures that the Chief Minister referred to, especially the really good figures in May, were before the current New South Wales lockdown. The businesses that are coming to us seeking support are feeling the pain now. We want to make sure that we support them when they need it most. I think it was Mr Davis who encouraged Ms Castley to write to the federal Treasurer. Let me assure members in this place that we are in contact with our federal counterparts. I put on the record my thanks to the ACT Liberal senator, Zed Seselja, who has been absolutely doing his part to stick up for ACT businesses.

Whilst we do not have a lockdown and we have been fortunate enough not to have had a case for over a year, we know that we are impacted by the lockdowns in other states. I think we are all in agreement—the Chief Minister, as well as Senator Seselja, as well as us—that it does impact us. That is something that we will continue to fight for. I thank Ms Castley for bringing this motion. It is an important one and I thank her for her ongoing and continuous support and advocacy for our small businesses. Certainly, it is something that is required in this city.

**MS CASTLEY (Yerrabi) (3.56):** What we see with this amendment is simply the Labor-Greens government passing the buck. The government has acknowledged that Canberra’s hospitality sector does need assistance, yet its solution is to call on the commonwealth government to increase its support to our hospitality businesses and workers. Our Chief Minister and Treasurer thinks that it is enough for him to sign off on a couple of letters while completely shirking his responsibility for the ACT economy and the welfare of business and workers. I understand the deep dive with all of the facts and figures, but I would love to know which businesses the government has been out and spoken to personally.

You cannot on one hand acknowledge that hospitality businesses and workers have been adversely affected by lockdowns and then on the other hand say that it is for the federal government to offer support. The most we get from the business minister is: “I will consider additional or extended supports as the situation evolves.” It is not good enough. How bad does it need to be before the government realises, after the deep dive, that parts of the sector—I understand that it is parts of the sector—need help? That is why my motion is calling for 30 per cent of businesses who are struggling that can prove it—

**Mr Barr:** I think you mean a 30 per cent turnover reduction.

**MS CASTLEY:** A 30 per cent downturn; thank you.

**MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** Mr Barr!

*Ms Cheyne interjecting—*

**MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** Ms Cheyne!

**MS CASTLEY:** It is not about a cash splash or a willy-nilly throwing out of funds to businesses that have misused money. They are desperately struggling as a result of the

lockdowns that we have seen most recently. Hospitality needs this government to lead with a survival plan, which includes the cash grants. I wonder how the government will feel as it walks past hospitality businesses that are closing up in the next month or two? Business is asking for more assistance. Hospitality venues are asking for more support, but the government is turning its back. I guess those businesses that will end up closing are just collateral damage.

Canberra's unemployment rate has climbed from 3.6 per cent in May to 4.9 per cent in June. That means almost 6,000 more Canberrans are now out of work. As I said earlier, I fear that the worst is yet to come. What further proof does this government need that sections of our hospitality sector are struggling and need a lifeline from the government elected to support business and workers? I reject the amendment.

Question put:

That the amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 15

Noes 8

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

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

## **Multicultural affairs—civic participation and language schools**

**MR BRADDOCK** (Yerrabi) (4.05): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) the central and indispensable contribution of the multicultural community to Canberra's civic, social, cultural, education and economic vibrancy;
- (b) the many multicultural community organisations, their employees, leaders and volunteers, that put their time, expertise and energy into making Canberra such a wonderful place to live;
- (c) the National Settlement Outcomes Standards published by the Settlement Council of Australia articulate that best practice settlement, including that "newly arrived individuals and communities are:

