



Debates

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MADAM SPEAKER (Ms Burch) (10.01): 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.

Australian Capital Territory Legislative Assembly Members Superannuation Board—membership Statement by Speaker

MADAM SPEAKER: Members will be aware that there exists a superannuation scheme for members, pursuant to the Legislative Assembly (Members' Superannuation) Act 1991. Although most members are now not part of that scheme, there still exists a requirement for an Australian Capital Territory Legislative Assembly Members Superannuation Board, which is chaired by the Speaker and has a government member and an opposition member. The act stipulates that those members must be elected in accordance with the procedures used to elect the Speaker at a meeting convened by the Speaker.

Members, whilst these meetings have previously been held at party room meetings, with respective members physically present, under the present circumstances those meetings are not occurring. Accordingly, I ask whether it is the wish of the Assembly to proceed with the election of board members and alternates.

There being no objection, and for the purposes of the act, I will now ask the Clerk to conduct an election for a government member of the board and an alternate, and then an opposition member of the board and an alternate. I call the Clerk.

Clerk: I call for nominations for a government member of the Australian Capital Territory Legislative Assembly Members Superannuation Board.

Ms Orr: I nominate.

Clerk: I declare Ms Orr, the member proposed, to have been elected as the government member of the Members Superannuation Board. I call for nominations for an alternate government member of the Australian Capital Territory Legislative Assembly Members Superannuation Board.

Dr Paterson: I nominate.

Clerk: There being no further nominations, I declare Dr Paterson, the member proposed, to have been elected as an alternate government member of the Members Superannuation Board. I now call for nominations for an opposition member of the Australian Capital Territory Legislative Assembly Members Superannuation Board.

Mr Hanson: I nominate Peter Cain.

Clerk: Does the member accept the nomination?

Mr Cain: I accept.

Clerk: There being no further proposals, I declare Mr Cain, the member proposed, to have been elected as an opposition member of the Members Superannuation Board. I call for nominations for an alternate opposition member of the Australian Capital Territory Legislative Assembly Members Superannuation Board.

Mrs Jones: I nominate Mr Hanson.

Clerk: Does the member accept the nomination?

Mr Hanson: Yes.

Clerk: There being no further proposals, I declare Mr Hanson, the member proposed, to have been elected as alternate opposition member of the Members Superannuation Board.

Petition

The following petition was lodged for presentation:

Municipal services—Lyons shops—petition 41-21

By Mrs Jones, from 442 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) Lyons Shops is a well-loved community shopping centre which needs to be upgraded

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

- a) Install a playground next to the shops;
- b) Provide toilet facilities for the shops;

- c) Increase the amount of outdoor seating available;
- d) Install a pump track on the oval for kids to ride their bikes;
- e) Increase frequency and quality of oval maintenance; and
- f) Paint the inside of the bus stop with work by a local artist

The Clerk having announced that the terms of the petition would be recorded in Hansard and referred to the appropriate ministers 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) (10.05): This petition is from residents of the Australian Capital Territory and requests that the Assembly note that the Lyons shopping centre is a well-loved community shopping centre which needs to be upgraded.

The petition requests the Assembly to call on the ACT government to install a playground next to the shops, provide toilet facilities for the shops, increase the amount of outdoor seating available, install a pump track on the oval for children to ride their bikes, increase the frequency and quality of oval maintenance, and paint the inside of the bus stop with work by a local artist.

I welcome commitments that I have seen referenced in the budget papers to add play equipment at the Lyons shops. I would like to put on the record that this is important not only for the residents of Lyons but for the many families who will be moving into tower blocks planned for the Woden town centre.

I thank all members present for no doubt enthusiastically considering this petition. I hope that we can see some rejuvenation, particularly so that children who might be growing up in apartment blocks have access to bike-riding facilities near home and are safe through the underpass from the Woden town centre.

It is also important for the community and business owners who have invested so much time and effort in building themselves up. The greengrocer has spent quite a lot of money rejuvenating the supermarket, and a fantastic family who have recently taken over the cafe are very committed newer Canberrans, and we very much embrace and appreciate what they are doing. We also have a new hairdresser in the block, one who specialises in curly hair, for those who are interested in that—Mr Gentleman in particular, I am sure.

It is important. While territory and municipal services, which Mr Steel looks after, might seem to be not as high level as some of the things we debate here, these things very much impact on people's everyday lives. Lyons is calling out and crying out for improvement. We look forward to seeing what the government is able to provide.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

COVID-19 pandemic—safe working arrangements for the ACT public sector

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) (10.08): The ACT government has comprehensive work health and safety measures in place to ensure the health and safety of territory public servants during the COVID-19 pandemic. The response to public health directions, including the ACT lockdown, was swift, and territory public servants are working from home wherever possible. For those working on the front line, providing essential health and community services, strict protective measures are in place to prevent the spread of infection in workplaces.

These new work health and safety arrangements build on the continuing proactive measures that have been in place across ACT public sector workplaces during the pandemic. It is important that our response to the pandemic aligns with the requirements in place for managing COVID-19 in the ACT community.

The outbreak of COVID-19 in the ACT has brought new challenges, with community transmission and ACT government workplaces being exposure locations for the first time. This has required a work health and safety response to ensure that territory public servants are supported to get tested and to quarantine or isolate as required.

Workforce arrangements such as flexible provisions and the availability of COVID-19 leave have worked in conjunction with new work health and safety guidance to support employees, managers and workplaces to respond appropriately and proportionately to cases of exposure.

The whole-of-government work health and safety response to the pandemic continues to occur on two fronts: ensuring that risks of exposure to COVID-19 are identified and managed in all workplaces; and supporting the health, safety and wellbeing of territory public servants during their changed working arrangements.

The ACT public sector has implemented, and continues to implement, a COVID-19 work health and safety framework, with associated guidance and policies. It requires all ACT government workplaces to implement controls to eliminate or minimise the risk of transmission of COVID-19.

The framework is based on the guidance of expert international and national health bodies, the expert health advice of the Australian government and ACT Health, and Safe Work Australia, which is leading the response for workplace management of COVID-19.

Public health directions are followed in all ACT government workplaces. Core measures in place across all ACT government workplaces continue to be physical distancing, including spacing of office workstations and capacity limits in buildings and other workplaces; contact tracing, including use of the Check In CBR app in all

ACT government workplaces; increased and targeted cleaning protocols; promoting hand and respiratory hygiene; and reminding workers to get tested if they have symptoms and to stay home when unwell.

In addition to managing risks associated with COVID-19 itself, changed working arrangements and the unprecedented changes brought about by the pandemic have required a strategic, targeted, whole-of-government approach to identifying and addressing psychological risks and supporting employee wellbeing. A coordinated approach to supporting employee mental health and wellbeing has been in place since April 2020. This includes communication and engagement activities, resources and support materials, and promotion of targeted programs and initiatives.

Managers and workers have had access to a range of supports for managing changed working arrangements, including guidance and support for those working from home and managing remote teams; guidance on preparing for, and responding to, changing public health directions, including lockdown; leave entitlements to encourage workers to take leave when they are unwell and to participate in the COVID-19 vaccination program; and physical health and wellbeing programs, including a new virtual physiotherapy service offering virtual check-ups of home working arrangements with allied health professionals.

A survey conducted in December 2020 provided all ACT government workers with an opportunity to provide feedback about their health, safety and wellbeing at work during 2020. The results provide further assurance that the ACT government has responded well to the pandemic. Overall, employees felt safe and well and are confident about the government's ability to continue serving the community as the pandemic continues.

Any changes to COVID-19 work health and safety measures will be considered in line with public health requirements and a full assessment of the risks. Directorates and agencies have COVID-19 transition plans in place to assess risks and put controls and measures in place to address these and to respond as the situation changes.

The move to working from home for a large portion of our ACT public sector in response to COVID-19 in 2020 has shown that having flexibility and options about where territory public servants work, where this is possible, is good for people, good for the ACT government and good for the community. Feedback from territory workers who have been able to work from home has been overwhelmingly positive, and wellbeing for many of these workers has improved.

As we now look to what the future of working in the office looks like for the ACT public sector, we cannot lose sight of the benefits that offering flexibility provides. The ACT government's approach to returning territory public servants to the office has been proportionate and cautious in the past and will remain so. The health and safety of workers, and the community who use ACT government services, have been at the forefront of decision-making throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

I am grateful to all those who have been involved in this response, including managers, staff and unions. Our collective goal has been safe workplaces, and this will not change.

Looking to the rest of 2021, a similar approach will be taken as health directions change and a return to the office becomes an option to consider. COVID-19 measures will continue to recognise the health and safety of ACT government workers and the community as the highest priority.

I would like to sincerely thank all public servants, whether they are working from home or on the front line, for the effective response to the pandemic and for their ongoing work to keep our city going during these challenging times. I know that many are working harder than ever, despite the challenges that changed working arrangements have caused. I will ensure that you are all supported, in whatever way is needed, to continue this work.

I present the following paper:

COVID-safe working arrangements for the ACT Public Sector—Ministerial statement, 8 October 2021.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Gambling—harm minimisation measures Ministerial statement

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong—Attorney-General, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Gaming and Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction) (10.16): In December last year I made a commitment to this Assembly that I would report on the progress of the government's gaming reform agenda by October this year. Today I would like to take the opportunity to present on the progress of the gaming commitments set out in the Parliamentary and Governing Agreement for the Tenth Legislative Assembly and on the government's achievements so far in reducing harm from gaming while supporting sustainable clubs.

This government is committed to working collaboratively with community clubs to ensure that clubs continue to play a valuable role in our community. As the Minister for Gaming, I am determined to see clubs continue to flourish in our city. Clubs provide our community with a place for like-minded Canberrans to meet, celebrate and share cultural, ethnic, sporting and creative interests.

I am, however, aware of the challenges that ACT community clubs face, particularly in relation to the significant reliance that many clubs still have on gaming revenue and, in turn, the associated harms that gaming has on our community. It is for these reasons that this government has, in no uncertain terms, committed to the 10 gaming reforms in the parliamentary agreement to support sustainable clubs and minimise the harm caused by gaming in our community.

In summary, the 10 gaming-related commitments listed in the parliamentary agreement are to establish a community clubs ministerial advisory council; reduce the number of gaming machines to 3,500 by 1 July 2025; establish a cross-venue self-exclusion scheme; match or exceed harm reduction reforms commenced in New South Wales, such as cashless gaming; introduce \$5 bet limits and \$100 load-up limits; facilitate planning and other processes to allow clubs to diversify to other revenue streams; provide a just transition for workers in the community clubs and gambling industry; conduct a review into non-potable water costs for high-intensity club users; establish a five-year \$5 million building energy efficiency upgrade fund; and support clubs to become heat and smoke refuges for local communities.

Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to report that the government has already delivered on the first commitment set out in the parliamentary agreement, relating to the establishment of the ministerial advisory council. The council was formed in May this year. It comprises 14 members, including me as the Minister for Gaming, Ms Tara Cheyne MLA as the Minister for Business and Better Regulation, representatives from community clubs, gambling harm reduction organisations, unions, young people, and government representatives. Presently, the council meets monthly to discuss the gaming commitments in the parliamentary agreement and other issues affecting the ACT clubs industry.

I am also pleased to inform members that work is progressing to establish a four-year, \$5 million fund to assist community clubs to upgrade their buildings' energy efficiency. While the design of the program is still in development, it is envisaged that products eligible for upgrade and installation under the fund could include battery storage systems, electric heating and cooling systems, efficient electric stovetops and refrigeration. The fund may assist clubs to reduce their operating costs and may also provide alternative revenue streams through solar PV feed-in tariffs that may offset other costs.

The government released a discussion paper in March 2021 as part of the broader review of non-potable water costs for high-intensity club users. The aim of the review is to allow clubs to maintain operations while not requiring cross-subsidisation from other ACT water users. The review's recommendations will guide the government delivery of this commitment. In the interim, the non-potable water rebate is available to high-intensity club users for non-potable water charges incurred.

Members will be aware that Canberra enjoyed significant rainfalls this year, which has resulted in clubs requiring less non-potable water than expected in 2020-21. As a result, the rebate has been extended by six months, to enable remaining funds to continue to be used for the rebate until these are exhausted. The rebate covers the use of surface water, groundwater and recycled water from the lower Molonglo water quality control centre and stormwater from the inner north reticulation network.

The government is actively progressing the introduction of the harm reduction measures of \$5 bet limits and \$100 load-up limits. An external expert has been engaged to prepare advice about the technical and cost issues associated with implementing \$5 bet and \$100 load-up limits in ACT gaming machines.

In order to meet the new regulatory settings, the government is considering the cost and implementation requirements to upgrade gaming machines. Further industry consultation will be undertaken. Policy work is proceeding on a number of commitments to inform further conversations with the industry and other stakeholders about how these commitments might be delivered.

The government has commenced work to ensure that our cross-venue self-exclusion regime in the ACT is as rigorous as possible for people experiencing gaming harm. A subcommittee of the ministerial advisory council, the ACT Gambling Exclusion Regime Working Group, has been formed to provide the council with advice about opportunities to enhance the experiences of the gamblers and gaming venues that interact with the ACT gambling exclusion regime.

Regarding the commitment to match or exceed any further harm reduction gaming reforms commenced in New South Wales, I met with the New South Wales Minister for Customer Service, the Hon Victor Dominello MP, in May this year to discuss the reforms proposed in the Gaming Machines Amendment (Gambling Harm Minimisation) Bill 2020 in New South Wales.

While many of the measures in that bill are already part of the ACT legislative framework—including, for example, the ability for persons to self-exclude themselves from gaming venues—the ACT government's Justice and Community Safety Directorate will continue to consider the implementation of the New South Wales reforms, such as cashless gaming and family and third-party exclusions, in the ACT context.

JACS is also assessing the commitment to provide a just transition for workers in the community clubs and gambling industry. JACS is currently reviewing the employment profile of the ACT clubs and gambling industry to determine the number of workers who may be affected by the government's gaming harm minimisation reforms.

In relation to the commitment to support clubs to become heat and smoke refuges for local communities, JACS is working across the government to design and deliver policy options which strengthen the ACT's existing emergency response strategies. Alongside this, the government is considering how to facilitate planning and other processes to allow clubs to diversify, including exploring opportunities for ACT clubs to make better use of their land assets.

Another important commitment is to target a further reduction in the number of authorisations to 3,500 by 1 July 2025, with additional incentives to move to zero machines within a venue location. While the planning system does have a role to play in supporting club revenue diversification, JACS is also considering what measures may be effective in achieving this further reduction, noting the success of previous measures in the last term of government to incentivise clubs to reduce their authorisations to 4,000.

In addition to the reform proposals set out in the parliamentary agreement, members may already be aware of the ACT government's diversification and sustainability support fund, which was set up in 2019. The fund is jointly funded by industry and the government to provide funding to community clubs for activities and initiatives that seek to support the sustainability of clubs and to assist clubs to diversify their income to sources other than gaming machines.

This government is continuing to match industry contributions into the fund for the 2021-22 financial year, as it has since the fund's creation. The fund is an important tool for supporting the club industry while assisting clubs to diversify away from gaming machine revenue. The club industry has demonstrated a willingness to engage with the grant process and explore innovative ways to diversify income streams.

In the last financial year, over \$630,000 in funding was provided to support seven clubs to diversify away from gaming machine revenue and fund a range of initiatives, including upgrading and reopening a kitchen, constructing sheds to store golf carts, developing a strategy to diversify to alternative income streams, and contributing to a risk analysis for a venue redevelopment.

The most recent funding round closed on 17 August 2021, with grants of up to \$250,000 available to help Canberra's club industry to shift its reliance on gaming machine revenue. Applications for tier 1 funding, to a maximum of \$25,000, are available to small and medium clubs and club groups and can be submitted for consideration by the board at any time, on an ongoing basis. I look forward to receiving the board's recommendations about payments to be made from the fund for the 2021-22 financial year.

Madam Speaker, so far today, I have canvassed the extensive gaming reforms and initiatives progressed by this government since it was formed in November last year. I would like to conclude my statement to the Assembly by acknowledging that the club industry has been significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. I would like to take this opportunity to inform members about the COVID-19 relief measures that the government has extended from the previous government to support the club industry during this difficult period.

Clubs are eligible for a range of business support grants that the government has made available, as part of the largest single financial support package ever undertaken in the ACT's history. On our calculation, the larger clubs would be able to apply for up to \$125,000 in direct grant funding. This funding for clubs helps to meet unavoidable costs incurred during the lockdown period, alongside the income support payments going to club workers from the commonwealth. Clubs will also be eligible to apply for commercial tenancy rate relief for this and the next financial quarters, up to \$10,000.

This government has also continued several measures under the COVID-19 economic survival package, established in 2020, including the gaming machine authorisation surrender incentive, to assist gaming machine licensees. Prior to 30 June 2021, licensees could access an incentive payment of \$15,000 per gaming machine

authorisation surrendered, to be used towards the employment of staff, diversification activities and initiatives, and energy and water efficiency measures. This initiative has brought the number of gaming machine authorisations now in operation down to 3,864.

I have also extended the measures in the Gaming Machine (Emergency Community Purpose Contribution—Local Live Performance Industry) Declaration by three months, until 30 November 2021, to provide support to both the clubs and local live performance industries, in connection with the COVID-19 public health directions. Clubs can claim contributions made to or for the local live performance industry for music or other live entertainment, other than sport, as community purpose contributions. The funding can be used to meet 100 per cent of a venue's expected costs between 1 June and 30 November this year for engaging artists and technicians and up to 50 per cent of marketing and promotion costs. The extension of this initiative should assist clubs to continue to play a key role in Canberra's social events by providing music and other live entertainment, other than sport, for club members and patrons.

Madam Speaker, this government is committed to implementing effective gaming reforms and initiatives to assist the ACT community club industry and to minimise gaming-related harm to our community. I look forward to providing further updates to the Assembly as the commitments are implemented throughout this term of government.

I present the following paper:

Government commitments to reduce harm from gaming while supporting sustainable clubs—Progress—Ministerial statement, 8 October 2021.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (10.29): I would like to respond to Mr Rattenbury by acknowledging that in his time in this portfolio space he has been much more open to listening than his predecessor. But I cannot help but get the sense that this statement has missed the mark. I know it is a statement about the progress of the government's commitments to reduce harm from gaming—I get that—but it has missed the mark in terms of the effect that the pandemic has had. In its final paragraphs, the statement has touched on the effects of the pandemic on our clubs, but I fear that those impacts have not been taken into account fully by the minister—certainly not as covered in this statement.

Mr Rattenbury gave some figures on the maximum that some clubs could be eligible for under business support grants. When I was speaking to one gentleman from a particular club, he suggested that that amount was pretty much what they lost in August when you take into account that in August they were operating for the first week and a half. When we put September, October, November and December on top of that, we can see that we need to get a grip on the fact that the pandemic has brought

many of our community clubs to their knees and that the biggest challenge facing a number of them now is their very survival.

I fear—and I think Mr Rattenbury probably fears as well—that some clubs will close after the Delta wave shut us down. I think we share the fear that some of the clubs that closed will not reopen. We all get the parliamentary agreement, and we understand that this is a parliamentary agreement struck between two parties and that Mr Rattenbury is the minister and is in charge of rolling that out. I would hope that Mr Rattenbury and his colleagues can also try to understand that this agreement was struck before the lockdown of 2021. If some adjustments need to be made to some of the timetables to ensure the actual survival of our clubs, I hope that consideration will be given to this. I hope that is genuinely the case and that, if those changes are made, they will be made to save thousands of jobs, to allow the clubs to continue to support the community in the way that they do.

I am urging the minister to focus heavily on the real-world problems that are facing these organisations; to continue to get advice from the clubs; and to, if necessary, adjust his program if and when that is required. I am pleased that this is not as contested a space as it was during the last term, but, as the shadow minister, I need to emphasise that this sector is in an extremely precarious position.

DR PATERSON (Murrumbidgee) (10.32): I am very pleased to hear the update on the progress of the government's gambling reform agenda, recognising the impact that gambling has on many of our citizens. This time last year, I was director of one of Australia's most prominent and longest standing centres for gambling research at the Australian National University. I spent 15 years of my life researching gambling. When I started, I did not understand it. I thought it was fun and I did not really understand how people became addicted or how it was harmful. Year in and year out, in story after story, a feeling of sickness grew in me. I began to see the harm and the insidiousness of this activity in our community. Like most things, once you see it, you cannot go back.

I see the 47,000 people in this city that experience harm from gambling. That is 30,000 who experience harm themselves and 17,000 who experience harm from a family member's gambling. There has been lots of discussion in this sitting on the 38,000 Canberrans living in poverty in the ACT. There are more people in this city that are experiencing the impacts of gambling harm than there are people living in poverty.

In two weeks time, in a normal year, it would be Gambling Harm Awareness Week. I stand here today to highlight the harm and the impacts that gambling causes in our community. COVID-19 has seen Canberra's pokies fall silent. The lights are out. However, as our venues have been shut, we have been in our homes for the last eight weeks and we have been barraged day in, day out, on TV and social media, by gambling ads.

Australia's experience of the pandemic has seen foreign-owned corporate bookmakers gain tens of billions of dollars in market value during the last year. Global corporation Flutter Entertainment, the parent company of Sportsbet, gained almost \$30 billion in

value during the COVID-19 outbreak in Australia. This largely comes from the increase in their market share in Australia. It is not surprising, as the research from the Australian Gambling Research Centre found, in a survey of 2,000 people, that last year almost one in three participants opened a new online betting account during the pandemic lockdown.

The gambling industry spent \$271 million—\$271 million—on advertising last year. We know that advertising works, which is why we do not allow cigarette advertising. The advertising has become so bad that even the Tabcorp chief executive, in September this year, said that the federal government should impose restrictions on TV gambling ads, particularly during prime time, to protect children and teenagers. He warned that a switch towards online gambling during the pandemic has brought about a need for greater government intervention.

The free TV code prohibits gambling and betting commercials from being broadcast in any program classified G or lower between 6 am and 8.30 am and between 4 pm and 7 pm, as well as during any program broadcast between 7 am and 8.30 pm that is principally directed towards children. However, a loophole permits such advertising during commercial broadcasts in a news, current affairs or sporting program.

Although the free TV code and the ASTRA codes were updated to prohibit the promotion of ads during live sporting matches, the loophole means that viewers, including children, are still exposed to gambling advertisements during these time slots. However, it should be noted that, no matter what time of day or night it is, any sporting footage has gambling advertising embedded in it. The games are shrouded in advertising around the sportsgrounds and on the jerseys of our favourite players. This all needs to change.

The Alliance for Gambling Reform, of which former MLA Gordon Ramsay is now CEO, is a national advocacy organisation that works to prevent harm from gambling. It is running a campaign calling for an end to sports betting advertising in Australia. I encourage everyone to sign its petition to ban the ads.

The Reverend Tim Costello, chief advocate of the alliance, says:

When you stop and take notice of how many gambling ads you see on television, it's really disturbing. Sometimes more than half the ads you see in a commercial break are for gambling. That's not right.

Unfortunately, over this lockdown the advertising has been invasive. It is wrong. You do not need to be an anthropologist or a psychologist to see who these companies are marketing to. They are marketing to men—young men; larrikins; the good old Aussie bloke; the bloke with mates; the funny guy; the rich man; the happy, winning man.

We talk a lot in this place about issues that are gendered. The harm that comes to individuals and families from online and sports gambling is gendered, and it is men who are experiencing that harm. Of course, the harm flows, which is why gambling is a public health problem, because the harm that the young man experiences also hurts his young wife and their young children.

I wish to thank Minister Rattenbury and the Community Clubs Ministerial Advisory Council for their work to reduce gambling harm in this community. It is great to see the combined benefit of initiatives from this government to address climate change while reducing clubs' reliance on pokies. I look forward to continuing to offer my support for the range of gambling reforms and initiatives as well as support for community clubs, moving forward.

As we move into Gambling Harm Awareness Week and as we move out of lockdown, I say to those people who are fighting that internal battle with themselves: call 1800 858 858 for a chat. Call that number and work out a plan for yourself. I say to men in the ACT, to men who gamble with mates: look after your mates.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Seniors—International Day of Older Persons Ministerial statement

MS DAVIDSON (Murrumbidgee-Assistant Minister for Families and Community Services, Minister for Disability, Minister for Justice Health and Minister for Mental Health) (10.39): I rise to recognise the International Day of Older Persons. Since 1990, the United Nations has designated 1 October as the International Day of Older Persons. On this day across the globe we pay tribute to the enormous contributions older people make to our lives and our communities as we also continue to reckon with the aged-based discrimination and abuse that too many older people experience. In the spirit of this day, the ACT government underlines our commitment to addressing these issues.

Currently, there are about 50,000 Canberrans aged 65 years and over, and this number will continue to grow. Treasury projections point to significant increases through to 2058. By 2058, 122,000 Canberrans over 65 will make up 17.4 per cent of the ACT's population. Nationally, more than a third of people aged over 65 were born overseas, with the majority born in non-English-speaking countries. Half of those aged 65 years and over have a disability. The figures for the ACT are similar. While there is very little data on the older Australian LGBTIQ community, census data points to the fact that five per cent of the 46,700 same-sex couples in Australia are aged 65 and over. More than half of the people over 65 are women. While the number of older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is growing, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 65 and over make up just five per cent of the total Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population. This is compared with 16 per cent of the non-Indigenous population being aged 65 and over.

For the second year running, the International Day of Older Persons takes place amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. With the impacts of the lockdown continuing, we know that older people in our community have faced specific challenges. I want to recognise that residents of aged-care facilities have been particularly impacted by lockdowns. The progress we are making in relation to vaccination rates for the aged care workforce is particularly welcome. As at 29 September, 99.8 per cent of residential aged-care workers in the ACT had received their first dose, and 88.7 per cent were fully vaccinated.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank community organisations and service organisations who support older people and veterans for their work informing their members and communities about the COVID-19 vaccination program. I was pleased to host the seniors COVID-19 vaccination forum in June, and I acknowledge the attendance of many of these organisations so critical to the wellbeing of older Canberrans in our community. The ACT has experienced an extremely high uptake of the COVID-19 vaccine among persons 60 years and older. As at 29 September, more than 99 per cent of Canberrans aged 60 years and older had received their first dose, and 88.1 per cent were fully vaccinated.

I want to pay tribute to Canberra's rich and diverse landscape of community organisations that support older people. These organisations, seniors centres, ADACAS, and of course, COTA ACT—to name just a few—have been at the forefront of the COVID-19 response, providing clear and direct information for older people, amidst the sea of different messages. They have rapidly adapted their supports and services and have provided connections when physical distancing was necessary. For example, over the lockdowns of 2020 and 2021 COTA ACT has worked with major supermarkets to ensure that seniors cardholders can access priority home delivery services. This quick thinking and action will no doubt have made access to shopping for food and essential items much easier for many older Canberrans.

The ACT government's support of older Canberrans, and efforts to build a truly age-friendly city, are due in large part to our partnerships and collaboration with the community sector. It is this spirit of partnership which powers the elder abuse network—a broad and diverse network of over 40 community organisations and government agencies, collectively problem-solving issues around the abuse of older people in Canberra. It is this spirit of partnership which pushes awareness of the annual seniors grants into the furthest reaches of the community. And it is this spirit of partnership which made the World Elder Abuse Awareness Day event in June possible, bringing together key players from government and the community to raise awareness and provide support.

The ACT government has long been proud to support COTA ACT's organisation of Seniors Week. Following the uncertainty of 2020, COTA ACT made a very sound decision to expand Seniors Week 2021 to the Silver is Gold Festival, running over a six-month period. As we find ourselves in the thick of this current COVID-19 response, I applaud COTA ACT for this foresight. The Silver is Gold community art and photographic competition exhibition and the Chief Minister's concert at the Canberra Theatre Centre have been memorable and enjoyable highlights in a year of ups and downs. I would also like to remark on the name and spirit of the festival—Silver is Gold. There is no better way to capture the importance of positive ageing and the adventure of getting older.

The ACT government is setting the course on whole-of-government policy design and implementation which is responsive to the needs and experiences of older people through the Age-Friendly City Plan. I refer to my ministerial statement in May, where I provided an update on the first report on this four-year strategy. In the seven months of the plan, three of the 33 actions across six ACT government directorates are

complete, and 20 further actions are underway. I note that there is further work happening in our age-friendly suburbs in this year's budget. Importantly, the plan is not just a compilation of important actions but a critical expression of commitment to older people in our community. To this end, the plan has been a springboard for adaptive and emerging responses to the needs of older people through the COVID-19 pandemic.

Libraries ACT have continued to deliver their digital helpline to support people to access the libraries' online resources, and the Human Rights Commission's powers have permanently been expanded to investigate complaints in relation to the abuse of people at risk—a measure that was introduced temporarily as part of the COVID-19 response. In the community, with the support of a seniors grant, the University of Canberra's work with Northside Community Service to create the intergenerational penpal program for older people and primary school students has nurtured connections in a time of isolation.

In April this year, this Assembly unanimously passed a motion calling on the government to progress work on Dementia Friendly Cities as part of the Age-Friendly City Plan. I am pleased to inform the Assembly that Access Canberra is exploring dementia assistance training for service centre staff and that dementia-friendly principles have been considered in the design of the new Access Canberra Belconnen Service Centre. The ACT government is also looking at the application of dementia-friendly planning for ACT government events when they can once again take place.

Centring the voices and experiences of older people in ACT government policies, programs and services, is crucial to building an age-friendly city, and to this end I am indebted to the expert and lived experience advice of the Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing, MACA. The MACA comprises 12 dedicated community members, each bringing rich expertise and deep connections to different parts of Canberra's community.

I said at the beginning of this statement that the International Day of Older Persons is an opportunity to recognise the vital role older people play in making Canberra the city we love. Older Canberrans contribute immeasurably to the care of people in our community as informal carers and grandparents, and their contribution as volunteers is the lifeblood of many organisations and groups across our city. It is worth noting that today's retirees are the most educated generation in history. We know that the decrease in older people's volunteering availability reverberates across Canberra and through families unable to draw on the care from, and connection with, grandparents in the same way.

One of the lessons from this pandemic is that we need to better recognise the work that older people do to make our community more inclusive, equitable and caring. When it comes to equality and justice for older people, there is no doubt we have work to do. More than one in four older Australians live in poverty. The Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety report has shone a much-needed light on the systemic failings in our care. And aged-based workplace discrimination is rife, with over a quarter of Australians aged over 50 having experienced it. These are

serious, significant and complex problems. The ACT government has a clear role in addressing these issues. At the same time, a whole-of-community effort is required.

Research from the Australian Human Rights Commission has shed light on one of the many manifestations of ageism. That is, the negative stereotypes and connotations of ageing. The study cites the example that ageing is associated with concept loss, as in loss of health, loss of hearing, loss of mental capacity and loss of income. I therefore challenge us, as a community, to instead see ageing for its gains—the gains of life experience that we inevitably accrue across the life course and the gains that we make as a community when we genuinely socially include older people. It is through this prism that we can build a truly age-friendly and inclusive community.

I present the following paper:

Statement on International Day of Older Persons—Ministerial statement,
8 October 2021.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (10.49): I would like to thank Minister Davidson for providing her statement today. I had thought it was to be provided on Tuesday, but apparently there was not enough time. I apologise for not noticing that. As the minister has noted, older people have faced significant challenges because of the pandemic and subsequent lockdowns. Seniors have been more vulnerable, more isolated and more at risk than many other groups in our community.

I agree with everything Minister Davidson has said in her statement. I, too, am pleased that older Canberrans have had such a high uptake of the COVID-19 vaccine. It is clear that our seniors understand the risk of this virus and want to protect themselves and their loved ones as best they can. I also note that Minister Davidson has paid tribute to the incredible community organisations we have here in the ACT that help to support older Canberrans—Communities@Work, seniors and 55-plus centres, ADACAS, and of course COTA ACT, to name just a few. It is absolutely fair that the minister, and anyone else, including me, pay them tribute, given that these organisations have done a lot of the heavy lifting during the pandemic and brought many issues to the government's attention.

