



DEBATES

OF THE

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FOR THE

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

HANSARD

22 MAY 1996

Wednesday, 22 May 1996

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The Assembly met at 10.30 am.

(Quorum formed)

MR SPEAKER (Mr Cornwell) took the chair and asked members to stand in silence and pray or reflect on their responsibilities to the people of the Australian Capital Territory.

PETITION

The Clerk: The following petition has been lodged for presentation:

By **Mr Hird**, from 13 residents, requesting that the lease and development application for the community sporting facilities in McKellar be approved.

The terms of this petition will be recorded in *Hansard* and a copy referred to the appropriate Minister.

National Soccer Centre

The petition read as follows:

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

The petition of certain residents of the Australian Capital Territory draws to the attention of the Assembly that the undersigned residents living in the Belconnen community totally support the proposed development and provision of much needed community sporting facilities by the Belconnen Soccer Club at the intersection of Owen Dixon and William Slim Drives in McKellar.

Your petitioners therefore request the Assembly to approve the above lease and development application as soon as possible.

Petition received.

RETAIL SPACE EXPANSION - PROPOSED MORATORIUM

MS HORODNY (10.33): I move:

That this Assembly calls on the Government to enforce a moratorium on the expansion of retail space in town centres in the ACT (excluding Gungahlin) for five years.

The purpose of this motion today is to put a stop to the increase in concentration of our retail market in four major town centres. I want to begin by posing the questions: Do we really want our children to grow up in a world that is dominated by national and multinational chains? Do we want to be able to walk down to our local shops in 10 years' time and buy a loaf of bread? Do we want a vibrant and sustainable local economy?

Canberra is not like other capital cities. This is a planned city. Canberra was planned with a retail hierarchy of three levels of shopping centres; that is, the town centres, the group centres and the local centres. This was initiated nearly 30 years ago, after extensive research into shopping demands and how best these could be met within Canberra's overall planning structure. The objective was to ensure that accessibility to shopping facilities could be maximised, at the same time ensuring the economic viability of different types of shops. Local shopping centres were meant to provide for most day-to-day shopping needs, with easy access for residents; group centres served the greater shopping needs of four or so suburbs; while town centres were meant to provide those types of shops which served a whole town and which were for the big items like clothes, household items, et cetera - things that might be bought only once a month or so.

Over time this plan has been tipped upside down by developments in the retail market, consolidation of market power and many other factors. Our town centres are now drawing in regular shoppers for everything from basic grocery items to luxury goods. Neighbourhood shops are now visited only occasionally, for emergency items. The focus on the neighbourhood has been eroded. As a consequence, many shopping centres are in serious danger. There have been 12 supermarket closures in recent years, and at least 20 others are under threat. In fact, in the last two weeks another two local supermarkets closed. They were the ones in Gowrie and Dickson. The closure of local supermarkets threatens the other stores in local shopping centres.

The Greens acknowledge that some of the factors are beyond our control. There are also other factors outside of the retail market; for example, the closure of neighbourhood schools has a devastating effect on adjacent shops. When speaking to local shopowners at the Charnwood shops, I was told that the closure of the Charnwood school has had a marked effect on trade in the Charnwood shopping centre. However, we do believe that we should take whatever action we can to make sure that neighbourhood centres survive. This includes the sort of action that we are proposing today. Of course, it is not the only action that we need to take. We also need to support proactive measures, such as the heart and soul program and the precinct programs, to revitalise local shopping centres. But these programs themselves will not work if the town centres keep expanding and dominating the retail market.

The social impact of small business closures is felt not only by the individual businesses but by the whole community. Some people in our community do not have the luxury of being able to drive to town centres. We do not want people to be driving to town centres, in any case. We would like people to be able to walk to their local centres. In fact, between 10 and 30 per cent of people surveyed in a recent study by Purdon walk to their local shopping centres. The study recently released by the Government on the social impact assessment of retail changes in the ACT concluded that local centres play several important roles for local residents - economically, socially, culturally and also from the point of view of access. It is the least mobile and the most disadvantaged in our community who rely on these centres the most. Some people do not have cars to jump into to drive to a town centre.

There are also huge environmental impacts from the increased traffic congestion that is generated around the town centres as everyone battles to find a car park close to the shops. The preliminary assessment on the Woden Plaza redevelopment acknowledged that there would be increased traffic around the Woden Town Centre and stated that the traffic intersections near the plaza would need to be upgraded to cope with this. Who is going to pay for these upgrades? Is the Government going to be picking up the tab?

This motion refers to a moratorium on retail space in town centres only. Members will be aware that a number of group centres are also proposing expansions which may be detrimental to neighbourhood shopping centres. However, it is the expansion of the town centres which is doing the most damage. We already have before us proposals to expand both Woden and Tuggeranong town centres. The management of Woden Town Centre wants to expand by over 20,000 square metres; 10,000 of this is supermarket space. There was a comment made on radio this morning regarding the revamping of the Woden Plaza. We do not have a problem with the revamping of the Woden Plaza; what we do have a problem with is the 70 or more new shops going into that place. Leda want to extend the Hyperdome by 16,000 square metres. These developers are competing to dominate the Canberra-wide market, not just the market within their town. They all acknowledge that their catchment areas overlap because Canberra is really too small to support four and soon five large town centres. An issue that has to be addressed is the fact that Lend Lease, Leda and Westfield openly acknowledge that they are competing with each other.

When the Liberal Party was in opposition they argued for the Hyperdome expansion to be stopped. In fact, they argued for a moratorium. It is interesting that Mr Humphries today said that a moratorium was simplistic. They said that there was clearly an oversupply of retail space in the ACT. They have publicly stated that. They even tried to introduce a moratorium on the expansion of the Hyperdome. I was surprised to hear Mr Humphries on radio this morning saying that this was a simplistic measure, as this was exactly the type of motion that they tried to introduce when they were in opposition. I have not heard of his Government coming up with anything better.

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Mr Humphries said this morning that this was simplistic and was not providing a solution. We are not saying that this is going to provide a solution. This is a stop-gap measure in order to allow the Government to come up with a proper retail strategy in the ACT to protect local shops and to protect small business. In no way are we suggesting that this is a solution in itself. It is merely to stop retail trade in the ACT going in the wrong direction. If Mr Humphries has an opportunity to amend this motion as he sees fit, I would encourage him to do that, rather than to throw it out altogether.

Mr Humphries: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Ms Horodny has quoted from what she claims is a Liberal Party document or something that shows that we were going to move for a moratorium. In the last Assembly we did move for a moratorium on town centre expansion. I would ask that she table that document.

MR SPEAKER: Will you table the document?

MS HORODNY: I do not have the document with me, but I will do that.

Mr Humphries: Because it is not in existence, that is why.

MS HORODNY: I am sorry; I will look into that.

Mr Humphries: Mr Speaker, I have to press the point of order. Does Ms Horodny intend to table the document or not?

MR SPEAKER: Yes. She did say that she would table the document.

MS HORODNY: I will. Let us be clear about the nature of the proposed expansions of these town centres. The purpose of these developments is not ultimately to provide more choice to ACT residents; each shopping centre is just trying to entice customers to move their shopping activity from other centres to their own. The new shops that are brought in are often not independent small businesses. Usually they are just another branch of a national shopping chain. If you walk through any of these malls you will find the same shop names, the same food outlets and the same stifling atmosphere. Is this really providing competition and diversity for shoppers?

What about jobs and profits? If we keep expanding these town centres we will have no local shops left. That is the way that we are going at the moment. We will send more and more of our profits out of the ACT and we will lose jobs. If we are talking long-term job security for Canberrans, this will not be by having more and more major chains. We should all know by now the statistic that, for every 3.9 employees that are made redundant from small business, on average, only one is being re-employed by the large chain-stores. I believe that there is substantial support in the community for measures which will protect local shops. Our community does not want to see the big shopping centres grow to such an extent that the local shopping centres die. We know that over 30,000 people supported the save our shops campaign at the last ACT election.

There is already a huge oversupply of retail space in the ACT. We have probably at least twice as much retail space as we require and possibly as much as is required for a population of up to one million people. We really have to ask the question: How much more retail space do we need in the ACT; and, more importantly, how much can we sustain? We have over 260,000 square metres of floor space in the four major town centres. In light of the current freeze on public sector jobs in the ACT Government and the big cutbacks at the Commonwealth level, I think this adds further weight to the argument that the ACT economy simply cannot sustain any more retail expansion. Even the Government's own pre-business seminar service says that there is too much retail space in the ACT. In Tuggeranong, the Conder shops are about to be developed. This will add about 3,500 square metres to the amount of retail space that is available to people in the Tuggeranong Valley. This development certainly needs time to settle down before we even consider further expansion.

I would like to conclude by saying that the greatest irony of all is that this Government goes on and on about competition and how wonderful it is. In fact, later in the day there will be debate on competition policy reform. This begs the question: What is real competition? We are being told that it is anti-competitive for a government business to have a monopoly position. Why should national shopping chains be allowed to have a monopoly? This is what is happening in the ACT.

When it comes to the private sector - the same private sector as this Government and most governments around Australia, including Labor governments, think should be a model for public sector operations - governments fail to take action to regulate this sector in the best interests of promoting fair competition. The whole concept of competition is based on a level playing field. There is no such level playing field in the retail market in the ACT. There is a distinct lack of real competition. The market is controlled by the big majors, and they have significant advantages which are quite unfair to smaller retailers. As the big players compete to grab the biggest slice of the market, the small traders, both inside and outside the town centres, suffer. Concentrating a large component of retail space in four large centres is not good for competition; it is not good for the economy of the ACT; it is certainly not good for the sense of community in our suburbs. I would very strongly urge members to support this motion.

MR KAINE (10.47): This is an interesting debate, because when we look back we always see that things were so much more attractive than what we have today. I look back with some nostalgia at the days when we had general practitioners that made house calls; I remember fondly the days when bakers and greengrocers knocked on your door and delivered their goods to your door. Very often the greengrocer was a local who had his market garden on the outskirts of town, grew his fresh vegetables, knocked on your door and offered them to you at the doorstep. That was very attractive; but, in today's world, it is impractical. I submit that those small businesses which existed in those days have gone out of existence because people have voted with their feet as to how they do their shopping and where they do their shopping; their shopping preferences have changed.