- (i) assisted to develop their knowledge and understanding of Australia's social and political systems, and reinforce knowledge of their rights and responsibilities;
  - (ii) supported to share their own stories and opinions, to ensure that their voices help to shape Australia's civic and political landscape; and
  - (iii) supported to preserve their own cultural identity and values (for example, through establishing cultural community associations and facilitating celebrations)";
- (d) language is an integral part of cultural retention, and the invaluable work of Canberra's community language schools to provide language, and cultural connection and training; and
- (e) the work that the ACT Government has undertaken to improve the accessibility of programs and services for the multicultural community, such as holding community workshops and simplifying grant guidelines;
- (2) further notes that despite these contributions:
- (a) multicultural community organisations have reported having difficulty successfully obtaining government grants to allow them full cultural and civic participation;
  - (b) multicultural communities face a range of barriers in equitably accessing government processes, for example, submissions and consultation; and
  - (c) many local community language schools do not have secure tenure over their classroom space, and their funding allocation has not been updated in more than a decade; and
- (3) calls on the ACT Government to:
- (a) table the independent review of Canberra community language schools, including its recommendations, and the ACT Government response, by 31 October 2021, and for the ACT Government response to consider ways to:
    - (i) ensure the status and stability of Canberra's community language schools by investigating long-term affordable access to suitable venues in which to hold their classes;
    - (ii) enhance the quality, efficacy and financial sustainability of Canberra's community language schools by reviewing per head funding, looking to other states' funding models as a benchmark; and
    - (iii) investigate providing training through Canberra Institute of Technology at minimal or zero cost to community group volunteers to enhance their skills, invest in the community sector, and provide transferrable skills and qualifications;
  - (b) commit to ensuring that the ACT, via both government and community services, meets National Settlement Outcomes Standards published by the Settlement Council of Australia;
  - (c) commit to increasing the accessibility of grants to multicultural community groups, for example, through:
    - (i) increasing the ability for peak bodies to auspice small grants programs with minimal barriers to entry; and

- (ii) running sector specific information and training sessions for grant applications;
- (d) commit to increasing civic participation, for example, through targeted support to write submissions, for budget and other inquiry processes; and
- (e) report back to the Assembly by June 2022 on progress, including how participation in (i) submissions and (ii) grant applications and recipients, have changed.

I rise to seek the support of the Assembly for making Canberra a more inclusive community, one where everyone has equal opportunities to participate in government and community, and a Canberra where people of all backgrounds have a voice, celebrate their cultures and contribute to our communities.

I am sure I can say with confidence that everyone here has enjoyed the Multicultural Festival. This much-loved Canberran event provides a delight for the senses, whether it be watching the dancers and displays; listening to the beautiful music and singing; or, perhaps, most memorably for the tastebuds as we quaff and eat our way on a culinary journey across the world. But the festival is just the tip of the iceberg that is multiculturalism. Nine-tenths are, in fact, below the surface—the speaking of languages other than English in the home, the dance classes performed after school, the coming together of family and friends for special events, the sharing of recipes and food; the sense of community.

Since being elected as the member for Yerrabi, the most diverse electorate in the ACT, I have spoken with many community groups. Two recurrent themes come through as to where they think the government can and should do better. Firstly, we know that there are barriers for people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities to fully participate in our government processes. We need to address these barriers so as to enable these communities to share their insights, experiences and backgrounds to inform better decision-making across the ACT and to enable access to grants and government support that help make Canberra a community.

Secondly, the focus on multicultural policy is often on sharing culture in the broader community. But, as we have been told, you cannot share what you have not kept. Strengthening and supporting connections to culture, language and community is an essential part of maintaining and supporting a diverse Canberra. It is these two issues—civic participation in our democracy and supporting connections to culture—that the motion seeks to address today.

Why civic participation and connection to culture? In identifying what Canberra should aspire to for civic engagement for multicultural communities, I refer to the Settlement Council of Australia. The council is a national peak body that represents a community of members whose core work is helping people make Australia home. Together with its members, the Settlement Council developed the national settlement outcomes standards, which equip settlement service providers to offer the best possible support to newly arrived individuals, families and communities who are settling in Australia.

The standards themselves apply to the whole of government and whole of community. They are the fabric through which we welcome migrants and help them become socially, economically, spiritually and emotionally connected to our communities. My motion calls on the ACT government to commit to the standards, so that we know we are adhering to best practices in the sector.

A key part of civic participation is ensuring that individuals and communities are assisted to develop their knowledge and understanding of Australia's social and political systems and reinforce knowledge of their rights and responsibilities, as well as supported to share their own stories and opinions, to ensure their voices help to shape Australia's civic and political landscape.

In the words of former Race Discrimination Commissioner Dr Tim Soutphommasane: "Multiculturalism is a success story. But it is also a success that demands our vigilance. Those who arrive on Australian shores as migrants are not expected to remain mere guests. Rather, they are expected and encouraged to become fellow citizens of equal standing in society. Australia's multiculturalism is based on a compact of citizenship." This compact requires active outreach and engagement to ensure all communities can participate fully in ACT government processes and policy development.

Federal government programs primarily focus on support to attain citizenship, but there are comparatively few programs and supports for exercising the full rights of citizenship. Increasing civic participation includes: increasing knowledge of the civic engagement processes; practical programs encouraging engagement with the Legislative Assembly; translating government consultation documents; ensuring that community groups have adequate capabilities to effectively advocate for their own needs; and improving migrant and refugee representation in the government, parliament, media and other public spheres.