But while we can all agree with these positive and constructive words, it is disappointing to see that this week's budget did not back up these fine words. No new initiatives were announced for seniors in the ACT budget this week. Under this government, it is business as usual with seniors, despite acknowledging that they face additional pressures during the pandemic. It is the same seniors grants, the same funding for seniors cards and the same inclusion and participation metrics.

Yes, I agree, it is great to have the seniors grants and the funding for seniors cards. But of course every government in Australia provides funding for seniors cards. This is not anything special or out of the ordinary. These are important initiatives, but it is

nothing new for older Canberrans. I believe that, more than ever before, our seniors need to be supported and prioritised by this government. We spoke about this during the debate on Mr Braddock's motion yesterday. The seniors organisations in the ACT do a fantastic job but they cannot do it alone and they need support to be able to support all of their members and constituents. I genuinely appreciate the minister's words today, but I fear that they are just words. This government could actually start to deliver for older Canberrans—walk the talk, rather than just talk the talk.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Planning and Unit Titles Legislation Amendment Bill 2021

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

Title read by Clerk.

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) (10.53): I move:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

I am pleased to present the Planning and Unit Titles Legislation Amendment Bill 2021. This bill is part of the government's regular program of omnibus bills that make technical amendments to keep our statute book up to date. Importantly, it contains a specific measure to increase the COVID-19 safe practicality of endorsing unit titles applications electronically.

The bill that I present to the Assembly today contains minor policy and procedural amendments to legislation administered by the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate and the Justice and Community Safety Directorate. This bill amends the Unit Titles Regulation 2001, the Planning and Development Act 2007 and the Land Titles Act 1925. The technical amendments relate to the process for endorsing unit titles applications; administrative procedures for land management agreements; and the requirements for registering a building management statement.

I will now discuss the provisions in the bill. As I have briefly outlined, the bill amends the Unit Titles Regulation 2001—the Unit Titles Regulation—to streamline the process for endorsing unit titles applications. At present, section 9 of the Unit Titles Regulation requires a unit titles application to be submitted, and subsequently managed, as a hard copy set of documents. The current process to approve a unit titles application requires the planning and land authority to provide a physical copy of all the documents to the applicant for them to physically sign every sheet of paper. The applicant then returns this hard copy of the endorsed plans for final checking and sign-off by the planning and land authority. The hard copy of approved unit titles plans is scanned by the authority for the files and subsequently returned to the

applicant for the package of documents to be then lodged with the Land Titles Office. The Land Titles Office then scans these same approved hard copy plans to its own electronic register.

I am sure that members would agree that this process is administratively cumbersome both for those within government and, importantly, for our community member applicants. As such, the modifications to section 9 of the Unit Titles Regulation that I propose in this bill, as set out in clauses 34 to 36, remove the need for “wet signatures” and the requirement to sign all pages of the unit plan, including the schedule of unit entitlements. This amendment to the administrative process aligns with COVID-19 safe practices and facilitates the move to an electronic system of approvals across government.

With the amendments proposed in this bill, an applicant will be able to electronically lodge a unit titles application with the planning and land authority. The authority will then be able to assess, exchange and approve the unit titles documents in electronic format. This will save time, printing costs and additional manual handling, and ensure the quality of the documentation. The current process requires applicants to attend an Access Canberra service centre up to five times to process, lodge and pick up documentation. The amendments in this bill reduce future pressures on face-to-face services as Canberra continues on its path out of the current lockdown.

As the approved units plan will be stored on a shared document management drive, this will also allow the Land Titles Office in Access Canberra to access the approved documentation at the time of lodgement, thus removing the need for double handling of the application. This will facilitate examination by electronic means and remove the administrative burden of scanning volumes of paper. This shift to an exclusively digital engagement will make it easier for the applicants within the community by supporting subsequent settlement processes for buyers, as this is one of the objectives of the Managing Building Better reforms.

The electronic processing of unit plans allows both the seller and buyers of newly constructed units to access registered documents and information from the land titles register far quicker. This will improve on the current time frame of two to four days post registration, during which period the documents have been scanned into the system as part of the processing. This initiative further supports Access Canberra’s introduction to the ACT of electronic conveyancing—or e-conveyancing—by the end of 2021. This initiative supports end-to-end processing for the lodgement of units plans by enabling buyers of a unit to access plans electronically and securely, right until the time of final settlement. This initiative is another example of digitisation of services to make it easier for people to do business with government.

The next suite of amendments that I wish to speak to are those relating to the Planning and Development Act 2007 and the administration and approval of land management agreements. Land management agreements are intended to facilitate cooperation between ACT Government agencies and rural leaseholders, with a view to establishing appropriate sustainable agricultural management practices; ensuring good farm biodiversity; maintaining the ecological and cultural values of the land; and protecting the environment from harm.

The bill proposes changes to section 283 of the Planning and Development Act to address the apparent discrepancy with section 425 by clarifying that an approved form is not required when negotiating and endorsing a land management agreement with a rural lessee. Based on advice from officials, and out of an abundance of caution, the bill provides for transitional provisions in relation to current agreements. By clarifying this matter, the amendment to section 283 also serves the government's commitment to reduce administrative red tape.

The bill also enables greater guidance to be provided for the management and administration of land management agreements. As these agreements are entered into by the Conservator of Flora and Fauna and rural lease holders, it is appropriate for guidance to be provided by the conservator to rural leaseholders. New sections 283(5) to (7) have been included in the bill to permit the Conservator of Flora and Fauna to make guidelines in relation to land management agreements and to require the conservator to consult with the planning and land authority about the guidelines. These guidelines will enhance risk management frameworks by identifying, assessing and mitigating risks—or identifying opportunities—associated with rural leasehold land in the territory.

The final raft of amendments that I will now discuss relates to building management statements, as required under the Land Titles Act 1925. These amendments support the continued implementation of the Managing Building Better reforms. The first phase of reforms was delivered through the Unit Titles Legislation Amendment Act 2020, which came into effect on 1 November 2020. The comprehensive reforms contained in the Unit Titles Legislation Amendment Act support the ACT government's work to deliver a fairer and easier way to live and work together.

The Managing Building Better reforms work established the new framework policy and the legislative framework for unit titles to improve the management of apartments, townhouses and mixed-use developments and commercial units. Included in these amendments was the introduction of building management statements for buildings which contain multiple leases. A building management statement is a binding agreement between all building lessees for the maintenance and administration of their building, ensuring that the building is maintained and managed as a whole and in accordance with the agreement developed with the consent of all the lessees.

These agreements introduce an important new governance structure for buildings to make sure that every owner contributes to and participates in the preservation and upkeep of the building, as well as setting out the processes for matters such as ongoing management, decision-making and dispute resolution. During implementation of the Unit Titles Legislation Amendment Act, minor issues were identified relating to the process of applying to the planning and land authority for approval of a building management statement. As such, the bill includes minor and technical amendments to the Land Titles Act 1925 to make sure that legislation relating to building management statements is effective and clear.

There are also minor consequential amendments to other legislation to support the changes needed to clarify the process of applying for approval of a building

management statement. These include amendments to the Civil Law (Property) Act 2006, the Civil Law (Sale of Residential Property) Act 2003, the Unit Titles Act 2001 and the Unit Titles (Management) Act 2011. The bill includes a number of amendments to definitions to clarify who a building management statement applies to and improve wording consistency within the legislation. Amendments have been made to who can apply for approval of a building management statement in order to capture all the relevant people that may lodge the application, recognising that this may be done by parties other than the building lessees, such as managers, developers or lawyers.

Further, the bill clarifies the approval process undertaken by the planning and land authority for building management statements by making it clear that the statement must address specific information. However, the adequacy of these statements will not be scrutinised by the planning and land authority. This recognises the unique and individual nature of a building management statement and that a standard assessment approach is not practicable, as no two building management statements will be alike.

Finally, the bill also removes the requirement for notification and review of decisions. This is a direct result of the fact that, as there is no assessment of the adequacy of the content of a building management statement, there are no grounds for an applicant to seek a merits review of a decision based on the adequacy of the statement. So long as a building management statement addresses all the formal requirements that must be included by the legislation, the application will be approved. These changes do not impact on a building lessee's right to seek the assistance of ACAT if there is a dispute relating to a building management statement.

In summary, this bill makes amendments that will improve, clarify and streamline legislation that relates to unit titles, land management agreements and building management statements. While the amendments in the bill are minor in nature, the changes they make are necessary and worthwhile improvements to the ACT statute book. I commend the bill to the Assembly.

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

Territory rights—federal government

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) (11.07): I, and also on behalf of Mr Rattenbury, move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) all Australian state parliaments have passed legislation to establish a voluntary assisted dying (VAD) scheme, except New South Wales;
- (b) a VAD bill is expected to be introduced shortly into the New South Wales Parliament, with newly installed Liberal Premier Dominic Perrottet confirming that a conscience vote will be permitted;

- (c) in 1997, the Commonwealth Parliament passed the *Euthanasia Laws Act 1997* (Cth) which amended the *Australian Capital Territory (Self-Government) Act 1988* (Cth) and the *Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act 1978* (Cth), removing the power from both territories to legalise euthanasia or assisted dying, and this ban persists to this day, 24 years later;
- (d) all parties in the ACT Legislative Assembly have urged the Commonwealth Government and Parliament to lift the current restriction on ACT residents' right to consider this issue;
- (e) Northern Territory Country Liberal Senator Sam McMahon earlier this year presented the Ensuring Northern Territory Rights Bill 2021 (Cth) to the Senate, which would remove the restriction on the Northern Territory to debate and potentially legislate to re-establish a VAD framework for the Northern Territory;
- (f) at the explicit request of ACT Liberal Senator Zed Seselja, the Ensuring Northern Territory Rights Bill 2021 (Cth) deliberately excludes the ACT from any removal of a restriction on legislating on VAD;
- (g) the potential passage of the Ensuring Northern Territory Rights Bill 2021 (Cth) in its current form will leave the ACT and its 430 000 residents as having fewer democratic rights than the residents of every other jurisdiction in Australia, including the Northern Territory;
- (h) the Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, chaired by Liberal Senator Sarah Henderson, released the report from its inquiry into the abovementioned bill on 6 October 2021 which:
 - (i) highlighted for the Senate's consideration that, in the absence of an express provision in the abovementioned bill which would amend the *Australian Capital Territory (Self-Government) Act 1988* (Cth), the provision inserted by the *Euthanasia Laws Act 1997* (Cth) would continue to apply;
 - (ii) noted evidence received that proceeding with the bill without including the ACT would not resolve the disparity between state and territory residents' ability to debate and legislate in relation to VAD;
 - (iii) included a minority report from Senator the Hon Kim Carr, which recommended the bill not be passed in its current form, explicitly noting that Federal Labor recommends that any legislation to restore the right of the Northern Territory to debate and legislate with respect to VAD laws should restore those same rights to the ACT; and
 - (iv) included a minority report from the Australian Greens which recommended the bill be amended to ensure that it affords all Australian self-governing territories the same legislative rights as the Northern Territory;
- (i) the disrespect the Commonwealth Government has shown to ACT and Northern Territory citizens by taking almost seven months to respond to ACT and Northern Territory Government correspondence from 3 March 2021 regarding the need to rectify the concerning persistence of the ban on the ACT's and Northern Territory's ability to legislate on this issue;

- (j) the response received from Commonwealth Attorney-General Michaelia Cash, dated 1 October 2021 which:
 - (i) advised that the Commonwealth Government does not have any current plans to introduce legislation to repeal the *Euthanasia Laws Act 1997* (Cth); and
 - (ii) failed to address the human rights considerations explicitly raised in the correspondence from the ACT and Northern Territory Governments; and
- (2) calls on the ACT Legislative Assembly to:
 - (a) reaffirm its commitment to ensuring that the ACT Legislative Assembly should have the same ability to debate this important issue as other legislatures across Australia do, and that ACT residents should have the same democratic rights as residents across Australia;
 - (b) condemn the removal of the ACT from the Ensuring Northern Territory Rights Bill 2021;
 - (c) denounce the correspondence received from the Commonwealth Attorney-General in October 2021 regarding Territory rights; and
 - (d) refer this motion to all Senators and Members of the Commonwealth Parliament, attaching the correspondence referred to at 1(i), 1(j) and 2(c).

I have no pleasure in bringing this motion today. I am sure Minister Rattenbury finds no pleasure in it, either. But we do so because the ACT finds itself in the most appalling situation. It is the most unacceptable situation and one that ACT residents will not stand for. It is one that we, as the ACT government and members of ACT Labor and the ACT Greens, will not stand for. We will stand up. We will do what it takes. We will not let this go. Our parties have given this commitment before; today we firmly give this commitment again.

While members are aware of the history, it is worth repeating again and again because it demonstrates just how ridiculous and how untenable this situation is. Quite simply, through the Constitution, the commonwealth parliament has special powers to intervene in the affairs of the territories. The Northern Territory was the first jurisdiction to legislate for voluntary assisted dying when the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly passed the Rights of the Terminally Ill Act in 1995. In response, in 1997, the Commonwealth parliament passed the Euthanasia Laws Act, also known as the Andrews bill, to amend the Australian Capital Territory (Self-Government) Act and the Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act, removing the power of both territories to legislate to legalise euthanasia or assisting dying. The ban was cruel. It was needless and it was senseless.

The devastation was in its simplicity. Straightforward amendments, new provisions in the ACT and Northern Territory's self-government acts, rendered citizens of the territories as second-class when compared to the states. This ban persists to this day, 24 years later. Fast forward to 2017. Victoria became the first state to legislate for voluntary assisted dying. It now has a scheme which has been operating for some time. Then Western Australia legislated in 2019. Its scheme has also begun operating this year. And now it is 2021. Tasmania, South Australia and, three weeks ago,

Queensland, passed legislation under Labor and Liberal governments. A bill will be introduced into the New South Wales parliament as soon as next week, and Premier Perrottet—himself proudly conservative—has confirmed he will permit a conscience vote. But the ACT and Northern Territory remain banned.

The only body which can restore the powers to the ACT and Northern Territory is the same one that took them away—the federal parliament. Seven long months ago, back when only two states had legislated for voluntary assisted dying, Northern Territory Attorney-General Selena Uibo and I wrote to several senior commonwealth government ministers. We outlined our governments' serious concerns regarding the continued ban on the ACT and the NT being able to consider legislation providing for voluntary assisted dying. We also drew attention to the human rights implications of this continuing prohibition, noting that it was likely inconsistent with Australia's international human rights obligations. Australia is party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which guarantees citizens the right to take part in the conduct of public affairs, and individuals are entitled to enjoy their human rights without distinction or discrimination of any kind. Prohibiting ACT and Northern Territory citizens from participating in public life in ways that citizens in the states can, by virtue of these citizens living in territories, may limit these human rights.

Soon after this, the ACT Legislative Assembly passed a tripartisan motion and wrote to all members and senators of the commonwealth parliament supporting territory rights and seeking this untenable situation to be resolved by the end of this year. It is no secret that we received no correspondence from the Attorney-General or anyone else in the commonwealth government for almost seven months and that we had to follow up several times, both formally and informally. We learned that the ministers were handballing the correspondence between the portfolios.

At one point the Attorney-General's department formally advised us that the Attorney-General would not be responding to us but that the Assistant Minister for the Territories would be. But that changed this week. I table correspondence dated 1 October but received by us this week:

Territory rights—Voluntary assisted dying—Copy of letter from the Federal Attorney-General, to the ACT Minister for Human Rights and the Northern Territory Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, dated 1 October 2021.

In summary, it advises that the commonwealth government does not have any current plans to introduce legislation to repeal the Euthanasia Laws Act 1997; fails to respond to the issue of territory rights, instead advising that there is a 'diversity of views' on voluntary assisted dying; and fails to respond to the very serious human rights implications we have raised.

I asked in March and ask it again: how can the rights of citizens in their own country not be a priority? How can the citizens in their own capital not be a priority? Attorney-General Cash's correspondence is dismissive. It is evasive. It is disrespectful. It disrespects the concerns of ACT and Northern Territory residents and those of the Australian community. And it is pathetic. If you want an example of something not worth the paper it is written on, this is textbook. After seven months of

waiting for a reply, of having to follow up several times, we got one line about the commonwealth's supposed policy. After seven months, we got no explanation for it. You know why, I know why, and the Australian public knows why. It is because there is no explanation for it. The commonwealth government and its first law officer cannot even defend the position. She does not even try. The truth is, they have not tried for years. They ignore questions time after time; and when they are eventually pressured into answering, they offer the one line. It is not good enough. We demand better.

Not only that; the Attorney-General signs her name to a letter which ignores human rights issues. The Attorney-General is the minister responsible for human rights policy in the commonwealth government, and she cannot even bring herself, in her correspondence, to reference the incredibly serious issues—issues that call into question the Australian government's commitment to human rights obligations. The commonwealth government cannot even take human rights issues, democratic rights, rights to participate in public life equally, seriously in its own country. That makes it an international embarrassment.

The commonwealth government cannot continue to evade, to distract, to ignore, to dismiss. We will not let them. It is indefensible that they have even attempted to do so in light of the situation right around the country, led by both Labor and Liberal governments. Shame on them. Shame on their lack of leadership. And if that was not enough, mid-year we learned that Country Liberal senator from the Northern Territory Sam McMahon planned to introduce the Ensuring Northern Territory Rights Bill. Central to that bill is an attempt to remove laws that limit the ability of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly to legislate for voluntary assisted dying if its Legislative Assembly chooses to do so.

The bill does not seek the same removal of laws for the ACT. This is because Senator McMahon consulted ACT Liberal Senator Seselja in the drafting of the bill and Senator Seselja explicitly requested the ACT not be included in seeking the removal of this prohibition. This is despite all parties in the ACT Legislative Assembly having urged the commonwealth government and parliament to lift the current restriction on ACT residents' right to consider this issue, including explicitly on 31 March 2021.

This interaction between the two senators was widely reported when the bill was in its draft stage and it prompted an enormous amount of commentary, concern and outrage from the community—notably from, but not limited to, the ACT—that the ACT was not included. Despite this clear outcry, Senator McMahon refused to include the ACT in the bill before it was introduced. What does it tell us about Senator Seselja's influence and how willing he is to defy the citizens he is supposed to represent, to defy the Canberra Liberals and the Canberra Liberals leader, that Senator McMahon felt that, even with all the feedback, including from this place in a tripartisan motion, she still could not include the ACT?

We utterly condemn Senator Seselja's role in this. The commonwealth Attorney-General's correspondence might be pathetic, but Senator Seselja's intervention is disturbing. His actions actively and knowingly undermined the leader of the Canberra Liberals, which speaks to the health of the party in the ACT. It is also

worth drawing the Assembly's attention to the fact that the correspondence received from the commonwealth Attorney-General appears to actively and blatantly contradict the intentions of Senator McMahon's private member's bill, and wilfully ignores it. This is beyond curious given that the private member's bill was generated from within the same party.

Following its introduction, Senator McMahon's bill was referred for inquiry by the Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs. The committee inquired into and provided a report on the bill on 6 October 2021. We note that, following its inquiry, the committee has not provided any recommendations in its report. However, the Liberal-chaired committee did highlight that if other territories, including the ACT, were not included with regard to removing the prohibition on legislating for voluntary assisted dying, the disparity between state and territory residents' ability to debate and legislate in relation to voluntary assisted dying would not be resolved.

It is worth drawing attention to Professor George Williams's submission, which sums it extraordinarily well, and serves as a further indictment on the stance Senator Seselja and, through him, Senator McMahon, have taken. He said:

The restriction on enacting laws with respect to euthanasia should be repealed. However, there is no justification for only removing this bar from the Northern Territory. The same issues of self-government and democratic rights apply with respect to the ACT, and so the equivalent clause in its self-government act should also be repealed. Without this, this Bill would introduce another invidious form of discrimination, this time between Australians living in the Northern Territory and the ACT.

Minority reports from federal Labor and the Australian Greens also supported the inclusion of the ACT in the abovementioned bill. Noting the minister's correspondence, it is not clear that Senator McMahon's bill will be debated before the federal election. We are, after all, talking about a commonwealth government that prides itself on its attitude of dismissing, evading and disrespecting simple ambitions that accord with democratic rights. So it would not be out of character for them to not bring on debate on this.

Nevertheless, we strongly recommend that members of the commonwealth parliament acquaint themselves with this bill; this Senate standing committee's report and the strength of the evidence received; the minority reports; and the correspondence from the commonwealth Attorney-General. Because whether or not this bill is debated before the federal election, there is another guarantee—that this is absolutely an election issue. We have leadership from Anthony Albanese, who has made clear that territory rights should be restored.

We—ACT residents, Northern Territory residents, and citizens across the country who are appalled at the commonwealth government's treatment of us—can send a very firm message to the commonwealth government. So today, as an Assembly, we doggedly reaffirm our commitment to not letting up on this issue. We condemn the removal of the ACT from the Ensuring Northern Territory Rights Bill, which occurred after the explicit intervention of ACT Liberal Senator Seselja. We denounce Senator

Cash's correspondence and the disrespect that she has shown to the ACT and Northern Territory—our governments, our parliaments and our people. As someone commented this morning, the federal government does not consider all Australians equal. We are, and this should be recognised in our self-government acts. We will not let this go. I commend this motion to the Assembly.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong—Attorney-General, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Gaming and Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction) (11.21): Like Minister Cheyne, I am not thrilled to be having to have this discussion again today. It is a source of enormous frustration not only for members of this place but for people right across the ACT. But I do thank Minister Cheyne for initiating this motion and for providing us the opportunity to once again make our position clear, that it is well and truly time that the rights of ACT residents to canvass these matters are restored by the commonwealth government, the sole government that has the capability to do that.

It is not a radical ask that we are putting on the table today. It is only an ask for the commonwealth government to remove a restriction arbitrarily imposed on the territories, meaning that the governments of almost 700,000 people are denied the ability to legislate on voluntary assisted dying, an issue that is so important for so many people not only in our two territories but across the country.

As I have done so before, I express my gratitude for the persistent advocacy of previous MLAs. From the ALP, Mary Porter was a strong and long-time advocate for a return to sensible policy from the commonwealth and, of course, my former Greens colleague, Caroline Le Couteur, was tirelessly committed to advancing this issue over her time in the Assembly. Many others have spoken in this place about the necessity for the ACT to have these rights restored.

It is a legislative aberration which has lingered ever since Kevin Andrews introduced the Euthanasia Laws Bill in 1996. This knee-jerk reaction to the Northern Territory's laws for voluntary assisted dying was wrong at the time but now has evolved to the point where it is simply an anachronism. This motion is directed to one thing and one thing only: to ask that the commonwealth government show territorians the respect of allowing us to govern ourselves in the same way that our fellow citizens across the nation are able to do.

It is worth noting that the right enjoyed by residents of the states has been given quite the workout recently. The motion notes that, of the six states, five have legislated to provide for a voluntary assisted dying scheme, with two already having commenced operation, and that there will soon be a bill introduced into the New South Wales parliament. This will represent the second time in four years that New South Wales has considered these laws—two more times than we are currently empowered to do. With literally every single jurisdiction that can have this debate either doing so or having done so, the commonwealth has made no song and dance about the unravelling of the moral fabric of our society or protesting the outrageous rogue states.

What conclusion are we to draw from this? One obvious conclusion is that the federal coalition can barely be bothered lifting a finger just to get out of the way. The

contemptuous disregard for a great many Australians beggars belief. As Minister Cheyne has highlighted this morning in her remarks, I think the nature of the response from the federal Attorney-General underlines that notion that they simply can barely be bothered to lift a finger to deliver a very simple ask for the people of the territories, Australian citizens who deserve the right to be able to consider these matters for themselves.

Of course, while all this has been going on, the ACT's only federal parliamentarian in the government, Senator Seselja, cannot decide whether he is evasive or opposed. This includes comments about how he might entertain a reform if it were in the context of territory rights generally but not a voluntary assisted dying-focused debate. It does seem awfully convenient to sidestep the clear desire of his constituents and arbitrarily tie his own hands. I encourage my Liberal colleagues in this place to put the case to Senator Seselja that the time has come for this sorry chapter in federal overreach to come to a close.

As I have mentioned, the Greens' view is that the Andrews bill was wrong from the start. But even if you agreed with it at the time, both of its underlying premises have clearly worn out their welcome. At the time there appeared to be a dual rationale for denying the right to have this debate to citizens not enjoying the constitutional protections of statehood: firstly, that the issue was indeed a national one, because the Northern Territory's legislation was so unique both within Australia and beyond that people were travelling from far and wide to access it; and, secondly, it was put that the Northern Territory and ACT legislatures were too immature to have debates on issues such as this.

Whatever you make of those 1996 arguments, neither is remotely tenable in 2021. In every single Australian jurisdiction not prohibited from doing so, this reform has been debated; and in five of six states, it has been legislated. Similarly, many nations have now legislated for voluntary assisted dying.

Thus it is clear that, whatever the national character debate may have had at the time back in 1996, it is clearly gone. It is a local issue held up at the federal level; and the question of our legislative maturity, insulting as it is, is certainly now irrelevant. Since all other jurisdictions have debated and five states have passed such legislation, it is now abundantly clear that there is no rationale for this differential treatment. It is actually almost perverse that, in an effort to stop territory legislatures leading the nation on this, the commonwealth has, in fact, held us back at the back of the pack. There is a real prospect that in the near future all states will have operating voluntary assisted dying schemes, and in the territories we cannot even consider it.

This legislature cannot even ask a committee to look at the matter. This legislature cannot, with a straight face, undertake consultation with our citizens because of these commonwealth laws, because we could not honestly go to the people and ask them the question, knowing that we were prevented from actually legislating it in this place. Territorians know how to grapple with difficult issues and yet we are arbitrarily barred, just on this one issue, singled out by conservatism from a bygone era. It is truly the very definition of an anachronism.

This is an issue where we ought to have the capacity to offer dignity and compassion to the citizens of the ACT. It is important to a great many of us now and, of course, will be to others in the future. It is unconscionable that the status quo should remain. The time for change is now. The federal government needs to remove this barrier to citizens of the ACT and our friends in the Northern Territory.

Our local federal representative needs to listen to and speak for his constituents, the barest requirement for a parliamentarian of any party. While nationwide support for the territories' ability to legislate on this issue sits at around 90 per cent, based on 2019 data from the ABC, where a clear majority supports this and there is clearly an intention within the federal parliament—if not the government—to grapple with the same issue for the Northern Territory, it appears the ACT's greatest barrier is the senator who is tasked with representing us. I think the comments made by Ms Cheyne have spelled out very clearly the role that Senator Seselja has played in being the single biggest barrier to the ACT getting our rights back to be able to address this issue together as a community and have that complex and sensitive discussion we need to.

Somehow Senator Seselja has taken it upon himself, when offered to join, to say, "No thanks. I don't think the people of the ACT deserve that. I don't think it is right for Canberrans to be able to have this conversation." He explicitly went out of his way to limit the rights of Canberrans to have this conversation, to decide for ourselves on an issue of significant personal importance for so many people in this territory.

We need loud and unambiguous advocacy from every single member in this place today to tell their federal colleagues and particularly our senator for the ACT, Senator Seselja, that the time has come to represent us. It is time to say this inactivism should be swept away. The ACT should be able to debate this issue. It will be a challenging discussion for us. It is one that this Assembly needs to examine with care and with sensitivity—not in a rush—but we should be able to do it. I commend this motion to the Assembly.

MS LEE (Kurrajong—Leader of the Opposition) (11.31): The Canberra Liberals support territory rights. We respect that there is going to be a diversity of views across our community on the issue of voluntary assisted dying—and we respect that—but every single member of this place has been elected by our constituents to be our voice. We believe firmly that we, as Canberrans, being the voice for Canberrans, should have the right to debate and legislate on an issue that impacts Canberrans.

Ms Cheyne knows very, very well what the Canberra Liberals position is. In fact, Mr Rattenbury and I, on behalf of our parties, worked together earlier this year to bring forward a tripartisan motion expressing this. It is incredibly disappointing then that Ms Cheyne and Mr Rattenbury have decided that they are now going to change tack, that they are going to change that pathway, and it is no accident that this motion is being brought today without any notice. The first I read about it was in the *Canberra Times* this morning—

Mr Rattenbury: It was on the notice paper.

Ms Cheyne: It was on the notice paper.

MS LEE: I read the *Canberra Times* before the notice paper was issued—given that all three parties came together and passed, with unanimous support in this place, the motion that we did in March, it is incredibly disappointing that only after yesterday, when this Assembly came together unanimously to pass an Australian-first in outlawing stealthing, and the motion that is actually directly after this to recognise Pregnancy and Infant Loss Remembrance Day, today has been muddied by Ms Cheyne making this extremely important issue political. I know this is so important to her—I know that—but it is clear from today’s antics that she is putting politics above this issue; and that is extremely disappointing.

There is also no doubt that, whilst Ms Cheyne and Mr Rattenbury go on at length about the federal coalition, it is worthwhile remembering that there are federal Labor representatives who are also opposed to giving the ACT the right to debate and legislate on voluntary assisted dying. We need to remember that. Whilst, of course, it is an extreme disappointment that we again are being told that we cannot debate and legislate on this issue, let us make sure that we are taking into consideration the full picture.

The Canberra Liberals support territory rights. We signed a tripartisan motion earlier this year. Our position has not changed. And it is incredibly disappointing, appallingly disappointing, that Ms Cheyne, who received the letter from the federal Attorney-General, which is dated 1 October, has chosen this manner to bring it forward to the chamber today—incredibly disappointing.

MR DAVIS (Brindabella) (11.35): I rise to commend the comments of Minister Cheyne and Minister Rattenbury in relation to territory rights. I will keep my comments brief. I have a few points that I want to make. In particular, I refer to the letter received by Minister Cheyne and Minister Uibo of the Northern Territory from Michaelia Cash.

Mr Assistant Speaker, like you, I was elected less than 12 months ago. I spend most of my time corresponding with constituents. Imagine, if you will, the contempt a constituent would hold me in if they wrote me a letter and said, “Mr Davis, I am very worried about the nature strip at the front of my house. When is that nature strip going to get mowed?”, and I responded to them, “I thank you very much for your email. Nature strips are very important. There are lots of nature strips in Canberra. We mow lots of nature strips every year. And thank you again for your email.” They would rightly hold me in a bit of contempt.

That is why reading this letter published in the *Canberra Times* today from the federal Attorney-General is so frustrating and so intellectually insulting, because it ignores some of the key points raised in the joint letter of Minister Cheyne and Minister Uibo of the Northern Territory. It completely ignores the principle of territory rights and chooses, I would cynically argue, to focus the debate and focus the letter on the very emotional, very deeply personal debate around voluntary assisted dying. I do not need to tell you, Mr Assistant Speaker, that this means so much more than voluntary assisted dying.

One of my first forays in political activism was fighting for the right of this Assembly to legislate on marriage equality which, as we have seen previously, the federal government did away with when it suited their political motivations. So this is not just about voluntary assisted dying. This has happened before when the ACT's duly elected legislator had been run completely roughshod over. As long as these federal legislations stay in place—if it is not voluntary assisted dying, it will be another thing or another thing after that—this duly elected legislator is slapped in the face by the federal government and told, “Your elections don't matter, your parliament doesn't matter, the people you represent don't matter. What matters is the political point that we can score off, ripping away from you a piece of legislation that you have duly sought to implement.”

What I find particularly frustrating though is the role of Canberra's Senator Seselja in this debate. A lot has been made of Senator McMahon's bill. I commend Senator McMahon for bringing forward her bill. A country Liberal senator, I commend her. And I commend her because she is representing her constituents above party politics. I think that is the first obligation on every single one of us in this place and every similar place right across the country.

I imagine she has probably ruffled a few feathers in her federal party room. It is very obvious she has ruffled Senator Seselja's feathers by bringing forward this legislation. I commend her for doing that because sometimes change is tough and sometimes you lose friends. Sometimes you have to sit across a boardroom table from people that you have had some terse words with. So I commend her for doing that.

What I find so galling—the nerve, the audacity, the gall and the gumption—is that this push at the federal parliament to continue to diminish the territory's right to govern itself is being advanced by a man who tried to tell the people of the Australian Capital Territory in recent memory that he was ready to serve in the top job as Chief Minister. Can you imagine how confounding that is for the average Canberran, that somebody who wanted to be in charge of the government, run the city, take on the ultimate responsibility of lord mayor, chief minister, premier—all combined—of our 450,000-odd people years later is now an active aggressor within federal parliament against the rights of this Assembly to do its job? I just find that absolutely confounding, deeply hypocritical and shocking.