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Canberra is a planned city, and for decades it has been planned on the basis of three levels of shopping centres - your town centres, your group centres and your small suburban shopping centres. Over the years I have seen a lot of the shops in the smaller centres close. Why do they close? They close because people's shopping habits change. We initially bought the greengroceries from the guy that knocked on the door; we then went to the little local corner shop; later we went to the small, for Canberra, local suburban shopping centres; but now people tend not to do that. There is a matter of personal preference.

Ms Horodny talks about fair competition. How do you define fair competition? Does she say that fair competition is the Government somehow propping up small suburban businesses when people have already indicated by their shopping habits that they do not want to use them? Is that fair competition? I do not know. It seems rather strange to me that the Government ought to get involved in that kind of decision-making in the first place. This is democracy working; it is not the USSR of the 1950s, where government dictated to everybody what they could do and where they could do it. In any case, we know what the result of that kind of economy is. We have seen it disintegrate before our very eyes.

Having said all that, I must say that it is clear that people's shopping habits have changed. I think it is the responsibility of government to see whether or not this basic philosophy of three tiers of shopping is really what this community wants today. They are voting with their feet, in my view, and that is why smaller shops in smaller shopping centres are going out of existence. They go out of existence because the business is not there to sustain them. That indicates to me that the Government ought properly to be doing a review of shopping facilities which the community demands in the 1990s and ought to change its planning to accommodate that.

I happen to believe that we should not allow the town centres to grow too big, because there are a lot of people who still do not like to do their shopping there; they have a preference to shop in a smaller centre. I am not sure, mind you, in a democratic society, how government legislates to determine where shops will be and where they will not be. We have tried that, and it does not seem to work too well; otherwise we would not have this motion from Ms Horodny on the table today. It is not working well; there is dissatisfaction; and I think it is the responsibility of government to see why that is so and to devise ways and means of accommodating the genuine and legitimate needs of the community.

I think the town centres are there because people use them. If anybody doubts it, go down to any one of the big shopping centres on a Friday night or a Saturday; they are full of people. Why are they there if they choose to shop in the local shopping centre? Perhaps Ms Horodny can answer that question for me. Why are they there if it is not their choice to be there? On the other hand, there is still a need for suburban shopping centres. Some people still prefer to use them. If you do not believe that, I suggest that you go to places like Chisholm and Erindale in Tuggeranong. You will find lots of people there, too. There is a demand for those two types of shopping facility.

There is clearly not much demand, or a reducing demand, for the individual, small suburban shopping centre. They are the ones that are feeling the pinch. We have seen it happen over a number of years in Hackett and Rivett. Now Gowrie seems to be under some threat.

Mr De Domenico: No; they are fine. We rang them this morning, and they are fine.

MR KAINE: In that case, I assume that Ms Horodny is wrong. That does not surprise me. But we have certainly seen some of the smaller shopping centres go by the board. If you walk around a lot of those small shopping centres today, it is obvious that they are under stress. There are not a lot of customers there, and the small businessmen there are concerned about their future.

It is my view that perhaps we should be doing away with this three-tier shopping notion; have the town centres and the group centres; and, in those areas that are then no longer served by a small suburban shopping centre, you reintroduce the corner stores so that at least in every suburb there is a corner store or two or three - the old general store where you could buy your bread, your groceries, maybe a few greengroceries, a few non-prescription pharmaceutical goods and the like. If you need an aspirin on a Friday night, you can get one at the corner store - and the bottle of milk and the loaf of bread.

I would remind Ms Horodny that that facility is not entirely lacking in Canberra even today. Try any service station in any suburb. She will find, I am sure, that they are operating as small general stores. You can buy a loaf of bread, a packet of cigarettes, or a meat pie in the warmer if you want one. They are quite diversified in what they do. Maybe the days of the small suburban shopping centre are past. Maybe they are an anachronism in Canberra. If that is the case, then the Government should do something positive to encourage those small traders to concentrate themselves in the bigger shopping centres - the town centres and the group centres - but change the planning laws to allow small corner stores. That is my view. I presume that it is just as legitimate as Ms Horodny's.

What is Ms Horodny's solution to this problem? Put the dead hand of government on the whole caboodle for five years. What purpose does that serve? It protects nobody's interests, because the small stores in the local suburban shopping centres are going to go out of business anyway if people do not choose to shop there, whether or not the dead hand of government is on it. I submit that Ms Horodny has not seriously thought through this proposition. I do not see it as having any merit at all, although I agree that the circumstances are such that some reconsideration by government is needed of what it can legitimately do in the competitive workplace out there to assist the community - and I do not mean assist big business - to have available to them the shopping facilities that they require; not what the big business people require; not what the members sitting around this room think is needed; but what the community needs.

It is clear that the community need has changed, and some small businessmen are feeling the consequences of that. Maybe they have to adjust to this new world of the 1990s as well. That may mean some relocation for them, some dislocation of their business. I know that people will say, "They are just keeping their head above water now.

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They cannot afford the cost of relocating". Well, they might not be able to afford to stay where they are either. If the customers are not going to go into their businesses, then they have to do something else. That might sound a bit hard, but that is the world we live in. If their business is going to fail in its present location, then they have to consider relocating. It is a decision that business people make every day - big ones, I might add, as well as small ones.

I do not support Ms Horodny's motion. I think it is fairyland stuff. It will solve no problem. It will merely, as I say, impose the dead hand of government. Where did we get the expertise to make this decision? Who amongst us has ever run a small business, with the exception of the Chief Minister? I know that Ms Horodny has not, and I know that I have not. I have been involved in some big ones but I have never been involved in a small one, except in waiting for the big one to become a small one, which is what is happening in some of our suburbs now. I think Ms Horodny would do well to wait for a few days because it is my understanding - and I am sure that Lucy Horodny is as well aware of this as I am - that the Government has been working for some months on a retail strategy for Canberra and is about to table it in the next few days. Why could she not have waited, rather than make this grand gesture in the hope of making some political point and getting her picture on the front page of the *Canberra Times*? Why could she not have waited for a week to see what the Government intends to do, instead of trying to cut across the bows with a salvo like this, which will do more harm than good to small business in Canberra? I repeat: I will not be supporting this motion.

MR SPEAKER: I am particularly pleased to welcome Year 6 of Garran Primary School to the Assembly today as part of their study of Australian parliaments. We welcome you to your Assembly.

MR HUMPHRIES (Attorney-General and Minister for the Environment, Land and Planning) (10.59): I have to repeat the concerns which Mr Kaine has stated in this place about this motion and repeat what I said on radio this morning, which is that this response to what is obviously a very serious problem in the ACT is a grossly simplistic one and the problem deserves, frankly, more time and effort by every member of the Assembly than is exhibited by this motion. Ms Horodny essentially is trying, in a sense, to make administrative decisions from the crossbenches. She is entitled to express a view about the way in which the policy should head, but a decision about which particular development deserves to be approved and which one does not is, with the greatest respect to Ms Horodny, not a decision she can make from the position she sits in; it is a decision that ought to be made, with respect, by the Executive of the Territory or possibly the Executive with the advice of an Assembly committee or something of that kind. The decision should be made on a case-by-case basis, not on the basis that we think some proposals for development of town centres are not good; therefore, put a blanket on all of them for the next five years. That puts a restriction on for not only the life of this Assembly but almost all the life of the next Assembly as well. That does not work.

I think the problem with Ms Horodny's approach is exhibited by the simple mistakes of fact that she has listed in this place. First of all, she claims that the Liberal Party has supported in the past, or was about to support, a moratorium on the expansion of town centres. I challenged Ms Horodny to table the document which indicated that. Table it, Ms Horodny; you have had your chance. I think she will find that that is not the case.

We have never supported a moratorium on the expansion of town centres, although we have maintained twice that they need to be looked at in a very careful way. The second mistake or myth perpetrated by Ms Horodny was the suggestion that the Gowrie supermarket was in some kind of trouble. I think she said, "The Gowrie supermarket has closed down". I have a member for Brindabella sitting beside me who lived in Gowrie and who assures me that it has not closed down and, according to the proprietor, has no intention of closing down. He rang the proprietor and found that out. We make jokes about that, but someone's business could be potentially damaged by speculation from people like Ms Horodny that they are about to close down. I hope that she has some sense of regret that she has effectively pronounced to the world the death of a business which is perfectly alive and flourishing. I do not think her look is one of regret; I think it is more a look of stunned bemusement.

Ms Horodny also suggested that the Dickson supermarket was in some kind of trouble. If she is referring to the Woolworths supermarket at Dickson - - -

Ms Horodny: No.

MR HUMPHRIES: Well, it must be some other supermarket in Dickson of which I am not aware. The fact is that the main supermarket in Dickson is doing extremely well, and that is not in a town centre. If there is any damage done to the supermarket at the other end of Dickson, it will be because of the presence of the supermarket at the other end of Dickson, not because of a town centre. Her motion is quite irrelevant to that. I think it is quite wrong to suggest that there is a link between what is happening in the town centres and what is happening at the other end of Dickson.

Another important myth she perpetrated was that the jobs in the town centres are not jobs generated by or associated with small business. Ms Horodny ought to take a walk through those town centres and see how many small businesses there are. In fact, by definition, the number of small businesses in those places greatly exceeds the number of big businesses. It would also be, I think, true to say that the number of jobs generated in those town centres by small business exceeds the number generated by big business.

The fifth myth Ms Horodny has perpetrated or mistake she has made is that people operating under chain-store names or nationally branded names are not small businesses. Ms Horodny has obviously never walked into, or inquired about, the nature of many of those businesses. If she had, she would realise that a great number of them - probably the overwhelming preponderance of them - operate as franchisees. The local operator at McDonald's in all likelihood is not a direct employee of McDonald's but rather has bought the privilege of operating a franchise from McDonald's, is a local person, has a local business which employs local people and, in every sense of the word, is a local small business. It is repugnant, I believe, to this place for Ms Horodny to come in here and tell us that town centres are all big business and local centres are all small business. That is simply a dichotomy which she cannot make. I hope that she has taken note of that. This policy, put forward by the Greens, is simplistic. There is a whole series of forces at work in local centres in this city. Not all of them are due to the presence or the expansion of town centres.