Gaps in this area flow through to engagement and participation in a range of democratic processes. For example, for the last four years only one multicultural group has made a budget submission to the ACT government's budget consultation process, with many others missing the opportunity to advocate for resources and programs that would allow them to meet the needs of their communities. This is a strong sign that groups are not being adequately supported, communicated with or mentored to be able to effectively have their voices heard. I am calling on the government to commit to increasing civic participation through targeted support so that we can see these voices come through loud and clear.

Multicultural voices are also missing from government grant applications. I have heard from many groups that they struggle to write grants or they are not successful when they do. Because of their complexity and other requirements, government funding processes are frequently inaccessible to many multicultural communities. I note an exception to this, the recent community connection grants. With a low barrier for entry for a small amount of funds, we saw a significant increase in the number of successful multicultural groups. This is to be applauded and hopefully continued.

Not having access to these government resources impacts the ability of multicultural groups to support advocacy, outreach and cultural connection. In particular, the groups with the greatest need are often the newest and the least aware of how the government can support them. For this reason, we are calling on the government to commit to increasing the accessibility of grants to multicultural community groups through increasing the ability of peak bodies to auspice small grants with minimal barriers to entry for newly established groups, as well as running sector-specific information and training sessions for grant applications. We look forward to hearing, at the end of the reporting period, how these initiatives have enhanced participation in democratic and grants processes.

I would now like to talk about supporting connections to culture. Canberra is uniquely positioned in Australia. Given the size of our population, we have a surplus of riches and opportunities in this space. Firstly, we are home to nearly 80 embassies and high commissions. We are also home to the federal government, where many roles require an understanding of other cultures and languages in order to be able to do those jobs. This means we are blessed with many multicultural communities with a strong identity, mixed with a population that recognises and celebrates the diversity in cultures and languages.

This is a unique and valuable resource for Canberra and Australia. The seven-year-old learning Mandarin in a community languages class today may, in 20 years time, be serving as a diplomat in Beijing. The children raised in a home environment that speaks Swahili may in future help establish business links between Australia and Africa. An understanding of different religions helps Australian and ACT governments to develop and implement tailored and nuanced policies.

The best practice guidelines call for newly arrived individuals and communities to be supported to preserve their cultural identity and values. Again, you cannot share what you do not keep. If you do not maintain your culture, you have nothing to share. Our multiculturalism will crumble within a matter of a few short generations if communities are not able to maintain their traditions and languages.

The importance of mother tongues was noted and agreed to by the Assembly in a tripartisan motion introduced by Mr Alistair Coe in 2017. Many colleagues still present may remember that motion and in particular how Mrs Kikkert and Ms Lee spoke to it in Tongan and Korean, respectively. There are around 170 languages spoken across Canberra. We are so lucky to have over 50 community language schools operating here. These schools help people connect with their cultural backgrounds, promote understanding and mutual respect among ethnic communities, and teach languages, history and culture to their students.

While it is great to see more students utilising our community language schools, it is important that funding continues to keep up with demand. This is one practical way that the government can actively support connection to culture here in the ACT. I am calling on the government to review the schools funding. The funding that supports students has not been updated in a decade. The ACT invests \$90 per student into these schools. By way of comparison, Victoria invests \$170 per student. My question is: how much value do we place on this language training in our community?

Any review of funding also needs to consider the long-term sustainable and adequate resourcing of the sector. This may be through in-kind services or direct funding. Another challenge which is a perennial for my electorate is access to community spaces. The ACT Community Language Schools Association, an umbrella group, currently rents ACT government properties to hold classes, while relying on some block and per head funding to carry on the operations of the association and members schools.

The issue of insufficient funds and uncertain tenure over classrooms is causing great distress to this essential community service. Twelve language schools are facing closure because the government schools that host them do not wish to renew the contract. Nine of them are in my home turf of Gungahlin—just when you thought I was going to get through another speech without mentioning the G word. As the president of the ACT language schools association, Dr Fuxin Li, has stated, we need stability and certainty of a place to belong. For this reason, our motion calls on the ACT government to ensure the status and stability of Canberra’s community language schools by securing long-term affordable access to suitable venues in which to hold their after-hours classes.

Finally, but not least, community organisations have also requested greater support for recognised professional development for their volunteers. This is not only to improve the quality of training and teaching that they deliver to their community but also to reward those volunteers who have a transferable skill and qualification. We commend this call to the government.