It would not surprise you, Madam Speaker, that I would leap to my feet and say, “Of course, Canberrans should go out there and vote for Dr Tjanara Goreng Goreng and put a Greens senator in the federal parliament.” Of course that would be what you would expect me to do. But removing the partisanship of it, I just encourage Canberrans to look right across their Senate ballot paper and find a candidate who will stick up for Canberra. There has got to be half a dozen of them and none of them are Senator Seselja, which is frustrating because Senator Seselja has made a point of sticking his nose in the Assembly's affairs since leaving and becoming a senator. Oh my word!

Madam Speaker, as you know, I sit as one of the three members of the Select Committee inquiring into the Drugs of Dependence Bill, a territory bill which the

territory parliament is forensically inquiring into—line by line, meeting with stakeholders, checking out the evidence—only to find through the course of our deliberations that Senator Seselja has paid good money and taken it upon himself to push-poll Canberrans on the subject. That is just another quite galling example of the hypocrisy here. Senator Seselja cannot figure out if he still wants to be an MLA or a senator. But he is doing a pretty slack job of half-doing both.

I end on one final point, Madam Speaker. It might seem like an obscure point but it is worth making. During the election campaign of last year—and I wonder if you have experienced it too—I would meet the occasional Canberran who would say to me words to the effect, “Glorified town council. We didn’t even want self-government anyways” or “Self-government was foisted upon us” et cetera, et cetera, et cetera.

We received self-government in 1989. I was born in 1991. I do not know a world where this city has not been in charge of its own future. Now I have the incredibly humbling privilege to serve as one of 25 members to help chart the course for the future of this city.

So I encourage those Canberrans who may have emotional views, highly emotional views, on the very topic—be it voluntary assisted dying or marriage equality—or some Canberrans who pine for yesteryear—when the streets were paved with the gold of federal government and we did have an advisory council—to reflect on the fact that there are now people in this place who have always lived in Canberra, who have only ever known self-government, who have only ever looked to this chamber and to this parliament to represent their interests, to fight for them, to advocate for the kind of city, country and world that they want to live in, and encourage those Canberrans to move on.

Self-government is here. It has been around for a while. It will be around for a while. We are big enough and ugly enough—to coin yet another Tom Davis expression, which I will barrel out a few in my time here—to govern for ourselves, to legislate for ourselves; and I think there will be an opportunity early next year for Canberrans to make that crystal clear in their vote on the big white ballot paper.

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) (11.43), in reply: In closing, I will just speak very shortly. I thank all the contributors to this debate.

This is not antics. Let us talk about some facts here. We received the letter this week. The Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs delivered its report on Wednesday afternoon. The motion was on the notice paper. I am surprised I have to educate the opposition leader on this but the notice paper comes out the night before the next sitting day. That not one person in the Canberra Liberals or their staff actually reads the notice paper at that time is a matter for them. The opposition leader’s comments are really very silly and a little embarrassing for her. This is not like dropping a no-confidence motion. There was plenty of notice given and formally.

I do thank her for reaffirming her party's commitment to territory rights. It is pleasing to hear. But as the leader of the Canberra Liberals, it is clear and it is concerning that she does not speak for all Canberra Liberals. More than that, the Canberra Liberals' one representative in federal government is actively and knowingly undermining her on the issue and defying ACT residents' wishes. The correspondence we received from the commonwealth government, let us be clear, is from a minister from the same party as Ms Lee.

Mr Parton shouted across the chamber earlier, I think to me, "Are you going to fight it or fix it?" This is a question he should be directing to his leader. What is she doing to fix her own party's inconsistent, embarrassing and contemptuous position on this federally? In the meantime, we look forward to the federal election, where we really will have our say.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Pregnancy and Infant Loss Remembrance Day

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong) (11.46): I, and also on behalf of Ms Cheyne and Ms Lee, move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) one in five Australian women have lost a child through miscarriage, stillbirth or within a month of birth; and
 - (b) Pregnancy and Infant Loss Remembrance Day is recognised on 15 October in jurisdictions across Australia and internationally; and
- (2) acknowledges the loss and grief resulting from pregnancy and infant loss, and offers its support to those members of our community who have been affected by this loss.

I am very pleased to be co-sponsoring this important motion with Minister Cheyne and Ms Lee. This is a topic that touches many families in the territory. The loss of a child is simply heartbreaking and it is so difficult to capture in remarks in this place the depth of the grief and the impact that such loss has on the parents and families of those who experience it.

According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Australia is one of the safest places in the world for a baby to be born, yet death occurring within the perinatal period is not uncommon. The AIHW reports that every day in Australia six babies are stillborn and two die within 28 days of birth. One in five Australian women have lost a child through miscarriage, stillbirth or within a month of birth.

The AIHW reported that in the ACT in 2017 we recorded 10.3 stillbirths per 1,000 births, compared to the national average of 7.1. These figures and reports provide us with data to assist our health and maternity services, our support organisations and our governments to work towards improving the outcomes for infants and families.

The figures and reports do not tell us about the love and grief felt by the loved ones of these children. Data does not tell us the stories of the mothers, fathers, siblings, grandparents and families who lose a baby. It does not show the varied and complex journeys for mothers and families processing the emotional, spiritual and physical impacts of losing a child. The data does not offer an opportunity to safely share those stories, to have the conversations—to hear and be heard—and to grieve.

In jurisdictions in Australia and across the globe 15 October is recognised as International Pregnancy and Infant Loss Remembrance Day. The day offers an opportunity for bereaved families from Australia and around the world to pause to remember their babies who have died. The annual day honours the approximately 106,000 babies who lose their lives to miscarriage, stillbirth and newborn death each year. In many places the day is commemorated by key buildings and landmarks being lit in pink and blue, in remembrance and to raise awareness. Today many members in the chamber are wearing ribbons of the same colours, in recognition.

Last year John De'Laney from Pregnancy and Infant Loss Australia approached the ACT Greens and other candidates and asked us to show our support for the recognition of International Pregnancy and Infant Loss Remembrance Day on 15 October annually here in the territory. My colleagues and I met with John and we committed to bringing forward this motion to the Assembly. John and his wife, Kate, could not be with us in the chamber today of course, but they have been a driving force for raising awareness and for supporting families. Thank you to John and Kate for working with us on this motion and for your ongoing work across the country.

The sitting calendar this year does not allow us to speak on this issue in this place on 15 October, but by bringing on this motion today we can ensure that International Pregnancy and Infant Loss Remembrance Day is recognised in the Assembly this year. I know Minister Cheyne has worked on how we can further the recognition of pregnancy and infant loss in the ACT, moving forward, and I know she will speak to that shortly.

In Canberra we also have wonderful groups like Sands, Red Nose, the Canberra Grief Centre, Bears of Hope and the Perinatal Wellbeing Centre who support and care for families experiencing the loss of their baby and their continuing journey. No doubt COVID has made this experience even more trying for families and made it harder for support organisations to assist. On behalf of the ACT Greens, I pass on my sincere thanks to those organisations. My thoughts are with the families who are on this heartbreaking journey.

Recognising that this was a matter beyond politics, one that touches and will continue to touch Canberrans from all walks of life, I thank Minister Cheyne and Ms Lee for working with me and my office to make this a tripartisan motion. I hope that by having this conversation in this place we can help to raise awareness across Canberra about pregnancy and infant loss in our communities. We hope that recognition by our parliament of the immeasurable loss felt by families goes some small way to acknowledging their grief and the journey they have ahead. I commend this motion to the Assembly.

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) (11.51): Pregnancy loss and the loss of an infant are tragic and traumatic events for parents and their loved ones. The shock, the disbelief, the confusion and the guilt that can come with this loss can have long-lasting psychological and social impacts for a family and for their loved ones.

Next Friday, 15 October, is International Pregnancy and Infant Loss Remembrance Day. It is an opportunity to recognise the impact of pregnancy losses, miscarriages, stillbirths, newborn deaths and infant loss; to pause to commemorate the loss to families throughout the ACT, Australia and the world; to break the silence and taboo which can sometimes surround the loss and further deepen the grief felt by families; and to commemorate the health providers and the loved ones who have supported parents and families through this time.

Miscarriage, stillbirth, newborn death and infant loss continue to be hidden tragedies that remain poorly understood and, sadly, shrouded in stigma. Too often, parents can feel blame, a sense of failure, shame or guilt that it has happened to their family, and too often the parents' loved ones can feel their own grief and helplessness to support the parents and confusion on what to say or what to do. While we cannot prevent these feelings we can say to parents and loved ones that your grief is valid; your grief is justified. We can acknowledge the immense impact that this loss has on lives at the time of loss and in the weeks, months and years ahead.

Recognising this day and what it means is invaluable and I am proud to stand with my colleagues on all sides of the chamber today and on behalf of the ACT government. In addition to this very important formal recognition of this day that we are providing in this place today, there is another way we can provide recognition. Where there is pregnancy loss after 20 weeks a birth certificate and a death certificate are legally required, but there is no legal requirement for recognition where a pregnancy loss is before 20 weeks. Every other state and territory has provided formal recognition through early pregnancy loss commemorative certificates. Victoria was the most recent, in 2020.

I was horrified when I learned that the ACT had not made this recognition available, that we are the last jurisdiction to do so. On becoming the minister responsible for birth policy, at my very first meeting with directorates I advised that this was a priority to be addressed as soon as possible. There has been a significant amount of work in the past 11 months, and I thank the Justice and Community Safety Directorate and Access Canberra for their very hard work on this.

I signalled this in the most recent estimates hearing, and I can advise today that, to help families in the grieving process, from 15 October formal acknowledgement of early pregnancy loss will be available for ACT residents in the form of an early pregnancy loss commemorative certificate. The certificate will provide a tangible recognition of this loss and I hope it will offer some support and some comfort for parents. The certificates will be available retrospectively and for free. People will be able to apply at any time. Any parent who has experienced early pregnancy loss in the

ACT, at any time, can apply for a certificate to honour their child, even if the parent no longer resides in the ACT. This will be available online from next Friday and through the Access Canberra website.

These certificates are flexible and provide a range of options to make the certificate personal to a person and to their experience. They include a number of artwork designs to choose from, and statements from the artists about the artworks to guide that choice. Families will also be able to indicate what information they would like to have included on the commemorative certificate. As I mentioned, an application can be made at any time, including retrospectively, and I affirm that there is no cost.

I will provide more information on this next week, but I acknowledge that throughout the development of these certificates we have been guided by those with lived experience, advocacy groups and social workers supporting bereaved families. They have shaped the appropriate form for the certificate, the kind of information that should be included, the circumstances under which they should be made available to bereaved parents, the designs and the wording to officially commemorate the loss. A special thank you to Bears of Hope, who recently tested the form and provided invaluable feedback to improve the experience of applying for a certificate.

While our work in the ACT means that the ACT is one of the safest places in the world to give birth, we absolutely acknowledge that there is still significant work to be undertaken. While any pregnancy can result in stillbirth, we know that there are significant equity gaps in stillbirth rates in Australia, including in the ACT. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women who are migrants and refugees, rural and regional women, women from socially disadvantaged areas and women under 20 years all experience higher rates of stillbirth compared to the general population. We absolutely take maternal and infant health seriously, and Minister Stephen-Smith, I know, takes a very personal and close interest in this, noting that it is a very complex area of health.

We, along with other states and territories, have signed onto the Safer Baby Bundle. This is a national initiative developed by the Centre of Research Excellence in Stillbirth and it brings together evidence-based education and awareness measures that aim to reduce the rates of stillbirth by 20 per cent by 2023.

Commonwealth funds have contributed to a dedicated perinatal loss education coordinator for health facilities in the ACT. This role will support health professionals to work with families who have experienced perinatal loss and help to foster greater understanding of the causes of stillbirth in the ACT.

We have invested in infrastructure and services to respond to the needs of parents and families who have experienced pregnancy and infant loss. This includes a purpose-built angel room that provides extra privacy and space for families who have lost a baby. There is the completion of the new Early Pregnancy Unit, anticipated for late 2022. It will offer medical, emotional and psychosocial support to parents and families who experience pregnancy loss at less than 20 weeks.

When families experience pregnancy or infant loss there are a number of support services available to them, and Minister Rattenbury has detailed those. We want to emphasise, through you, Madam Speaker, to anyone listening or who may listen, that even if you may feel alone in your grief, be it in the immediate aftermath of the loss or years down the track, you are not alone, and the ACT government and all members in this place and the community stand with you.

I pay tribute to Bonnie Carter, a fierce advocate for breaking the taboo around pregnancy loss. She and her husband, Steve, raised money to improve the look and feel of the Fetal Medicine Unit bereavement suite. She raised with me the need for the commemorative certificates and has generously shared her time, experience and expertise to make these certificates a reality. She has worked tirelessly to ensure that we appropriately recognise Pregnancy and Infant Loss Remembrance Day in Canberra and around the world. I am sure that there are countless other things that she does as well that I am not aware of, because she is an absolute force.

Pregnancy and Infant Loss Remembrance Day is a day for us to acknowledge and reflect on the impact of pregnancy and infant loss in our community. This loss has significant visible and hidden impacts on parents and loved ones. They can last a lifetime.

I finish by saying something directly, through you, Madam Speaker, to all those who have been impacted by pregnancy and infant loss, whether parents, siblings, friends, grandparents or colleagues. Your grief is real, your grief is valid, your grief is justified and your grief is respected. With this motion, we pause to acknowledge the magnitude of this loss and the impact it has on our ACT community and we pay our respects to all those who have been impacted by pregnancy and infant loss.

MS LEE (Kurrajong—Leader of the Opposition) (12.01): There is a unique pain when you lose someone that you have never met. It is a pain that many families know, and it is a pain that many families experience alone. One in five women have lost a child through miscarriage, stillbirth or within one month of birth. Out of the one in four pregnancies that end in miscarriage, that figure is speculated to be even higher, given that many women experience an early loss without realising that they are pregnant.

In February this year the Australian parliament formally recognised 15 October as Pregnancy and Infant Loss Remembrance Day. The numbers are clear, and they are sobering: over 100,000 miscarriages each year and almost 3,000 lives lost due to stillbirth or newborn death. The most shocking part of these truly stark numbers is that they have not moved in two decades. Each and every one of these losses represents thousands of families who are left devastated, left to grieve. For too long we have been too scared, too embarrassed or too ashamed to speak up about these losses—our losses.

I know that recognising 15 October as Pregnancy and Infant Loss Remembrance Day will not miraculously provide answers to the thousands of grieving families about why and how we can make sure that other families do not experience the same

devastating loss. But it is an important step by this Assembly, by the people who are privileged to be the voices of our community, to acknowledge and formally recognise, to empathise, to understand and to stand with families who, for so long, have felt alone.

In June 2018 my partner, Nathan, and I experienced a miscarriage before we were fortunate to fall pregnant with our daughter, Mia, born one year after our loss. We were lucky, as other families are, to go on to have what are referred to as “rainbow babies”—babies born after families experience loss. I also know that there are many other families who remain childless, not by choice. One constituent of mine who has reached out to me about her experiences has spoken about the pain of not being seen or heard—that couples who remain childless, not by choice, are not included in conversations about families. I know that it is not because people do not care; it is because of the longstanding stigma attached to speaking about loss, grief and death. What do you say to someone who has experienced a loss that is so painful?

In many countries around the world pregnancy loss has long been blamed on women. Not only are these women not able to grieve over their loss but they are shamed into thinking that it was something they did or something they did not do that led to the loss of their baby. In many of our multicultural communities, even to this day, I know that there are many families grieving in silence and alone. Whilst much effort is being made to break down this stigma, it is not easy to change the culture and attitudes of generations overnight.

This year, Nathan and I experienced two more miscarriages, for both of which I was required to undergo a dilation and curettage. As medical procedures go, it is a fairly minor one. I was extremely fortunate to have the support of a professional and caring medical team. Whilst the physical recovery is pretty straightforward, the emotional recovery is not so easy. Every family experiences pregnancy loss differently. For me, the emotional response comes in waves, sometimes when I least expect it—sorry, like today. I have almost forgotten all about it, then a Facebook memory comes up with one of Mia’s ultrasound scans, and the hazy outline of that little face is enough to make my breath catch in my throat and my heart skip a beat, with an overwhelming sense of grief.

I have almost forgotten all about it when I am updating my health insurance policy and they innocently ask, “Is there a reason that you need top-tier hospital cover?” This is enough for me to stop, and my mind goes straight back to that dark room and the sonographer saying those most painful words, “I’m sorry, there’s no heartbeat.”

Even though I know there is nothing that I could have done—in fact, tests confirmed this—I could not help thinking, and even now, about whether there was anything I could have done to prevent it. Was it the glass of wine or the cured meat that I had before I realised I was pregnant? Was it the high-impact exercise class that I did when I was six weeks pregnant? Was it the significant work stresses I was under at the time? I know that it was none of these things, but I also know that there are many families who cannot help thinking like this. The stigma, silence and shame add to the pain of grief, loss and guilt.

When I shared the story of our first miscarriage, I was very touched by the support I received from people that I do not even know. But what also came through was others reaching out to me about their experiences, and that is what this motion does. It does not pretend to find miracle solutions for pregnancy and infant loss, or answer why, in a lucky country like ours, we have not been able to reduce these painful experiences. But it does acknowledge the pain and grief that so many families have suffered for too long in silence.

I thank Mr Rattenbury for his initiative in bringing forward this motion. I am very proud to co-sponsor the tripartisan motion, on behalf of the Canberra Liberals, to support Canberra families that have experienced pregnancy and infant loss.

I also welcome what Ms Cheyne said about the early pregnancy loss commemorative certificate. It is really important that it is personalised. I have had a constituent reach out to me to say that, on the birth certificate of her second child, the first baby that she lost was identified in that certificate as being deceased. Every time she sees that birth certificate, it is a stark reminder of the loss, not the celebration, of her life—how short it was. I think it is really important that we recognise that everyone grieves, and needs to process and grieve, in a different way.

Whilst, of course, we acknowledge and recognise the grief and loss of these families every day, may 15 October each year be recognised as a day when we break down the stigma of talking about pregnancy and infant loss, and a day when families do not feel so alone. My last words are to the families. We see you, we hear you and we stand with you.

MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi) (12.09): I thank you all for sharing your stories today. Pregnancy and Infant Loss Remembrance Day is a day to honour our losses. They are not just a statistic; they lived and they have died. But it is also about ensuring that their names are not forgotten.

I rise today in memory of my brother, Timothy Keith Thompson Braddock, and my son, Connor Jack Braddock. Timothy was born on 19 April 1966, alive, with his poor heart beating, but he could not breathe. They whisked the baby away, never to be held in my mother's arms. She was told to get a new one, to carry on and live her life. We now know that he is buried at the back of Adelaide's West Terrace Cemetery, in a white cardboard box, in long trenches with other stillborn children. Fortunately, we know that a clergyman prayed over them; that was the practice back then.

My son, Connor Jack Braddock, was born sleeping on 8 September 2012. After a heartbreaking miscarriage during our first pregnancy, we were so excited when Deb fell pregnant with Connor, full of hopes and dreams that, sadly, were not meant to be. Connor was born sleeping, born still.

One in four pregnancies end in loss, but that statistic hides what the bereaved parents face—the moments when hopes and dreams are shattered. Like Ms Lee, I was also in that dark sonographer's room when I heard those words—that the heartbeat could not be found. Parents have to go through labour in the knowledge that there is no joy to be

had at the end of the process. They will leave hospital with empty arms and endure the unendurable because there is no other choice for them.

I cannot stress how far we have come in acknowledging stillbirth. In the hospital, Bec, our terrific obstetrician, and the midwives took such good care of us, compared to what happened to my mother. Although it was immeasurably hard for us at the time, we were able to hold Connor, spend time with him, have a funeral for him, and he has a grave at Gungahlin Cemetery, where we can grieve together as a family. Despite having come so far, we still have so far to go. It is still so fucking hard. As I wrote this speech, nine years on, the tears came streaming down my face. The feelings came flooding back.

As bereaved parents, Deb and I have accessed important supports, some of which have been mentioned, and others that I will add. They included Red Nose, Bears of Hope, Heartfelt, Perinatal Wellbeing Centre, and Pregnancy and Infant Loss Australia, plus others—too many others to mention. I commend them to other bereaved parents.

Red Nose in Canberra helped us while our grief was still so raw, connecting us to another bereaved parent—someone who knew the pain all too well. Bears of Hope welcomed us with open arms into a community for which no-one wants to pay the price of entry. You would not think that a teddy bear was a useful gift at such a time, but I can tell you that when you leave a hospital with empty arms, it is a small but important contribution.

I would like to call out Hilary Wardhaugh, a professional photographer who volunteers for Heartfelt. She captured Connor's very last moments before we buried him. As difficult as it was at the time, we are glad to have those photos years on. I would also like to call out the Canberra Bereaved Dads Fireside Group, who meet on the first Friday of each month to spend a few hours by a fire with other dads who have lost a child, to cook over the fire, and to have a cuppa and a conversation.

We have come so far, yet still have so far to go. We need to break down the silence that surrounds pregnancy and infancy loss, to normalise it, to state that these children lived and had an impact on our world. My wife showed great courage and determination to be open and honest about our story at a time when all I wanted to do was to turn inward and grieve silently. Let it be said and recorded in *Hansard*: she was absolutely correct.

Despite our own personal pain, Deb and I have worked hard to honour our losses, break the stigma, raise funds and improve the situation for our fellow bereaved parents. Our efforts, however, pale in comparison to those of our good friend Bon Carter, as others have mentioned today. Bon and her husband, Steve, have worked tirelessly, even during their grief after multiple losses, to advocate for bereaved parents and to light up important sites around Canberra to commemorate this date.

Everyone does this work to help other bereaved parents and their families, and to acknowledge the existence of so many babies. Importantly, we do this work to break the stigma about a topic that so many will not talk about, even now, in 2021, so that

families do not need to feel alone, isolated or without support at a time when they need it most.

On Connor's headstone there is a saying on which I often reflect. It states, "There is no foot so small that it cannot leave a footprint on this world." Connor and Keith, you have left your footprint. I love you and I miss you.

MS VASSAROTTI (Kurrajong—Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, Minister for Homelessness and Housing Services and Minister for Sustainable Building and Construction) (12.15): Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to provide some reflections on the tri-party motion supporting the call to recognise International Pregnancy and Infant Loss Remembrance Day on 15 October.

As has been noted in this chamber, the experience of pregnancy loss is surprisingly common and an experience that many women share, although we do not often speak about it. Early pregnancy loss is so common that well-meaning advice provided to people when women first find out that they are pregnant includes the suggestion that women keep it quiet for a while in case something goes wrong. It seems rather strange to not share with those that you love and care for that you are experiencing something which is not only painful but includes feelings of sorrow and grief. It is strange to turn up to work after being ill and not share a deeply impactful experience.

I would reflect that I am glad that I did not take this advice and did not carry the weight of the experience of early pregnancy loss alone. Although my partner was incredibly supportive and affected himself, the power of sharing with women that I love, including many who had shared a similar experience, was how I moved through my sorrow and grief. I was so grateful to have the support of my mother, my aunties, my sisters and friends as I went through this experience.

Early pregnancy loss is a really difficult experience to live through and it impacts your experiences, moving forward. Infant loss involves a whole other dimension, as families must welcome and farewell someone they love much too quickly. As a community, we can struggle to acknowledge these lives and the impact that they have made on their families and on us more broadly. I welcome moves such as the ability to document the life of early pregnancy; that is really important.

International Pregnancy and Infant Loss Remembrance Day provides us with the opportunity to pause and remember babies lost. In this chamber today, I would like to take a moment to acknowledge the life and impact of Matilda Felicity Abbott and share her parents' reflections on what she taught them and what we need to know to better support people who experience infant loss.

Matilda was born on 14 November 2018 at 7.51 pm. She was just shy of 23 weeks old. Her parents, Lucy and Lachlan, reflect that they feel incredibly fortunate to have cradled her in their arms, kissed her over and over, and felt her tiny chest gently rise and fall, before saying goodbye as she drew her last breath. They note their gratitude to the Heartfelt photography charity that captured those precious moments in such a sensitive and beautiful way. They note the care of the Calvary midwife who helped

turn the most tragic night of their lives into one they can look back on with love and affection.

Matilda's parents have shared with me what they learned from their baby girl—empathy, compassion and a newfound awareness that much of life is beyond our control. They note that Matilda taught them the importance of communication and how opening up about their experiences has helped in their healing journey. Uncertainty can feel crippling, and loss can make you feel like a failure, but talking and communicating with those you trust can take your mind to a better place in minutes.

Lucy and Lachlan urge people to acknowledge others' loss. Saying nothing is one of the worst things you can do. A call, a text, a card or even an emoji is all that it takes to let someone know that they are in your thoughts, even if it is to say, "I don't know what to say." The next step is to keep letting them know, and acknowledging their baby, especially by name, if you can. Do not expect their grief to evaporate within a time frame.

Matilda was my neighbour. I never got to meet her, but one of the gifts that she gave me was a deepening friendship between my family and hers. In grief, my beautiful neighbours let us in to listen to their experience, demonstrate our care and our respect for them, and enable us to show our support.

While suffering pregnancy loss and losing an infant will always be part of a family's story, there is joy in the stories of the two families that I reflect on today. In my case, a year after my loss I gave birth to my Matilda. Twelve years later, she continues to delight, challenge and excite me, as my beautiful daughter and an amazing young woman. After a very complex journey, my neighbours now have a baby girl, Zoe. While Zoe will never get to meet her sister, Matilda, her parents' love is shaped by their experience. Matilda is never far from their hearts or thoughts. Grief is still there, but there is gratitude as well, as they revel in the delight of a beautiful, bubbly six-month-old baby.

MS DAVIDSON (Murrumbidgee—Assistant Minister for Seniors, Veterans, Families and Community Services, Minister for Disability, Minister for Justice Health and Minister for Mental Health) (12.21): I thank Ministers Rattenbury and Cheyne and Ms Lee for bringing forward this tri-party motion today. The stories that we have heard today are not only very personal but also a reflection of how powerful an event it is in someone's life to want to bring a new member into the family.

I rise today to speak as a former ACT branch president of the Maternity Coalition and as one of the founding members and a former convenor of Friends of the Birth Centres Canberra. We spent many hours in those groups talking about how pregnancy and birth are handled in the ACT and how we could do things better. That included talking through what happens when something goes wrong and how we could better support people.

I would also like to reflect on the fact that it is often midwives who have to help families through those very difficult times in their life. I thank them for the work that they do with such care and empathy.

One of the things that we have done in the ACT is to try and make the right spaces available so that when those things happen there is somewhere that people can go and reflect, and go through that process. I was one of the members of the committee that helped to choose some of the artwork that went into one of those rooms at the birth centre at the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children. We spent a lot of time in that committee reflecting on the diversity of different cultural backgrounds, the different ways that people might be grieving and what they might need in that moment, in order to try and choose artworks that were appropriate for everyone and would make those spaces feel welcoming and safe for everyone.

Having a remembrance day means that we are all able to mark that day with conversations about what this means for our community and our families, and how we can better support each other when those things happen. I am very glad that we will have a pregnancy and loss remembrance day, and that we can all be participants in these conversations and work through all of this as a community so that no-one ever needs to feel alone in that situation.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong) (12.23), in reply: I close this discussion by thanking members for their heartfelt contributions today and reinforcing this Assembly's support and love for those impacted by pregnancy and infant loss. I commend the motion to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

MADAM SPEAKER: I thank members for coming together on such a significant and important matter, and for the respect that was shared.

Sitting suspended from 12.24 to 2 pm.

Ministerial arrangements

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism) (2.00): Minister Steel will be absent from question time today. Ms Berry will be taking questions in his place.

Questions without notice

Budget—business support

MS LEE: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, I refer to the observation of Dr Jane Rennie of CPA Australia that the ACT budget provides “insufficient support for business”. She also states:

Tellingly, the budget speech only mentions business twice, in the context of existing supports, and doesn't specifically mention small business.

Chief Minister, given the commonwealth grants are paying for half of the COVID business support grants, why doesn't your budget provide more support for small business?

MR BARR: The single largest initiative in the budget is the business support grants. The budget speech is necessarily contained to a reasonable period of time. If colleagues would like me to spend several hours going through every single element of the budget, I could deliver! My colleagues who have heard me talk about the budget would all nod and say that I could make a three-hour budget speech. But, Madam Speaker, convention and protocol normally suggest that you confine your comments to around 20 to 25 minutes, which is what I do. In relation to the number of items and things that you can mention, I think that, of all the budget analysis, the question of how many times a certain thing is mentioned in a budget speech has to be amongst the weakest commentary you ever hear about budgets.

Ms Lee: Madam Speaker, a point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: Resume your seat.

Ms Lee: That was part of the preamble, but the question was: why does your budget not provide more support for small business?

MADAM SPEAKER: The minister is speaking about small business and I am sure he will get to that point. There is no point of order.

MR BARR: Thank you, Madam Speaker. There are a number of initiatives and, if the analyst had bothered to delve into the detail of the budget, she would have seen that there are initiatives across export industries, and that the small business hardship scheme specifically referenced “small business”, together with support for tourism, arts, accommodation, sport and fitness. In the ACT context, nearly all of those are small business. So the totality of investment to build a bridge over the pandemic for business has been close to half a billion dollars. That is the equivalent of building a new football stadium for Canberra. That is the totality just of the grants and tax concessions, let alone the fact that economic development is seven per cent of the budget spend, a very significant spend.

MADAM SPEAKER: Ms Lee.

MS LEE: Chief Minister, if, as you say, you have plenty of things in the budget for business, why is it that the MBA, the AHA, CPA Australia and the Canberra Business Chamber have all come out to call this a business-light budget? Is that why you did not front up and appear live to answer questions at the Canberra Business Chamber virtual budget breakfast?

MR BARR: The organisations are free to make whatever commentary they want, but the numbers speak for themselves in terms of the expenditure associated with business support, hardship grants, tax concessions, the future job fund, the international engagement strategy and the fact that the ACT has had the fastest business growth of any jurisdiction in Australia; more new businesses than any other state or territory. Every month, since the data has been collected, there are more new business entries than there are exits, which is why the ACT sees growth month on month in the number of businesses operating in the territory.

DR PATERSON: A supplementary.

MADAM SPEAKER: Dr Paterson.

DR PATERSON: Chief Minister, can you please detail the important role that small business plays in the ACT?

MR BARR: Nearly 30,000 small businesses account for employment in the territory, which would be slightly more than 25 per cent of all employment in the ACT. There are larger employers: the federal government, the ACT government, the universities, medium-size business and the large Australian employers. But across more than 30,000 businesses, and growing each and every month, we see more diversity in the ACT economy and we see, increasingly, small businesses who have a vision and a view beyond just the Canberra market. That is where growth will come in future. Any city, any economy, that just wants to buy and sell goods and services to itself will not be able to grow rapidly.

That is why it is important that we have a focus on national and international markets—because, whilst the ACT is two per cent of the Australian economy, Australia is two per cent of the world economy. The bigger markets clearly are national and international. That is why next week's ACT Chief Minister's Export Awards are such an important opportunity to celebrate the success of many small and medium-size businesses who are tapping into export markets, including businesses that have served this city and this nation—and, indeed, the world—so well during the pandemic, including a previous exporter of the year, Aspen Medical.

Hospitals—waiting times

MRS JONES: My question is to the Minister for Health: you are the sixth health minister in the last 20 years of the Labor-Greens government, after Stanhope, Corbell, Gallagher, Corbell, Fitzharris. For most of the last 20 years, the ACT has had the worst-performing emergency department times in Australia. On 31 January 2021 you committed to fixing the ACT's ED wait times in nine months. Nine months is now. In Wednesday's budget, however, it was disclosed that the outcome for the 2020-21 year was 46 per cent of ED patients seen on time, 24 per cent below your own target of 70 per cent. Minister, who is responsible for the failure to meet your own 70 per cent promise on ED waiting times?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: Probably a couple of points of clarification for Mrs Jones that are directly relevant to her question. She keeps repeating this so-called commitment in relation to waiting times. When I was talking to the journalist—and I have corrected this with her a number of times—I was actually talking about the number of people who are in the emergency department for four hours or more, what is called the NEAT. That was the number we were focused on, because that is a number that reflects what we know in relation to increased potential for mortality and morbidity if people spend a long time in the emergency department. So Mrs Jones can say it has many times as she likes, but she is completely misrepresenting and continues to do so.