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The demographics in the city are changing. People who years ago did not work, such as women in the home, are now working. People who did not have cars years ago, when these local centres were established, now have cars. There is a much higher proportion of people with two incomes and two cars. People will travel further to get what they perceive to be a bargain or to go somewhere where they think they can get a better deal or where the shopping opportunities are greater, such as in a town centre. The average household has a lower density than it had 20 years ago, which means that there are fewer people in the catchment of each of these local shops. Those things are having an enormous impact on town centres. In fact, those things predated the recent expansion of town centres, which has caused so many problems for local businesses. There are a number of local shops in this city which have closed in recent years - shops in my suburb of Weston, in Aranda, and in a whole series of other small places. They closed in advance of the expansion of the town centres. How does Ms Horodny explain that? The fact is that the closures are not caused just by the expansion of the town centres; they are caused by other things as well.

The fact is that for a complex problem we need a sophisticated response, and we do not get that through what the Greens have proposed. This Government is concerned about the position that those local businesses find themselves in. Next week, this Government will announce a retail strategy. That strategy will be based on a number of documents. It will be based on the Ibecon study, which was commissioned by the previous Government and which looked at the impact of changes in retailing patterns, in particular, on the growth of town centres and the impact on local centres. That document has provided interesting and important information about the way in which local retailing is being affected.

We also have commissioned a review of trading hours in the ACT by Mr John Hyndes. That has also been important in educating our point of view. We have also indicated our concern about the social impact of changes in retailing by commissioning a social impact assessment, which is now available. This Government's stated plan was always as follows: To comprehensively collect the information available on the position of retailing in this Territory in the first year of our term of office; in the second year, state and put in place a retail strategy; and, in the third year, hopefully, if all goes according to plan, begin to see the benefits of that policy in place.

Next week, I hope to be in a position to announce that retail strategy of this Government. When it comes forward, I believe that members will see a strategy which, for the first time in this Territory, addresses the question of the interrelationship between those town centres and local centres; deals with the question of trading hours; and looks at how we sustain a real hierarchy offering opportunities for both shopping and investment across the whole city. That has not occurred in the past. The former Government proposed to deregulate trading hours altogether. They had a Bill on the table to do that - no trading hours control whatsoever. Ms Horodny has said that she wants to close town centres at 6 o'clock in the evening.

Ms McRae: You change them; go on.

MR HUMPHRIES: We are about to. You watch us. We get two different cries from those opposite. They say that we are not going to do anything. When we do, they say that they are going to be there to attack us. That is the typical response we get from those opposite. All I can say to you is, "Do not make any plans for any media splashes late next week because we will be dominating the airwaves with the launch of our retail policy". I have no doubt that it will be very controversial as well. People will have a range of views about this, and there will be considerable disappointment by some who see a vested interest being upset. But the fact is that we have collected the information; we have done our homework; we believe that we are now in a position to make a decision about that retailing policy.

As I say, the solution is simplistic; but it also ignores the very important point which arises from the proposals to expand centres such as the Woden Town Centre and the Tuggeranong Town Centre. (*Extension of time granted*) The fact is that those two developments between them amount to something of the order of \$150m worth of investment in this city. Using the formula that Mr Moore stated in this place a few days ago, we are looking at over 1,000 jobs - some permanent, some temporary - created by those developments. If anyone in this place is in a position to say that they are prepared to dismiss that opportunity for 1,000 jobs, then I think they are extremely foolish. There is, of course, the point that some jobs created in town centres come at the expense of local centres. That is a very important point. That is why the Government's policy, to be announced next week, will distinguish between the nature of jobs created in town centres and those that operate at the moment in local centres. I think Ms Horodny would be well advised to wait until she sees that before she makes a comment.

I wish to respond to a few other points that Ms Horodny made. She asked, "Who pays for the upgrade around redeveloped town centres?". Essentially, the premium from the improvement in those areas, the gain that is made by those centres, albeit by way of betterment and albeit by way of simply buying the dirt, produces a benefit to the community which, in turn, the community can use to pay for some upgrades. In the case of things like the Woden Town Centre, for example, there is a direct link between what they will be doing and what they will be spending directly on things like the Woden Town Square to upgrade the quality of community infrastructure. They will directly pay for that as a part of that process, but the Government will pick up some of the things in a direct sense. I remind members that, when anybody goes into a local centre, a group centre or a town centre, the Government picks up associated costs because citizens wish to use those centres. It is not rational to say that because they are expanding we should not facilitate public infrastructure around them to make sure that people can use those centres once they are expanded.

As I have indicated, there is a range of complex issues at work here. This Government's response to those issues has been more carefully worked through than has the response of any previous government. Our response, I believe, will be a very significant change of direction from the activities of previous governments. It will not be as blanket and unsubtle as to say - as the Greens have done - that we should close town centres at 6 o'clock at night and ban any expansion of town centres for five years.

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It will be a very different situation to the one that presently exists in our city, where, in a sense, unlimited expansion has been allowed to occur without awareness of the fact that the highly-planned nature of our city gives rise to special obligations to those who make investment decisions based on an expectation that the hierarchy will be maintaining its present form. That is the special obligation of government in the ACT. If we were in Sydney, Melbourne or anywhere else in Australia, we could say, "If you want to build a shop, go ahead and do it. Apart from design and siting and locational issues, what you do in terms of impact on other businesses is really your own affair". That would be an easy position to take in the ACT. We cannot take that position, because we have the problem that there is a range of hierarchy placements which have been determined by government decision, which we have some obligation to protect and defend.

I ask members to be patient; to see what the Government has to say; and, if they wish, then to return to this debate or a debate like it on another day. I have to say that, if we do return to the debate, it certainly should not be - and I am sure that it will not be - on the basis of the very simplistic proposal put forward by the ACT Greens.

MR MOORE (11.13): Mr Speaker, this question is about balance, and I am going to come back to that. First, I think it is important to point out that the Government can make either a negative response or a positive response to such motions. I believe that, by and large, the Government approach here is to say, "This is simplistic; we are sophisticated" - that is, they are sophisticated as they see it - "and therefore we can just ignore motions like this". A much more appropriate response, I believe, is to move an amendment. I think that is the appropriate thing to do. That is why I have circulated an amendment. I take this opportunity, Mr Speaker, to move:

After "years" add "or until such time as the Government satisfies the Assembly that it has in place a strategic plan which protects small business by identifying how much retail space is to be developed in individual locations and when that development should occur".

I will read the motion and the amendment together, because one follows the other. The motion will then read:

That this Assembly calls on the Government to enforce a moratorium on the expansion of retail space in town centres in the ACT (excluding Gungahlin) for five years or until such time as the Government satisfies the Assembly that it has in place a strategic plan which protects small business by identifying how much retail space is to be developed in individual locations and when that development should occur.

I thought the Government would welcome this amendment because it actually takes the spirit of the motion that Ms Horodny has put and then turns the responsibility fairly and squarely back on the Government to carry out what they should be doing. It puts it into a planning framework - the sort of thing that Mr Humphries has been talking about.

This is where that question of balance comes in. First, we have to make a choice. Are we going to allow Canberra to be developed in the way that is set by developers, or are we going to allow Canberra to be developed in the way that is set by planners? That is the choice that we have before us. Mr Humphries has just indicated that because of the structure of Canberra - and he explained it very clearly, with the hierarchy of town centres with regard to retail space - we do not have a free market. We have to dismiss this idea, which I heard some people put up, which says, "Let the free market dictate. If the free market dictates, people will all go off to the town centres and the others will die; and that is the way it is".

Mr Berry: You are not going to support prohibition, are you, Michael?

MR MOORE: There is an interjection from Mr Berry, "Are you going to go for prohibition?". No, Mr Berry, I never go for prohibition; but I also never go for a totally free market. I know that it is going to be very difficult for you to understand, but there is actually middle ground. It is that middle ground that we are concentrating on here - finding that balance. As I was saying, there is a whole series of other policy issues on which we should do a cost-benefit analysis and, on balance, try to find out the way that we can find most benefit for the most number of people and, at the same time, protect the rights of smaller people.

We do not expect a simplistic approach; nor do I believe that the original motion by Ms Horodny was simplistic. I think that was a very unfair accusation by the Government. However, I think it is appropriate for the Government to have to wrestle with this particular issue that Mr Humphries is talking about - developing a strategic plan. There is no doubt that the retail plan that Mr Humphries is talking about may well go some way to satisfying the Assembly that it answers some, perhaps even all, of those questions. If Mr Humphries is confident that the retail plan will satisfy the Assembly, then of course he would be willing to support this amendment and the motion, because he would be able to come back at the next sittings of the Assembly and say, "Here is the retail plan; it will satisfy the needs of the Assembly as to how much retail space will go where and when it should go there". They are the questions that he must answer. That will be a sophisticated response, Mr Humphries. If you are able to do that, then of course you would welcome this motion with the amendment.

Mr Humphries also suggested that this is the first time in the Australian Capital Territory we will ever have had that sort of approach. It may be the first time since self-government, Mr Humphries, but it certainly is not the first time in the history of Canberra, because the strategic plan of 1984 and previous plans were about ensuring the appropriate amount of retail space, combined with the appropriate amount of office space, and when and where it should be located. It is only where development has been initiated outside the control of that plan that we have begun to see the sorts of problems that we are trying to wrestle with today.

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Mr Humphries also went on to say that we simply cannot support this motion because there would be a thousand or so jobs attached to the expansion of the retail centres at Tuggeranong, Woden and probably Belconnen; but certainly at the first two. Let us take that to its logical conclusion. Mr Humphries, if what we want to do is get jobs and we are not concerned about these issues, why do we not then take the approach that they have taken in France? I imagine that you, in particular, because you like to visit France, have been to one of the French hypermarches. I am sure that Mr Cornwell and others have, too. They are a very interesting shopping centre - a single shop, by and large, where you can buy pretty well everything except cars. You can buy almost anything else.

Mr De Domenico: Have you been there, too, Mr Moore?

MR MOORE: Indeed, I have been there. That is why I am describing it. I must say that it is 10 years or more since I have been in one of these, but I have been there. They are usually located just outside the town, and they drag people away from the other shopping centres. That is the free market. If we are going to take your logic, then let us make some area available for a hypermarche and call tenders. Why do we not do it on the other side of the Governor-General's house, in the horse paddocks beyond Weston Creek? It would be a great boost to Weston Creek, too. What you can do is say, "Let us call for tenders for such a hypermarche". At the same time, you could watch how people who are now advocating expansion of the retail centres squeal. That is exactly what they will do, because it will affect their business. We do have the potential to extend this. Such a project would bring thousands and thousands of jobs.