In closing, for those communities to maintain their identity, culture and language, it is not something that can be done by only one day at the Multicultural Festival. It takes a continuous investment of time, energy and resources over the course of a year. Community leaders and volunteers, in addition to the challenges of living their daily lives in a foreign culture, freely and with great charity invest large quantities of time and energy to members of their community. I call on the government to provide the enablers to help them maintain their languages and their cultural heritage, and that these groups be included and supported to actively engage in ACT government decision-making and democratic processes.

**MRS JONES** (Murrumbidgee) (4.17): I thank Mr Braddock for bringing this motion for discussion today. It clearly raises the need for an update to the support that community language schools are given by the government and to modernise the government’s approach, to bring us more in line with neighbouring states. Mr Braddock mentioned the social contract and it goes to the very heart of government that we are able to facilitate the outcomes that we want to see in the community.

At the outset, let me say that the issues raised include the settling process of new Australians into our city; the continuation of culture of the country of origin in people as they settle into being Australian; the navigation of government services and the needs that newer Australians will have to access the breadth of services that are

available for their proper functioning as Australians, and Canberrans, especially if they have needs which government can assist with.

There is another issue which I raise in this debate, and it goes to the heart of that access to government services, as well as friendship with those of us who have been in this nation for generations now—that is, the ability to integrate fully as Australians and become familiar with the Australian way of life.

Becoming Australian is a process that I have often heard expressed as taking a generation, which is something that I have often thought we should work on. While identity is a very personal and multifaceted matter, it is something that we can always learn how to better assist people with. We want our new Australians to take great steps forward and we want to be a city that is on the front foot with this process.

To go back a few years, firstly, I was one of those children who went on Saturdays to a community language school. Mr and Mrs Ottavi ran Italian School in North Hobart, in a building called the Italian Cultural Centre, which was a very ancient house next door to the Italian club. We learned language and dance. I have photos of me performing—which I can circulate to members outside of the debate—and dancing at the Italian club in my tarantella cultural uniform. I had to dance with my older brother, which was annoying. Nonetheless, I was learning the movements and the patterns and rhythms and sounds of my mother's Italian culture. The older generation would praise us for learning and performing. When I felt that I was a bit different to the mainstream Aussie kids at school, I had a tribe and a team behind me saying I was worthwhile and that my mixed cultural background was something to learn about and to celebrate.

Going back a few years earlier, long before I was born, my grandfather arrived in Tasmania alone without his wife, my grandmother Nonna Nicolina, and my mother who was then two years old when he left for Australia. The plan was that after he had been in Australia for about a year, he would have established a home for his family and they could then come and they would be reunited. Grandfather was boarding in a house with some other Italians, doing shift work. He sent the papers for Nonna and mum to come out and he did not hear back. There was no Facebook, no Skype; there probably was not even a phone in his home village in Italy. He waited and waited and every day he would go to the letterbox and sit there and wait for the agreement to arrive that Nonna was going to come.

This went on for months and the postman began to ask him why he was always waiting. He explained in his broken English that he was waiting for a reply that his wife was coming. The postman told him to go to the state parliament down in Salamanca Place in Hobart and ask to speak to his local member. He could not picture how he was going to be allowed to turn up to a place like that without an invitation or a formal appointment. No-one that he knew knew how to make an appointment like that. So he kept waiting at the letterbox day after day, getting steadily more and more depressed.

Eventually, after keeping on at him for weeks and weeks to go to the parliament, the postman got really angry at him and told him in no uncertain terms that he had to go to the parliament. He did not know where it was, but he decided to put on his best

Sunday clothes and walked into the city and asked around until he found the parliament. He went to the front door very scared because he expected that he would meet a policeman at the front door and he would be kicked out. These were his cultural expectations from his homeland. However, when he approached the door, he was met by an usher who showed him to a waiting room.

He waited and was eventually taken to see his local MP, who wrote to the then Minister for Immigration, Harold Holt, who confirmed that the papers he had filled out for his wife to come had been lost as part of a shipment that went missing overseas. His local member was then able to help him arrange new papers, and shortly after—three years since he had left his wife and daughter—Nonna and Nonno were reunited and my five-year-old mother, Giovanna, arrived in Australia. That ordeal had lasting effects on Grandpa, and it was a shame that in the process of getting here and becoming Australian he had encountered such trouble. Grandma must have really worried if he was ever going to send for her. It must have been a very difficult time all round.