The other point of clarification I make for Mrs Jones is that we did have a plan to look at increasing the number of people who spent four hours or less in the emergency department, and that plan has been partially implemented. We realised that plan needed some additional funding, and that is funded in the budget—all of those additional funding measures that we have put in the budget around increasing staff in the emergency department, introduction a medical navigating position in the emergency department, introducing an acute medical unit, is a pathway for people, and Mrs Jones is welcome to a full briefing on that if she is interested.

The other clarification I give to Mrs Jones is that the budget is data up until 30 June, so there is really no point in saying you have not met what you are supposed to be doing in October and looking at data as of 30 June.

MRS JONES: Minister, given the Chief Minister has made it clear how much he values human life, how many people have had severe health outcomes as a result of not being seen on time in the emergency department, like the suicidal girl I saw earlier this year who gave up on seeking help after having spent over four hours at Calvary and then a further 10 hours at TCH?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: Obviously we all hear very disturbing stories from our constituents and people who contact us around their experiences in the emergency department, particularly people with mental health challenges. It is often difficult for them to be admitted in the timely way when our mental health capacity is strained, as it has been this year and we know that it has been. So I am very sorry to hear about that experience.

We are always very supportive of following up individual experiences if they are referred to us. But it is one of the specific challenges we face in the emergency department around ensuring that people with mental health challenges can be admitted on time. And that is exactly why we have invested through this budget in a new acute mental health ward in 12B, which is now open and up and running.

MR HANSON: Minister, have you achieved your promised NEAT target of four hours in ED, which you promised nine months ago? If not, will you now apologise for breaking your promise?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: Again, for the clarification for Mr Hanson, I indicated to the journalist that we had a plan to achieve that. I also said it was a very ambitious target and it would be difficult, and I outlined to the journalist the many challenges that we would face. So then identifying this as a firm promise that was never, ever going to have any challenges associated with it is completely and utterly a misrepresentation.

Mr Hanson: On a point of order of relevance, Madam Speaker, the question is whether she broke her promise. It appears that she has clarified she made a promise to achieve these targets. Whether they are difficult or not is not the issue. The question is: did she achieve these targets—yes or no. If not, will she apologise.

MADAM SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I think it was exactly what I was saying—it was not a guarantee. It was not a promise that I was going to get there, because of all the challenges that were associated with it. It was a long conversation with a journalist about the plan we had to move in stages towards achieving this target, and then a long conversation with the journalist about the many challenges associated with that. You sit down in an interview with a journalist and they take short grabs, and the opposition misrepresents them. And that is exactly what has been happening here for months.

Mrs Jones interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mrs Jones, that is enough interjection.

Government—ACT Integrity Commission

MR DAVIS: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, on Tuesday our New South Wales neighbours saw a change of premier, when Gladys Berejiklian resigned pending an inquiry into her conduct by the New South Wales Independent Commission Against Corruption. Since then, I have been contacted by several of my constituents who have asked me why the ACT does not have a specific, in name, independent commission against corruption. How do we give our community confidence that we are committed to exposing and eliminating corruption in government should it exist here in the ACT?

MR BARR: In the last parliament this place voted unanimously to establish the ACT Integrity Commission. There was an extensive committee process. Mr Rattenbury was involved in the committee, as were members of the opposition and the government. We then had a very extensive debate in this place to frame the legislative framework for the ACT Integrity Commission. We have established the Integrity Commission independent from the executive, so I am not the minister responsible for the Integrity Commission. The Integrity Commission sits outside the executive as it is, indeed—along with the Electoral Commission and a number of other statutory organisations—a creature of the parliament. There is a parliamentary committee that oversees the work of the Integrity Commission. So you can tell your constituents, Mr Davis, that the ACT does indeed have an Integrity Commission.

MR DAVIS: Chief Minister, what should Canberrans do if they suspect corrupt conduct from parliamentarians or government officials?

MR BARR: There is a pathway, depending on the nature of the alleged conduct, to report that either to the Integrity Commission or to the commissioner for standards. There are, of course—

Ms Lee: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, can I seek your advice on this? You have made it very clear on a number of occasions that questions that are in order are questions that are directed to ministers who have responsibility. The Chief Minister, in his own answer, has just said that he does not. He is not the overseeing minister for the Integrity Commission. Could you rule on whether Mr Davis's question is in order?

MADAM SPEAKER: I think—

Ms Lee: I don't mind it; I am just asking.

MADAM SPEAKER: It is a fair question because no one in this chamber has direct responsibility in many ways for the independent commission. In its nature, we created an independent body. The Chief Minister is responsible for the act; not for the commission itself, but he is responsible for the act, so in that sense, and wearing that hat, he can reply to the question.

Ms Lee: On the point of order and your ruling, Madam Speaker, with questions relating to the Integrity Commission, you do consider them to be in order to be asked during question time of the Chief Minister?

MADAM SPEAKER: I will take some further advice on that because it is independent. It is like saying that there are questions of the Auditor-General, the Electoral Commission or, indeed, our own Clerk.

Ms Lee: I know; that is why I am trying to get clarification.

MADAM SPEAKER: I am quite happy to get some clarification and come back.

Ms Lee: Okay; thank you.

Mr Davis: Madam Speaker, with your indulgence, to confirm the wording of the question, I asked the head of the government what Canberrans should do if they suspect that there is corrupt conduct by a parliamentarian. I think it is reasonable to ask the head of the government what he would advise constituents to do if they thought such instances existed, and point them in the right direction. If Ms Lee actually had a point of order, it may have been with respect to the first question.

Ms Lee: It was; that is what we are doing. It is a supplementary; that is what we are asking.

MADAM SPEAKER: Members, I will allow the supplementary, but I will come back to members with further advice.

MR BARR: The time has expired.

Budget—infrastructure

MR HANSON: My question is to the Treasurer. The budget contains a five-year infrastructure program spend of \$5 billion. Over the next four years of the budget cycle and forward estimates—four years, not five—can you confirm that the infrastructure program is \$4.48 billion?

MR BARR: As I recall there is net new capital in this fiscal year of \$89.678 million, net new capital of \$155.119 million in 2022-23, net new capital of \$74,346 million in

2023-24 and net new capital of \$135.864 million in 2024-25, which collates to a four-year net new capital of \$455 million.

MR HANSON: Can you confirm that, in February 2021, your budget for 2020 and 2021 had a four-year infrastructure program of \$4.3 billion?

MR BARR: I will need to go back and look at the budget papers. There has been some movement in terms of the capital works reserve, and some capital provisions have shifted from one fiscal year to the other. But the net new capital is \$455 million. That is expensed, obviously, and accorded new policy initiatives within the budget papers. I refer Mr Hanson to table 3.2.1—financial impacts of new policy decisions.

MR CAIN: Minister, can you confirm that this year's budget has only a 4.2 per cent increase on infrastructure over four years compared to last budget?

MR BARR: The net new capital is \$455 million over four years, and then there is additional capital in the first year outside the forward estimates.

Budget—health

MS ORR: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, can you please update the Assembly on how the ACT government is investing in our health system through the 2021-22 ACT budget.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Ms Orr for the question. The 2021-22 budget sees \$2.1 billion spent on health in the 2021-22 financial year—30 per cent of the ACT budget, and a record \$8.5 billion over four years for the health portfolio. We are committed to providing free high-quality public health care and continuing to support our amazing frontline health staff in what they do best.

Through this year's budget investment, we will be responding to our growing community's needs and focusing on the continued transformation of our health system, through initiatives to continue building and improving health infrastructure, with a total investment over the forward estimates of \$867 million; continued funding, of course, for our COVID-19 response; \$73 million to keep improving our health system, including \$50 million for nursing and midwifery ratios; almost \$130 million for our critical hospital services, which will include \$39 million for more emergency surgeries and post-surgery care; \$28 million for additional intensive care unit capacity at the Canberra Hospital; \$23 million to keep improving and expanding the capacity of Canberra Hospital's emergency department; \$16 million for more services at Calvary Public Hospital Bruce, including delivering more emergency department capacity, with 24/7 operation of the medical imaging services; \$15 million for two additional cots in the neonatal intensive care unit; and \$7 million to deliver even more elective surgeries and continue the enhanced recovery after surgery program. In addition, there is \$22 million for better care in the community, including in partnership with non-government organisations, for the delivery of programs that address health needs in the community, more alcohol and drug services, investments in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, LGBTIQ+ health services and disability health services.

MS ORR: Minister, what plans does the government have to deliver better care across our hospital system?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: The ACT government has committed to employing 400 new clinical staff over this term of government, including doctors, nurses and healthcare professionals, to provide more healthcare services as our city grows. The impact of new initiatives across the health portfolio shows considerable progress towards our goal. By the end of 2021-22, we will have invested in an additional 257 health professional full-time equivalent staff, nearly 65 per cent of our commitment delivered in one budget. This includes more than 90 nurses across Canberra Hospital and Calvary Public Hospital through the nursing and midwifery ratios alone, and more medical, nursing and allied health staff in our emergency departments, intensive care, acute medical services, surgical areas, endoscopy, neonatal intensive care and, of course, in the community.

This government will maintain our focus on delivering our vital health infrastructure projects, ensuring that the health system has the space it needs to provide quality treatment and care into the future. This includes continuing planning and design work for the new north-side hospital and significant investments in upgrades at Calvary Public Hospital to ensure continued provision of safe and effective services as our city grows.

Along with planning for a new modern north-side hospital, a \$12 million commitment, we are committed to the delivery of the Canberra Hospital master plan and will commence early work for a new multistorey car park at the Canberra Hospital to continue providing enhanced facilities at the hospital campus.

We are also investing in a range of areas to deliver better care through implementing a new model of patient navigation to better coordinate care across the health system for people with chronic and complex conditions, including a new paediatric liaison and navigation service; co-designing a gender-focused peer-led health service with non-government organisations and LGBTIQ+ stakeholders; and developing and implementing a plan to respond to the LGBTIQ+ health scoping study.

DR PATERSON: Minister, how will implementing nurse ratios contribute to improving outcomes and the hospital system?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Dr Paterson for the question. The ACT government has committed to implementing nursing and midwifery to patient ratios because we know that ratios save lives and improve care. We want to ensure that our staff are able to work in the safest environment possible to provide the best care possible.

Ratios are a process of organising care of patients to a mandated number of nurses and midwives every shift. The ACT government has developed, in partnership with the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation, the Australian public sector nursing and midwifery framework. The framework provides a blueprint for determining the right number of nursing and midwifery staff and skill mix to care for patients within our public hospitals. This will ensure a safer environment for everyone, patients and staff.

Ratios mean that nurses and midwives will have more time to spend with patients providing direct clinical care. Research shows that improved patient outcomes are seen through decreased complication rates, decreased re-admissions, and shorter lengths of stay in hospital. It also means that nurses and midwives enjoy greater job satisfaction, which will enhance Canberra Health Services and Calvary Public Hospital as better employers of choice.

In consultation with the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation, it has been agreed that ratios will be implemented in a phased approach across both public hospitals. Preparations are already well underway for the first phase to be implemented.

This budget included \$50 million allocated over the next four years to recruit more than 90 additional full-time equivalent nursing positions through our health system for phase 1, so by the end of this financial year. With this financial commitment, we anticipate implementing ratios and increasing staff levels very shortly, with recruitment to commence as soon as the enterprise agreement is finalised.

We, of course, committed to implementing ratios at the last elections, as did the ACT Greens. I do not recall the Canberra Liberals doing that. Now they are claiming to be the champions of nurses, but they did not make this commitment. We did and we are delivering on it.

Environment—social cost of carbon

MR PARTON: My question is to the Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction. Minister, can you tell the chamber about the social cost on carbon introduced in this budget and what ACT government activities it will cover?

MR RATTENBURY: I thank Mr Parton for the question. I am delighted to have a chance to talk about this. The social cost of carbon is a concept that essentially measures the economic and social consequences of a tonne of carbon emitted into the atmosphere. This is, I guess, a developing area that identifies there is a true cost to that because of the way that carbon emission flows through into climate change. We know, of course, the impacts of climate change. The ACT has experienced them already, and they are anticipated to get worse in future.

The social cost of carbon is a way of measuring that, of putting a price on that emission. We are using it in the ACT government as a signal to our directorates of the consequences of their emissions. It will act as an incentive for directorates to reduce their emissions. The funds raised from that social cost of carbon will be used to invest in further emission reduction projects so that we can continue to reduce our emissions here in the territory. This is part of being a responsible government that takes these issues seriously. That is very clear with our own agencies—that is, as a government, we expect to set a very clear example in our efforts to tackle climate change here in the territory.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary.

MR PARTON: Minister, does the social cost of carbon apply to activities under the infrastructure investment program, and, if not, why not?

MR RATTENBURY: I am not quite sure where Mr Parton is going with the question, Madam Speaker, but I will do my best to answer it. The social cost of carbon applies to the emissions of ACT government agencies. I think that is the clearest answer I can give. I am happy to arrange a briefing for Mr Parton and any of his colleagues with my agency but also with the ACT Climate Change Council. They have actually recommended to the ACT government that we adopt this approach. It is an internationally recognised mechanism for being very transparent and very clear in how one measures one's impact and also in how you might incentivise efforts to reduce emissions. Hopefully that has answered Mr Parton's question. As I say, I am happy to organise a follow-up if that is of use to him and his colleagues.

MR HANSON: A supplementary, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: You might need to take this on notice as well, Minister. Does the social cost of carbon apply to the production of materials and supplies used in the ACT government's infrastructure investment program?

MR RATTENBURY: I did not take the previous question on notice. I was very clear in my answer that it applies to the measured scope 1 and scope 2 emissions of ACT government agencies. On reflection, particularly now having heard Mr Hanson's question, I think those opposite are trying to get at scope 3 emissions. There is no recognised measure of scope 3 emissions under any carbon accounting frameworks, either internationally or locally, at this point in time. The actual answer to both Mr Parton's and Mr Hanson's questions, if I have understood them, would be no.

Business—COVID-19

MR MILLIGAN: My question is for the Chief Minister. At last Thursday's select committee the Canberra Business Chamber said they felt there was a disconnect between support for stood-down workers as opposed to businesses and that businesses were seen as some amorphous being which is not about people. They said owners were not only eating into their savings but borrowing against their homes, putting their homes and families at future risk. Do you understand the dire straits many small businesses are in?

MR BARR: Yes.

MR MILLIGAN: Chief Minister, are you concerned that businesses are borrowing against their mortgages just to keep going so that they can continue to pay the commercial rates that you are charging them?

MR BARR: I do not believe commercial rates are the principal issue. As to what particular businesses might be borrowing against, that will obviously depend on the

circumstance of those businesses. So you need to be a commercial operator owner to be paying rates.

MS CASTLEY: Chief Minister, how many businesses will fall off the cliff, and what will you do about it? Aren't these people Canberrans too?

MR BARR: My greatest regret through this is that the commonwealth government abandoned JobKeeper. In its second iteration that was a much better-designed program that provided necessary support for business for its largest cost—being labour—and kept the worker attached to the business. Now, unfortunately, because of the rush in the design of the first phase of JobKeeper, tens of billions of dollars were paid to companies that did not need assistance. A lot of that money went into dividends to shareholders and bonuses to executives, when it should have been kept or reclaimed by the commonwealth to provide support for exactly the businesses Ms Castley is talking about.

Budget—public housing

DR PATERSON: My question is to the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development. Minister, how does this year's ACT budget support public housing in the ACT?

MS BERRY: I thank Dr Paterson for her question. In this year's budget the ACT's contribution to housing in the ACT was significant. The ACT government is the largest social landlord, with over 12,000 dwellings, home to more than 20,000 Canberrans. Building on a strong base of public housing, the ACT government will make one of the single largest investments to increase and improve the amount of public housing in the history of self-government, to provide essential housing for low income Canberrans at risk of homelessness.

In the budget \$100 million has been committed to increase social and affordable housing in the ACT. In addition to advancing and supporting the build-to-rent and community housing sector, this package includes an additional \$80 million for public housing maintenance over the next three years. This funding will ensure that public housing tenants live in safe and secure homes that meet their needs. The package also includes \$19 million in additional funding for the Growing and Renewing Public Housing program to support the delivery of the government's commitment to add 400 additional public housing dwellings and renew another 1,000 properties.

This funding is a strong statement that the government is committed to growing, renewing and maintaining a public housing portfolio that is better able to meet the needs of our diverse community, regardless of their abilities or circumstances. In particular, the maintenance funding injection reflects our commitment to continuously improve the maintenance services to provide homes that suit the diverse needs of our tenants.

The ACT government is the strongest supporter of public housing, with the highest ratio of public housing in the country. This commitment will enable tenants to live in suitable homes for families, people with disabilities, women escaping domestic and

family violence, and all households needing the support of public housing. (*Time expired.*)

DR PATERSON: Minister, what impact will this boost to growing, renewing and maintaining public housing have on tenants?

MS BERRY: Growing, renewing and maintaining public housing will improve the lives of existing Housing ACT tenants as well as making more homes available for families in need of housing in Canberra. Over the last few years I have met so many tenants who have moved into their new homes, and it has changed their lives in a most remarkable way.

Gloria and Daniel are two such wonderful tenants that I have met through the process of moving into their new home. Their new two-bedroom class C adaptable home in Kaleen is spacious, well located, and cheaper to heat and cool. Automatic doors through the complex mean that Daniel can get in and out of his home more easily. I was so grateful to hear Gloria and Daniel's story. There are hundreds of tenants just like Gloria and Daniel who are moving into new homes designed and built to suit their needs. It will be a place that they can call home for years to come.

The \$80 million investment in the maintenance of public housing will also significantly benefit existing tenants and prolong the life of public housing. The boost to maintenance funding will include upgrades to kitchens, bathrooms and laundries, modifications to support disability or ageing in place, security upgrades for tenants experiencing domestic and family violence, including security screens for doors and windows and lock changes, roof repairs and upgrades, replaced floor coverings, internal or external painting, as well as other general works and repairs. This work ensures that public housing tenants will continue to live in safe, well-maintained homes.

MR PARTON: Minister, can you now guarantee that all maintenance requests will be fulfilled within the regulatory time frames?

MS BERRY: If a public housing tenant contacts Programmed ACT to have maintenance conducted on their home, it will be triaged appropriately. If it is required and it is urgent then it will be assessed, and that maintenance will occur. If Programmed or Housing ACT are unaware of the maintenance, it makes it a little bit difficult to make that commitment. I encourage Mr Parton, if he has constituents contact his office regarding maintenance, to make sure that they have also contacted Programmed to ensure that they are aware—

Mr Parton: On a point of order, Madam Speaker, the question was not to detail the process around maintenance requests; it was very specific: can you guarantee that all maintenance requests will be fulfilled within the regulatory time frames? I would ask that the minister be relevant to the question.

MADAM SPEAKER: She is being relevant. There is no point of order. Minister, you have a minute left.

MS BERRY: It does give me the chance to go on and respond in more detail about the ACT government's commitment. We already have the second highest ratio of social housing in Australia, with 27 dwellings for every 1,000 people—much higher than the national average of 17 homes. The ACT leads the country in the provision of public housing, with 25 dwellings for every 1,000 people, against the national average of 12 dwellings.

Mr Parton interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Not again, Mr Parton.

MS BERRY: The government acknowledges that there is more work to do, and we continue to invest in providing more and new public housing for people who need it.

Mrs Jones: Madam Speaker—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mrs Jones?

Mrs Jones: Madam Speaker, the question was quite direct, and the minister is now reading a pre-formed answer on something else.

MADAM SPEAKER: No, the question was all about housing maintenance and the investment in this year's budget. Mr Parton is seeking a simple yes or no answer, and we all know I am not going to direct the minister to provide a simple yes or no answer.

MS BERRY: Madam Speaker, the ACT government is committed to providing social housing for people who need it. *(Time expired.)*

Budget—National Arboretum and Stromlo Forest Park

MS CLAY: My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services and Special Minister of State. In the 2021-22 budget it states that one of the priorities of the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate is continuing to progress the National Arboretum Canberra and Stromlo Forest Park master plans, including consultation with key user groups. They are great facilities, and I have ridden and walked at both, but I have heard from many users and user groups that they are worried about announcements about paving roads at the arboretum and a paved car park at Stromlo. They are desperate to improve their user experience with investment in new trails and they do not want any disincentives to use these. What community and stakeholder consultation was conducted prior to making the decision to pave the roads in the arboretum and build a paved carpark at Stromlo?

MR STEEL: I thank Ms Clay for her question. Quite extensive consultation has been occurring in relation to both of those venues, firstly through the master plans for both of those venues. I will read from the car parking section of Stromlo Forest Park master plan. It noted that formal car parking would include permanent infrastructure in the form of paved and lit carparks and all-weather surfaces for access at all times of

the year. That is why, in the budget, we have invested in making sure that we are formalising the car parking at Mount Stromlo so that more people can enjoy this fantastic venue, including cyclists and people engaging in other recreational activities. It will see the provision of safe, sealed and clearly defined car parking spaces at the park to accommodate the increased visitation that that venue has seen over time. The site will form part of a new car parking area in alignment with the master plan, which can be viewed at the Stromlo Forest Park website.

Having an asphalted car park will improve safety, and the efficient allocation of car spaces will help to alleviate some of the safety concerns. I know that, when I have been there, there has been significant rutting in the car park. We want to make sure that it is safe for all park users to use. The funding will allow for both the design and construction of the car park. That design will occur this financial year. I know that the venue managers will continue to consult directly with the users of that venue.

In relation to the arboretum, similarly, a master plan was undertaken some time ago, which has also committed to the sealing of some of the internal roads in the arboretum and, importantly, the provision of safe car parking as part of that. That was funded, I believe, under the local roads and community infrastructure program. (*Time expired.*)

MS CLAY: Will the car park at Stromlo be paid parking for users?

MR STEEL: There is an ongoing conversation that we are currently having about how we can make Stromlo Forest Park the best possible recreational facility for Canberra, for interstate visitors and for Canberrans alike. We have noted the model that is currently in existence at the arboretum, where all of the revenue from the car parking, which is paid parking, is used to improve the fantastic facilities at the arboretum. So we are considering the range of options that might be available in relation to Stromlo Forest Park to make sure that the facilities there continue to get better over time. We have a new trails manager, who has been doing some fantastic work on the trails up there, which I know that the mountain biking community, in particular, has responded really well to. I am looking forward to how we can improve the facilities there and make sure that they are maintained. I know I have been out there with you, Madam Speaker, to have those conversations.

MR BRADDOCK: How will the paved car park at Stromlo fit in with the Stromlo Forest Park master plan, which identifies a village hub on the same site?

MR STEEL: As I mentioned in the answer to the first question from Ms Clay, part of the master plan for Stromlo Forest Park was making sure that there was safe, sealed parking that could be used by those who are visiting the arboretum. Of course, there are future plans that are set out in the master plan that will be progressively achieved over time, including future accommodation facilities, potentially, future road connections, and future playing fields as well. All of those will be completed over time. This is an important first step going forward. We are looking forward to getting on with this work and providing better facilities for users of this fantastic recreational venue.

ACT Policing—COVID-19

MRS KIKKERT: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, in a COVID Select Committee hearing last week, the Human Rights Commissioner asked that people apprehended by police for breaking quarantine could be returned to their location of quarantine rather than to the city watchhouse or the prison. Minister, why are COVID-positive cases or close contacts of COVID-positive cases being taken to the watchhouse and the prison?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I really think it is a bit difficult to ask the Minister for Health a question about the operations of policing. In regard to what police have been—

Mrs Kikkert: It's a health order.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I am the health minister; that is right, Mrs Kikkert. I am not responsible for ACT Policing.

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members! Mrs Jones!

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I might ask Mrs Kikkert to repeat the actual question that she wants answered.

Mrs Kikkert: Minister, in the COVID committee hearing last week—

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: Not the whole thing; just the question is fine.

Mrs Kikkert: Minister, why are COVID-positive cases or close contacts of COVID-positive cases being taken to the watchhouse or the prison?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: The advice that we have from ACT Policing is that when people are being charged with breaches of the COVID-19 public health directions, that is generally associated with other activity for which they are being charged. As a general proposition, people are not being taken to the watchhouse or, indeed, to AMC as a result of breaching public health directions; they are being taken to the watchhouse or AMC as a result of being apprehended for other activities, and they happen to be also breaching public health directions.

MRS KIKKERT: What changes to legislation, if any, do you need to make to enable people to be returned to their place of quarantining or isolation rather than to the watchhouse or the prison?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: We do not need to make any changes to legislation. Police can already do that.

MRS JONES: Has the Human Rights Commissioner raised a reasonable question here, given that she has obviously had complaints about this matter? And how does taking people who have had close contact with COVID cases or, indeed, who have COVID to the watchhouse or the prison fit with your health orders?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: As I indicated earlier, the advice we have from ACT Policing is that when this has occurred it has generally been as a result of people being apprehended for sometimes quite serious alleged offences. That is the reason Policing have indicated to us, to ministers, that they have taken the actions they have.

The Human Rights Commission is absolutely legitimately raising these questions, and I know that these questions have been raised by other people as well. That is why we have sought the advice from ACT Policing in relation to this matter. But ACT Policing officers are putting themselves at risk in working in the community with people who are COVID-19 cases and close contacts. Police are doing so with appropriate personal protective equipment and they are doing so in a very responsible way. They are working very closely with our other agencies to ensure that our compliance and enforcement regime is absolutely focused on engagement and education to the greatest extent possible. Where, unfortunately, they come into contact with people who are cases or who are contacts who are also engaged in other activity for which they would normally be arrested and taken to the watchhouse or the AMC, unfortunately, sometimes that has to be the case.

Budget—seniors and veterans

MS LAWDER: My question is to the assistant minister for family and community services. In the 2021-22 ACT budget there are multiple new initiatives that relate to children and young people but none specifically for seniors or veterans. In this past year, we have seen an increase in the isolation of seniors all over the city, who are also disenfranchised by a majority technology and data response to COVID-19. Minister, why isn't there a single new budget initiative relating to your portfolio of seniors and veterans?

MS DAVIDSON: I thank Ms Lawder for the question. In response to the issues that people have been raising around what they have been experiencing with COVID-19, the ACT government has provided additional support to a range of community organisations who can help with providing information to people and providing support to people during a difficult time. We know that this will continue on for quite some time to come, and there are a number of things in the ACT budget to help with that. Specifically in relation to what in the ACT budget might be helpful for older Canberrans, there is quite a lot of work being done in the age-friendly city plan, including upgrades in—

Ms Lawder: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. The question asked specifically why is there not a single new budget initiative relating to seniors and veterans, not what is in the budget, as business as usual.

MADAM SPEAKER: The question is about initiatives for seniors in the ACT budget. That is what the minister is answering. Minister.

MS DAVIDSON: Thank you. That is a really good point. One of the reasons there is not a single budget line item relating to seniors is that we have many budget line items that will bring great benefits to older Canberrans—for example, some of the work that Minister Steel is doing in implementing our age-friendly suburbs. For example, there are upgrades to footpaths in suburbs like Chifley, where there is quite a lot of work can be done to make it easier for people to get around their neighbourhood. Particularly at a time when they are trying to avoid using public transport, that is really appreciated.

There is the work that Access Canberra are doing with the new Belconnen service centre, making sure that it is dementia-friendly. I know you have a really strong interest in that. We have been listening to what the community has been telling us and responding to that. *(Time expired.)*

MS LAWDER: Minister, when will your government finally start to prioritise Canberra's older residents, given your own acknowledgement that seniors have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19, as opposed to measures that have been in the budget for several years? Is there anything specific to the COVID-19 response for seniors?

MS DAVIDSON: There have been a number of things that we have been doing in response to the impacts of COVID on seniors—for example, providing additional funding for print materials that will help people to get access to the information that they need, and some additional funding to advocacy organisations. For example, ADACAS are receiving additional funding in this year's budget. They provide some fantastic advocacy support to older Canberrans. As well, some additional support was provided to COTA ACT back in August related to COVID.

In addition to that, sometime in the next couple of weeks I expect to open the next round of the seniors grants, which will provide a really important opportunity for community organisations and community groups who are doing fantastic work helping to keep everyone connected—and with a real COVID-19 lens on it this year—and to get access to some funding to enable those activities to take place.

In this year's round of the seniors grants, for example, there was a theatre performance that was created and performed by older Canberrans, particularly about what they were experiencing during COVID-19. In addition to that, I also expect that we will see some of the experiences that people have had during the last year and a half feeding into the older persons mental health and wellbeing plan, which is currently being worked on and which I look forward to talking about more in future months.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Milligan, a supplementary.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, why have you said nothing about veterans when it was included in the initial question, which was referring to seniors and veterans?

MS DAVIDSON: Thank you for that question. There is quite a lot of work being done to support veterans in our community. There has been some work done in relation to the royal commission into veteran suicide and making sure that ACT veterans' experiences are reflected back to federal government in drafting up those terms of reference. The veterans grants program will soon make \$80,000 available to projects and activities to support veterans' and their families' wellbeing to promote veterans as valued members of our ACT community.

This funding will also have a real lens on it for the impact of COVID-19 on the veteran community. They have had a particularly hard time this year, not just with COVID-19 but also with everything that people have been talking about around what has been happening in Afghanistan. That has been a particularly difficult experience, when they have not been able to get together in the way that they normally would. But they have been incredibly responsive—finding ways to stay connected with each other while the lockdown has been happening. I think that our ESOs and community organisations who have been supporting that work are to be congratulated for the efforts that they have made to make sure that people are staying socially connected at a very challenging time.

Budget—business support

MS CASTLEY: My question is to the Minister for Business. Yesterday the *Canberra Times* carried the headline, “Business groups have slammed the ACT budget,” featuring a range of business groups criticising the budget for providing no new support for crippled small businesses. The Canberra Business Chamber's Graham Catt called on the government to guarantee that local Canberra businesses will get tenders and grants to support large infrastructure projects such as light rail. Why was there no new support for small business in your budget beyond the schemes that are already operating?

MR BARR: Madam Speaker, given the question strays mostly into areas I have responsibility for, I will take the question. In relation to the final part of Ms Castley's question, I draw her attention to the Canberra region local industry participation policy that has amongst its other requirements; that the territory entity must, of course, pursue value for money in procurement; that there be no discrimination consistent with national and international agreements—free trade agreements, Ms Castley, which your party likes to champion; and the third point is enhancing opportunities for local businesses.

So within any ACT government procurement, depending on the value of the procurement, there must either be a local industry participation plan or, indeed, an economic contribution test for each procurement depending on the value of the procurement. That has a positive weighting in favour of business also from the Canberra region. We do extend beyond the borders of the ACT to make that economic contribution test, because clearly there are a lot of businesses that operate in the

Canberra region that may have part of their business in New South Wales. So we take a broader assessment.

I draw your attention, firstly, to the local industry participation policy. In relation to support within the budget, the single largest expenditure item is business support grants. And amongst the next largest items is the small business hardship scheme, coming in at nearly \$50 million. These are the single largest expenditure items—the centrepiece of the budget, the reason the budget is in a \$950 million deficit—(*Time expired.*)

MS CASTLEY: Chief Minister, will the government mandate extra local procurement for the large infrastructure projects so that Canberra small businesses and workers benefit?

MR BARR: For a contract that is between \$200,000 and \$5 million an economic contribution test must be completed and submitted, and there will be a 10 per cent default weighting in favour of local businesses submitting to tenders between \$200,000 and \$5 million. For a contract value over \$5 million the local industry participation plan is mandatory, and there is a further 10 per cent default weighting in the evaluation process. For a contract value between \$25,000 and \$200,000 there is a requirement that a quote must be sought from a respondent located in the Canberra region—must be sought.