It may well be that this is such an attractive proposal that the Government will adopt it or will put it into a plan for retail space in Canberra. If it is developed as part of a strategic plan where we know what is going to happen to the hierarchy of stores and this adds yet another dimension to the hierarchy, then it may well be a positive thing. But let us understand what it is going to do and let us plan it. Let us not do the reverse, as they have done at the Gold Coast. We know that the Gold Coast, by and large, has been fairly much developed as a free market. The whole of the Gold Coast development has been initiated by developers, with minimal input from planners. Apart from the climate - and, even on climate, I must say that I prefer here - which of the cities is preferable to live in? Anybody who has lived in Canberra knows that this is a much more delightful city.

Ms McRae: Not if you have to shop at your local shop.

MR MOORE: Ms McRae interjects, "Not if you have to shop at your local shop". If you have to shop at your local shop at the moment, yes; that is okay, unless you happen to be in one of those suburban areas where there has been this kind of impact. The local shopping areas, of course, are not designed to meet your full shopping needs, and that is why we have the hierarchy to meet different needs. That is how it is generally viewed in Canberra.

What we have is a situation of balance. We are talking about balance. We can expect, and should expect, the Government to set out what that balance should be. That is a role of planners, and it is a challenge for the Minister for Planning. That is why the very sensible amendment that I have proposed should make this motion basically irresistible.

MS McRAE (11.23): I rise to oppose both Mr Moore's amendment and Ms Horodny's motion. But, in saying that, I would like to give Ms Horodny some comfort. I believe that she probably read this speech in *Hansard* before she moved her motion. I am quite aware that when the Liberals moved against the expansion of the Hyperdome it was done with a caveat, and the caveat was that further study be undertaken. I have no problem with that. Of course, it was the argument that was put around it that was so interesting. I am sure that this is what Ms Horodny read before she put her motion. Mrs Carnell said:

Again, we come back to things that really matter in this city, and that is things like 2,000 youth unemployed and an unknown number of women who would normally get jobs in their local shopping centres, who would normally be able to pick up some part-time work when the kids are at school ... where will the jobs come from?

She continued:

That is not even considering the social issues around allowing our small suburban shopping centres to go to the wall. There is the issue of Canberra's ageing. We know that in percentage terms Canberra is ageing at a faster rate than other cities. What are Canberra's ageing people going to do to get down to the Hyperdome if they do not have a local shopping centre?

I imagine that Ms Horodny took a lot of comfort from that, but now we have a slightly different tune.

Mrs Carnell: No, not at all.

MS McRAE: You will get your chance to argue all of that. It is all right; I am on your side. Do not get too excited. But the differences in attitude, the differences in opinions expressed, the differences in the interests of the local youth and the young mums are of great interest to us and have to be noted. What we have here today is a debate that comes after a great deal of work has been done. I believe that all the issues that have been raised about Woden were raised about Tuggeranong, and I believe that there were other interests that prevented people from supporting the expansion of the Tuggeranong Hyperdome. I do believe that there is room for the Tuggeranong expansion and the Woden expansion. I believe this, for a range of reasons.

Despite all Mr Moore's calls for checks and balances, I think Mr Moore's arguments are disingenuous because the checks and balances are there. Woden Plaza management could not stand up and say, "Tomorrow we are doubling our space". They had to go through a statutory process which this Assembly put in place. Dare I say that it was mostly at the instigation of Mr Moore that all this business began way back when Mr Moore ran exactly the same line about checks and balances, the public getting their say and correct input.

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It all came about a long time ago, and we have all been struggling with it ever since, as Mr Humphries well knows. All that process has been done and has been done to a level of excellence which shows up some of our own problems with planning within the ACT which are much more profound than the social processes that are now being undertaken in the preliminary assessment process.

All the issues that Mrs Carnell raised are of serious concern. Their stand is blatantly hypocritical. One could argue against what is being argued now. Never mind, I will not be churlish about that. What should have been done in Tuggeranong was clear, but what should be done now is even clearer. First of all, we cannot turn back the clock, as other members have said. There is no romantic ideal about local shops. They did not serve my purposes when my three children were young. Neither did the local suburban centre serve the purposes of any mother with three children; nor did it serve the purposes of ageing people. For instance, the local shops where I lived never had a pharmacy. My mother needs to go to a pharmacy. Instantly, the local shops did not serve her needs. There is a range of needs that individual families have that the hierarchy of shops never dealt with. We have been shown quite clearly in the expert work that has been done by Lend Lease that there has been a major shift in community attitude to shopping and to what a shopping centre can provide. They have not done that out of the blue. They have done that against the requirements that this Assembly has set as statutory requirements, and they have done it with great thoroughness.

That leads back to the matters, as I said, which Mrs Carnell raised against us a couple of years back and which still remain questions for us as an Assembly to solve. They are social issues which this development has, in essence, nothing to do with; they are the challenges to the greater plan. What are we doing about public transport? How are we responding to the needs of our ageing community? What are we doing for mothers and their children? What are we doing for frail people who cannot use the roads and transport? Those questions remain.

Whether or not Woden Plaza goes ahead with its development, whether or not the town centres expand, those social issues remain. But developing or not developing on some romantic notion of what the local shop did and did not do is not the way forward. The way forward is to understand what will make people's lives easier and what people do want; and then proceed on the basis of thorough information, not on the basis of some Mr Stevenson-type survey. I believe that the preliminary assessment work that has been put before us has done a lot of that work. I think the Government has now done that further work. I will look with great interest at that work, because I fear that we are getting messages today that the clock is going to be turned back; and I would be very fearful of that. To move backwards now, when we have before us a range of information which is at odds with some of the romantic notions that we have about what is a good community, would be foolish indeed. What we need to do is come to grips with what people are saying, doing and acting out in our city.

Despite all our ideas about how local shopping centres work, where do the vast majority of people go? To our town centres. Despite all our efforts to suggest that the local shops fulfil a basic need, where do people go? To the town centres. It is not something that I want to believe in, because it is against my notions of social justice. I always believe -

and probably my party believes and most of us still believe - that there is an equity question about people who can only walk to their local shop, people who do not have access to cars, people who have problems in even getting on buses and young people who cannot afford to use the buses. There is a very basic equity question there, but I cannot stand up and say that we have to stop town centre developments because there is an equity question. There is a very serious equity question, but I do not see that standing up here and preventing town centres from expanding, at the express wish of a great deal of people in the ACT, is going to solve that equity question.

I want to pursue the equity question in other forums, in other places, and to come to grips with how we, as a collective, can assist those very people who most need our assistance. But I do not see that standing up here and saying that town centres ought not expand is helpful today, as it was not in the least helpful when the Liberal Party took that stance against the Tuggeranong Hyperdome. All the arguments used against it, despite the fact that they were calling for further evidence, were based on a lot of romanticism at the time and were grasping at the same arguments as are being grasped at today.

This party will not support either Mr Moore's amendment or the motion. The party and I support very strongly some better understanding of how to meet the needs of people who cannot afford buses, who cannot drive or who find difficulty in using the types of centres that we have planned. I think it is actually a bigger issue than just retail. Our roads are often too big; our suburbs are badly designed; the planners have not taken into account the type of society that we have become. I do not think governments have the answers yet. I am not suggesting that we will have them even tomorrow. But what we have to face is that this is the issue that faces us all; that we need to agree that we want to develop communities where people can live, work and be comfortable. That is an issue, no doubt; but putting a moratorium on town centres is not going to solve that problem. We will not be supporting this motion.

MR DE DOMENICO (Minister for Urban Services) (11.32): Mr Speaker, as my colleague Mr Humphries has foreshadowed, the Government's retail policy is to be released in the very near future. To have this debate now, prior to that release, is, to my mind, not only inappropriate but also, to be a bit bolder, perhaps a waste of this Assembly's time. However, I will keep my comments brief, based on the statements I have just made.

Mr Speaker, Mr Humphries has dealt with the planning aspects of this motion that seeks to place a moratorium on town centre development other than in Gungahlin. I will deal with some of the other aspects of the debate. The Government has recognised that many local retail centres have been experiencing, or are likely to experience, trading difficulties because of a range of social, economic and retail industry factors, and that a long-term strategic plan for the future development of retail industry in the ACT is needed. I noted with interest that Ms Horodny said on radio this morning that a long-term strategy was needed. That is exactly what this Government is about to release very shortly, Ms Horodny - a long-term strategy. I think you knew that as well. As Mr Humphries suggested, you chose to move this motion today for your own reasons.

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There is another thing I must comment on, by the way. I did not hear your comments on radio, Ms Horodny, but I believe that you said that the Gowrie shops had closed. As someone who lived in Gowrie for many years and who regularly shops there - I have an appointment to go and see the physiotherapist there next week - I hope to God that they have not shut, because we are all going to be in trouble. I suggest that before you say that on the public airwaves you get your facts straight, because it can affect trading in those areas if someone as responsible as you says that publicly.

Ms Horodny also stated that to do nothing to assist small retailers would mean their death knell. This Government acknowledges the pressures being placed on many small shopping centres and will put in place concrete initiatives to ensure, where possible, their future viability. However, research is required to better understand the changes occurring within retailing in Canberra at all levels and their implications for the future. The recent review of trading hours conducted by Mr John Hyndes is one of three major studies undertaken towards this goal. Mr Humphries has already mentioned the others.

In his report Mr Hyndes identified the area of main concern and contention in relation to retail trading hours as supermarket retailing. Supermarkets are regarded as anchor tenants in town centres, group centres and local centres, and Mr Hyndes concluded that, in general, local centres have become or will become non-viable if local supermarkets close. Mr Hyndes recommended the introduction of a hierarchical trading hours regime. The regime would be primarily targeted at supermarket-type activity and would give the longest trading hours to local centres, followed by group centres, with the most restricted hours being allocated to town centres. Special arrangements were proposed for stand-alone supermarkets, depending on size, fruit and vegetable markets, Christmas and public holidays, and special trading days. Significant fines for breaches - \$20,000 for corporations and \$2,000 for individuals - were proposed. However, as I mentioned earlier, the report of the review of trading hours is one of three reports that the Government is considering in the development of a retail strategy for the ACT, the other two being, as Mr Humphries said, Ibecon, which was commissioned by the previous Government, and the report to the Territory Planning Authority on the social impact of retail changes.