The assumptions of how governments and public servants and parliaments and police behave can be so incredibly different and are formed by our new Australians' experiences of their countries of origin. Therefore, the work we do here to promote understanding of how the Assembly and ACT government work, that there is support and that there are grants and government help available, as Mr Braddock has mentioned, to people to assist them in settling here and maintaining their original cultures, as well as their Australian new culture, is vital to proper settlement for people into this, their new home. I genuinely support this motion and the intent to achieve this.

Regarding the community language schools here, that is also an important element of this motion. It seems, yet again, that the government is not paying attention to the details of policies set under the Stanhope era, which have not seemingly been refreshed or reassessed. The funding per head which community language schools receive has been at a standstill for about 10 years, I am told. In Melbourne, students learning parents' mother tongue in a community language school are funded by the state government \$245 per head, and from this funding comes the cost of both delivery as well as the rental premises.

In New South Wales, the funding is \$131 per head plus free access to government school buildings, making this assistance at least equally as valuable as the funding in Victoria. Here in the ACT the funding is at a remarkable point of \$90 per head and no free access to school buildings. In fact, groups here pay for the use of classrooms on the weekends and after hours.

The Community Language Schools Association under the able leadership of Mr Fuxin Le has 48 member community language schools and two member play schools. In Gungahlin alone there are 12 member schools, and the arrangement for six of those schools at Palmerston Primary School is not being renewed next year. I appeal to Minister Berry to assist via the Education Directorate to find them another local option if needed if they cannot continue at Palmerston for whatever reason. Currently the community language schools, particularly in Gungahlin, are under pressure,

unable to have confidence that they will be able to access school buildings within their local region. It is very disappointing, to say the least.

It was interesting to hear the Chief Minister speak yesterday about the new facility at EPIC for the multicultural community and that there may be the chance for language classrooms in the building. It may not be the best location, but it will be good to see what comes out of that. However, that building is at least a couple of years away.

From my own time living overseas and learning a new language in that country, as well as from my mother and my grandparents' experiences, I know precisely the impact of not being fluent in the language of the country in which you live. From my many years of doorknocking, especially in Gungahlin, I can tell you that there are many women with children who do not yet have proficiency in English. This is caused by the family's need to prioritise financial stability above language skills and the prevalence of at-home mothers amongst new arrivals.

I studied this issue in depth in my first term here in the four years that I was shadow for multicultural affairs. The states and territories, along with the commonwealth government, share the responsibility to give new Australians every opportunity to learn and become fluent in English. To be able to experience all the benefits and responsibilities of being Australian, newly arrived people need to be able to speak English as much as they possibly can, and there are various barriers to this.

The study I commissioned in 2013 by my office shows that the family's financial stability takes precedence over everything when people first arrive here. Very often that means that mums are at home with kids while dads are at work. That is how it usually works when there is a choice to be made amongst traditional people. As a result, men are accessing English conversation practice daily in the workplace; however, women are not.

The answer to this barrier is conversation classes in the home one on one, which until the pandemic were offered in Canberra. The other option is classes in a community facility, such as a library, with auxiliary child care. This is not the setting up of a full childcare arrangement; it leaves mum as the onsite primary carer of their children or, indeed, dads, where that is the case, and has a babysitter or a part-time auxiliary child carer in the room next door so that parents can learn English and not be out of pocket for the necessary supervision of their children. Affordable or, even better, free child care or the provision of English language conversation classes in the home can go a long way to resolving this tension.

That is why I have circulated an amendment to the motion, which I believe has broad support. While agreeing to Mr Braddock's motion, it adds to it the opportunity for the government to take a fresh look at what English classes are being provided now and how they are being taken up. Given that the pandemic is unlikely to end any time soon, there is a need to ensure that these language skills development opportunities continue.

I move, by leave:

1. Insert new paragraph (2)(d):

“(d) newer Australians who have not learned fluent English do not always have the opportunity to do so due to family dynamic and circumstances. This has also been impacted by some English language programs being suspended during the COVID-19 pandemic; and”.

2. After paragraph (3)(d), insert new paragraph (3)(da):

“(da) to analyse the current provision, and uptake by non-English speakers, of English classes and conversation groups and investigate the current provision of auxiliary childcare alongside English language classes available in the ACT; and”.

3. In paragraph (3)(e), omit “June 2022”, substitute “August 2022”.

**MS CHEYNE** (Ginninderra—Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Minister for the Arts, Minister for Business and Better Regulation, Minister for Human Rights and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (4.28): I am very pleased to speak to the motion and to the amendment as circulated today. Mr Braddock’s motion speaks to the indispensable contribution of the multicultural community to our city, and the ACT government could not agree more with its sentiment. I particularly want to speak to the references in the motion to language and the integral role of language in cultural sharing and retention.