I draw the attention of members opposite to the requirements under the free trade agreement that the Australian government has signed that we must be consistent with those national and international agreements in relation to government procurement. So when Tony Abbott went off to China to do the ChAFTA and when Dan Tehan is off negotiating with the UK and the EU, free trade agreements require that there not be discrimination. That is what it is about. But, within our procurement policies, we are able to have a positive weighting in favour of local business, and we do.

Mrs Jones: Why only 10 per cent?

MR BARR: Because that is the maximum allowed under free trade agreements. I have to say that this absolute hypocrisy on trade from the Liberal Party is extraordinary to witness! (*Time expired.*)

Mrs Jones interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mrs Jones! If I have to come to you one more time you will be warned.

MR PARTON: Chief Minister, do you agree that Canberra will miss out on huge economic benefits and jobs if the government funds out-of-town business to do these major projects?

MR BARR: No, because of the local participation policy requirements for contracts greater than \$5 billion. It is inbuilt within the procurement guidelines. Even if the head contractor, which is often the case for projects \$500 million or more, is indeed a

tier 1 national infrastructure company, there are requirements in their tendering to utilise local contractors. The bulk of the ACT government's infrastructure program sits well below those really big ticket items—250 projects contained within the program and only a handful are over \$250 million in value. So overwhelmingly the delivery of the infrastructure program is undertaken by Canberra region businesses.

But there are some examples where we simply do not have the skills or capacity—light rail being one, because there is no-one who builds light rail in Canberra—where we need to bring that capacity in. Until we built stage 1, there had never been any rail built by a territory government in the ACT. There are some infrastructure projects that require national or international expertise; there are others, though, that we do every month or every year. And that is the staple of the local infrastructure program—that we have in place a local industry participation policy that is consistent with what is allowed under free trade agreements.

This is the thing that just boggles the mind—that you lot go out there claiming your party as the advocates of free trade, and yet when it is actually applied you whinge about it. Unbelievable!

Government—land release

MR CAIN: My question is to the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development. Minister, in the year to September 2021, Canberra house prices have risen by 28 per cent, according to CoreLogic's home property value index. Your Indicative Land Release reports show that the total promised release of single blocks between 2019 and 2021 was 3,544, yet the land and property reports from June 2019 to December last year show that only 841 blocks were settled.

Mr Parton: Quite a shortfall!

MR CAIN: This is a shortfall, as Mr Parton has said, of quite an amount—2,703. Minister, is this shortfall and the resultant acute scarcity generated by you, the effective monopoly supplier of land in the ACT? Is this what is primarily responsible for the increase in recent sales and the boom in housing prices in

MR GENTLEMAN: Madam Speaker, it is appropriate that I take that question, as the minister with responsibility for ILRP, as well as the decisions that are made in cabinet across land release well into the future. As you will see in this budget, Madam Speaker, we have had a strong Indicative Land Release Program to look at the demand that is growing across the territory, in particular, with the way we have looked at release planning for the future—that is, that we are moving to a more compact, efficient city. So you will see more smaller sites allowed as individual sites across the territory.

In the past we have not seen a reflection, particularly, of the Indicative Land Release Program in the cost of houses in the territory. The cost of houses is a market force. The cost has grown quite significantly, and we see that. We have a land release program that can look at the population growth across the city and the way that the city grows. Those are decisions that are brought to us in expert advice. Cabinet

deliberates on those over many, many months. We have some expert advisers. Louise Crossman in my office in particular has done a lot of work with directorates and officials over this budget. I commend her for the work that she has done.

There is a lot of work that goes behind the ILRP. It is a very important piece of work so that we can deliver a land release program that is suited to the territory and that allows us to grow in a way that is economical and efficient.

The Canberra Liberals went to the last election on an urban sprawl policy. They wanted to go right out, bulldoze Kowen Forest and build across the Murrumbidgee. Heaven knows what the cost of living would have been then. *(Time expired.)*

MR CAIN: Minister, what plans do you have to ensure that the actual releases of land, as opposed to houses, match your promises?

MR GENTLEMAN: It is very well thought out and very well delivered in the ILRP, and it was part of this budget. All of the work that has been done by the experts, by our officials and by market analysts looking at what we need to deliver for Canberrans in the forward years is in that budget document. I commend the document to the Liberals.

MR PARTON: Minister, what plans do you have to improve the affordability of detached housing?

MR GENTLEMAN: Of course, there are a number of detached dwellings in the ILRP, our land release program, over the forward years that the government will be delivering. There will also be a number that the private sector will be delivering. In regard to price, though, as I said, that is a market decision. Market forces—

Mr Parton interjecting—

MR GENTLEMAN: Market forces do drive the price, and investors drive the price as well across Canberra. We need to make sure that we have the number of dwellings available, and all of that work has been done over many years. So the very early work, doing the due diligence to ensure that we can deliver those blocks of land in time has been done, and they are now in the land release program.

Budget—Franklin Nature Reserve

MR BRADDOCK: My question is to the Minister for Planning and Land Management. I noticed in the budget there is a commitment to the enhancement of the Franklin Nature Reserve. Can you please provide further details of what this budget item is for?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Mr Braddock for the question. It is, of course, important, as we look at that last question, to think about how we deliver for Canberrans, not just in housing but in the way that they can live in the territory close to nature, which is what they love. I really do want to commend Ms Orr for the work that she did in the

last Assembly with me, in delivering the Franklin grasslands for the people of Gungahlin and for all Canberrans to go and visit. I had the pleasure of opening the grasslands with Ms Orr and the Canberra Friends of Grasslands. At the time I was given a very expert tutorial on the Ginninderra peppercress and the mycelial network, which I was very intrigued by. Our experts in Parks and Conservation do a fantastic job. In this budget we have allocated just over \$3.2 million to Franklin grasslands.

MR BRADDOCK: What outcomes from this investment will visitors to the grassland be actually able to see?

MR GENTLEMAN: You will see that funding delivered not just for Franklin grasslands and our temperate climate grasses and woodlands across the territory, making sure that we can have plenty of opportunities for reserving those areas that are most important to us. Of course, there are lots of endangered species that live in these areas, so we want to make sure that we can do that. Each of these areas must have a conservation plan and a plan of management as we go forward. The offsets program helps us to fund these opportunities and gives opportunities for us, our children and our grandchildren to enjoy those spaces into the future.

MS ORR: Can you please tell the chamber how the focus on Franklin grasslands has brought a focus on Gungahlin grasslands and what the government is doing for those?

MR GENTLEMAN: As I talked about earlier, I think Canberrans really enjoy those areas. It is important that we set them aside. When we look at the Gungahlin area, there are quite a number of nature reserves set aside, including for vegetation, as in the Franklin grasslands. Of course, grasslands provide a very good opportunity to set aside an ecological footprint. We often talk about trees across the ACT and trees in our nature parks, but grasslands are an important way of preserving that habitat. It is a different habitat for different species of vegetation and different species of animals. There is a historic view to Ginninderra grasslands in particular.

Budget—emergency services

MR PETERSSON: My question is to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Minister, how is the ACT government investing in police and emergency services through the ACT budget?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Mr Pettersson for his support of policing and emergency services across the ACT. We are continuing our strong investment in our police and emergency services in the 2021-22 budget.

We are making significant investments in our Emergency Services Agency, including: initial funding of \$15.2 million to help modernise and sustain our ambulance service; more than \$12.7 million for standard and low-emission vehicles and associated infrastructure; and over \$2.4 million to upgrade critical ICT systems to increase the capacity at the emergency triple zero communication centre and the incident management room.

We are also vesting funding in ACT Policing, including more than \$11.4 million to improve accommodation for our police and emergency services in Gungahlin; \$4.2 million to meet the growing and increasingly complex workload associated with forensic and medical services; \$6.6 million to replace ACT Policing's core radio comms system; and over \$11 million for expanded enabling services to support operational capacity.

These budget initiatives will ensure that our emergency services and police remain well resourced and that Canberrans remain safe and well protected as the city continues to grow.

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, how will these investments support the work of our frontline responders?

MR GENTLEMAN: I would like to begin by thanking our frontline responders for their ongoing commitment and dedication to serving our community. Our police officers, firefighters and paramedics do a wonderful job responding to emergencies and looking after Canberrans, often in challenging circumstances.

The ACT government has a proud record of supporting our police and our emergency responders and will continue to do so now and into the future. We are enabling our frontline responders to keep our community safe through major investments in this budget. We are providing significant funding for staffing, vehicles, infrastructure, ICT, accommodation and services over the next four years.

We have been listening to our frontline responders about what they need, and their invaluable feedback has helped us shape our initiatives for the 2021-22 budget. I look forward to continuing to work with them to ensure that they remain well supported and well resourced into the future.

MS ORR: Minister, how will these investments improve community safety into the future?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Ms Orr for her interest in community safety. When discussing community safety, it is important to note that Canberra is one of the safest cities in Australia. We have some of the most effective and best-performing emergency services in the country. This is no mistake. It is a result of this government's ongoing record of investment. It is always done in the past. This government is continuing to keep Canberra safe through the delivery of well-resourced, community-focused services.

The investments in our police and emergency services in the 2021-22 budget will improve community safety by boosting the capability of our paramedics, firefighters and police officers to respond to emergencies. It will ensure that Canberrans continue to receive a high standard of service in some of their most difficult times and that our frontline responders can keep up with the growing demand. It will also enable us to maintain a skilled and resilient workforce that is well equipped and supported.

Community safety will always remain a high priority for the ACT government, both in this budget and into the future.

Mr Barr: From car parks to free trade, I ask that all further questions be placed on the notice paper.

Papers

Madam Speaker presented the following papers:

Annual Reports (Government Agencies) Act, pursuant to section 15—Annual reports 2020-21—

ACT Auditor-General's Report No 9/2021, dated 7 October 2021.

ACT Ombudsman, dated 9 September 2021.

Inspector of the ACT Integrity Commission, dated 27 September 2021.

Freedom of Information Act, pursuant to section 67—A report on the operation of the *Freedom of Information Act 2016*—Annual report 2020-21.

Mr Gentleman presented the following papers:

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led review—Over-representation in the Territory's Justice System—Government response to the resolution of the Assembly of 9 February 2021 concerning racism at the Alexander Maconochie Centre.

Coroners Act, pursuant to subsection 57(4)—Report of Coroner—Inquest into the deaths of Anthony Leigh Bearham, Nicola Joy Fisher and Others—

Report, dated 4 March 2021

Government response, dated 8 October 2021.

Corflute Recycling Trial Report.

Endoscopy services—Wait times—Government response to the resolution of the Assembly of 22 April 2021, dated 8 October 2021.

Judicial Commissions Act, pursuant to subsection 61A(5)—ACT Judicial Council—Annual report 2020-21.

Planning and Development Act, pursuant to subsection 79(1)—Approval of Variation No 370 to the Territory Plan—East Yowani Estate—Lyneham section 67 part block 7—Zone change and amendments to the Lyneham Precinct Map and Code, dated 17 September 2021, including associated documents.

Remuneration Tribunal Act, pursuant to subsection 12(2)—Determinations, together with accompanying statements for:

Full-Time Statutory Office Holders—Determination 4 of 2021, dated August 2021.

Full-time Statutory Office Holders:

Auditor-General, Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, Electoral Commissioner—Determination 3 of 2021, dated August 2021.

Chief Executive Officer, City Renewal Authority and Chief Executive Officer, Suburban Land Agency—Determination 5 of 2021, dated August 2021.

Head of Service, Directors-General and Executives—Determination 2 of 2021, dated August 2021.

Members of the ACT Legislative Assembly—Determination 1 of 2021, dated August 2021.

Subordinate legislation (including explanatory statements unless otherwise stated)

Legislation Act, pursuant to section 64—

Animal Welfare Act—Animal Welfare (Advisory Committee Member) Appointment 2021 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-204 (LR, 9 August 2021).

Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act—Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Amendment Regulation 2021 (No 1)—Subordinate Law SL2021-20 (LR, 20 August 2021).

Cemeteries and Crematoria Act and Financial Management Act—Cemeteries and Crematoria (Governing Board) Appointment 2021 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-203 (LR, 9 August 2021).

Civil Law (Wrongs) Act—Civil Law (Wrongs) Australian Property Institute Valuers Limited Scheme 2021 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-213 (LR, 30 August 2021).

Crimes (Sentencing) Act—Crimes (Sentencing) Amendment Regulation 2021 (No 1)—Subordinate Law SL2021-21 (LR, 20 August 2021).

Government Procurement Act—Government Procurement (Non-Public Employee Member) Appointment 2021 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-215 (LR, 2 September 2021).

Liquor Regulation—Liquor (COVID-19 Emergency Response—Permit Fee Waiver) Declaration 2021 (No 3)—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-209 (LR, 26 August 2021).

Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Regulation—

Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods (Vaccinations by Pharmacists) Direction 2021 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-205 (LR, 9 August 2021).

Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods (Vaccinations by Pharmacists) Direction 2021 (No 3)—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-207 (LR, 16 August 2021).

Nature Conservation Act—Nature Conservation (Scientific Committee) Appointment 2021—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-208 (LR, 16 August 2021).

Road Transport (Safety and Traffic Management) Regulation—Road Transport (Safety and Traffic Management) Traffic Offence Detection Device Approval 2021 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-206 (LR, 12 August 2021).

Utilities (Technical Regulation) Act—

Utilities (Technical Regulation) (Gas Metering Code) Approval 2021—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-220 (LR, 2 September 2021).

Utilities (Technical Regulation) (Gas Safety and Network Operation Code) Approval 2021—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-217 (LR, 2 September 2021).

Utilities (Technical Regulation) (Gas Service and Installation Code) Approval 2021—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-219 (LR, 2 September 2021).

Utilities (Technical Regulation) (Light Rail Regulated Utility (Electrical) Network Boundary Code) Approval 2021—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-211 (LR, 26 August 2021).

Utilities (Technical Regulation) (Light Rail Regulated Utility (Electrical) Network Code) Approval 2021—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-210 (LR, 26 August 2021).

Utilities (Technical Regulation) (Regulated Utility Coordination Code) Approval 2021—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-212 (LR, 26 August 2021).

Working with Vulnerable People (Background Checking) Act—Working with Vulnerable People (Background Checking) Amendment Regulation 2021 (No 1)—Subordinate Law SL2021-22 (LR, 22 September 2021).

Corflute recycling trial report

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Manager of Government Business, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Industrial Relations and Workplace Safety, Minister for Planning and Land Management and Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (3.16): Pursuant to standing order 211, I move:

That the Assembly take note of the following paper:

Corflute Recycling Trial report.

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee—Minister for Skills, Minister for Transport and City Services and Special Minister of State) (3.16): I wish to speak to the tabling of the report on the pilot that was undertaken, the corflute recycling trial.

For the benefit of members, I originally intended that this document would be provided to the committee looking into the 2020 ACT election. That committee reported a little bit earlier than expected, so I am providing the report for the benefit of members, so that they can look at the outcomes of that trial, which has been very successful—in relation to not only political corflutes, but also the many community corflutes that are used every year to highlight the many events that occur around our city. In partnership with the manufacturer of corflutes, we have seen quite a significant tonnage of corflute material being recycled, with a very low contamination rate. This may be of interest to members when they are considering the outcomes of the inquiry into the 2020 ACT election and what reforms might be looked at in the future to address issues around political signage.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Over-representation of Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders in the territory's justice system—government response

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Manager of Government Business, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Industrial Relations and Workplace Safety, Minister for Planning and Land Management and Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (3.17): Pursuant to standing order 211, I move:

That the Assembly take note of the following paper:

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led review—Over-representation in the Territory's Justice System—Government response to the resolution of the Assembly of 9 February 2021 concerning racism at the Alexander Maconochie Centre.

Debate (on motion by **Mrs Kikkert**) adjourned to the next sitting.

Planning—Molonglo Valley

MRS JONES (Murrumbidgee) (3.18): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) the Molonglo Valley is currently experiencing significant residential growth, with a forecast population of nearly 35,000 by the end of this decade;
- (b) to date, the delivery of critical community facilities, shops and services in the Molonglo Valley have been plagued by significant delays, forcing residents to rely on neighbouring facilities in Weston Creek, which are already under significant pressure;
- (c) at the previous election, ACT Labor promised to “fast track” the delivery of the Molonglo Valley commercial centre, which will contain sorely needed facilities such as:
 - (i) a police station;
 - (ii) a year 11-12 college;
 - (iii) a library;
 - (iv) a community precinct;
 - (v) emergency services;
 - (vi) health facilities; and
 - (vii) supermarkets, retail and commercial space;
- (d) to deliver on this promise, the ACT Government will need to release the first major piece of commercial land before 30 June 2022, as outlined in the *Indicative Land Release Program 2019-20 to 2022-23* and reiterated by Minister Gentlemen in a letter sent to the Molonglo Valley Community Forum in April this year;

- (e) with less than a year to go, Molonglo's 10,000 existing residents have yet to be consulted or provided with any detailed information about the current plans for the Molonglo commercial centre;
 - (f) on 11 June 2021, the National Capital Design Review Panel reviewed the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate's (EPSDD's) planning framework for the commercial centre, and advised that the current proposal:
 - (i) has no consideration of indigenous site history;
 - (ii) compromises the existing landscape character by requiring extensive cut and fill;
 - (iii) does not accommodate sufficient existing mature trees;
 - (iv) lacks an effective water management strategy;
 - (v) has not justified its current distribution of uses and associated densities;
 - (vi) does not outline an effective, well integrated movement network;
 - (vii) fails to articulate how it will deliver a safe and sustainable development; and
 - (viii) neglects the needs of the existing and fast-growing Molonglo Valley community;
 - (g) after 15 years of planning, this is an extraordinary critique of EPSDD's ability to deliver high quality outcomes for the Molonglo Valley; and
 - (h) the Minister should be greatly embarrassed to receive such a report criticising the skills of his directorate and implying that they are stuck in the past; and
- (2) calls on the ACT Government to:
- (a) table the *Molonglo Group Centre and Surrounds Planning Framework* in full, to allow elected Members and the wider community sufficient time to analyse this critical piece of planning work ahead of next year's land release;
 - (b) nominate a start date for construction on this group centre for the community to have an understanding of when their group centre is expected to begin being constructed; and
 - (c) report back to the Assembly on preparations for the release of the land for the Molonglo commercial centre and plan for community consultation by the last sitting day in November 2021.

As a proud member of this Assembly for Murrumbidgee, I have the enormous privilege of representing the people of the Molonglo Valley. This wonderful and diverse community has emerged from the grasslands of the valley over the last 10 years and has developed into its current form. The Molonglo Valley is currently experiencing significant residential growth, with a forecast population of nearly 35,000 by the end of this decade.

To date, the delivery of critical community facilities, shops and services in the Molonglo Valley has been plagued by significant delays and dysfunction, forcing

residents to rely on neighbouring facilities in Weston Creek, which are already under significant pressure.

At the previous election, ACT Labor promised to fast-track the delivery of the Molonglo Valley commercial centre, which will contain sorely needed facilities such as a police station, emergency services, a year 11 and 12 college, a library, a community precinct, health facilities, and big-sized supermarket, retail and commercial space.

To deliver on this promise, the ACT government will, as outlined in the Indicative Land Release Program 2019-20 to 2022-23, need to release the first major piece of commercial land before 30 June 2022. This need was reiterated by Minister Gentleman in a letter that he sent to the Molonglo Valley Community Forum in April this year. With less than a year to go, however, Molonglo's 10,000 existing residents have yet to be consulted or provided with any detailed information about the current plans for the land release and the Molonglo commercial centre generally.

On 11 June 2021, the National Capital Design Review Panel reviewed the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate's planning framework for the commercial centre. The panel's conclusions were damning. It found that the current proposal had no consideration of Indigenous site history; compromised the existing landscape character by requiring extensive cut and fill; did not accommodate any existing mature trees; lacked an effective water management strategy; had not justified its current distribution of uses and associated densities; did not outline an effective, well-integrated movement network; failed to articulate how it would deliver a safe and sustainable development; and neglected needs of the existing fast-growing Molonglo Valley community.

The panel was asked by the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate to "provide input on whether the present concept plans can deliver a high-quality built form and landscape outcome for the Molonglo Valley". This is a critique of work which has been undertaken in our planning authority since 2006. It goes on to say:

The panel recommends that the proponent investigates a first principles approach to planning.

What have they been doing for the last 15 years with respect to designing this commercial centre? It continues:

The panel encourages the proponent to employ contemporary digital planning and designing tools to test alternative design options.

Again, what does this reflect—that we are using outdated systems in the process at present? It continues:

The panel consider that early consideration of the issues identified in this advice is essential to ensuring positive outcomes in later stages.

Essential to get positive outcomes! Basically, if we continue with the plans as they are, will they not provide a positive outcome. The panel states that the proponent is also encouraged to elevate the current vision and principles, to clearly articulate the intent and to define the desired outcome for this important proposal. All I can say is thank God for the design review panel, because, from what they have said, the current plan does not clearly articulate the intent and/or define what the desired outcomes are. I can help a little bit here. The outcome should be an aesthetically pleasing, functional and properly connected shopping, learning, health, emergency services, community building and commercial centre, with modern design and functionality, sitting in the landscape and respectful of it. People want their shops delivered on time, to have the facilities that they need, and to have appropriate and sufficient undercover carparking, public transport and bicycle arrival locations.

They need to be able to enjoy using the area in the warm weather as well as in the cold weather, as we know across Canberra, and for the various blocks to be connected, unlike the difficulties in the Gungahlin town centre, where blocks were separately sold and separately developed by completely different developers with completely different ideas of what that town centre should be. They need and want to look out over the surrounding area and the views, and not have a total decimation of the land as it undulates at present. Is that too hard to articulate or to plan for?

The panel states that the current planning does not demonstrate adequate consideration of and integration with Indigenous site history. Are we still no good at this? How many more years will it take? We know we are on Aboriginal land. Why is this not just a standard part of preparation of a new area and especially our commercial centre?

The current proposal includes a significant cut and fill, as we see in new estates all over Canberra, which means that the shape of the landscape is altered, and any native flora and fauna are removed. Again, why? Is it necessary? The design review panel seems to think it is not. How will the mature trees on the site be included? The report says that at present they are not. This is a shame for a new area which is lacking so much mature vegetation that it seems to be a huge concrete thoroughfare and a heat island at the moment.

The panel says that the proposal does not adequately articulate how sustainability will be achieved. Again, really? This is a Labor-Greens government. You would think that this would be a normal part of the design process. There is no water management strategy for the various proposed ponds. The panel therefore concludes that they will be of limited effectiveness. The various densities across the site are not sufficiently justified.

It seems from the panel's report that transport infrastructure has not been adequately considered. The panel asked the proponent to create a community-focused core earlier. Yes, please.

There is significant frustration in the Molonglo Valley community about the fact that people do not know when these shops will be built, how they will look, what will be

included and when, and whether the government will keep their promise—a promise first made by me in 2006 to fast track-the shops, and then copied by the government at the last election. We have the brochures. They say that the shops will be fast-tracked.

People in Molonglo Valley have very few places to be together as a community, to get to know each other, to mix, to build and bond as a community. This centre should be delivered as a priority to assist in that process.

Further, I am concerned that the current proposal to release small parcels of land to different developers could result in a poorly integrated and disjointed development. The minister should seriously consider an integrated, single-release approach, which would support a development that integrates commercial, retail and public spaces from the start. Such an approach has been used in the award-winning recent development at Rouse Hill in Sydney. I understand that it has been an outstanding success. It has been referenced in consultation with planning officials about this centre, but the piecemeal land release approach that seems to be emerging goes in a completely different direction.

The answer from the panel is in. After 15 years of planning, the plans are not up to their expectations. This is an extraordinary critique of government and Minister Gentleman's ability to deliver high-quality outcomes for the Molonglo Valley. The minister should be greatly embarrassed to receive such a report criticising the directorate and implying that the plans are stuck in the past.

Since I submitted this motion on Tuesday, we have learned that the government has in fact announced a two-year delay in the timetable for the delivery of this commercial centre. What has happened since April this year, when the minister wrote to the community council saying that everything was on track? What has happened is that the government, having received a scathing report on its plans for the Molonglo Valley commercial centre, will use the COVID lockdown as an excuse to delay this build further. The lockdown, even if it has slowed processes down, is for less than three months. This does not justify a two-year delay.

The government will then say, "We need to consult with the community." Yes, we do, but given that this is also a part of standard practice of government, do not use talking to the community as an excuse to deny them a much-needed commercial centre, a group centre, for more than two years. It does not take two extra years to consult with the community. It is unjust to have such a fast-growing area without basic services of their own.

I urge the Assembly to support this motion and to give the Molonglo Valley a proper, central shopping, education, health and emergency services commercial centre in the time they promised at the election, and to not break their promise to the people so easily, as they seem to be doing.

DR PATERSON (Murrumbidgee) (3.29): I thank Mrs Jones for bringing this motion to the Assembly on an issue about which we are both very passionate. The government will support the motion, and I will move the following amendment:

Omit all text after paragraph (1)(a), substitute:

- “(b) Molonglo Valley residents currently rely on services provided in Weston Creek;
 - (c) at the previous election, ACT Labor promised to “fast track” the delivery of the Molonglo Valley commercial centre, which will contain facilities such as:
 - (i) a police station;
 - (ii) a year 11-12 college;
 - (iii) a library;
 - (iv) a community precinct;
 - (v) emergency services;
 - (vi) health facilities; and
 - (vii) supermarkets, retail and commercial space;
 - (d) to deliver on this promise, the ACT Government will release land in accordance with the Indicative Land Release Program by 2023-2024;
 - (e) consultation for the development of the Molonglo commercial centre will start from the end of 2021 and continue into 2022; and
 - (f) on 11 June 2021, the National Capital Design Review Panel provided a peer review of the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate’s work for the Molonglo Group Centre and provided valuable input on areas of planning improvement; and
- (2) calls on the ACT Government to:
- (a) table the Molonglo Group Centre and Surrounds planning in full by the last sitting day in December, to allow elected Members and the wider community sufficient time to analyse this initial work; and
 - (b) update the Assembly by the last sitting day in December on when development of the Molonglo commercial centre is intended and outline plans for community consultation.”.

The planned Molonglo group centre will be a major retail and commercial centre for the Molonglo Valley. The commercial centre will provide Molonglo Valley residents with much-needed shopping facilities, including large scale supermarkets, retail, and commercial businesses, emergency services and other community facilities, such as education, an arts centre and a library.

The first step towards development of the Molonglo commercial centre is the release of land by the ACT government. This was anticipated to occur in 2021-22. The ACT government’s budget handed down this week has announced a delay to the release of those first parcels of land. The land is now set for release in 2023-24. I understand residents of Molonglo Valley and Weston Creek are disappointed by the delay—and I share that disappointment—but we want to get this right.

The Molonglo Valley community has stated the need for strong place-making outcomes in various projects across the region, and the ACT government has agreed

that this is an important principle for the Molonglo group centre. Unfortunately, this results in changes to some of the planning work and community consultation that needs to be done.

What it means is that refinement—and therefore time—is needed for further strategic planning and community consultation. If the land were to be released this year, as originally intended, it would be a piecemeal approach with individual blocks released—exactly the problem Mrs Jones pointed out in her speech! We want to avoid that. This would not provide good place-making outcomes.

A holistic approach is needed to provide coordinated development and delivery that meets the community's needs well into the future. While I reiterate that I understand the community's frustration and dismay about the delayed time frames, I am confident the end result will be a positive one for the community.

For too long, we have all seen the impacts of the lack of suitable shops in Molonglo Valley. The pressure this has placed on services and facilities in Weston Creek—at Cooleman Court in particular—is of ongoing concern for Weston Creek and Molonglo Valley residents. Local shopping centres do much more than just provide a point of convenience and services; they are often the heart and the hub of the community—a place to meet, a place of social cohesion and connection.

It is great to see the IGA and other shops and businesses up and running at Denman Prospect. Construction has recently commenced on the private Koko development, which is anticipated to house a mid-sized or Metro Woolworths of 1,500 square metres. This has been approved through the development processes, and it is anticipated that it will open late 2022. The building has literally just popped out of the ground in the last couple of weeks and is an encouraging sight to see. A second development application for the same site that includes a second supermarket is currently awaiting approval.

As part of the ACT government's 2021-22 budget commitment, land release to enable local shop development in Whitlam is planned for this financial year. This means shops at Whitlam could open around 2023. In the interim, the Suburban Land Agency has established the Heartbeat Cafe in Whitlam to provide early residents with access to local facilities, and in recognition of the importance of a meeting and gathering place for new residents in their suburbs. This means that within the next few years, Molonglo Valley will be better served by shops and services while we work closely with the community to develop plans for the group centre.

I remain committed to ensuring adequate and appropriate shopping facilities for the people in my community—the residents of Murrumbidgee. I will continue to be a strong advocate and to do everything within my ability to ensure a favourable outcome. I will remain engaged in the various aspects of the group centre's planning, community consultation, land release and subsequent delivery to ensure the best possible outcome for the community.

In particular, I wish to ensure that community consultation is undertaken in a meaningful way and that community voices are heard and incorporated into the final

design and development outcomes for the Molonglo group centre. I want to reassure residents of Molonglo Valley and Weston Creek that I am doing everything I can to achieve a successful outcome on the prompt delivery of quality shopping facilities, commercial services and community facilities in Molonglo Valley.

I thank Minister Gentleman for his continued commitment to land use and planning outcomes in the Molonglo Valley and for the community. I will continue working with colleagues, stakeholders and community members until this is resolved and into the future.

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (3.35): The Greens are pleased to support this motion in its amended form. It highlights the consultation and the planning and design we would like to see in development in the years to come. We need transparency and we need good design principles in our planning.

There is a major planning review underway in the ACT. This is a once-in-a-decade opportunity to examine our planning system and determine whether our current laws and processes are working for a growing Canberra and whether they are working during our climate emergency. It is an opportunity to ensure our future planning system delivers development of high building quality that is environmentally sustainable and that preserves our green spaces and our natural amenity.

The design review panel is a joint initiative of the ACT government and the National Capital Authority. It provides a citywide design review panel process before a development application is lodged. This panel has experts in planning, design and development, and it offers a really efficient and consistent approach to delivering independent, confidential design advice for big development proposals across Canberra.

I think it is great that EPSDD asked for feedback and received it from the design review panel. That is a voluntary step. It is a voluntary service for development proposals, and they are not required to do that under law. I applaud the use of the design review panel for major projects like this one, as I think it will lead to better outcomes.

The Molonglo Valley commercial centre will be the major commercial hub for Molonglo Valley and it will contain commercial, retail, residential and community facilities. It has been in planning for a while. In the meantime, the residents in Molonglo have relied on services in surrounding areas.

The design review panel made a number of important points about what this commercial centre should look like. They provided some really sound recommendations, and whilst they are raised in the context of Molonglo, these should apply to all future developments. We want to ensure that any development on greenfield land is of good quality and incorporates best practice and sustainable, well planned design and development. We need early consultation with Indigenous traditional custodians to help shape our development. By considering and integrating Indigenous site history and cultural narratives, we have an opportunity to

integrate the development into existing historical, cultural and physical uses of the land. It is a real opportunity and we should not squander it.

We want to see well planned open spaces. We know that our newer suburbs struggle with urban heat island effect, and that is why our green spaces are so important. We do not want to repeat mistakes of the past or build in a way that does not suit a hotter Canberra with a changed climate, nor do we want to significantly impact on critical ecosystems with sprawling development.

We support higher densities with minimal overall footprints that allow for greater green space. This means that future building designs should incorporate a best-practice sustainable urban design approach and include commitments to principles including mitigating and adapting to climate change instead of contributing to it. We should think about this and we should include things like light-coloured roofs, roofing material that does not retain the heat, space for community microgrids and water storage.

We need to protect our environmental values. Preserving remnant mature trees is really important. Our hollow-bearing trees are important for preserving for birds and other animals and they are particularly important in our urban environments, because there are fewer mature trees and so they have to compete harder for the hollows that are there.

I am happy to see the design panel's recommendation that this development should adapt to the existing landscape. This will make for a more undulating natural urban environment and it will prevent loss of topsoil and contamination of waterways. It is no longer acceptable to scrape and fill new blocks. That practice removes valuable topsoils and it leads to runoff in our waterways as well as to poorer suburban development.