Mr Speaker, the report of the trading hours review acknowledges these reports and notes that its findings and recommendations need to be reviewed in the light of, and integrated with, these other reports, particularly the social impact study. It is important that the Greens recognise and understand this. The trading hours report - indeed, any of the reports that have been mentioned - do not stand alone. They need to be considered together and in the context of other information and research on planning, development and retail-related matters. The issue of retailing in town, group and local centres is not just a simple big business versus small business issue either, as some would like to believe. The Government is strongly aware of the community's concerns about the decline in business in many local centres. On the other hand, there are many small businesses in group and town centres. In Woden Plaza alone, for example, there are some 300 tenants. Many of them support initiatives such as the recent Lend Lease proposal to extend the Woden Plaza because it will benefit them and their customers. A large number of those small business tenants have recently written to Mr Humphries and to other members of this Assembly indicating their support for the proposed expansion.

In formulating its retail policy, Mr Speaker, and considering the future of retailing hours restrictions in the ACT, the Government needs to consider not only the differing concerns of retailers within local, group and town centres but also the needs and demands of consumers. Extended trading hours have been demonstrated to be highly attractive to Canberrans, with many of the larger supermarkets now experiencing some of their highest turnover outside of what would be considered traditional trading hours. Factors such as the generally high mobility and earnings of the ACT community, combined with a comparatively high number of families where both parents work, have combined to make extended trading hours a boon to many in Canberra. The Government must look also at what is best for the community as a whole. The Government recognises the particular needs of those in the community whose mobility is restricted and for whom convenient shopping for essential goods is an important consideration. We must balance - Mr Moore talked about balance, and this Government has a balance - this against the community demand for greater choice, flexible trading hours and more competitive prices.

In conclusion, Mr Speaker, we recognise the importance of trading hours to retail policy and we are giving close consideration to the review of trading hours as part of our development of a comprehensive retail policy. Consistent with both our philosophical approach and the Territory's obligations under the competition principles agreement, we are open to a level of regulation that is in the public interest, but we will need to be clearly satisfied that such an approach is the best available option. A blunt instrument such as a moratorium on retail development at town centres clearly does not meet that public interest test. That is why we will oppose the motion, and that is why we will oppose Mr Moore's amendment.

Mr Speaker, much has been said about what was said in *Hansard* before. There is no doubt that the Liberal Party did support no more expansion in the big centres until we had some studies done, and here they are.

Ms McRae: You changed your minds.

Mr Berry: Crass politics.

MR DE DOMENICO: I note the interjections, Mr Speaker. This Government has been in power for less than 18 months. We went to the community saying, "We will, first of all, commission some proper studies. After we have the opportunity of having a look at those studies, we will then make a decision".

Ms McRae: Do nothing.

MR DE DOMENICO: We will then make a decision. That is to be made very shortly, Ms McRae. We are not sitting on our hands like the previous Government did. The shopping centre trading hours issue did not happen just in February 1995. It had been brewing and brewing for years. There have not been amendments to the trading hours since 1975, for heaven's sake.

Ms McRae: Because they were perfectly good. They were good, that is why; and they are still good. I like 24-hour shopping; it is good.

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MR DE DOMENICO: You lot were in power for nearly five years and you did nothing, Ms McRae. This Government is going to take the bull by the horns. We are not going to please everybody in the community. There will be some criticism of what the Government will announce next week or the week after.

Ms McRae: You bet.

MR DE DOMENICO: Ms McRae says, "You bet". Ms McRae is already criticising something she has not seen. We know that that is the lot of the Opposition in this place - criticise for the sake of criticising.

Mr Whitecross: We just know how you fix things.

MR DE DOMENICO: Mr Whitecross interjects, "It depends on how you think". They will fix you properly, mate, if you do not do your job properly in this place. I will tell you what we will do, Mr Whitecross. Unlike your colleagues behind you who did nothing for five years, we will take the bull by the horns and make the tough decisions that need to be made in order to help the community as a whole, noting that individual members of the community might disagree with what we might have to say.

MR WOOD (11.41): Mr Speaker, in declining to support the Greens' motion, the Opposition's approach is entirely consistent. We did not support a moratorium when it was proposed by the now Government some two or three years ago. We believe today, as then, that this is an inappropriate way to proceed. It was not the view of Mr De Domenico and company at that time. A moment ago Mr De Domenico sounded eminently reasonable in saying, "Yes, we had a short-term proposal for a moratorium pending further reviews". But that was not exactly what happened at the time. They blew this issue up, sensationalised it and carried on forever about it. Let me add to what Ms McRae read. Let me quote the Chief Minister, and this is something she will overcome, I would expect, when her deputy delivers the retail strategy shortly.

Mrs Carnell: Mr Humphries will.

MR WOOD: Mr Humphries. On page 4191 of volume 4 of 4 of *Hansard* for 1994 - it is probably the page Mrs Carnell has - she is recorded as having said this:

The fact is that if you drive around Canberra, and certainly if you drive around the valley, it would be hard not to come up with the conclusion that we already have too much retail space in this city.

Somehow she is going to have to accommodate to the problems she saw then. Let me quote what Mr De Domenico said at page 4205:

Madam Speaker, if it is wrong to protect small local business in the Tuggeranong Valley, we are wrong.

Okay, I do not argue with that. I agree with that statement. He continued:

If it is red tape to protect small business in the Tuggeranong Valley, live on red tape.

It was this man who brought down the Red Tape Task Force report. This argument at the time was totally wrapped up in a great amount of hype to be merely opportunistic, to take every advantage that was available at the time. It was typical of this Government. Mr De Domenico at that time, and subsequently, made a great number of statements about protecting small business. I have not seen anything yet, and he is now holding out a promise of something in a fortnight or so. So we do not know. We wait in hope. I hope that something is delivered.

This motion by the Greens, however, is too arbitrary. At least they are consistent, which is what these people across the way are not. The motion is altogether too arbitrary. We all seem to agree that there are very significant problems. I think there is a consensus emerging that this is because of changing patterns. We live in a city that is always deemed to be well planned, but that well-planned city, certainly in this case, has not been able readily to adjust to the changing social habits of people. People have changed the way they do things. The rather inflexible planning we have had - that we have a shop here and then another bigger group of shops here, and then the big town centres - has not been effective in protecting those smaller shops. In some circumstances those small shops have done extremely well because of the entrepreneurial skills of their management. They have survived. In other areas, among other factors, lacking those sorts of skills, they have not survived or they are doing very badly.

In some areas I tried to convince shopowners to join with the Government to do something in the area. Mr Lamont, in the end, was able to get up some precinct committees. In other areas I know that the shopowners - not the tenants, but the people who own the premises - were absolutely reluctant to spend a cent on their premises. It is some of those shopping areas that are now in the most difficulty because they are not able to compete with the greater attraction elsewhere. It is very much a local issue. Where the local owners and the traders have worked hard with energy and vision, they survive. Maybe some who do have energy and vision do not survive.

There are very difficult circumstances, and imposing a blanket moratorium is not necessarily the answer. There is a process that we have to work through. That is what I told Mr De Domenico and Mrs Carnell a couple of years ago. There is a process that has to be worked through and we are now working through that process.

Mrs Carnell: And we said that that is fine.

MR WOOD: You were not prepared to listen a little while ago.

Mrs Carnell: I am sorry; but we did.

Mr De Domenico: We did, Mr Wood. You should read everything that you have in front of you.

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MR WOOD: No, you were not. I have read this very carefully. It is well annotated, Mr De Domenico. You should go back and read every word of what you said here in this Assembly and out in the community. Let us have a look through that process. Let me point out that the opposition to the Greens' motion today does not mean that we are supporting the expansion of the Hyperdome and Woden Plaza.

Mrs Carnell: Ms McRae just said that you did.

Mr De Domenico: Ms McRae just said that you did.

MR WOOD: No. You were not listening carefully enough.

Mr De Domenico: I was, very carefully.

MR SPEAKER: Order!

MR WOOD: It does not mean that we will either support it or reject it. There are still processes to be worked through. Ms McRae pointed out the very good points that were presented, but there is still more to be done. There are committees of this Assembly, and this Assembly itself, to make decisions on those matters. I do not think that carrying this motion will solve the problem. This is not the time to deal with it in this way.

MRS CARNELL (Chief Minister) (11.48): Mr Speaker, I was very interested to hear Ms McRae make this comment: "Roll on 24-hour trading. That is what we want. Let Tuggeranong and Woden expand as quickly as possible".

Ms McRae: Yes. Yes.

MRS CARNELL: She says, "Yes, yes, yes". Quite seriously, Mr Speaker, that is a formula for disaster. As much as it is what Leda and Lend Lease would love us to do, to have 24-hour trading and let Tuggeranong and Woden expand as much as they want to immediately would be a disaster. The reason why this Government in opposition supported a moratorium while we had a whole look at what the impact of these sorts of extensions would be on both the social networks and the retailing networks in the valley was that that sort of an approach would almost overnight take out all of our local centres. Ms McRae was quite happy to sit there and say, "Yes, yes, that is what we want". Well, it is not what the Government wants.

I think it is very important to quote from the Liberal Party local shops policy that we went to the last election with. I am happy to table this after I quote from it. The Liberal Party said this, quite definitely:

Unlike Labor, we will not stand back and watch the ACT's neighbourhood centres die. These centres are an important component of Canberra's planning, and provide both a community focus and service for our suburbs.

A Liberal Government will establish an independent inquiry into the ACT retail trades industry to advise on:

- . what are the key factors affecting the viability of small suburban and group shopping centres.
- . whether these centres can continue to survive.
- . the social impact that any centre closures would have upon the community, particularly the effect upon access for people with disabilities, elderly persons and single parents.
- . the future retail needs of the ACT, particularly in Belconnen and the Tuggeranong Valley.
- . whether amendments to the planning laws impacting upon Canberra shopping centres are required.

... ..

A Liberal Government will also:

- . implement any necessary reforms that may emerge from the findings of this inquiry.