We proudly recognise and celebrate the linguistic diversity of our multicultural communities here in the ACT. Over 170 different languages are spoken in the ACT, with the 2016 census showing 23.8 per cent of ACT households spoke a language other than English. That is an increase from 2011, when it was 21.1 per cent of households, and of course we look forward to the results from the upcoming census. There are over 12,000 Mandarin speakers, over 4,000 Vietnamese speakers, and around 3,500 speakers of Hindi and of Spanish in the ACT.

Linguistic diversity is a key pillar of multiculturalism. And it plays a crucial role in the development of personal, social, and cultural identity, which I think Mrs Jones highlighted particularly well. A strong foundation and familiarity in a child’s mother tongue allows for a deeper understanding of themselves and their community and an increased sense of wellbeing and of confidence.

I am pleased that the ACT government has been working closely with the ACT Community Language Schools Association. Since 2012, the government has provided annual funding grants to over 40 ACT community language schools. As others have noted, the current ACT government investment in community languages schools is over \$275,000 annually. The grant program provides a per-student grant to all eligible schools and provides supplementary funding to playgroups and smaller operations to assist with running costs.

Under the second action plan of the ACT multicultural framework 2015-20 the ACT government committed to undertake an independent review of the investment in community language schools in the ACT. The purpose of the review was to ensure the ACT government continues to meet the needs of the Canberra community and that

future investment delivers positive and effective outcomes. I can confirm for Mrs Jones that we looked across jurisdictions in the review.

The review considered the role community language schools play in maintaining and promoting language use in the Canberra community, how they operate and the standards that guide the delivery of languages services in schools. The review was carried out externally and independently and was provided to government recently. Because this review necessarily touches on government venues which provide the teaching and learning spaces, including schools, multiple ministers and directorates are working together on a cross-portfolio response. We have made good progress on this, and it is our intention to publicly table the review and its recommendations and the response at the completion of the work required. We are on track to do this by the end of October, so we are happy to agree with what the motion calls for, including considering the sub dot points that Mr Braddock has included at 3(a).

Regarding Mrs Jones's comments about specific schools, the ACT government supports the community use of public school facilities, but this needs to be where it complements school operations. I think Mrs Jones would agree that we need to ensure the needs of the important work of community language schools and the needs of primary schools are complementary.

I understand the issues that have been raised by the school in question, which has an agreement with the community language school in relation to how the room is returned at the end community language lessons, noting that teachers go to a lot of effort to set up and plan their classrooms and lessons and interruptions to this can be counterproductive. I can confirm that Minister Berry and I are working hand in hand to resolve the current issues and in response to the wider review.

I also note the other issues and areas to which Mr Braddock calls on the government to investigate and explore, and we are happy to undertake this work, a good deal of which is an extension or a continuation of what we are already doing. As members may be aware, the Office of Multicultural Affairs works hand in hand with other directorates and multicultural community services, such as the Multicultural Hub and MARSS, to deliver positive outcomes for our linguistically diverse and multicultural Canberrans, such as the outcomes standards identified by the Settlement Council of Australia.

We continue also to improve the design and accessibility of multicultural grants and a range of government programs to make it easier for the community to engage, but we can always do more. For the benefit of members, some recent initiatives include the simplification of the 2022 National Multicultural Festival grants, and the delivery of two sector-specific workshops to support organisations with their applications. For those who submitted grant applications for the 2021 festival, which sadly has not been able to go ahead, we have ensured they have access to those applications so they do not have to duplicate effort.

In the other portfolio areas where I am directly responsible, we have been working to make the grants there simpler, clearer and more accessible generally. The recently

announced ACT Events Fund is an example of this. But I note Mr Braddock's points, and we will continue to work on this and will report back.

We have also been actively translating resources and working with other directorates to encourage this, too—this was touched on during question time today—notably with the Health Directorate with materials about the pandemic, and more recently with ChooseCBR, which very pleasingly had a very big take up from multicultural businesses, something the opposition had called for.

I also acknowledge Mrs Jones's amendment and thank her for negotiating with me and Mr Braddock on it. This is something that as a government we are also happy to investigate. I acknowledge the amendment extends the reporting time, and I thank the other members for agreeing to this two-month extension. While we are pleased to undertake the important work that this motion calls for, I want to acknowledge that the Office of Multicultural Affairs is a very small team with a very big agenda—over the coming months especially. This small extension gives us a bit more time to do this work.