As active travel spokesperson for the Greens, I agree that new developments like this need to integrate good active and public transport planning from the start so that people do not habituate to cars. We need to plan long-term for light rail. We need buses in the short term and a good network of pedestrian and cycle paths. With this in mind, we need safe crossing over big roads, like John Gorton Drive. Public and active transport need to be there at the beginning to make sure people do not move in and buy a car. Once they do that, we may have lost them to alternative transport for the next decade or more. We support building mobility hubs with green walls and active play spaces and not just concrete and tarmac car parks. People should take priority in our urban space, not cars.

Given the location of the Molonglo Valley commercial centre, we support the need for good, water-sensitive urban design. This will manage the potential adverse impacts of runoff on the ecological health of the Molonglo River corridor and it will retain existing retention ponds and support healthy soil and canopy trees.

There are a lot of good recommendations in here, and I am delighted to see the planners considering them. I am disappointed that development of the Molonglo Valley commercial centre will be pushed back to at least 2023-24. We need good,

strong community engagement on these issues. But good project management is also key. That will ensure communities have access to the services they need.

We need a better way of building our suburbs than letting services lag behind. We really need to plan and consult on services earlier. I am really happy to see a commitment to release further information on this project, as requested by the Molonglo Community Group. Transparency builds trust and it gets better outcomes for the community and for Canberra. I look forward to exploring these issues as the planning review continues. The Greens are happy to support this amended motion.

MR HANSON (Murrumbidgee) (3.41): Firstly I thank Mrs Jones for bringing this important matter before the Assembly. It is very timely; we did not know about this delay until the budget. Mrs Jones had been advocating for this for a long time, and I commend her for that and all the other good work we have been working together on in Molonglo. There is no doubt that the Molonglo Valley residents deserve a better deal. I think the government see them as a cash cow through the land sales there and the rates that they squeeze people for. They are very happy to take the money from the residents, but they are not providing them with the infrastructure that they deserve. It is absolutely outrageous that people in Coombes do not even have local shops! And now the commercial centre is being delayed.

The only reason the bridge will happen, it seems, is that the feds came in and provided \$87 million and said, "You've got to do it or you're not going to get the money." That is the only reason this ACT Labor-Greens government is doing anything. The people of Molonglo Valley have every right to be very, very, disappointed not only with this delay but with the whole fiasco of planning that has occurred. Meanwhile they get squeezed for rates and they pay exorbitant amounts of money for their properties.

I am very disappointed with the amendment that has been put forward by Dr Paterson and the fact that the Greens are going to support it. It seems they are more interested in running interference for this government than they are in backing the people of Molonglo Valley. The weasel words we have heard are very disappointing. The members for Murrumbidgee, in particular, should be fighting for our residents, not running interference for this government and making weak excuses for it.

The delay is an extraordinarily disappointing decision both for the people of Molonglo Valley and for the residents of Weston Creek. Everybody knows that without this commercial centre Cooleman Court remains the go-to place. There was a capacity problem with parking and the use of the shops there before the Molonglo Valley had residents there. It is at a critical level. The fact that this will now be delayed will exacerbate that problem, and the government has not come up with a solution to that problem. The only solution was to accelerate the commercial centre, not to slow it down. So this is very disappointing.

I will go through what the Molonglo Valley Community Forum is saying about this. They have been passionate, strong, advocates and I commend them for the work they have been doing. This is from a public statement on their Facebook site:

Today the ACT Government broke a key commitment made at the 2020 ACT Election, by delaying the Molonglo Commercial Centre's first land release by a further 2 years.

This announcement, revealed in the 2021 ACT Budget papers, will mean that current and future residents of Molonglo will be forced to rely on the facilities at Cooleman Court for the foreseeable future, with the first set of shops at the Molonglo Commercial Centre now being unlikely to open before 2030.

The delay throws into doubt the timing of the following facilities planned for the Molonglo Commercial Centre and surrounds:

- Molonglo Police Station
- Molonglo Year 11-12 College
- Molonglo Library and Community Centre
- Molonglo Arts Centre
- Molonglo Supermarkets and Businesses

How do you feel about this delay? Let us know in the comments below.

I will read some of them, because this is what the community thinks about this outrageous delay that the Greens and the Labor Party have imposed on the people of Molonglo:

I think this is a bit of a lesson to the government that consultation on central infrastructure should occur early. It's a crime that the residents of MV have not had their community established with the same considerations as some new Gungahlin suburbs.

Another comment:

Why does this not surprise me? They promise - they don't deliver. It is ridiculous that so much land has been opened up for housing in the MV without adequate infrastructure to support it. Cooleman Court is unable to cope

Another comment:

Why do they keep building houses and apartments and selling more blocks of land to build if there is not going to be any infrastructure to support everyone!! Bluddy Barr government. Always have screwed priorities. Better reduce the rates for the residents of Molonglo! I won't be voting for Barr again.

Another one:

No surprise at all. Perhaps we need to rally for half price rates given the MV is missing half of our promised services

Another comment:

Maybe they need to stop building houses and apartments until they put more infrastructure into the area!

Another one:

10 years...no shops in Coombs and Wright but double tax rates...thank you Barr Government.

Another comment:

Did they ever keep any election commitments regarding MV in last 2 elections? What's new?

Another comment:

Now you know what its like to live in Woden! No community centre or Arts centre either

More comments:

Bugger. Some in MV also rely on services in Belconnen ...

Another:

continued ghettoisation of Molonglo

And so on. I will stop there, but there are many, many, comments on that Facebook site, and the residents of Molonglo Valley have every right to be deeply disappointed.

This is a broken election commitment. The government went to the election saying one thing and they are delivering another. That is a broken promise. It is a broken promise to the people of Molonglo, and they are going to suffer now for years without the facilities that they were promised by this mob here, the Labor Party and the Greens, who said one thing before an election—just as they said it about hospitals, just as they have said it about teachers, just as they have said it about a lot of other infrastructure programs. What is the reality? The reality is they are not delivering. So even if they say things today will that be true? All these commitments they make, are they going to be followed through? Will there be further delays? I really hope not.

I am frustrated. I know Mrs Jones is frustrated. I know the community in Weston Creek is frustrated, and I know that the community in Molonglo Valley—in Wright, Coombes, Denman Prospect, and the people coming into Whitlam—are going to be extraordinarily frustrated and disappointed.

I commend Mrs Jones for the work she has done in advocating for the people of Molonglo Valley. We will continue to work hard. We will continue to pressure this government. We want this decision reversed. Let me be very clear—this is a bad decision. This is a wrong decision. Mrs Jones and I will be campaigning for the next three years for this to be reversed. I hope that the members for Murrumbidgee who speaking today and have spoken stop running interference for this Labor-Greens government and start standing up for their community.

MS DAVIDSON (Murrumbidgee) (3.49): I support of the amendment moved by Dr Paterson. Like Ms Clay said, we believe in greater transparency and consultation.

I will speak for few moments about other community needs in addition to the Molonglo Valley group centre. I was sent survey results recently from the Molonglo Valley Community Forum that was conducted in July 2021. I found it very interesting to see the range of different things the community needs, and this is why community consultation is so important.

For example, 56.8 per cent of people said they need to see more sports facilities; 40.7 per cent said more recreational facilities; 39.5 per cent said a community activity centre, and I thank Minister Steel for the work he has been progressing to get community activity centres up and running in Molonglo as soon as possible. For emergency services facilities, 33.3 per cent; parks and playgrounds, 27.2 per cent; arts and cultural facilities, 27.2 per cent; health facilities, 17.3 per cent; and places of worship or religious facilities, 12.3 per cent.

If Molonglo Valley is not to become a dormitory district, then we must add to the Mount Stromlo cycling and running facilities with other services and facilities that will bring visitors into the Molonglo Valley from other parts of Canberra and create local employment opportunities. This includes education, health, sports and recreation, arts, and commercial spaces.

I also support Ms Clay's points about the need for good planning processes and for public transport and active travel connecting Molonglo Valley to the rest of the ACT as well as within the Molonglo Valley to create healthy, sustainable communities where everyone is able to engage safely and easily in public spaces. This is very important.

I also welcome greater consultation with the community as their district develops. The ACT government has some great examples of co-design and good consultation in recent years, including the family safety hubs, safe haven cafes and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suicide prevention, intervention, postvention and aftercare service.

Good co-design and consultation is exactly what we need when talking about building infrastructure because, as Ms Clay pointed out, it also builds trust. It builds on a foundation that we have a collective cause and that we are committed to this journey together. Trust comes from love and from kindness, and that is what we need for this government and community building a brighter future together. I support the amendment.

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Manager of Government Business, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Industrial Relations and Workplace Safety, Minister for Planning and Land Management and Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (3.51): I thank everybody for their contributions today, particularly for Dr Paterson's amendment to the motion. It gives us the opportunity to address this across the chamber. We want to ensure, of course, the best outcomes for Molonglo, and it has

been the Molonglo residents themselves that have asked for strong representation and strong opportunity to comment on the future of their group centre.

Group centres are not delivered automatically a certain number of years after a jurisdiction begins. I remember when I first moved to Higgins in 1969; it was not until 1976 before we saw—

Mrs Jones interjecting—

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Davis): Minister Gentleman, resume your seat. Mrs Jones, that was, like, eight interjections in the space of a minute. If we could hear Minister Gentleman in silence, please?

MR GENTLEMAN: In short, we want to make sure we hear all the comments from those people in Molonglo as we develop the group centre.

MRS JONES (Murrumbidgee) (3.53): That speech from Minister Gentleman was an insult. That speech of three paragraphs was a complete insult, and I note now he has left the room. He is embarrassed. He is completely ashamed of this decision to put off yet again the development of the community's commercial centre. I have written to Minister Gentleman for years asking when this commercial centre will come. I wrote to him for years asking when the bridge over the Molonglo would be built. And the answer never came until the federal government put money in. This government is very good at building new housing at exorbitant cost, charging people massive rates and not delivering to them the infrastructure they deserve.

Dr Paterson's amendment to my motion, this community-led motion, to remove inconvenient truths from it is another example of why this government has lost the plot when it comes to delivering services to new areas like the Molonglo Valley. I think the community is just about sick of Minister Gentleman's discussion about how when he was young, living somewhere else in the ACT, things took a long time to come as well. Well, I am glad that his view of planning in the ACT is that things never get any better! It has been 20 years of this system; there is nobody else to blame. It is this government's fault that people are paying massive rates and do not know when the commercial centre is coming.

The minister also made the point in his speech that he needs to consult. I foreshadowed entirely that the excuses that would be used for delaying this thing would be consultation and COVID. But COVID has only disrupted government processes for around three months and consultation is a normal part of government.

It must be very frustrating for Minister Davidson and for Dr Paterson, who I know are great proponents of consultation, that it has not happened yet. This thing has been in train in the department since 2006. Why has there not been any consultation yet? I understand neither of you were here, but I was and I was asking for it and it was not forthcoming.

The proposed new paragraph (1)(d) is a way of hiding the two-year delay which the new land release program confirms. Incidentally, that will tie in nicely with the next

election, when the government will be able to say, “We’re about to release blocks of land as we go into the next election.” I have seen it many times before. But the community wants action now.

Minister Davidson congratulated Minister Steel for getting a community centre! The reason there is not a community centre now is that it was unaffordable for the community because of the way the government had it built by the private sector. Maybe community centres need to be built by the government. Maybe that is why people pay exorbitant rates. Do not come in here and thank the minister for finally sorting out the complete stuff-up he has made in the development of this area!

Vitally, the amendment removes the accountability of the government nominating a start date for construction. We know what will happen. As Mr Hanson outlined—we have seen it time and again—the government will postpone and postpone until they are good and ready. If the community has to wait longer—I hope we can get this decision reversed—it had better be a bloody good shopping area!

Question put:

That the amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 15

Noes 8

Ms Berry	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.

Appropriation Bill 2021-2022

[Cognate bill:

Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2021-2022]

Debate resumed.

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Davis): I understand it is the wish of the Assembly to debate this bill cognately with Executive Business order of the day No 2—Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2021-2022.

That being the case, I remind members that in debating order of the day No 1, Executive Business, that they may also address their remarks to Executive Business order of the day No 2.

MS LEE (Kurrajong—Leader of the Opposition) (4.03): On 12 August 2021, life in Canberra changed and it changed within hours. When we first went into lockdown the Canberra Liberals stood side by side with this government. Our first priority was and remains the safety of all Canberrans. We respect and support the health advice that is keeping our community safe. On behalf of the Canberra Liberals, I again acknowledge and thank everyone on the front line, everyone who has and is working hard to make sure that Canberrans are getting through this pandemic.

We are now entering the ninth week of lockdown. This lockdown and the incursion of Delta have exposed, once again, Labor's and the Greens' arrogant and complacent governance of our territory over the last 20 years. Despite the efforts of the community and our hardworking frontline workers, the lockdown and its economic fallout will leave lasting consequences on families, on vulnerable Canberrans and on business. Sadly, many children are falling behind, many families are struggling under the poverty line and many businesses will never reopen.

The Treasurer on Wednesday attempted to sell his 10th budget as a "turbocharged economic recovery". After 20 years of consecutive Labor budgets, Canberrans will not be fooled. This is a bandaid budget. The Treasurer is right that this budget is a critical one for the future of our territory but, after 20 years in government, after 20 years of fiscal mismanagement, after 20 years of arrogance and complacency and after 20 years of skyrocketing taxes and cost-of-living pressures, this government has run out of ideas. The pandemic has brought to a head the glaring neglect by this government in health, education, housing and infrastructure.

Canberra deserves a world-class health system befitting of the nation's capital. And as one of the smallest yet highest taxing and highest income earning jurisdictions in the nation, we have the tools to create a world-class health system. There is no doubt that COVID-19 has put a strain on our health system, as it has on every health system around the world. But the most recent cash splash by this government to employ additional nurses is too little, too late. This is not a new investment. This is a government failing to deliver over half of its election commitment to hire more than 200 nurses. In the middle of a global pandemic and a COVID-19 outbreak in the ACT, this government has made almost no additional investments in our frontline health staff and infrastructure in health. Without the delivery infrastructure projects on time and on budget, our nurses and doctors cannot do their critically important jobs in keeping Canberrans safe.

This government was unable to manage the health system before the pandemic. Canberra has been plagued for years by the worst emergency department wait times in the nation. Our junior doctors face the nation's highest rates of bullying and pay uncertainty, and we have an overall decline in investment in our health system—all under this government. After 20 years, and now with a pandemic on our hands, Canberrans have no confidence that this government will be able to deliver on its

promises to improve our hospitals. Inadequate investment in our health system costs lives.

The Canberra Liberals have raised concerns about crumbling infrastructure and overcrowding in our schools for years, and this budget does nothing to address the serious concern of hazardous materials in our schools. This budget does nothing to address the serious concern of overcrowding in our schools, especially in the inner north. Instead, the bulk of the school infrastructure budget is to be spent on expanding Margaret Hendry School, a school that was opened just two years ago! This is a stunning admission of failure on the part of this government to properly plan for our growing school population.

The ACT Council of Social Service has raised concerns that the pandemic has exacerbated the poverty, the inequality and the disadvantage that already exist under this government. Earlier this week, I called for a full review of the targeted assistance strategy to make sure that the right support is going to those who need it.

The Canberra Liberals have fought for years for our public housing stock to be brought up to a livable standard. Unbelievably, this government has dismissed our calls to bring our public housing stock to meet the minimum safety standards. The pandemic and the forced lockdowns of some of our most vulnerable Canberrans in houses that are just not fit for quarantine has forced this government to commit \$80 million to maintenance. But we know that this is, once again, a bandaid fix, a catch-up, to try and patch up the shocking neglect of public housing stock under this government's watch.

We must provide hope and certainty for our businesses, who have faced a challenging 18 months, and many still face an uncertain future—businesses that cannot see what the next few weeks will look like for them, let alone next year.

The next 12 months will be an extremely crucial and challenging time for our community, and the decisions that this government makes over the next 12 months will determine how we recover from the biggest health and economic challenge we have ever faced. We are a strong, resilient community and I believe we can get our economy back on track with the right priorities and leadership.

First, we must back our local businesses, to boost confidence, innovation, skills and jobs through and beyond the pandemic. Unfortunately, there are Canberra businesses that will not survive this lockdown. When we lose these businesses, we do not just lose a business; we lose the spirit of entrepreneurship, of vision and of everything that represents the blood, sweat and tears that go into establishing every small and local business. We lose the heart and soul that goes into starting and growing every small and local business. Our businesses need support now. We need a plan to back our businesses, to support them through and beyond the pandemic.

The Canberra Liberals have been listening to our local business community, and I call on this ACT Labor-Greens government to back our businesses through this challenging time. We must show trust by giving all businesses the opportunity to create COVID-safe plans, which will allow them greater freedoms to recommence

their operations safely. The default answer to whether businesses can operate should be yes, unless it is clearly contrary to health advice. It should not be what we see now, which is a default no, unless the Chief Minister feels like saying yes.

We need consistency with how our COVID-safe restrictions are applied across different sectors, and we must have transparency as to why and how these restrictions are informed by the health advice. We must taper ACT government business support to ensure that we do not leave behind local businesses whilst restrictions are still in place and they are not able to trade in any meaningful way.

In the Chief Minister's own words, we are out of lockdown on 15 October, yet we know that many restrictions will remain, which will have a huge impact on many businesses. It is the Chief Minister who has mandated continuing restrictions, despite saying that the lockdown is lifting. He has a responsibility to ensure that Canberra businesses—our businesses—are not forgotten and left behind.

We must reduce red tape for business. This should be a constant priority for government, but, in the immediate recovery period, we must red tape and inefficiencies on what businesses need to do to get the support that they are entitled to and to access the rebates and delays to repayment that have already been announced. Laws, regulations, procedures and protocols should exist for safety and probity. If there is a form to fill out just for the sake of filling out a form, or if it is a duplicate, let us get rid of it. Let us give time and freedom back to our businesses so they can get back to doing what they do best. We must create a local skills and jobs strategy with industry to outline the key targets for skills and jobs growth across the ACT economy.

We know that when state and international borders open in the coming months there will be a significant skills shortage across our economy, especially in the hospitality and retail sectors—sectors hit the hardest by lockdowns and restrictions. With a local jobs and skills strategy we can address skills and workforce demands and shortages in key growth industries, including in tourism, in defence, in clean energy and in cybersecurity, and in the trades as we emerge out of lockdown.

Canberra, as the nation's capital, is and should be the home of the Australian Public Service. This does not mean that we cannot also diversify our jobs market to attract innovation, technology, skills and jobs that will make our city one where anyone can achieve anything. That future must start with a local skills and jobs strategy which should set out a clear plan to take us there.

We must review the tax agenda to remove barriers to innovation, investment and entrepreneurship. The impact of taxes on growth, innovation and creativity of business should be reviewed to give businesses the confidence and support that they need, to take risks and strengthen our economic recovery. The Canberra Liberals are ambitious for business. We value business, we trust business and we respect business. To all our local businesses that have felt forgotten, felt abandoned, felt left behind and felt unvalued, know that we have your back and we always will.

Let us get our children safely back to the classroom, with world-class facilities to deliver a world-class education. Many parents raised significant concerns about

hazardous materials in our schools before this outbreak and, since lockdown, their concerns have intensified. They are concerned that, when their children do return to the classroom, they will be in schools that do not have appropriate ventilation—schools that are not fit-for-purpose in this new COVID world.

We must fast-track these long-awaited upgrades to our ageing schools to create safer learning environments and to stimulate our building and construction industry. We must prioritise this critical infrastructure funding to create COVID-safe, world-class learning environments so that our teachers can deliver a world-class education. Our teachers, our students and our parents, who have dealt with the challenges of COVID so well, deserve a government that prioritises their safety, learning and wellbeing to bring out the best in every child.

We must equip our tradies with the tools they need to deliver on a strong and ambitious infrastructure plan by boosting skills and training. Our building and construction industry literally build our city. With every dollar spent generating a \$3 economic return, a robust and thriving building and construction industry is crucial to our economic recovery. Infrastructure investment not only provides critical jobs and economic stimulus; it also lays the foundation for a more livable, vibrant and productive city.

The Treasurer has trumpeted a once-in-a-generation infrastructure spend. We know that this government is first class when it comes to spin over substance. When it comes to delivering, its legacy of the underspending, of the broken promises and of the delays speaks for itself. Hyperbole and re-announcements do not turbocharge our economy. Glossy brochures and videos do not create more jobs or deliver support for businesses crying out for support right now.

A \$5 billion infrastructure spend over five years, at first blush, sounds great on paper. But when you start digging into the numbers, this figure has been misrepresented by adding in a fifth year to make it sound bigger and flashier. Last year's budget promised an infrastructure spend of \$4.3 billion over four years. This year's budget promises an infrastructure spend of \$4.48 billion over four years. The reality is that this is a 4.2 per cent increase, in real terms, on the infrastructure spend that was announced last year. Is a 4.2 per cent increase what the Treasurer calls a full-throttle economic recovery through infrastructure boost? Creating the illusion of action is no substitute for real action.

We must do more to support this industry. We must appropriately invest in training. The ACT government provides for the lowest training subsidies for construction and trades in the nation. Despite the federal government's expanded support for apprentices through its boosting apprenticeship commencements program announced just last month, this government has woefully fallen behind in showing our tradies and apprentices that they are valued and worth backing. This neglect has been intensified by the lockdown restrictions that have seen tradies unable to receive hands-on training—a double-blow to an industry that has been let down by this ACT government for too long.

We must work strategically with industry and the commonwealth government to boost local jobs and ensure that every project—small, medium and large—has real opportunities for Canberrans. The major infrastructure investment in our hospital is critical and it is beyond time for excuses and delays. We must have a plan to end infrastructure underspend and end failures to deliver. Instead of blaming industry for not being able to deliver on projects, we must work with industry to build for the future, not make excuses for why something has not or cannot be done.

The first step towards futureproofing infrastructure underspend, of course, is to provide a significant boost to skills and training. If we do not invest in skills now, we will not see a sustainable, beautiful city that we want to leave for our children. Let us maximise our potential as the knowledge capital and create a plan to safely bring back our international and interstate students. Canberra is the knowledge capital of Australia, but we can be the knowledge capital of the world. We boast some of the most amazing minds in the country, and our research capacity is second to none.

In my previous budget reply I spoke about our city's potential to be at the forefront of research in climate action and renewables, in cybersecurity and defence, and this still holds. Our universities have suffered significant blows with border closures, and we must have a plan to safely bring back international and interstate students. International education is the ACT's first billion-dollar export industry. International students have been a huge part of Canberra and its heart for a long time. Whilst their citizenship on paper belongs to a different country, for many, their hearts belong to us. Not only do our international students support the tertiary and vocational education sectors; they bring the richness of their culture, their language and their voice, making our city more vibrant, more dynamic, more livable. They also play a huge role in core skills in hospitality, retail, IT and the service industry, which make an enormous contribution to our economy.

We know that, once domestic borders start to open up, all Australian cities and institutions will be competing to attract bright young minds from around the country. We must be ready and competitive when that time comes. The next 12 months will be an incredibly challenging and important time for our city as we map our way out of this pandemic. Canberrans have already shown the depth of our courage and community in the way that we have responded to the extraordinary events over the past two years—from bushfires to smoke, from hail to a global pandemic.

The Canberra we want to see in the next 12 months is one that will be stronger, be more resilient and that has great hope for a brighter tomorrow. The Canberra of tomorrow that I want to see for my daughter and her generation is one where we have shown incredible heart to pull through the most tough times, where the decisions made by the leaders of today create opportunities for the Canberrans of tomorrow, where we are the city befitting of the nation's capital and the envy of every other city in the world. Laying the foundation to create this Canberra of tomorrow must start today.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong) (4.23): I rise to reply to the 2021-22 ACT budget tabled by the Treasurer and Chief Minister on Wednesday. As one of the two parties

that form the ACT government, we the Greens believe there is much to be proud of in this budget. The budget partially or fully delivers around 90 of our election commitments, with the effect of making the ACT a more caring, sustainable and equal place to live. Of course, budgets are not just about the economy, because economies are about societies. The decisions we make affect people and the planet—in other words, our overall wellbeing.

The Greens did not get everything we wanted in this budget, of course. In a multi-party government, no party ever does. Were this solely a Greens government or a Greens-led two-party government, the budget would look different than it does today. Nevertheless, I also know that the budget looks the way it does today because we are part of the government and both parties of government have much to be proud of in this budget—most of all, the consistent way it prioritises community wellbeing, not just in the short term, but with action to mitigate growing threats to our wellbeing, like climate change.

The Greens are grateful to the Canberra community for electing us into a position where we can shape and shift the ACT government to be more sustainable, more caring and more just. We are grateful to our partners in government, operating through the parliamentary and governing agreement, for working together to deliver our shared agenda and the individual agendas of ACT Labor and the ACT Greens.

We are making significant headway across all areas. We have been delivering our agreed program of work and providing stable, progressive government that looks after people today and invests in actions that will support our wellbeing decades into the future. We do not see the short-termism here that is so destructive to all Australians at the federal level. With the Greens making up a third of cabinet and another three MLAs on the crossbench, this is the greenest government in Australian history.

Green values are written all over this budget. They shine through in the budget's investments in our environment, in our invaluable community organisations and in ensuring we make a just transition to a zero emission society. Our ideas do not need to be routinely fought out through the media or by holding our Labor colleagues to ransom behind closed doors because, after 13 years of collaborative government, our parties understand and work to our shared values. In doing so, we are a government that truly represents our community.

A home for all might initially sound like an impossible proposal, but it is one that we took to the last election, because access to shelter is a fundamental human right. Every person should have a place to call home, and I would expect that Canberrans wholeheartedly agree with that proposition.

Climate action, once thought of as a Greens fringe issue, is now the name of a portfolio held by the Chief Minister. Climate change is increasingly at the forefront of economic thinking, healthcare planning, property and financial markets; and certainly, it was pulled to the forefront of all our minds when we suffocated through weeks of smoke and when a third of the land in this territory was burnt, most of it in a supposedly protected national park. We know now, of course, that whether it is Namadgi, Tasmanian rainforests or the Great Barrier Reef, you cannot draw a line

around a place and say it is protected. No place on earth is protected from climate change. I am proud that, with Greens in government, the ACT has been taking climate action for over a decade.

As a party, we called for emission reduction targets 25 years ago in this Assembly. After gaining the balance of power in 2008, we renewed our call for legislated targets. They were passed into law in 2010. Since then, in every budget, including this one, the government has allocated the resources to meet those targets and protect our community's wellbeing.

We are here for a second time this year putting forward a budget that responds to the times we live in, which are, as is well noted, most unusual times. We are confronting the expected challenges of climate change and the unexpected crisis of a pandemic. Both of these challenges call for a strong but clear-headed response from the government that not only takes decisive action but also works to keep the fabric of our community intact.

It will not surprise anyone here when I say that taking action to respond to climate change is a key motivator for all six Greens in this Assembly. Alongside that is our deep commitment to reducing inequality. This is the vision for a better normal that we took to the election and which we have worked so hard to achieve over the past year with our Labor colleagues through the parliamentary and governing agreement, both as ministers and on our crossbench. We believe that any response to major change requires us to work with the whole community and do our best to ensure a just transition from past ways to a new future. During times of crisis, such as the current pandemic, the gap between rich and poor grows. It grows wider, and those with the least are the most impacted.

As Greens, we base our policies on the evidence—what will work—and we take advice from the experts on how to achieve our vision. The COVID-19 pandemic has proven that in Australia we do have what is required to respond quickly when the need arises. In this case, we have made choices to roll out new vaccines and provide new lifesaving treatments. For a while, we chose to make child care free to unequivocally support flexible working, to stop demonising people who rely on government support and to lift those people above the poverty line.

This response, nationally and locally, proves that, while the future might have challenges, if we make the right choices we can rise up to meet them. This gives me hope that we can continue to build on our efforts to manage this health crisis, respond to climate change, protect our precious environment in this territory and do what it takes to stamp out inequality so that wellbeing is not reserved for some at the expense of others.

This pandemic is having a disproportionate effect on those who have low incomes, making the inequality gap even bigger. It is vital that we bear this in mind as we progress through the rest of this year and the immediate years to come. What we do now will make all the difference in the years ahead in terms of ensuring that people do not get left behind.

The work, income and health equity report released by the Australian Council of Social Service and the University of New South Wales just six weeks ago shows clear links between the lack of wealth and poor health outcomes. It shows that those in the highest income groups are more than twice as likely to be in good health compared to people in the lowest income group.

Many people on low incomes live in insecure, overcrowded housing or work in roles that cannot be carried out from home. As Professor de Leeuw says in that report, health inequities are not a given; they are a consequence of how our societies work. This budget demonstrates how a Greens influence can affect how our local society works, with many initiatives funded by Greens and other ministers to reduce inequality and address the underlying causes of poverty and disadvantage.

I would like to thank the whole community for their commitment to keeping us safe during the current lockdown. I applaud the high vaccination rates of our population because the evidence is clear that this is the best chance we have of keeping our good health. Alongside that, I am very proud of Canberrans who have understood how important it is to abide by the necessary restrictions the government has applied. I thank them for playing their part in keeping us all safe.

I would like to applaud the hard work of my colleagues in this Labor-Greens government during this pandemic, in particular the Minister for Health, Minister Stephen-Smith, and the Chief Minister for their daily grit and leadership.

I would also like to thank the many frontline staff, nurses, health workers, police, doctors, social workers, public servants, policy experts and non-government organisations who have worked long hours to assist with the management of this pandemic. It has been so heartening to see the number of volunteers involved in food deliveries, packing hampers and checking in on each other. It reflects the connectedness of our community and reminds me why Canberra is one of the best places to live in the world.

Nevertheless, this pandemic has shown us that there are many people in Canberra who need assistance to move out of poverty. Many of these people are trying to survive during this pandemic on the inadequate income support meted out in a miserly fashion by our commonwealth government, the same federal government who, during this second spike in the pandemic, has declined to use its resources, both financial and administrative, to assist those living below the poverty line. In fact, even during this most significant health crisis, the federal government is trying to undermine our gradual easing of COVID restrictions, in my view, by turning off the supports too soon.

The Canberra Liberals like to say that the government is letting people down. This budget shows how we are lifting people up. It is the Liberals at the federal level who have cut homelessness funding, left critical funding gaps in community legal centres, left gaps in the provision of services and supports to people with disability, underfunded domestic and family violence services, refused to invest in affordable housing and refused to change the tax settings that treat housing as a cash cow instead

of a human right, driving the affordability crisis Canberrans experience every day. ACTCOSS, in its cost-of-living report in August this year, had this to say:

Unemployment and household reliance on income support payments are the major drivers of income poverty in Australia.

ACTCOSS notes in its report that during the first outbreaks of COVID-19, during the period from April to September last year, the Australian government effectively doubled the rate of JobSeeker by introducing a coronavirus supplement of \$550 per fortnight. This saw the ACT's poverty rate drop from a pre-COVID 8.6 per cent to 5.2 per cent. This experience of brief respite for many of those on income support underscores the possibilities if our federal government chooses to assist. Now that JobSeeker has sunk well below the poverty level again, we are faced not only with worsening inequality but also worsening health outcomes in the midst of a pandemic.

It is the Liberals who keep Australians in poverty, with a poverty payment instead of a welfare payment. And it is the Liberals who refuse to take any meaningful action on climate change, who ignore renewables and pour government funds into propping up fossil fuels. It is also the ACT Liberals who keep preselecting Zed Seselja to represent them in the Senate, who uses his position to block restoring our territory rights, to fail to even turn up to the marriage equality vote and to stand in the way of action on climate change. I call on the Liberal opposition to get its own house in order and demand that its representatives deliver for the ACT before it criticises the work of this government to make up for those federal failures and look after people.

We understand that when we fund services to lift people out of poverty it is an investment in our whole community. For the first time in nine years, this budget lifts base funding for the specialist homeless sector. We have lifted it by 12.7 per cent. That is a better normal for these invaluable organisations and the Canberrans who rely on their services, and it is thanks to our first Greens Minister for Homelessness, Rebecca Vassarotti.

In addition to investing in homelessness supports, this budget's investment in affordable and social housing is the most significant in the history of self-government in the ACT. We took a bold vision to the election in our home for all package, calling for 400 new social housing and 600 new affordable rentals, and this budget sees us well on the way to achieving these goals.