It does go on, Mr Speaker, but I would be happy to table that. That is exactly what this Government has done. We have had a series of inquiries looking at the social impact and the retailing impact of such things as the expansion of major centres and retail trading hours, and we will be ready, next week hopefully, to table our retail strategy for community input. That retail strategy attempts to create the balance that I believe is important and that my Government believes is important.

Unfortunately, those opposite, who believe in 24-hour trading and letting centres expand as much as they like, obviously do not believe in that sort of balance. We do not believe that we should allow 24-hour trading and centres to expand as much as they like without at the same time having a proper policy and approach in place to ensure that local shopping centres at least have a fair go. Local shopping centres are not after protection; they are not after the Government coming in and looking after them. What they are after is a situation where they have some sort of a show of providing the services that the people of Canberra want. Ms McRae is saying that this is silly.

Ms McRae: It is.

MRS CARNELL: I am afraid, Ms McRae, that it is not silly.

Ms McRae: You are a member of the Liberal Party, Mrs Carnell, remember. Free enterprise, remember.

MR SPEAKER: Order! You have already spoken, Ms McRae.

MRS CARNELL: Local shopping centres are not there for just the milk and the bread. They do provide other services to the people of their suburbs. It is certainly true that not all local shopping centres will survive. The retail market is a dynamic one. Things change, and things certainly have changed over the last 10 years. People in Canberra, and people probably everywhere in the world, are choosing more and more often to shop in one-stop shopping centres - in other words, in malls and large shopping centres. But that does not mean that they are not shopping with local retailers. I think in excess of 90 of the small businesses at Woden Plaza are owned and operated by local business operators. To go down the path proposed by the Greens and to say to Woden and the other centres that they may not expand for five years - a very arbitrary term - I think, would be really wrong. Equally, I think it would be similarly stupid to take the approach of those opposite and say, "Let them expand as much as they like, and we really do not care if the smaller centres are affected, and very adversely affected, by this approach".

When Woden Plaza management came to see us - I suppose that it must be as long as 12 months ago - about their proposed extension, the first thing we said to them was, "You are going to have to go out and do some studies, some surveys, about what sort of impact this would have on the local area". They did not go out and get it. Obviously, they commissioned independent entities to go out and get that sort of information. Mr Speaker, that is totally in line with our approach to this sort of venture. It is essential, Mr Speaker, that we get a balance between town centre shopping and local shopping centre shopping, and, of course, in between, neighbourhood and group centres as well. That is what our retail strategy will do. It certainly will not make us very popular with a number of entities. I suppose that any balancing position always does that. (*Quorum formed*)

Mr Speaker, this Government will be supporting competition in Canberra. It will be supporting an approach to retailing that will give people the choice that they obviously want. It will not be supporting an open slather approach, such as those opposite have, which will allow local businesses indiscriminately to close.

Ms McRae: Nonsense! Who put the Land Act in?

MRS CARNELL: Quite seriously, Mr Speaker, if Ms McRae believes that 24-hour trading and allowing Tuggeranong and Woden to expand indiscriminately, or as much as they like within the planning legislation, without a proper retail strategy, without some strategy in place to ensure that our local shopping centres have at least a fair go, she is really wrong, because it would cause those problems.

MR WHITECROSS (Leader of the Opposition) (11.56): Mrs Carnell has made a classic "Don't want to do", "have it all ways" speech. On the one hand she says that we have to throw obstacles in the way of expansion of major town centres like Woden and Tuggeranong to protect small business people, and on the other hand she says that she is not so upset about the expansion of Woden because she heard that there are some local small business people in Woden.

The fact is, Mr Speaker, that this is not a simple issue. We have a planned city and we need strategies in relation to these things. There is no doubt about that. Any simplistic formulation - whether we allow everybody to do what they like or whether we arbitrarily stop people from making decisions to expand - is not going to work. It is not going to be practical. We need to use the provisions of the planning Act to ensure that there is proper consideration - - -

Mr De Domenico: Do you support 24-hour trading, like Ms McRae, or don't you? What are your views on that?

MR SPEAKER: Order!

MR WHITECROSS: Thank you, Mr Speaker. It is appropriate that we go through these proper planning processes to consider the implications of these expansions and to consider where they fit into the overall scheme of things. That is necessary, obviously. But to adopt the proposition that Mrs Carnell was promoting - that we have to put obstacles in the way of the trading of town centre businesses in order to give the neighbourhood centres a fair go - is a nonsense. All businesses in the ACT, no matter what they are doing, have to operate on the basis that they - - -

Mr De Domenico: Tell us whether you support 24-hour trading, like Ms McRae does.

Mr Hird: Yes. What about the 24-hour trading?

MR SPEAKER: Order! Mr Whitecross has the floor.

MR WHITECROSS: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr De Domenico: No answer.

MR SPEAKER: Interjections are not supposed to be answered.

MR WHITECROSS: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, to support a proposition that it is the role of the Government to throw obstacles in the way of one set of businesses to allow another set of businesses a fair go or a chance to have a cut of the action is not a sensible proposition. Businesses have to appeal to customers. They have to get customers through the door on the basis that they are attractive to those customers. There is no point in being part of a planning process which allows businesses to open up in one place and which causes them to close somewhere else. That is also a nonsense proposition. So we have planning processes which get us to where we need to go.

Mr Speaker, this is not a motion that we ought to be supporting. It puts an arbitrary blockage in the way of the sensible processes that have been going on. We opposed the Liberals when they tried to adopt this approach in relation to the Tuggeranong Hyperdome. We oppose it now. There are proper planning processes to decide whether expansions are suitable and viable or not, and it is those processes that should be gone through, not arbitrary restrictions.

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Mr Speaker, I make this observation without prejudice to the question of whether particular expansions go ahead or not. It is interesting to observe, Mr Speaker, that the proposed expansion of the Hyperdome, which the Liberals have such a set against and which has been so widely debated in the community, would still leave the Hyperdome smaller than the Belconnen Mall but servicing a larger population. I think there is a lot of chaff in the air on these issues. I think it is important, when we get down to the analysis of these things through the planning process, that we look at them in a clear-headed way.

Mr De Domenico: What about 24-hour shopping?

MR WHITECROSS: I do not think we do that with arbitrary things. Mr De Domenico says, "What about 24-hour trading?"

Mr De Domenico: That is what Ms McRae said. Do you agree with that?

MR WHITECROSS: Mr De Domenico, there are businesses trading 24 hours a day now and there are customers. No-one makes them do it. They do it because they want to do it.

Mr De Domenico: But Ms McRae said that the Labor Party believes in 24-hour trading. Does it or does it not? You are the leader. Tell us. Are you the leader or aren't you?

MR SPEAKER: Order!

MR WHITECROSS: Why should not a business which is allowed to trade 24 hours do so if they believe that it is in their commercial interest?

Mr De Domenico: That is a cop-out, Mr Whitecross. You are the leader. Tell us what you think.

MR SPEAKER: Order!

MR WHITECROSS: Mr Speaker, if Mr De Domenico wants to take away from customers choices which they currently have, then good luck to him.

Mr De Domenico: No, I am not saying that. I am asking: What is the Labor Party's policy? Do you know?

MR SPEAKER: Order! This is a debate, not a free-for-all.

MR WHITECROSS: I look forward to his policy announcements in relation to that matter.

MS HORODNY (12.03), in reply: I have to say that what I have heard here today has been absolutely pathetic. The Labor and Liberal parties once again are going weak at the knees when it comes to big business. I suppose that I could have expected it. I am very pleased that Mr Moore supported and, indeed, moved to amend my motion. I think it was a very sensible amendment, but unfortunately it has not been adopted either.

I have been told that Mr Osborne also is in support of this motion and he also is very disappointed that the Labor and Liberal parties are both paying lip-service to small business. He asked that that message be conveyed in my speech. There have been a few - - -

Mrs Carnell: Could you apologise to Gowrie's supermarket?

MS HORODNY: I am coming to that now. The Gowrie supermarket is not the Gowrie supermarket in the suburb of Gowrie. It is the supermarket that services the Gowrie Hostel. It is called the Gowrie Supermarket. It is in Lowanna Street in Braddon, just next to Northbourne Avenue. Does it really matter, Mr De Domenico, whether it is a supermarket down there or a supermarket on this side of town?

Mr De Domenico: It does matter, because the guy who owns the Gowrie supermarket is a bit concerned. He nearly had a heart attack.

MR SPEAKER: Order!

MS HORODNY: Does it really matter? We are talking about two supermarkets in the ACT that have closed down just this week.

I would like to go over some of the things that members in this house have spoken about. Mr De Domenico says that the Government is coming up with a long-term strategy. I am very much looking forward to having a look at that. I hope that it is a real solution and not like your truck parking solution, which was indeed a Clayton's solution to the problem.

Mr De Domenico: That is a matter of opinion, Ms Horodny.

MR SPEAKER: Order!

Mr De Domenico: You might not like it. It probably is pretty good if you do not like it.

MR SPEAKER: Order, Mr De Domenico!

MS HORODNY: I am also very happy to table the motion I have here which Mrs Carnell tried to put up in November 1994.

Mrs Carnell: Read it out.

MS HORODNY: It says:

That a moratorium immediately be instituted to ensure that proposed extensions to the Hyperdome and other retail sites in the immediate area are not proceeded with until a full analysis of the social and commercial needs of the Tuggeranong Valley is completed.

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Mr De Domenico: There they are. Have you read them?

MS HORODNY: Interesting. Okay. I would be very happy to table that.

Ms Follett: I raise a point of order, Mr Speaker. I have heard you caution Mr De Domenico six times in a row in an attempt to bring him to order. I suggest to you that he is persistently defying your order, and you ought to take the appropriate action.

MR SPEAKER: I have called Mr De Domenico once by name, but I would remind all members that this is a debate, not a free-for-all. I insist on order being maintained.

MS HORODNY: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I would like to go through some of the arguments that members here have put forward against this, and I will begin with Mr Kaine. Mr Kaine said a number of things earlier today, but I would like to quote from *Hansard* of November 1994 when this issue was discussed. Mr Kaine was talking about small business being the engine of growth and employment opportunity in this city. He said that people “want to be able to hop down to the corner store on a Sunday afternoon and buy something if they need it quickly”; that “people want access to a wide range of shopping facilities, some nearby and some a little more remote”. He also said:

When we get into a debate about which shopping centres should expand and which ones should not, we should not allow ourselves to be drawn into a debate about whether we need small business or big business; we obviously need both ... They -

the public, that is -

do not want to see the big shopping centres grow to such an extent that the small local shopping centres are forced to close down ...