I put on record on behalf of the ACT government and particularly on my behalf my personal thanks to the office for all of their hard work and thorough engagement with the issues in the past, presently and undoubtedly into the future. I and the broader government are committed to supporting the multicultural community and to ensuring that the ACT remains inclusive and welcoming. I look forward to reporting back to the Assembly on the progress of these actions, and I support the motion and the amendment.

**MR BRADDOCK** (Yerrabi) (4.36): I thank all parties for their support for this motion. It reflects the critical importance and contribution this community makes to Canberra. Like Minister Cheyne, I also pass on my appreciation to the members of the multicultural affairs office, who work diligently at making our Canberra the community it is today.

I fully support the amendment moved by Mrs Jones. The importance of people to be able to learn English as part of engaging with the government is critical, as is the provision of care for their children to allow them to concentrate on the task at hand. I am happy to support the amendment to the reporting date because I would prefer to see the job done properly rather than the mindless achievement of a specific date.

I say thank you to all of the multicultural community and the contribution you make to Canberra now and in the future. I hope this motion goes some small way in recognising our appreciation of that.

Amendment agreed to.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

## **Adjournment**

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

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

## **Palliative Care ACT—Leo's Place**

**MRS JONES** (Murrumbidgee) (4.37): On Thursday, 29 July, I visited a special place in the middle of our city called Leo's Place. A few years ago Palliative Care ACT began to question what more it could do to help people with a life-limiting illness. Research revealed that, despite 80 per cent of people preferring to die at home in Australia, the number of those who do is below 12 per cent. Dying in Australia is more institutionalised than in most countries, with Australians dying at home at half the rate that people do in New Zealand, the United States, Ireland and France. Carer fatigue and the lack of community support, such as respite, is a key reason for this outcome.

After investing in a scoping study and developing a model of care, Palliative Care ACT began fundraising to establish a respite option it could not find anywhere else in the world. Leo's Place is a non-clinical home away from home where people with a life-limiting illness can come for a few hours or a few days, up to a week, to give their carers some time to recoup.

The original goal was to build purpose-built accommodation to ensure the building met a wide range of needs and provided people with their own space, while offering spaces for people to come together. Of course, a new build would take significant investment, and the model was unproven, but Palliative Care ACT were regularly meeting people who needed this type of support. So, rather than wait to build the perfect place, it was decided to test the model on a rental property.

Late last year, after searching for the right place, a lease was signed on the home they have just set up, and it is lovely. It feels like a home. The first client arrived in late January and you can see the effort that has been put into making the place feel welcoming. Support workers are there to assist when needed and those staying overnight have their own room. There are multiple living spaces for people to relax in while doing a puzzle, reading a book or watching TV.

This sort of innovative care is a wonderful opportunity for our city to show how compassionate a community we can be. Palliative Care ACT has received operational funding from the ACT government for the proof of concept and has teamed up with the University of New South Wales to assess the benefits. It would be good to do more to help this project succeed as well.

We all need to share the story of this project and help get the news about it around to the people who could benefit. Then, at the end of the current funding, we need to continue to support it. Eighteen months for such a new and valuable initiative may not give it the time to reach its full potential. This is something our entire community should get behind—business, government and individuals. We might need this high quality support ourselves someday.

I thank the staff at Leo's Place for showing me around and the lady who was staying there who explained to me what a benefit the place is to her. I very much thank the kind and generous donors who have assisted to get the place going. I look forward to

seeing a purpose-built facility built in the ACT because, let's say, dying can take a long time. I have watched many people support their loved ones through that process and sometimes we all need a holiday or a break, no matter our health and no matter our situation. Thanks very much, Palliative Care ACT, and thanks very much to everyone involved in Leo's Place.

**Mr Derek Wrigley OAM—tribute**  
**Father Brian Maher OAM—tribute**

**MS VASSAROTTI** (Kurrajong—Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, Minister for Homelessness and Housing Services and Minister for Sustainable Building and Construction) (4.41): It is probably appropriate that I rise this afternoon to recognise the passing of two individuals that have made contributions to our local community in very different ways. I would firstly like to acknowledge Derek Wrigley OAM, who passed away at 97 in late June. Others have written some lovely obituaries for Derek since then. Since I have limited time in this adjournment speech, I will keep my remarks very brief.