We acknowledge this is still a work in progress and delivering this ambitious commitment will require both innovation and insights from our community partners to resolve the wicked problem of homelessness and housing affordability. Housing is a fundamental human right and our proposals, like build-to-rent, which are funded in this budget, will provide more affordable, long-term, stable rentals. The massive \$80 million investment in public housing maintenance will also ensure the ACT government is a responsible landlord, offering homes that are fit for all.

For years, local environment groups have been calling for long-term, secure funding instead of having to negotiate annual funding agreements with the government. In our first year of having a Greens environment minister, we have switched to four-year

funding agreements and we have increased the value of the ACT's environment grants for the first time in 15 years to more than \$300,000 per year.

Our Minister for Mental Health, who is also the minister for community recovery and emergency relief, Emma Davidson, has ensured that Canberrans doing it tough have additional supports during these tough times. She has overseen an increase of nine per cent in the total mental health budget. This means that there will be more than \$50 million over four years for a range of critical mental health services, including funding to support the newly established 10 additional mental health acute inpatient beds at Canberra Hospital. This important boost to mental health services is in addition to the recently announced COVID mental health response package to support the wellbeing of Canberrans during this pandemic.

Minister Davidson has fully delivered our commitment of more than \$2 million for culturally appropriate mental health suicide prevention, aftercare and postvention program for First Nations people. This initiative responds to the very real need to support this community through the difficult issues that arise with the prevalence of suicide.

A dedicated Coroner's Court, promised by the Greens during the election, included in the parliamentary and governing agreement and funded in this budget, will deliver a better normal in coronial proceedings to reduce the suffering that drawn-out coronial processes have caused some families in the past. This is part of the ACT Greens commitment to putting people first, and I am proud to have delivered it as Australia's first Greens Attorney-General.

I am delighted to mention that this budget includes funding of \$795,000 to develop and consult on raising the minimum age of criminal responsibility. We will be leading the nation in introducing this critically important legislative change to divert children away from a life of engagement with the criminal justice system. I hope that it will set an example for my colleagues in other jurisdictions.

As emissions reduction minister, I am proud that this budget delivers the nation's best incentives to make emissions-free vehicles the new normal, with two years free registration on electric vehicles and interest-free loans of up to \$15,000 coming soon. We were the only party that took a policy for electric vehicles to the election, and it is wonderful to have such enthusiastic support from our partners in government. That is just one of an ever-improving suite of climate change policies even now stretching into the detailed decision-making of government, with the introduction this year of the social cost of carbon.

Our crossbench have been hard at work this year too, representing their constituents in helping to deliver some of the achievements in this budget. Mr Davis, the member for Brindabella, supported this Assembly's efforts to deliver \$2 million in improvements to the Lake Tuggeranong foreshore, including a new playground and more tree canopy cover. Mr Braddock pushed for an investment in the Gungahlin community, and in this budget we see \$300,000 being allocated to explore with the community the feasibility of a Gungahlin community centre. Ms Clay, the member for Ginninderra, has been pursuing her passions for funding for artists, protecting vulnerable road users

and active travel, which is reflected in increased funding in arts and road safety in this budget.

There are so many other important initiatives in this budget and I look forward to discussing more of them during the detail stage. We are particularly pleased to see the planting of more trees to work towards a 30 per cent urban tree canopy by 2045, bringing biodiversity to suburbs and bringing down local temperatures in summer to ensure that our city is more resilient to climate change; the advancing of the ACT's circular economy and reducing potent methane emissions from landfill with a trial of food and organic waste recycling, known as FOGO, and scoping for permanent processing facilities; and making it affordable for everyone to switch from polluting fossil fuel gas to efficient electric appliances for their heating, cooking and hot water.

Interest-free loans are now available through the sustainable household scheme, and support for low income renters and owners will be offered through the vulnerable household energy support scheme, because we know it is low income households who can benefit the most from energy efficiency. We are investing in education through this budget to support the growing demand on ACT schools; ensuring schools are an appropriate temperature for students and staff with thermal comfort funding; delivering \$14 million to remove hazardous materials; employing more teacher-librarians; offering innovative curriculum options to meet the varied needs of ACT students; investing in mental health promotion and prevention by youth and social workers; and rolling out universal early education. I thank the Minister for Education for her passion for this important area of our city's needs.

Overall, the budget delivers or progresses around 90 commitments that the ACT Greens took to the last election, with real climate action, more and better housing and support for community sector and volunteer organisations that do an incredible job looking after local people and our local environment. This is only one year of an ambitious agenda that we intend to roll out during this Assembly. I am grateful for the hard work of both my Greens and Labor colleagues during these unusual times.

Of course, we have much more work to do to build climate resilience, support our community, provide a home for all and to work alongside our First Nations community to address past wrongs, but this budget is without a doubt a down payment on meeting these goals. I am proud to commend this budget to the Assembly.

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

Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2021-2022

Debate resumed.

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

Children and young people—mental health

MR PETTERSSON (Yerrabi) (4.44): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) the ongoing mental health crisis affecting young people;
- (b) the immediate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health of young people;
- (c) that in 2020, 34 percent of young people aged between 12 and 25 reported high or very high levels of psychological distress;
- (d) that there will be a significant minority who will be affected by long-term anxiety because of COVID-19;
- (e) the release of the Standing Committee on Education, Employment and Youth Affairs report on youth mental health in the ACT, tabled in August of 2020; and
- (f) the importance of taking immediate action to address this crisis;

(2) acknowledges the ACT Government's \$10.3 million commitment to addressing youth mental health in the 2021-22 Territory Budget including:

- (a) providing \$7.5 million in funding to youth mental health programs, including the Moderated Online Social Therapy program;
- (b) \$851 000 for Catholic Care's Youth and Wellbeing program; and
- (c) an additional 25 youth and social workers that will be employed in schools at a cost of \$7.4 million over the next four years to provide early intervention and support for students and their families;

(3) acknowledges the ACT Government's success in:

- (a) securing \$3.6 million in funding for the community and mental health COVID-19 support package including:
 - (i) \$90 000 to fund at home support for young people suffering moderate to severe mental illness; and
 - (ii) \$70 000 to fund additional mental health programs for schools, individuals and businesses in response to COVID-19; and
- (b) securing an additional \$2.3 million from the Commonwealth Government to boost existing crisis, mental health and wellbeing services; and

(4) calls on the ACT Government to:

- (a) work with the Commonwealth to ensure that the forthcoming National Agreement on Mental Health and Suicide Prevention will improve the outcomes for young Canberrans as we progress to a new COVID-normal life in the ACT;
- (b) develop a position statement on youth mental health recovery from COVID-19 within three months;
- (c) develop an ACT mental health workforce strategy within six months;
- (d) continue to support Mental Health Month in the ACT;
- (e) ensure funding for mental health support services for frontline workers; and

- (f) continue to fund youth mental health services appropriately and adequately, including ongoing commitment to delivering eating disorder programs.

I rise today to speak about the youth mental health crisis that we are currently experiencing. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on the mental health of young people across the world but also here in Canberra. It truly is a generation-defining experience. In normal times, young people would be at school with their friends, participating in the arts, sport and community activities. They would be applying for their first jobs, celebrating graduations and formals. They would be exploring their neighbourhoods, their cities and the world for the very first time.

However, COVID-19 has meant that, for many young people in Australia, these formative years have been spent in isolation and at home, and when they are outside their home they have kept away from people and must consider the possibility of an outbreak at any time. We do not yet fully know the long-term effects of this pandemic on young people's mental health, but we can predict that the mental health problems that have been sparked by the pandemic are likely to have long-term lingering effects.

Young people have disproportionately suffered the consequences of the ongoing pandemic. Missed education opportunities, loss of income, economic instability and immediate health concerns can create a spiral of negative feelings. Most young people who are employed are employed as casual workers, and many in hospitality, tourism, entertainment, the arts and the service industry have lost their jobs due to the insecure nature of their employment. Those who did not lose work were often frontline workers. I am nervous whenever I have to venture out of the house and go to the supermarket. I cannot even imagine the feelings of a teenager who has been assigned as the COVID-19 marshal of a large supermarket or the cashier of a busy takeaway cafe.

I have heard from lots of young people since the pandemic started. They have shared with me their stories, like the nerve-wracking work experiences I mentioned just before. But more often I hear stories from young people who feel uncertain about their future, and they are upset that they are not getting the normal experiences that we all remember from our youth. These anecdotes that I hear, that likely all of us are hearing, are supported by the statistics.

According to the 2020 headspace national youth mental health survey, 34 per cent of young people aged between 12 and 25 reported high or very high levels of psychological distress. Furthermore, 40 per cent of young Australians reported that they are not coping or dealing with life well. These are deeply troubling statistics. We, as legislators, have a responsibility to acknowledge this problem and take actions to fix it.

I do not qualify as a young person anymore, so I cannot speak directly to their experiences. However, I am closer in age than most in this place, so I feel somewhat aware of the challenges that young people face today that previous generations have not had to struggle with. That is why I am so proud to be part of a government that

takes mental health seriously. That is why the ACT government will continue to invest in youth mental health services.

I would like to acknowledge the ACT government's recent \$10.3 million commitment in the 2021-22 budget aimed at addressing youth mental health. Within this commitment, there is \$7.5 million going toward the MOST program. That is the Moderated Online Social Therapy program. The MOST program is the first of its kind and has proved extremely effective in offering care to young people by providing digital and online support.

This world-leading program is specifically designed to integrate with and address the key limitations of current youth mental health services. The program was designed with over 10 years of extensive consultation with young people to see how mental health services could better feel relevant to their daily lives. The MOST program has been tried and tested in Victoria as a response to their lockdowns and it has received positive reviews from young people who have been involved with the program. I for one am very glad to see the MOST program being supported and rolled out in the ACT as well. Innovative programs like this are more important than ever.

I would like to further acknowledge the ACT government's continued support of youth and social workers in the ACT school system. Over the next four years, an additional 25 youth and social workers will be employed in local schools to provide early intervention and support for students and their families. The specialist services and support these workers provide to students and their families are crucial to their wellbeing and development. Making these services available through our schools will make it easier for vulnerable young people and their families to get help when they need it.

I also acknowledge the ACT government's success in securing \$3.6 million in funding for the community and mental health COVID-19 support package. This package includes \$90,000 to fund at-home support for young people suffering moderate to severe mental illness and \$70,000 to fund additional mental health programs for schools, individuals and businesses in response to COVID-19. The ACT government has also secured an additional \$2.3 million from the commonwealth government to boost existing crisis, mental health and wellbeing services.

However, I always believe we can do more. That is why today I am calling on the ACT government to continue working with the commonwealth on the forthcoming national agreement on mental health and suicide prevention. Now more than ever it is important that state and territory governments, alongside the commonwealth government, work together in addressing this issue. The commonwealth has committed an historic \$2.3 billion to implement a national plan, and it is so vital that we work together to seize this momentum.

I am also calling on the government to develop a position statement on the youth mental health recovery from COVID-19. I think Canberrans need to know how we are planning to respond to the youth mental health crisis. The government has announced funding for lots of different services, but it is important that the community knows why we have, how they all work together and how we will know if they are working

or not. We need to continue to monitor the effects of the pandemic on young people and I think a position statement is a good way to encapsulate that.

I am also calling for the ACT government to develop an ACT mental health workforce strategy. I think all of us have heard stories about long wait times to access mental health services in the ACT. What I think it boils down to is that we do not have enough mental health workers. The most jarring stories are the ones where families call through a list of mental health service providers in the ACT and they struggle to find one with their books open. This then leads to the stories you hear about families travelling interstate to access mental health services. This must be so incredibly frustrating for families in crisis. But to compound the frustration, on the other side of the fence, I have heard stories from mental health workers that are overworked and underfunded with no reprieve in sight. They want to see more funding and they want to see more workers too. Tighter margins and the trend towards replacing ongoing long-term funding with short-term program-specific funding have resulted in increased workforce casualisation in the mental health sector, and I think that is a bad outcome for everyone. It is often then difficult for the sector to attract and retain staff but, in particular, the skilled staff who work the most complex of cases.

I think that an ACT mental health workforce strategy needs to be developed and implemented which covers both clinical mental health workers and the specialist psychosocial support workforce employed by the not-for-profit community mental health sector. This is important because the federal government's draft national mental health workforce strategy has a particular focus on the clinical workforce.

I know that the government has been working in different ways over the years to address the workforce shortage. To be very clear, it is not just an ACT shortage. But I know the sector and the community want a concrete plan for how the ACT is going to address this problem. We cannot help young people with their mental health if we do not have the work force to do it.

I take this opportunity to talk about Mental Health Month, because we are in October, and World Mental Health Day, which is fast approaching. They present an opportunity for all of us to talk about mental health. Approximately 45 per cent of Australians will experience issues with mental health in their lifetime. All of us will have friends and loved ones who have struggled with these issues before, and many of us will experience mental health issues ourselves at some point. As a society, we need to continue making efforts to reduce the stigma and discrimination associated with mental illness.

This year, the Mental Health Month theme for the ACT is "navigate your mental health". The 2021 theme will explore maintaining positive mental health, access to services, talking about mental health and how to support each other on this journey. Mental Health Month is a fantastic initiative and so timely this year. That is why today I am calling on the ACT government to continue supporting it and celebrating it.

Front-line workers have worked tirelessly throughout the pandemic to keep us safe, and often in very difficult and challenging circumstances. I think we all owe them an immense debt. Now more than ever it is essential that governments properly fund and

resource mental health support services for frontline workers. They have put themselves in danger every single shift to keep the rest of us safe.

I am also calling on the government more broadly to continue funding youth mental health services adequately and appropriately, including a renewed focus on eating disorder programs. In late 2020, after the initial lockdowns across the country, hospital data revealed a 25 to 50 per cent increase in young people presenting to hospital with eating disorders. Protracted lockdowns and uncertainty have triggered a wave of eating disorders for young people in this country. As a government, we need to ensure that we properly resource all mental health services but, in light of recent studies, I think we need a particular focus on eating disorder programs.

The past nearly two years have been hard on young people, and it has had a massive impact on their mental health. More than ever we need to recognise the unique challenges posed to youth mental health in these times. Although the pandemic has been tough for all us, I do not think it is controversial to say it has been particularly hard for young people. I am proud to be part of a government that is committed to supporting young people and properly supporting their mental health, and I look forward to seeing this important work continue.

MS DAVIDSON (Murrumbidgee—Assistant Minister for Seniors, Veterans, Families and Community Services, Minister for Disability, Minister for Justice Health and Minister for Mental Health) (4.56): I thank Mr Pettersson for bringing mental health to the attention of the Assembly with this motion, and I welcome the opportunity to talk about the importance of mental health in our community.

Young people have stepped up to support their community's wellbeing by staying at home during lockdown and getting vaccinated. Many young people have also volunteered in things like food relief or have been essential workers in retail and food services. Their commitment to their community and to all of us getting through this outbreak as safely and healthily as possible should be acknowledged.

In the ACT there has been an increase in younger people reporting mental health concerns and receiving mental health support, and this is expected to remain beyond the pandemic. As Mr Pettersson noted, for some of these young people, increased mental health issues will last in the long term. Research shows that this occurred with young people in Canberra following the 2003 bushfires and, while a pandemic is a different kind of natural disaster, it will have long-lasting impacts on mental wellbeing and community resilience.

During 2020 we saw a 34 per cent increase in psychological distress among 12- to 17-year-olds in the ACT. Recent ACT government YourSay survey results show that 43 per cent of 16- to 24-year-olds and 66 per cent of 25- to 34-year-olds rated their mental health as fair or poor. This reflects the fact that young people experienced greater loss of paid work as a result of the impacts on hospitality, retail and the arts, where so many young people work.

It is precisely for these reasons that the ACT government announced a nine per cent increase in the 2021-22 ACT budget to respond to mental health. This funding is in

addition to the delivery in September of a \$3.6 million community and mental health support package, including youth mental health, of which there was an additional \$200,000 specifically for eating disorders. As well, we secured an additional \$2.5 million from the commonwealth government, with a significant portion of this to be targeted at young people's mental health, including eating disorders, through Headspace.

As mental health minister, I have been proud to deliver these funding announcements over the last few weeks, and I thank my colleagues for agreeing to support mental health services amongst wider pressure on the health system. The ACT government has responded to both the physical and mental health needs of Canberrans during the pandemic.

The ACT government is working closely with the commonwealth and other states and territories to negotiate a national mental health and suicide prevention agreement. This agreement will play an important role in guiding the commitment, investment and development of mental health services across the country. It is intended that this agreement will be finalised towards the end of this year.

The ACT government is taking this opportunity to prioritise initiatives based on local needs and demand, with youth mental health and wellbeing as a key focus. The mental health workforce is a key issue within system planning, and we know that workforce strength and availability influences the mental health and wellbeing of our community.

The ACT government is working with the commonwealth and other jurisdictions to finalise the national mental health workforce strategy, which was recently the subject of a public consultation process. This strategy will be finalised before the end of the year. The ACT government will consider progressing a local strategy once the national strategy has been finalised, to ensure that priorities are aligned.

In addition to Mr Pettersson's recognition of the mental health of young people, I also welcome the focus on the mental health of frontline workers, who have been so important in delivering essential health and disability, transport, retail, cleaning and hospitality services to our community during lockdown.

The ACT government recognises that it is critical to support these people who have directly supported the Canberra community for so long. This includes through increased mental health support via funding for organisations directly assisting frontline and essential workers.

In the recent community and mental health support package, I was glad to announce funding for Mental Illness Education ACT, who have been running free online sessions for workers, including on managing and responding to stress and trauma awareness; OzHelp, who work with employers in building and construction to improve mental health and wellbeing in workers and apprentices; and Mental Health First Aid Australia, to deliver their online self-paced program to up to 72 business owners, managers or team leaders.

ACT government staff are all able to access psychological support through the Employee Assistance Program, which has continued to be a lifeline throughout the pandemic.

The mental health impact of the last two years is likely to have a long tail. We recognise that some people will continue to need extra support due to challenges over the past few years. That is why the ACT government has invested, across the forward estimates, in community-based mental health services.

Included in this commitment is our continued progress in delivering eating disorder supports in the ACT. The ACT government's Eating Disorders Specialist Clinical Hub provides a central point of care, resources and expertise to provide timely treatment for people with an eating disorder. Since opening in July 2021, this has helped respond to the waiting list for the eating disorder program in the ACT through two service initiatives, the short-term recovery intervention for disordered eating—STRIDE—program, and parenting groups. We are also working hard to progress the ACT Eating Disorders Residential Centre, in partnership with the commonwealth government.

It has been a tough two years. As a community, we have experienced the stress of the bushfires and smoke, followed by the COVID-19 pandemic that has upended our usual life. For young people, the pandemic has interrupted life at a time that is all about growth, new experiences, connecting with peers, thinking about the future and contemplating who we are in this world. The unknown and the unpredictable are a cause of significant stress, and it is important that there are supports out there that can help young people and their families.

That is why the ACT government has boosted funding to community and mental health services and increased community awareness about support options, including \$851,000 for CatholicCare's youth and wellbeing program to provide a multidisciplinary outreach service that supports young people aged 12 to 25 years living with mental health concerns; \$169,000 for Parentline, to provide more support for parents through phone referrals, counselling, face-to-face sessions and regular phone check-ins; and \$7.5 million for youth mental health programs, of which \$463,000 is for the MOST digital mental health program.

I also look forward to the launch of the Youth Navigation Portal on 19 October, providing online resources to help young people understand their mental health. Most importantly, the portal has a dedicated team of youth navigators who will work directly with a young person to help them find the right service.

Once again I thank Mr Pettersson for his motion regarding the mental health of young people in the ACT, and I wish all members of this place a kind, supportive and connected Mental Health Month.

MRS JONES (Murrumbidgee) (5.03): What a change a day makes for the Labor-Greens government. I thank Mr Pettersson for bringing forward this motion. Maintaining mental health is critically important during this ongoing COVID-19

pandemic. Young people especially are suffering as their school, social and career plans have been put on hold due to this once-in-a-hundred-year pandemic.

I know that in my house there is more stress, more grumpiness and more sore eyes from staring at screens. There is a total hatred of going for long walks. There is a genuine commitment to get into the takeaway shop. I know that my kids, who have each other even in a lockdown situation—they each have five siblings—are finding this really difficult.

What can I say to all of our young people? I can say that this pandemic will pass. Hold on to your dreams. Stay as connected as you can. Your lives will take many turns and have many seasons. There will be a day when you will look back on the COVID-19 pandemic as a detour in life's journey, not a roadblock. Stay strong.

The Canberra Liberals support the spirit of Mr Pettersson's motion. We recognise the need to expand the range of services available to support and maintain Canberrans', especially younger Canberrans', mental health, and especially at this time.

Wednesday's budget did foreshadow a modest boost in mental health services in the ACT, and we welcome that; but this is a space where more can be done. The constant conversations I have with people recovering from acute mental health conditions and their families leads me to believe that there are avoidable deaths and there is avoidable suffering in this city. I will work to improve this while I am here.

There is a small deficiency in the motion, however. With respect to thanking the ACT government for securing \$3.6 million in additional funding, I agree with that. The motion does not really thank deeply the federal government. Let me say on behalf of this Assembly and the people of Canberra: thank you, Minister Hunt and Assistant Minister Coleman, for the \$2.5 million in additional commonwealth funding that you provided to the ACT on 21 September, 2021. It might assist the Assembly if Minister Hunt's media release was tabled. I seek the Assembly's permission to table the media release from the commonwealth ministers who have supplied the ACT with this significant funding.

Leave granted.

MRS JONES: I present the following paper:

COVID-19 mental health boost for the ACT—Joint media release—Federal Minister for Health and Aged Care, Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention, and Minister for International Development and the Pacific Senator for the ACT, dated 21 September 2021.

We hear you all being criticised in this chamber, but there is a great deal of interest in the year-on-year investment that the federal government makes here. Whilst our team here in the Canberra Liberals have our own minds, we are from the family of the Liberals, and we are thankful for this support.

Another particular aspect of Mr Pettersson's motion that directly contradicts Minister Stephen-Smith's amendment to my motion yesterday regarding the state of the ACT health system is that yesterday I called on the Assembly to require from the government a workforce plan for the whole of ACT Health.

For reasons totally unknown—or, I suspect, reasons that the minister knows but does not wish to disclose—she moved an amendment to my motion to remove my direct call on the ACT government to develop a health workforce plan. My motion sought to “develop and implement a comprehensive health workforce strategy to establish a pipeline of highly skilled healthcare professionals to serve the ACT in the decades to come”. This, of course, includes mental health. I am so glad to see that Mr Pettersson and I are on a unity ticket on this concept.

It is totally unclear why there was no merit yesterday in a holistic workforce strategy covering thousands of doctors, nurses, allied health workers and so on, including those in mental health, for the years to come, but today there is merit in a mental health workforce strategy being developed within six months.

Mr Pettersson: You're not as persuasive as I am.

MRS JONES: Maybe I do not have the right jersey on, Mr Pettersson. This is just another example of how one half of the coalition of Labor and the Greens—the CLAG, as it was referred to by our friend Mr Parton—has no idea what the other half of the CLAG is doing. It is another example of one minister not coordinating with another minister or, perhaps, the health minister not being willing to undertake a sensible planning job that the mental health minister is willing to undertake. What is most important, though, is that this workforce strategy will be done, at least in mental health, as soon as possible, and it will show the Minister for Health what can be done.

The Canberra Liberals will be supporting this motion. Before we do, I would like to repeat my call for our young people to stay strong. Canberra is a wonderful city that brings amazing opportunities. The time for study, adventure and travel is coming soon. Reach out if you need help and, again, stay strong. You have so much ability and drive inside you. I am here to back you up, and the Canberra Liberals are here to back you up. We will be supporting Mr Pettersson's motion.

On a final note, I note that the motion talks about eating disorders. I have been aware for many years that we have had a deficiency in eating disorder services in Canberra. I stood with some young women 10 years ago in Woden town square asking for support for this. I know that the federal government committed some money at the last federal election. I know that Dr Paterson said that it has never materialised, but I believe it has.

I know that there is additional money now for eating disorders—another \$400,000 for services as well. I would not mind if there was a complete update for the Assembly of where exactly we are up to on eating disorders at some stage very soon.

MR DAVIS (Brindabella) (5.10): I would like to speak to Mr Pettersson's motion in my capacity as the ACT Greens spokesperson for young people and as this Assembly's youngest member. Young people are active members of our society. Their experiences, voices, concerns and needs require strong representation in this place. I thank Mr Pettersson for this motion and I thank Minister Davidson for her significant advocacy and tenacity in her work to secure so much more funding and so much more work in the youth mental health space. It speaks to the credit that the ACT Labor Party gives to the ACT Greens that the mantle of mental health minister was handed from one Greens minister to another. This is at the core of the work that we do in this place.

Young people have been on the front lines of this pandemic. The September 2021 YourSay panel survey suggested that the self-rated mental health of the community had again fallen, with more than four in 10 Canberrans rating their mental health as fair or poor. This result is more pronounced for younger Canberrans.

Working in retail, hospitality or the gig economy—all industries I have been proud to work in over the last decade, before my election to this place—young people in our service industries have continued to work hard to keep businesses running, people fed, packages sent and their loved ones cared for.

Unsurprisingly, because young people work in these industries, young people have also been disproportionately impacted by lockdowns, facing job losses and cuts in their hours. These losses are compounded for young people, most of whom do not have savings, and many of whom live in unstable accommodation arrangements. A young person cannot draw down the equity of their mortgage and take advantage of rising house prices. In fact, it is young people who stand to lose most in the face of that changing housing market.

According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, in May 2020 just over one in four, or 28 per cent, of young people aged 18 to 24 reported not being able to pay their rent or their mortgage on time in the previous three months. This compares with 15 per cent of Australians aged 18 and over. COVID-19 has, if nothing else, shown us that the federal government have the means to bring an end to poverty. It has shown us that they possess the mechanisms to create a fairer and more just world for everybody.

As we discussed earlier this week, we anticipate that the federal government's cutting of all COVID-19 financial hardship payments in just a few weeks time will have a profound effect on young people. I will take this opportunity to let young people in our community know that there are services and supports for them, including food vouchers. While the Morrison government leaves you behind, my office and my phone number are always available to you.

Ending pandemic financial supports will disproportionately affect young people nationwide and here in the ACT. We have already seen how this botched COVID-19 response from the federal government has disproportionately affected young people. The slow vaccine rollout has rendered young people fearful of getting COVID-19 in

the most recent wave. When Sydney's outbreak began, young people were told to "go out and get the jab" when there was no jab for them to get. Endemic cuts to the university sector and increasing casualisation of the workforce by the federal government have made job prospects for young people bleak as well.

Despite these huge challenges, unemployed young people have stood in solidarity with the rest of the community—staying at home, keeping their distance, wearing their masks and, now that they can, getting vaccinated. Young people have missed school, TAFE and university. Ensuring the safety of our youngest ones as they return to school is of the utmost importance, too.

There is no doubt that young people are facing a major existential crisis. The pandemic is highlighting intergenerational inequality and providing insight into the instability we will face as a result of a changing climate. The Australian Psychological Association recognises that climate change is the greatest health threat of the 21st century and has significant impacts on physical and mental health and psychosocial wellbeing. Research shows us that being involved in activism, organising and advocacy are protective factors against the mental health impacts of oppression, marginalisation and the social impacts of climate change.

I am extremely proud that earlier this year my motion was passed that supported young people's access to democracy—specifically, their right to protest—and the involvement of the Legislative Assembly in the education of students in parliamentary democracy. I am proud to be a member of a party that has consistently advocated for the rights of young people to be involved in politics and the political process since our first term in this Assembly, including expanding the right to vote. My colleagues and I are continuing to work on this important policy, and I look forward to further discussions and reform in this space.

The major existential and life challenges I have just discussed take a significant toll on the mental health and wellbeing of young people. Many life trajectories are strongly influenced by adolescence and young adulthood. Understanding the impact of the pandemic on young people's wellbeing will be important long into the future. Anne Hollonds, the National Children's Commissioner, has recently called for a national COVID recovery plan for children, and I encourage my colleagues to think about how the ACT government can centre children and young people in our recovery effort.

I was really pleased to read about the wellbeing approach that this government has taken to the budget and that the much-anticipated wellbeing indicators are beginning to be introduced in the budget this year. The 2021-22 budget includes an additional \$57 million for mental health and community healthcare supports, including, specifically, \$7.5 million to deliver a phased implementation of integrated face-to-face and digital mental health care for young people through an online platform delivered through the Moderated Online Social Therapy, or MOST, program developed by Orygen, a not-for-profit youth mental health advocacy and research institute run by former Australian of the Year Professor Patrick McGorry. This budget also supports CatholicCare's youth and wellbeing program to provide a

multidisciplinary outreach service that supports young people aged 12 to 25 who are living with mental health concerns.

Outside the mental health portfolio, the wellbeing and mental health of young people have been considered throughout the pandemic, including in the education portfolio, with another \$7 million in funding for youth and social workers to be based in ACT government schools.

I notice, too, that the new CIT at Woden will include an on-campus, multi-bed youth foyer that will also provide integrated learning, accommodation and support for young people who are committed to their education and training but are at risk of homelessness. Similarly, I was thrilled to learn that the Safe and Connected Youth Program, helping young people at risk of homelessness, has received operational funding, as well as an injection of capital funding for the building of a purpose-built residential facility. All credit and congratulations must lie at the feet of the Youth Coalition of the ACT for their considered advocacy for this program, as well as Northside Community Service, Woden Community Service and the Conflict Resolution Service.

Madam Speaker, people like you and I are very lucky. During this COVID-19 pandemic we have had the money and the resources to be able to work from home without concern about whether we will come into contact with the virus. All the while, brilliant young people in the ACT in low-paid, hard-to-do jobs have been really picking up the slack in this economy and in this community to keep Canberra strong.

I would like to give a shout out to all of these young people that are keeping our city moving. The 15-year-old working at a Macca's drive-through: I see you. The first-year nurse who did not know, upon graduating, that they would be part of the government's response to a global pandemic: I see you. The young people of this city are an inspiration. I am proud to be one; I am proud to work with them; I am proud to represent them and advocate for them in this place.

MRS KIKKERT (Ginninderra) (5.18): I thank Mr Pettersson for moving this very important motion. During the last Assembly, I served on a committee that undertook an inquiry into youth mental health in the ACT. Our final report made 66 recommendations, some of which are reflected in this motion today.

There is no doubt that there is an ongoing mental health crisis affecting young people, and the COVID-19 pandemic has worsened this crisis in many ways. Each extension of lockdown has increased anxiety and stress for many youth. Three weeks ago, when year 12 students were told by Ms Berry that they would be returning to school for the beginning of term 4, there was widespread rejoicing. Sadly, this assurance proved to be misleading, with only some year 12 students returning to school this week and next for a very limited number of activities. Students not included in those activities are still waiting.

Young people deal well with clearly explained expectations, but they do not deal well with having their expectations raised and then dashed, as happened for many of Canberra's year 12 students this week. This situation will only add to the mental

health burdens that many of our young people are already carrying. These are young adults, many of whom are already 18. The minister for education should have been straight with them from the very beginning.

In our current environment, they should be careful not to play with young people's emotions when making statements about education and going back to school to learn, to socialise and to grow. Young people are intelligent, they are resilient, they are capable of dealing with reality and they deserve our respect.

MR PETTERSSON (Yerrabi) (5.20), in reply: I want to thank all members for their contributions. I think they were all important in their own distinct ways. I thank all members for their support.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Adjournment

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

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Ginninderra electorate—community engagement

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (5.20): When lockdown started, I started to wonder how I could keep up my Ginninderra constituency work. I have always said that my first priority is to be an effective local member, and it was what I kept as a priority when the lockdown was announced. I have had the pleasure of meeting and reconnecting with a broad spectrum of Ginninderra residents during lockdown. Briefly, I would like to speak about a few of these connections.

In particular, I spent hours on the phone checking on residents in Ginninderra to see how they were coping with the lockdown and whether I could in any way support and assist them. I will be continuing to do this over the next few weeks. I connected with people on issues like fixing their street, their local park and their local shops. I discussed policy. I have heard a broad spectrum of views on a broad spectrum of issues. Some calls were a minute in length; some were half an hour. Most commonly, though, I just listened to what was happening that week or month, and how the lockdown was affecting them.