He went on to say:

How does one strike the balance? The balance can be struck only by government exercising its prerogative and its discretion about what gets done where ...

He went on to say:

... this is a planned city. ... It is a city where government decision affects everything. This Government has no compunction whatsoever about making a major decision that is forcing petrol station owners into bankruptcy. Why do they have a problem with the notion that they should exercise their discretion and their judgment about a decision as to whether the Hyperdome should expand?

He also said:

The Government -

that is the previous Labor Government -

does not seem to want to intervene in this. I think they have to.

He believed that the Government at the time should have intervened. Now he says that the Government should not intervene. He went on to say:

They have proven that they can do it. They have done it before, and I think they are going to have to do it again.

Is it not interesting how things change when you get into government?

I think it was Mr Humphries who said that no-one is suggesting that the clock be turned back. Indeed, no-one is suggesting that the clock be turned back. There is an attitude shift to shopping, and there is a whole range of reasons why this is happening. Ms McRae said that the Lend Lease survey was a very good one. She puts a lot of emphasis on that survey, but I would not accept a Lend Lease survey. This is a huge problem because we are asking the fox to be in charge of the henhouse in this instance. What we are doing is saying that Lend Lease, who are proponents of a particular proposal, are doing a public survey on shopping and retail needs in the ACT. It is absolutely ridiculous. I very much look forward to the Government's strategy on this issue.

Ms McRae also said, "Well, where do people go? They go to the town centre". But why do we not ask ourselves why this is so? Let us look at how much work the Government has done in supporting the local shops. Zero. There has been no work done. There is no strategy in place. There is no effort. There is no energy. There is no support for small business in the ACT. Mr Moore is bringing on the issue of the Tenancy Tribunal and the whole way we do or do not protect our small businesses in the town centres. I suggest that we do not protect them at all. They need our protection. I do not know how you can claim that you are supporting small business in the ACT. I see no evidence at all of this.

A number of speakers have said, "The local shops are not attractive. They are not drawing people to them". Let us look at the politics of this. We are looking at four town centres with big national companies - Leda, Lend Lease, Westfield and the Canberra Centre. There is a lot of money and a lot of power in those centres. By this Assembly not supporting a moratorium, which is simply to give - - -

Mr De Domenico: There are a lot of jobs, too, in small businesses.

MS HORODNY: Yes, I will come to jobs in a second, if I have the time. We simply want to give breathing space to the small businesses and the local shopping centres for five years. It is not a long time. We are oversupplied already.

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The public sector will be in decline in the ACT. We know that the housing market will be affected. We are saying that many things in the ACT will be affected by this current economic trend, yet you are saying that for the retail section it will be business as usual. You think that retail can just keep going on and on and expanding. It is just absolutely hopeless.

Someone mentioned entrepreneurial skills as well. That is asking local shopping centre owners to somehow carry a whole strategy for protecting local shops in the ACT. They are expected to work alone, to somehow spruce up their shops against the power of the national organisations. (*Extension of time granted*) When we compare the effort that we are expecting from the small businesses in the ACT with the huge money that is involved in the Woden Town Centre redevelopment, for instance, and the expansion, there is just no question that the playing field is even. It is absolutely not even. Whilst the Liberals found it easy to make these grand gestures in opposition, now that they are in power, now that they have the ability to deliver and fulfil their promises, they are unwilling to do so.

I have already said that putting a moratorium on town centre expansion is not a solution in itself. No-one is arguing that. Obviously, it is not a solution. However, a moratorium provides breathing space so that a proper local shops and small business strategy can be put into place. I would hope that that is something that the Government would be doing. I will be scrutinising your strategy very carefully when it comes out next week, or the week after. I hope that you address this issue, because it is a very critical issue. People out there are hurting. I have been going around shopping centres in my electorate. I have been talking to people in shopping centres at Charnwood and Florey, and many other shopping centres in Ginninderra, and there is no doubt that there is a lot of pain and a lot of agony out there. You are always talking about jobs, Mr De Domenico, so I hope that you address those issues in your strategy.

Question put:

That the amendment (**Mr Moore's**) be agreed to.

The Assembly voted -

AYES, 3

Ms Horodny
Mr Moore
Ms Tucker

NOES, 11

Mr Berry
Mrs Carnell
Mr Cornwell
Mr De Domenico
Ms Follett
Mr Humphries
Mr Kaine
Ms Reilly
Mr Stefaniak
Mr Whitecross
Mr Wood

Question so resolved in the negative.

Question put:

That the motion (**Ms Horodny's**) be agreed to.

The Assembly voted -

AYES, 3

Ms Horodny
Mr Moore
Ms Tucker

NOES, 11

Mr Berry
Mrs Carnell
Mr Cornwell
Mr De Domenico
Ms Follett
Mr Humphries
Mr Kaine
Ms Reilly
Mr Stefaniak
Mr Whitecross
Mr Wood

Question so resolved in the negative.

PUBLIC WORKS PROGRAM

Debate resumed from 15 May 1996, on motion by **Mr Wood**:

That as a positive measure to encourage growth and encourage employment in the ACT this Assembly urges the Government to:

- (1) accelerate the current public works program so that projects advance rapidly and no funds remain unspent; and
- (2) expand the program by the construction of such projects as:
 - (a) the Cultural Centre;
 - (b) the Government office block at Gungahlin;
 - (c) the Belconnen Indoor Pool;
 - (d) the visual arts access facility;
 - (e) the extension of Ginninderra Drive to Northbourne Avenue;

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- (f) the duplication of Drakeford Drive north of Isabella Drive;
- (g) the extension of the cycle path network;
- (h) the expansion of the Landcare, Parkcare programs, especially for weed control;
- (j) the refurbishment of run-down local shopping centres; and
- (k) the renewal of outdated playground equipment.

MR WOOD (12.19), in reply: This motion seems to have general support. I hope that it is authentic support, real support, and that we will see extra money allocated to tasks of the sort that I suggested, so that our public works program is increased and more employment is being undertaken.

Mr Berry: To make up for those cancelled ones.

MR WOOD: Yes; I hope that there are no cancelled projects. I hope that there is a significant amount of new money provided. This will require changes to the next two years' budgets at least of this three-year budget that we are told we have. I wait with anxiety to see such announcements in the near future.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Sitting suspended from 12.20 to 2.30 pm

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Absence of Members

MRS CARNELL: Mr Stefaniak will not be here for question time today. I will take any questions that would normally go to Mr Stefaniak.

MR BERRY: Ms Follett will be absent as well, Mr Speaker.

Disallowed Question

MR MOORE: Mr Speaker, my question is to Mr Whitecross in his capacity as Leader of the Opposition and the alternative government and Opposition member in charge of financial matters and things like that.

MR SPEAKER: Could you repeat that.

MR MOORE: My question is to Mr Whitecross as the shadow Minister responsible for financial matters.

Mr De Domenico: I raise a point of order, Mr Speaker. I suggest that you might ask whether Mr Moore is going to ask Mr Whitecross about something on the notice paper. If that is not the case, I would suggest that the question might be out of order.

MR SPEAKER: That is a fair question, Mr De Domenico.

MR MOORE: Mr Speaker, we had your ruling on this the other day, and I feel that I am well within it. Your ruling was with reference to standing order 116, which reads:

Questions may be put to a Member, not being a Minister, relating to any bill, motion, or other public matter connected with the business of the Assembly, of which the Member has charge.

Quite clearly, Mr Whitecross has charge of business of the Assembly to do with financial matters, Mr Speaker.

Mr Berry: Mr Speaker, if Mr Moore really wants Mr Whitecross to have charge of these matters, we are perfectly amenable to the proposition; but I think it is a bit premature.

MR SPEAKER: Mr Berry, there is no point of order on that matter. However, Mr Moore, I am afraid that your question to Mr Whitecross is out of order. Mr Whitecross does not have charge - much as he would like to, I am sure - of matters relating to any Bill, motion or other public matter connected with the business of the Assembly.

MR MOORE: Mr Speaker, I am quite comfortable with looking to change the standing orders in due time. That is not too difficult.

MR SPEAKER: Do you have a question?

MR MOORE: In that case, Mr Speaker, if you will allow me, I will ask my question of the Chief Minister.

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Mr Whitecross: I rise on a point of order, Mr Speaker. It is the normal custom of the house that you get one chance to ask a question. If you ask a question which is ruled out of order, then I would have thought that you have missed your chance and it is someone else's turn.

MR SPEAKER: No. I do not believe that he has missed his chance to ask the question, but he has missed his chance to ask the question now.

Budget Revenue

MR WHITECROSS: Mr Speaker, my question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, last week in answer to a question by Mr Moore you said that receipts collected within City Services were lower than expected. Will you now give the Assembly the details and the amounts of these shortfalls? Can you also give us the details of other areas of the budget which may be experiencing similar shortfalls in receipts collected?

MRS CARNELL: Mr Whitecross may not have noticed that it is not the end of the financial year yet. It is extremely difficult to give this Assembly any detailed run-down of where the budget is going to finish up when you actually have not finished the financial year. I am very happy to run through the areas where there have been some shortfalls. I have been quite public about them in the past.

MR SPEAKER: Without breaching the Executive policy rule.

MRS CARNELL: It will be no Executive policy, but the Assembly will have to accept that at this stage there obviously are no final figures. Even indicative figures would be next to useless at this stage. Shortfalls of approximately \$5m are related to the industrial dispute. In City Services, parking charges were not collected and fines were not imposed during the dispute. Fees at motor vehicle testing stations were not collected during the dispute. The Assembly might be interested to know that those bans have been reimposed and those fees are still not being collected. ACTION fares were not collected for a quite substantial period of time. All of those areas came to in excess of \$5m. Mr Whitecross did not actually ask me this, but there is a projected shortfall in revenue in such areas as conveyancing. As this Assembly would be well aware, the number of home sales in the Territory, particularly since last November, has shown a significant decrease. Obviously, that would be reflected directly in ACT Government revenue.