Derek is widely known in Canberra for his design work. As the university architect at the ANU, Derek's designs can be seen everywhere, such as the wooden chairs in some of the older ANU buildings. I recently learned that the beautifully comfortable seats and desks in the Shine Dome were also designed by Derek. He also worked on designing technical aids for people with disabilities, but moved into sustainable housing in the latter part of his career. Derek truly was a designer focused on the needs and aspirations of people.

In the past 20 years or so, Derek became alarmed about climate change and wrote several books on sustainable housing. Derek was a highly valued member of the Australian and New Zealand Solar Energy Society for many years. He made the challenging and creative process of retrofitting houses for improved comfort his forte.

Derek routinely held open days in his home in Mawson to showcase to people what they could do to their homes themselves. His ideas were grounded in pragmatism, function and affordability, and his energy and enthusiasm was infectious. Perhaps his most renowned idea was the southern reflector—polished steel mirrors placed on the southern side of a house to reflect winter sun into the southern rooms. On touring his Mawson home, it was possible to lose your bearings because the sun was beaming in from several directions. Derek would proudly proclaim to visitors how cheerful it made the house, and I think that sums up his attitude to improving homes for everyone.

I would also like to recognise the passing of Father Brian Maher OAM. Ordained in 1966, he was a much-loved priest serving in several parishes of the Canberra and Goulburn Archdiocese, including Braddon for eight years, Bungendore for six years and Aranda for 15 years. He retired in 2007 and also passed away at the end of June.

As well as these contributions, Father Brian became known for his significant contribution in documenting the history of the archdiocese. Over the years, as part of his research, he collected a number of records, including letters, maps, newspaper

cuttings and photographs which assisted his writing. He wrote a number of articles and papers, the histories of 10 parishes, and two books.

Father Brian was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for Service to the Canberra Region through historical organisations, and the Catholic Church of Australia in 2009 and was appointed an archdiocesan historian in 2011.

It was with great pleasure that I attended the launch of the Brian Maher digital collection in April as part of the heritage festival. We certainly needed no reminding of just how popular family history research has become. The work of Canberra's Heraldry and Genealogy Society in digitising Father Brian's extensive records will make the search for many of the district's older Catholic families so much easier, including my own, as I think I have reported before to this Assembly. Father Brian Maher was a relative and was always known to me as the "family historian".

Vale Derek Wrigley and Brian Maher. Thank you for your different but important contributions to our community, to our history and to our future.

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

**MR CAIN** (Ginninderra) (4.45): Recently I came across a page on the Have Your Say government portal on the topic of the dangerous pavers at Charnwood shops. This is something I have brought to the attention of the minister several times and he has even appeared on television about it. The minister is well aware that this is an issue that local residents care about, so naturally this consultation page on the Have Your Say portal left me baffled. How hard can it be to fix a pavement?

A consultation about how to fix the paving will just prolong the current untenable situation. I encourage anyone to go to Charnwood shops and see all the white lines drawn across most of the entry area. They would realise that this is a bit of a farce. I understand that a longer-term solution needs to be put in place, but the government should just fix the broken and dangerous paving. I am highly supportive of consultation on big-picture, long-term issues that have a major effect on the community, but consultation on fixing broken paving seems a bit over the top. Charnwood locals deserve more than bureaucratic inertia. I have no doubt that they would rather see the pavement fixed than go through endless rounds of so-called community consultation.

I emphasise again that I am all for community consultation, but you do not need to consult on fixing broken paving. There is an effective and comprehensive way—that is, broader community consultation—to make sure services meet the mark. The Labor-Greens government probably should have directed their consultation activities towards, for example, their proposed closure of the green waste facility in West Belconnen. If they are going to consult on fixing broken paving, why not consult on something like that? It was only after an e-petition which I sponsored reached 2,000 signatures that the government changed its decision to end the lease at the end of June.

The pavement at the Charnwood shops, on the other hand, just needs fixing. The Labor-Greens government is doing an online survey and two pop-up sessions at the

shops this month. To get to this point it has taken several letters from me on behalf of constituents, a WIN News story, two government ministers visiting the shops and, no doubt, many locals writing directly to the minister. While all this has been happening over many months—in fact, earlier this year I think the white lines were drawn to show how dangerous the Charnwood entry was—it is still not fixed. The online survey is due to close on 3 September, which is still a month off.

The local council role of the ACT government is to keep our pavements even, to keep the roads free from potholes and to collect the rubbish. I do not believe it is providing these services satisfactorily. Some say this is Canberra's worst government. I call on the minister to fix this paving now and then to look at longer-term solutions for landscaping. Thank you.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

**The Assembly adjourned at 4.50 pm.**