I heard everything from those in a fortunate position of just plodding along, doing gardening, working from home and doing okay, to virtual learning being difficult and real anxiety about the recovery of their business. Common experiences included loss of ability to visit family and friends, travel restrictions, schooling challenges, forced work from home, and developing a general and heightened appreciation of just plain, personal human interaction.

It is important that local members be engaged with their communities. It is what is expected from us, and it is the very least that we should be doing. I have developed

many insights into the needs and requirements of my local community by keeping in touch.

I also had the chance to do some volunteering work, in particular with Roundabout Canberra. After meeting with CEO Jeanette Dyer, I was able to assist them with sorting out cleaning and sorting through a package of donated clothing. Roundabout Canberra do an enormous amount of work helping to provide clothes and other goods, such as car seats and prams, to families and expectant parents. I am immensely proud that the Roundabout operation is based in Ginninderra, and I look forward to visiting their operation in Holt once lockdown is over.

While I have been able to go on walks around my local suburb, mostly to the local Evatt shops, I cannot wait to get back out more broadly in the community, meeting with the local community groups about planning issues, environmental issues and community organisation activities. Changing to a new MO has been a challenge for me, but I still consider myself to be in the fortunate position of being able to contribute in some way, even while working from home. I encourage any business or individuals in Ginninderra to continue to reach out to me as we start to enter the COVID recovery period.

National Mental Health Month

MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi) (5.24): Today I rise in celebration of Mental Health Month. National Mental Health Month is an initiative of the Mental Health Foundation Australia, who advocate for and raise awareness of Australians' mental health. It is an important time, when the Australian community comes together to raise awareness and promote better mental health for all.

This is a particular passion of mine because I have depression. I am one of those one in seven Australians who have experienced depression in their lifetime. The importance of physical activity, interpersonal engagement and getting outdoors to maintain good mental health is well known to me.

That is why I want to bring to the attention of all the National Walk for Mental Health on 17 October. This is a perfect opportunity to come together to raise awareness of such an important cause. I will be at Yerrabi Pond on Sunday with the Mental Health Foundation Australia, and I would love to have as many people as possible join us—chatting, enjoying being outside, out of lockdown, and taking in the sights of Yerrabi Pond.

Such events raise much-needed awareness of mental health and help to break down the considerable stigma that surrounds it. It does this in a positive and all-inclusive way. This year it is more necessary than ever before to help Australians to think about their mental health, considering the impacts of COVID-19, and to help rebuild the lives of Australians that have been greatly affected during this pandemic.

For my colleagues who thought I had gone for an entire sitting week without once mentioning Yerrabi Pond, I am happy to say that that is just not possible.

Housing ACT—maintenance

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (5.26): I have been the shadow minister for housing for a number of years, and it is a great privilege to undertake that job. Much of the important work that I have done in this space to date has been around pressuring the minister to fulfil basic maintenance requests in a timely manner. Additionally, we have moved motions in this place calling upon the government to lift its game in the maintenance space, and we have tabled petitions signed by hundreds of Canberrans looking for a similar outcome.

On most occasions the Labor-Greens government have assured us that there is no problem and asked us to look away. But I was most pleased when the government finally admitted failure in this space by allocating an additional \$80 million over three years in this week's budget to go towards housing maintenance. We celebrated that. We live in the hope that things may change. Given the minister's pathetic response to my supplementary question in the chamber today on housing maintenance, perhaps the celebrations were a little too early.

This issue that I want to bring to the attention of all of my friends here in the chamber this afternoon also leads me to believe that we have a long way to go. I was urgently contacted earlier in the month by a tenant living in Richardson who has had no hot water for two weeks. To get to this point in the home, I have been advised of the following information. The tenant was walking through their home two weeks ago and noticed an area of the floor was feeling quite hot. At the same time they noticed a hissing noise coming from under the floor in what could only be through the pipes. The hot water started intermittently not working.

The tenant called the program to raise a work order. A contractor came out to inspect and advised that the hot-water pipes were leaking and someone would come back. They did not. A few days later, the tenant advised that the hot water was not working at all, and that water had started flooding into three rooms of the house, causing wet carpet and water pooling behind the fridge, and the area of the floor that was previously hot was becoming hotter. They called again. Another contractor came out, stated that the hot-water heater needed repairing or replacing and that someone would be back on Wednesday, 6 October to do this. Once again, no-one came. For this family it is now going on for two weeks with no hot water.

We have, of course, alerted the minister to this. I think it is a highly disgraceful situation. No-one should have to go for more than half a day without access to hot water in their home. They are boiling the kettle to warm up water to bathe their young child. There are now holes in the walls caused by the contractor, a growing amount of water pooling in the home, wet carpet, and the flooring continues to be hot.

According to the tenancy agreement, this falls into the urgent repair category, to be fixed within four hours. Again, we note that in the budget released this week there was \$80 million for repairs and maintenance, so surely tenants should not be kept waiting. Even prior to that announcement, there is no way that a tenant should have

been waiting for two weeks for this. It is absolutely outrageous. I wanted to table the matter here, in addition to my correspondence with the minister earlier in the week.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 5.30 pm until Tuesday, 9 November 2021 at 10 am.

Answers to questions

Housing ACT—energy efficiency (Question No 368)

Mr Cain asked the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development, upon notice, on 6 August 2021:

Of the stock of housing managed by Housing ACT, can the minister advise the (a) number of dwellings under management by Housing ACT, excluding social and community housing, (b) average energy efficiency rating of dwellings and (c) number of dwellings with (i) rooftop solar panels, (ii) a household battery storage system, (iii) with a gas connection, (iv) a gas-powered water heater, (v) a heat pump water heater, (vi) gas-powered heating and (vii) electric-powered heating.

Ms Berry: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

Of the stock of housing managed by Housing ACT, can the minister advise; the

- (a) The number of dwellings under management by Housing ACT, excluding social and community housing,

As of 30 June 2021, Housing ACT provided tenancy services to 10,853 public housing properties.

- (b) average energy efficiency rating of dwellings; and

Housing ACT does not have an average energy efficiency rating of the dwellings within the portfolio as there is currently no agreed upon tool for measuring energy efficiency in existing dwellings. The ACT Government is currently undertaking work to address this.

- (c) number of dwellings with (i) rooftop solar panels, (ii) a household battery storage system, (iii) with a gas connection, (iv) a gas-powered water heater, (v) a heat pump water heater, (vi) gas-powered heating and (vii) electric-powered heating.

Housing ACT is unable to provide an accurate report on any of the above, as we currently do not have a complete dataset of the number of dwellings with the above connections or appliances. The collection of this data across the Housing ACT portfolio, will predominantly be captured through the Property Condition Assessments (PCAs) currently being undertaken by the Total Facilities Manager, Programmed Facility Management.

Housing ACT—properties (Question No 380)

Mr Parton asked the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development, upon notice, on 6 August 2021:

- (1) How many properties did Housing ACT have in the categories of (a) three, (b) four, (c) five and (d) six bedroom public housing properties, on (i) 1 July 2018, (ii) 1 July 2019, (iii) 1 July 2020 and (iv) 1 July 2021.

- (2) How many properties did Housing ACT sell in each category referred to in part (1) during the financial years of (a) 2018-19, (b) 2019-20, (c) 2020-21 and (d) 2021-22 to date.
- (3) How many properties did Housing ACT demolish in each category referred to in part (1) during the financial years of (a) 2018-19, (b) 2019-20, (c) 2020-21 and (d) 2021-22 to date.
- (4) How many properties did Housing ACT acquire in each category referred to in part (1) during the financial years of (a) 2018-19, (b) 2019-20, (c) 2020-21 and (d) 2021-22 to date.
- (5) How many properties did Housing ACT build in each category referred to in part (1) during the financial years of (a) 2018-19, (b) 2019-20, (c) 2020-21 and (d) 2021-22 to date.
- (6) How many properties did Housing ACT have in each category referred to in part (1) on (a) 30 June 2018, (b) 30 June 2019, (c) 30 June 2020 and (d) 30 June 2021.

Ms Berry: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

(1)

Housing ACT Properties	1 July 2018	1 July 2019	1 July 2020	1 July 2021
3 bedroom	4,756	4,715	4,641	4,498
4 bedroom	892	897	905	920
5 bedroom	187	196	209	211
6 bedroom	41	41	43	46

(2)

Housing ACT Properties Sold	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22 to 31 July
3 bedroom	52	58	117	10
4 bedroom	1	4	9	1
5 bedroom	0	1	4	1
6 bedroom	0	0	0	0

An additional 25 three-bedroom properties were transferred in 2018-19 from Housing ACT to the Public Housing Renewal Taskforce for disposal as part of the *Public Housing Renewal Program 2014-2019*.

(3)

Housing ACT Properties Demolished	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22 to 31 July
3 bedroom	13	37	66	0
4 bedroom	1	5	9	1

5 bedroom	1	0	2	1
6 bedroom	1	0	0	0

(4)

Housing ACT Properties Acquired	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22 to 31 July
3 bedroom	10	7	26	0
4 bedroom	2	9	10	0
5 bedroom	5	11	1	1
6 bedroom	0	0	0	0

(5)

Housing ACT Properties Constructed	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22 to 31 July
3 bedroom	39	14	14	1
4 bedroom	5	8	23	0
5 bedroom	5	3	7	0
6 bedroom	1	2	3	0

(6)

Housing ACT Properties	30 June 2018	30 June 2019	30 June 2020	30 June 2021
3 bedroom	4,756	4,715	4,641	4,498
4 bedroom	892	897	905	920
5 bedroom	187	196	209	211
6 bedroom	41	41	43	46

Public housing—maintenance (Question No 381)

Mr Parton asked the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development, upon notice, on 6 August 2021:

- (1) In relation to total work orders raised for public housing maintenance in (a) 2018-19, (b) 2019-20 and (c) 2020-21, for each month in each of these years, what were the number of work orders assigned to the categories of (i) Response Code Category U4 – Urgent Repairs, (ii) Response Code PND – Priority Next Day Repairs, (iii) Response Code D5 – Repairs within 5, (iv) calendar days and (v) Response Code D20 – Repairs within 20 calendar days.

- (2) What were the number of work orders (a) completed within each Response Code timeframes, (b) completed outside each of the Response Code timeframes and (c) never completed, for each year and category referred to in part in (1), and for each month.
- (3) What were the reasons for non-completion of work orders within each Response Code category.
- (4) What was the total number of maintenance calls received each year by Programmed for (a) 2018-19, (b) 2019-20 and (c) 2020-21.
- (5) How many calls were converted into work orders, for each year's total referred to in part (4).
- (6) What happened to those calls that were not translated into work orders.
- (7) How many breaches have occurred due to failure in meeting Response Code timeframes, since inception of the contract with Programmed Facility Management.
- (8) What financial or other penalties were incurred or imposed as a result of the breaches referred to in part (7).

Ms Berry: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

To provide information back to 2018-19 and break down month by month would require a significant diversion of resources. The following Information is provided for the 2020-2021 financial year.

- 1) A total of 37,262 Responsive Work Orders were raised for the 2020-21 financial year. The breakdown for each category is:
 - (i) U4 – Urgent Repairs – 10,038
 - (ii) PND – Priority Next Day Repairs – 4,071
 - (iii) D5 – Repairs within 5 calendar days – 7,066
 - (iv) D20 – Repairs within 20 calendar days – 16,087
- 2)
 - a) U4 – Urgent Repairs – 96% were completed on time.
PND – Priority Next Day Repairs – 95% were completed on time.
D5 – Repairs within 5 calendar days - 94% were completed on time.
D20 – Repairs within 20 calendar days – 94% were completed on time.
 - b) U4 – Urgent Repairs – 4% were not completed on time.
PND – Priority Next Day Repairs – 5% were not completed on time.
D5 – Repairs within 5 calendar days - 6% were not completed on time.
D20 – Repairs within 20 calendar days – 6% were not completed on time.
 - c) Programmed had approximately 10,000 work orders in cancelled status within the 2020-21 financial year for various reasons, with a number of them listed in part (3).
- 3) There are multiple reasons for a work order not being completed within the time frame – access or contact issues, tenant calling to cancel works, no fault found or repairs already completed, longer time frames required due to availability of parts or materials or contractors completing on site works and updating work orders in the system at a later time (to name a few).

- 4) A total of 69,528 calls were received by the Programmed Maintenance Call Centre during the 2020-21 financial year. However, not all calls were to raise maintenance requests. Out of 69,528 calls received, 37,262 work orders were raised.
- 5) The Programmed Maintenance Call Centre is a central point for communication; it is used for a range of reasons, one of which is for a tenant to raise a work order. Programmed do not measure a conversion rate of call to work order ratio, however, in the 2020-2021 financial year, as mentioned above, out of the 69,528 calls received by the call centre, 37,262 work orders were raised. Of note, not all works are always completed on one work order, due to additional works that may be identified and raised separately.
- 6) As per answer to part (5), this is not measured. The Programmed Maintenance Call Centre receive a wide variety of calls, which could be for several different reasons outside of raising maintenance requests. Examples include; to raise a request for a Property Condition Assessment, caller wanting to talk to the Planned Works or Fencing Team or Work Supervisor, reporting common area issues, or calling to lodge a complaint.
- Calls received seeking a work order are assessed and works raised if within scope for a responsive repair (e.g., broken window or leaking tap). If no work will eventuate from the call, it is explained to the caller why works cannot be raised. This would generally be as the request is outside the scope of what is covered by the Total Facilities Management Contract and Programmed have assessed the work is not required. An example of this would be a tenant calling to request a repaint of the property, however, the paint at the property is at a reasonable standard according to the Property Condition Assessment.
- 7) Please refer to (8).
- 8) To answer part (7) and (8), Housing ACT set a Key Performance Indicator standard (ranges based on response type) and Programmed report on performance against these as outlined in the contract. Assessment of financial penalties are done based on the overall performance under the contract, in line with the performance management system and the balance scorecard. Information relating to financial penalties applied is commercial in confidence and would not be released.

Women—grants (Question No 395)

Mrs Kikkert asked the Minister for Women, upon notice, on 6 August 2021:

How many women's return to work grants have been issued to released detainees for the financial years of (a) 2018-2019, (b) 2019-2020 and (c) 2020-2021.

Ms Berry: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

(a) and (b): Information on Return to Work clients' incarceration history was not collected as part of the Return to Work Grants program in 2018-2019 and 2019-2020.

(c) Information on Return to Work clients' incarceration history was not collected as part of the Return to Work Grants program in 2020-2021, however in 2020-2021, a pilot Return to Work grants program was delivered to women currently incarcerated at the Alexander Maconochie Centre (AMC) to support transition to further work and study once released.

Two women received the Return to Work grant under this program, following their release. The usual requirements for the grant were waived and the maximum grant amount was increased from \$1,000 to \$2,000 in recognition of the additional challenges female detainees often face in obtaining work, and the role of employment in preventing recidivism.

Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders—'We don't shoot our wounded...' report (Question No 410)

Mrs Kikkert asked the Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, upon notice, on 6 August 2021:

The 'We Don't Shoot Our Wounded' report from 2009 makes twelve recommendations for the ACT Government to implement and given the government has been engaging with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body Reference Group (the Reference Group) to develop specific action plans in response to these recommendations and has received priority recommendations from the Reference Group, can the Minister list the priority recommendations and the status and content of any specific action plans for each of these recommendations.

Ms Berry: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

In October 2020, the Domestic Violence Prevention Council supported the Reference Group to hold community consultations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to update the report and its recommendations. The Reference Group has identified four key recommendations as priority actions:

- establish a specific service for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women where a range of legal, advocacy, practical and healing activities can be delivered;
- develop a coordinated approach to supporting children and young people affected by family violence that recognises the importance of education and of family; and which offers practical, sustainable and non-punitive support to the parent who is also a victim of violence;
- provide advocacy, assistance and support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women from the time they report to police through to prosecution and court process and linked to victim support measures aimed at securing their personal, financial and social stability and security; and
- identify and implement a range of healing, supportive, advocacy and other interventions focused on addressing the trauma and harm from family violence.

As a result of these recommendations, the ACT Government is working with the Reference Group to co-design new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander domestic and

family violence programs and services, including service coordination. To support this work, the ACT Government has allocated \$790,000 over four years in the 2021-22 budget.

The ACT Government has also progressed work which will further support delivery of the *We Don't Shoot Our Wounded* project, including:

- supporting the tabling of the Ministerial Statement of Commitment in the ACT Legislative Assembly to address issues in the *We Don't Shoot Our Wounded* and *Change Our Future, Share What You Know* reports; and
- aligning the *We Don't Shoot Our Wounded* project outcomes with Target 13 in the *National Agreement on Closing the Gap* Target 13, 'A significant and sustained reduction in violence and abuse against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children towards zero'.

The Domestic Violence Prevention Council Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Reference Group will release an updated report later in 2021, based on community consultations in 2020. The updated report will further inform the development of community-led responses that address domestic and family violence in the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

Sport—Higgins Oval (Question No 413)

Mrs Kikkert asked the Minister for Sport and Recreation, upon notice, on 6 August 2021:

- (1) Are there any current plans to restore already degraded areas on Higgins oval.
- (2) Has the Minister received any complaints regarding the degradation of the oval.
- (3) What is typical government practice to repair damage in the case of heavy usage damage on ovals.

Ms Berry: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

- (1) Yes, the degraded areas will be restored when conditions permit.
- (2) Yes.
- (3) Repair of heavy damage is generally achieved through aerating the playing surface, topdressing compacted or depressed areas and over-sowing bare areas with seed. Subsequently a consolidation period ensures the treated areas are adequately irrigated and not subject to sporting use until established.

Waste—green waste service relocation (Question No 430)

Mrs Kikkert asked the Minister for Transport and City Services, upon notice, on 17 September 2021:

- (1) Does the Government intend to continue renewing the Canberra Sand and Gravel (CSG) lease for October, November and December 2021, given that since July 2021, the Parkwood green waste facility run by CSG has been kept open on a month-to-month basis while alternative northside green waste locations are found.
- (2) What progress has been made on locating a new location for green waste disposal on the northside.
- (3) Has a new location or locations been identified; if so, what are those locations in order of suitability and government preference.
- (4) Have any of these locations been suggested by CSG.
- (5) Has the Government met with CSG to discuss alternative locations; if so, on what dates did they meet with CSG.
- (6) Does the Government intend to take measures, such as subsidies to the operator of the alternate site, to ensure green waste disposal is free or very low cost; if so, what measures are being considered; if not, why not.
- (7) Will CSG be the operator of the new site once it is identified and finalised; if not, why not.
- (8) Will other waste service providers be given the opportunity to compete for the operation of the new site once identified.

Mr Steel: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) Late last year, a project to investigate the feasibility of Mitchell Resource Management Centre (RMC) Upgrades and the identification of future waste sites in North Canberra commenced. The purpose of this project is to assess all available options for the relocation or upgrade of the RMC.

The feasibility study also provides information about the appropriateness of any future sites for new facilities and/or potential upgrades to the RMC and related preliminary designs.

The study is in the investigation stage where a broad assessment of sites across west and north Canberra are being reviewed. A range of criteria such as proximity to population catchments, buffers from sensitive uses, environmental and physical constraints and availability of services, such as road access, are applied to identify sites with potential to locate a new facility.

Careful assessment of all options is being undertaken as providing this essential waste infrastructure is important for the long-term function and sustainability of Canberra's north.

Shorter-term options are also under consideration to assist in the immediate need to retain a green waste drop off facility in West Belconnen, while the long-term site is identified and constructed.

- (3) Several sites have been identified as potentially fit for this purpose and now require further investigations, site inspections and surveys. This work will involve a detailed topographic survey and geotechnical, ecological and heritage investigations.
 - (4) Short term options were put forward by CSG and are being considered.
 - (5) Yes. Meetings have been occurring weekly since August.
 - (6) The continued subsidisation of the disposal of green waste will be a consideration of Government.
 - (7) CSG will be offered the opportunity to manage the short-term solution under its existing licence agreement with the Territory.
 - (8) Yes, it is expected that the longer-term management of the new facility will be determined through a competitive tender process.
-

Environment—single-use plastics (Question No 444)

Ms Lawder asked the Minister for Transport and City Services, upon notice, on 17 September 2021:

Given that on 10 December 2020, I received a briefing on the Plastics Reduction Bill 2020 and was informed that businesses that have single-use plastic items in bulk would be able to use their remaining stock until they run out after the ban came into place on 1 July 2021, can the Minister confirm that this is still the case.

Mr Steel: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

While the *Plastic Reduction Act 2021* does not specify transitional arrangements for businesses to supply existing stocks of banned items to their customers after July 2021, in practice an educative approach has been taken with business on the matter. Businesses were encouraged to use up their stock of prohibited plastic before the deadline on 1 July 2021.

The ACT Government engaged the National Retail Association (NRA) to conduct face-to-face visits with ACT businesses impacted by the new legislation. The NRA conducted 502 business visits and ACT NoWaste staff also conducted an additional 398 visits. Support by businesses for the ban has been strong overall.

Municipal services—public toilets (Question No 447)

Ms Clay asked the Minister for Transport and City Services, upon notice, on 17 September 2021:

- (1) Has the number of public toilets in the ACT changed in the last 10 years and could the breakdown of the change be provided by region.

- (2) Has the ACT Government got a policy of increasing the amount of public toilets as population grows, including within existing suburbs and not just for newly constructed suburbs.

Mr Steel: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

- (1) There are currently 134 ACT Government managed public toilets across the ACT that are available for general public use. These toilets are located in various high use settings, including shops, urban parks and nature reserves. The breakdown by management group is at Table 1 (below).
- The 2011-12 Territory and Municipal Services (TAMS) Annual Report identified that as at 30 June 2012 the Territory managed 120 toilets.
 - In the last 10 years the number of public toilets has increased by 14, which reflects a 10 percent increase.
 - In addition to toilets managed by the ACT Government in urban settings, publicly accessible toilets are provided as part of town and centre shopping precincts by private lease owners under relevant planning and municipal infrastructure standards.
 - Other public toilets not included within Table 2 are provided within ACT Government owned facilities, such as libraries.
 - Toilet facilities are also provided at ACT Government-managed sportsgrounds for use during organised sporting activities.

Table 1: Public Toilets by management group (30 June 2021)

Management Group	Total
City Services, Place Management	68
CMTEDD, National Arboretum Canberra	2
EPSDD, Parks and Conservation Service	64

*Note: Excludes toilets provided to hirers of Sport and Recreation Facilities.

Table 2: Change over the last 10 years for 'Place Management' managed public toilets by Region.

ACT Region	2011 Count	2021 Count	Change
Gungahlin	5	10	+5
Belconnen	8	10	+2
Canberra Central	34	33	-1
Woden Valley & Weston Creek	8	7	-1
Molonglo Valley	0	0	-
Tuggeranong	9	8	-1
Total	64	68	+4

- (2) The ACT Government considers population growth as part of its planning for toilet provision. Recent toilet facility investments are identified in Table 3. Documents relevant to public toilet provision for both new suburbs and for infill development within existing suburbs include Plans of Management and Municipal Infrastructure Design Standards.

Table 3: Recent toilet facility investments.

Public Toilet	Year funded	Investment	Construction year	Handover Type
Tuggeranong Park	2020-21	New	2021	CAPITAL WORKS
Lyneham Shops	2020-22	Replacement	2021-22	CAPITAL WORKS
John Knight Park	2020-21	Replacement	2021	CAPITAL WORKS
Philip Industrial, Colbee Court	2020-21	Replacement	2021-22	CAPITAL WORKS

Canberra Health Services—accreditation (Question No 453)

Mrs Jones asked the Minister for Health, upon notice, on 17 September 2021:

Has the junior medical officer accreditation survey, referred to on page 43 of the Canberra Health Services 2019-20 Annual Report, been completed; if so, can the Minister provide all reports and results.

Ms Stephen-Smith: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

The Canberra Region Medical Education Council (CRMEC) conducted its accreditation site survey at Canberra Health Services (CHS) in mid-July 2021. The CRMEC publishes its findings on its website: <http://crmec.health.act.gov.au/accreditation>. As of 7 October 2021, it had not been published.

Canberra Health Services—staff safety (Question No 454)

Mrs Jones asked the Minister for Health, upon notice, on 17 September 2021:

- (1) In relation to Canberra Health Services, in 2018-19, how many (a) incidents classified as moderate were recorded in the RiskMan incident reporting module, (b) incidents classified as moderate were not recorded in the RiskMan incident reporting module within five calendar days, (c) Significant Incident Briefs were prepared, (d) significant clinical incidents were not reported within one working day of the incident occurring, (e) significant clinical incidents were referred to the Clinical Review Committee and (f) significant clinical incident investigations were not completed by the Clinical Review Committee within 100 calendar days.
- (2) In relation to Canberra Health Services, in 2019-20, how many (a) incidents classified as moderate were recorded in the RiskMan incident reporting module, (b) incidents classified as moderate were not recorded in the RiskMan incident reporting module within five calendar days, (c) Significant Incident Briefs were prepared, (d) significant clinical incidents were not reported within one working day of the incident occurring, (e) significant clinical incidents were referred to the Clinical Review Committee and (f) significant clinical incident investigations were not completed by the Clinical Review Committee within 100 calendar days.

- (3) In relation to Canberra Health Services, in 2020-21, how many (a) incidents classified as moderate were recorded in the RiskMan incident reporting module, (b) incidents classified as moderate were not recorded in the RiskMan incident reporting module within five calendar days, (c) Significant Incident Briefs were prepared, (d) significant clinical incidents were not reported within one working day of the incident occurring, (e) significant clinical incidents were referred to the Clinical Review Committee and (f) significant clinical incident investigations were not completed by the Clinical Review Committee within 100 calendar days.
- (4) In relation to Canberra Health Services, from 1 July 2021 to 31 August 2021, how many (a) incidents classified as moderate were recorded in the RiskMan incident reporting module, (b) incidents classified as moderate were not recorded in the RiskMan incident reporting module within five calendar days, (c) Significant Incident Briefs were prepared, (d) significant clinical incidents were not reported within one working day of the incident occurring, (e) significant clinical incidents were referred to the Clinical Review Committee and (f) many significant clinical incident investigations were not completed by the Clinical Review Committee within 100 calendar days.

Ms Stephen-Smith: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

- (1)
- (a) Incidents are not classified as 'moderate'.
- (b) Incidents are not classified as 'moderate'.

	2018-19 FY
(c) Significant Incident Briefs were prepared.	0
(d) Significant clinical incidents were not reported within one working day of the incident occurring.	12
(e) Significant clinical incidents were referred to the Clinical Review Committee. <i>*This includes incidents that were initially identified as significant clinical incidents but may have been downgraded following investigation.</i>	23
(f) Significant clinical incident investigations were not completed by the Clinical Review Committee within 100 calendar days. <i>*Not all investigations are completed by the Clinical Review Committee, this number includes all significant incidents that were referred to the Clinical Review Committee.</i>	16 *one unable to confirm

NB: Data in the above table has been generated using clinical incident data.

- (2)
- (a) Incidents are not classified as 'moderate'.
- (b) Incidents are not classified as 'moderate'.

	2019-20 FY
(c) Significant Incident Briefs were prepared.	0
(d) Significant clinical incidents were not reported within one working day of the incident occurring.	13
(e) Significant clinical incidents were referred to the Clinical Review Committee. <i>*This includes incidents that were initially identified as significant clinical incidents but may have been downgraded following investigation.</i>	30
(f) Significant clinical incident investigations were not completed by the Clinical Review Committee within 100 calendar days. <i>*Not all investigations are completed by the Clinical Review Committee, this number includes all significant incidents that were referred to the Clinical Review Committee.</i>	19

NB: Data in the above table has been generated using clinical incident data.

- (3)
- (a) Incidents are not classified as 'moderate'.
 - (b) Incidents are not classified as 'moderate'.

	2020-21 FY
(c) Significant Incident Briefs were prepared.	0
(d) Significant clinical incidents were not reported within one working day of the incident occurring.	14
(e) Significant clinical incidents were referred to the Clinical Review Committee. <i>*This includes incidents that were initially identified as significant clinical incidents but may have been downgraded following investigation.</i>	27
(f) Significant clinical incident investigations were not completed by the Clinical Review Committee within 100 calendar days. <i>*Not all investigations are completed by the Clinical Review Committee, this number includes all significant incidents that were referred to the Clinical Review Committee.</i>	15

NB: Data in the above table has been generated using clinical incident data.

- (4)
- (a) Incidents are not classified as 'moderate'.
 - (b) Incidents are not classified as 'moderate'.

	1 July 2021 to 31 August 2021
(c) Significant Incident Briefs were prepared.	0
(d) Significant clinical incidents were not reported within one working day of the incident occurring.	0
(e) Significant clinical incidents were referred to the Clinical Review Committee. <i>*This includes incidents that were initially identified as significant clinical incidents but may have been downgraded following investigation.</i>	1
(f) Significant clinical incident investigations were not completed by the Clinical Review Committee within 100 calendar days. <i>*Not all investigations are completed by the Clinical Review Committee, this number includes all significant incidents that were referred to the Clinical Review Committee.</i>	0

NB: Data in the above table has been generated using clinical incident data.

ACT Health—management systems review (Question No 455)

Mrs Jones asked the Minister for Health, upon notice, on 17 September 2021:

Has the review of the incident management system, referred to on page 52 of the Canberra Health Service's 2019-20 Annual Report been completed; if so, can the Minister provide a copy of the review.

Ms Stephen-Smith: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

Yes, a review of the Canberra Health Services' (CHS) incident management system occurred in July 2021. The report is currently in draft with recommendations being finalised for endorsement through the CHS Governance Committee. A copy can be provided when finalised and once the Committee has endorsed the recommendations.

Chief Psychiatrist—reports and recommendations (Question No 456)

Mrs Jones asked the Minister for Mental Health, upon notice, on 17 September 2021:

Noting that subsection 197(b) of the Mental Health Act 2015 empowers the Chief Psychiatrist to "make reports and recommendations to the Minister with respect to matters affecting the provision of treatment, care or support, control, accommodation, maintenance and protection for persons who have a mental illness", (a) how many reports has the Chief Psychiatrist provided to the Minister since 1 January 2020 and on what dates were any reports provided and (b) how many recommendations has the Chief Psychiatrist provided since 1 January 2020 and on what dates were any recommendations provided.

Ms Davidson: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

The Chief Psychiatrist has not made any reports or recommendation to the Minister with respect to matters affecting the provision of treatment, care or support, control, accommodation, maintenance and protection for persons who have a mental illness since 1 January 2020.

Canberra Health Services—Performance Committee (Question No 458)

Mrs Jones asked the Minister for Health, upon notice, on 17 September 2021:

- (1) In relation to the Performance Committee, referred to on page 23 of the Canberra Health Services 2019-20 Annual Report, can the Minister provide the (a) terms of reference, (b) charter or other governing document, (c) necessary qualifications of members, (d) current membership, (e) qualifications of each member, (f) dates on which the committee met since 1 July 2020 and (g) attendance at all meetings held since 1 July 2020.
- (2) Are minutes of the Performance Committee's meetings kept.

Ms Stephen-Smith: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

- (1)
 - a) The terms of Reference (ToR) are at Attachment A.
 - b) See ToR at Attachment A.
 - c) There are no necessary qualifications of members. Membership comes from all Canberra Health Services (CHS) divisions with expertise in data analysis, performance reporting, and information management.
 - d) Membership is listed in the ToR at Attachment A.
 - e) As advised in the answer to question 1c), there are no necessary qualifications of members. The positions of members are included in the ToR at Attachment A.
 - f) The committee was established in May 2021, meetings have been held on the 26 May 2021, 30 June 2021, 29 July 2021, 12 August 2021 and 9 September 2021
 - g)

Meeting	Attendance	Apology
26 May 2021	11	3
30 June 2021	20	3
29 July 2021	20	7
12 August 2021	12	10
9 September 2021	14	9

- (2) Minutes are taken by the secretariat and are kept by the Chair.

(Copies of the attachments are available at the Chamber Support Office).