The Assembly would also be interested to know that one of the other areas of concern at this stage is tobacco franchise fees. We would like to think that the reason that they are below what we projected is that people are smoking less; but we think that there may be a compliance problem, which we are currently investigating, or alternatively it may be that tobacco products are being bought in different States - a situation that we are investigating also. I am sure that that helps Mr Whitecross.

MR WHITECROSS: I ask a supplementary question, Mr Speaker. Can the Chief Minister tell the Assembly when we will receive the monthly financial statements, to get further information on these matters?

MRS CARNELL: I will certainly take that question on notice. As I think I made clear to the Assembly, we have a deal of difficulty in getting monthly financial statements together.

Mr Berry: You are hiding behind this.

MRS CARNELL: No. As those opposite would be aware, one of the casualties of the industrial dispute was our computer system, Fiscal. Some \$135m worth of transactions carried out during the term of the dispute were all done manually. All of those transactions then had to be entered into our Fiscal system. That process is, I think, just about complete now. In fact, I am sure that it is complete now. As that is in place, we will be able to produce our monthly financial statements, which of course we always like to produce on time but cannot if we do not have computers.

Public Service - Workers Compensation

MR KAINE: I address a question to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, over the last year or so, on a number of occasions, a question has been raised about the management of workers compensation cases in the ACT government service and the difficulties that have been experienced. It has not been raised for a while. Can you tell the Assembly what the Government is currently doing to address the high number of long-term workers compensation claims and the spiralling costs of premiums in connection with workers compensation for ACT government service employees?

MRS CARNELL: I am sure that Mr Kaine was very interested, as I was, that Mr Berry laughed. He obviously thought workers compensation was a joke. Certainly, he treated it like that when he was the Minister in charge. I thank Mr Kaine for the question. This is a problem that governments right across Australia have to grapple with. Unfortunately, Mr Berry did not grapple with it, and that was the problem. Nowhere has this issue become more important than here in the ACT. Mr Speaker, since we came to office, the ACT Government has been working closely with the Public Service to change our focus away from bureaucratic processes and back to where it should be, and that is on the customer. Put simply, we inherited an absolute mess in the management of workers compensation issues. When this Government came to office, there were 422 long-term cases in the ACT Public Service that had not been resolved. Those are people who have been on workers compensation for longer than 45 weeks. There were no plans, no systems and no policies in place to resolve these cases and improve the quality of life for the hundreds of people involved with injury claims.

What has this Government done about this appalling situation? Today I can advise Mr Kaine and this Assembly that this Government has achieved a great deal. In fact, we have successfully closed or resolved one out of every five of the workers compensation claims that we inherited from the previous Follett Government; that is,

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85 out of 422 cases have now been resolved through better management strategies by the ACT Public Service and Comcare. I am also advised that a further 20 claims are due to be closed in the very near future. We have achieved this in just over 12 months. Comcare and the ACT Government have been working closely together for some months now to put in place a new workplace injury prevention and management strategy. What this means is that, of the remaining long-term claims that we inherited, all but eight have been systematically reviewed and appropriate management plans have been developed and are being implemented.

Mr Speaker, the mob opposite would be well aware that under their administration the annual premium for the entire ACT Public Service almost doubled from \$16m in 1991-92 to almost \$30m in the last financial year. Even allowing for the Commonwealth's decision to create a separate ACT premium pool in 1994-95, the premium increase over the four years was almost 80 per cent. The bad news is that just because of this mismanagement our premium is still increasing. Although our record has improved, we may not see a decrease until possibly 1997-98 at the earliest.

What I find the most amazing about all of this is that Mr Berry, supposedly the worker's friend, is happy to sit there and smile and joke and think that this whole thing is simply unimportant. Obviously, when he was Industrial Relations Minister, he found it pretty unimportant. What happened? People ended up on workers compensation for extremely long periods of time. Their quality of life was impacted upon - in fact, destroyed in many circumstances - but I am very pleased to say that we have addressed that issue. Our new approach to improving safety in the workplace and our better approach to cases when people unfortunately end up with an injury in the workplace have resulted in very close to 25 per cent of all long-term cases being resolved. As for Mr Berry's record, Mr Speaker, I do not think that Mr Berry should be sitting there smiling. I think he should be very ashamed.

Mr Berry: Mr Speaker, I wonder whether Mrs Carnell would table the strategy. There is no strategy. You cannot table it.

MR KAINE: I ask a supplementary question, Mr Speaker. I may have missed some of the numbers, but did I understand you to say, Chief Minister, that there were 422 cases outstanding a year or so ago, that about 100 of those cases have already been resolved and that all but eight have been comprehensively reviewed in the last 15 months?

MRS CARNELL: That is right, Mr Speaker. We still have to review eight cases out of the 422. They will be done very shortly. Mr Berry said that there was no strategy. We have gone from 422 long-term cases - people who have been on workers compensation for longer than 45 weeks and who had no plans in place, no systems, no policies to actually address the problems that they have - - -

Mr Berry: Table the strategy.

MR SPEAKER: Order! If you keep interjecting, you will not see any strategy whatsoever.

MRS CARNELL: Mr Speaker, I am very happy for Mr Berry to have a full and intricate briefing on exactly what the strategy involves and why nearly 25 per cent of all the cases we inherited just over 12 months ago have now been resolved and all but eight have a proper plan in place to resolve their problems.

Budget Presentation

MR MOORE: Mr Speaker, my question is to the Chief Minister because I cannot find anything in the notice paper in Mr Whitecross's name. Chief Minister, you informed - - -

Mr Berry: I raise a point of order. Mr Speaker, a whole range of other people in this chamber may wish to ask a question. Mr Moore has made an attempt, and his question was ruled out of order. It would be far better if everybody else had a turn.

MR MOORE: I think he should read standing order 113A. Chief Minister, you informed this house that you would not be able to bring down a budget in the middle of the year, as had been done prior to your Government by Ms Follett, the then Treasurer. You said that you would not be able to put a budget together because you were not sure what money was coming from the Commonwealth. Is it some source of embarrassment for you that the Labor Government in New South Wales has been able to bring down a budget which the parliament there will be able to consider prior to the new financial year?

MRS CARNELL: Mr Speaker, the reasons that I gave for delaying the budget were the uncertainty of the timing of the Premiers Conference and, of course, the desirability of incorporating any decisions taken by that conference into the 1996-97 budget. Mr Moore will realise that the ACT is somewhat more affected by fairly small changes in figures than a State like New South Wales is. Some States - Western Australia, for example - have already brought down their budgets; some States are going early still; some States are waiting till after the Premiers Conference. Two approaches have been taken. Taking into account the problems that we were having with the Fiscal financial system and taking into account that amounts of money that would not affect the total New South Wales pool would make an enormous amount of difference to the ACT, we believe that our approach is the most prudent approach. One of the most important reasons for bringing down an early budget is to ensure that departments are aware of what their budget constraints and challenges will be right from the beginning of the financial year. Mr Moore can be assured that that will be the case.

MR MOORE: I ask a supplementary question, Mr Speaker. Can the Chief Minister indicate what her intention is for future years, or is she also going to try to find excuses in future years to avoid bringing down the budget at a sensible time?

MR SPEAKER: Order! I think that is a hypothetical question, Chief Minister.

MRS CARNELL: Thank you very much, Mr Moore. From our perspective, it certainly was not an excuse, but it was something that we really did not want to do. An earlier budget is by far the most sensible strategy, Mr Moore, and it is something that we will be aiming at in the future.

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Hospital Bed Numbers

MS McRAE: My question is to the Chief Minister in her capacity as Minister for Health. My question is this: Is it true that, during the unprecedented period of emergency bypass in our public hospital system, patients requiring attention in the intensive care unit at our major and only trauma hospital were removed from that intensive care unit and transferred to Calvary Hospital?

MRS CARNELL: Emergency bypass is not unprecedented at Woden Valley Hospital at all - - -

Mr Humphries: That is right. Far from it.

MRS CARNELL: Far from it. It is the sort of thing that - - -

Ms McRae: I did not ask about that.

MRS CARNELL: You said that it was unprecedented. It certainly was not unprecedented. What emergency bypass actually means is that the hospital does not accept patients from interstate unless they need emergency stabilisation. Comments that were made by Mr Berry and others that somehow indicated to the community that emergency bypass meant that emergency patients would not be accepted at Woden Valley Hospital were aimed at scaring the community and undermining confidence in Woden Valley Hospital. The reality is that emergency bypass does not mean in any way that emergency patients will not be accepted. Of course they are accepted.

When emergency bypass is on, the Ambulance Service is advised that all general emergencies should be diverted to Calvary Hospital. Woden Valley Hospital still accepts major trauma patients and those patients requiring specialist services that can be provided only at Woden Valley Hospital. If Calvary Hospital is also full, then patients are taken at Woden. Mr Berry referred to two cardiac patients yesterday. As I understand it, one of those patients, as I said yesterday, was admitted by 9.00 am and the other one was allowed to go home after tests. Certainly, under some circumstances patients will be transferred from Woden Valley Hospital to Calvary, but they will be sent to Calvary only if appropriate medical services exist there. Major trauma patients certainly will be maintained at Woden, and patients in specialist areas that only Woden looks after will be maintained at Woden.

MS McRAE: I ask a supplementary question. My question still is: In that period of 24 hours, were patients removed from the intensive care unit and transferred to Calvary Hospital? Were patients actually removed?

MRS CARNELL: I am certainly very happy to get absolute details of what happened to every single patient at Woden Valley Hospital for the 24 hours, if those opposite would like that. It is normal practice during emergency bypass to transfer patients from one hospital to the other. It is the only sensible approach to take. It is interesting to me that yesterday those opposite were saying that we were treating too many patients. They were saying, "Shock, horror! You, the Government, are treating too many patients and you are spending too much money". Today they are saying that somehow we should have more beds and spend more money. Yesterday it was exactly the opposite. I think they really should make up their minds, Mr Speaker.

Operation Sell Canberra

MR HIRD: Mr Speaker, once again the Opposition got their hands caught in the lolly jar. My question is to Mr De Domenico in his capacity as Minister for Business, Employment and Tourism. Could he outline, for the parliament's information, a recent initiative launched by the Government named Operation Sell Canberra and its effect on the tourist industry in the region?

MR DE DOMENICO: Mr Speaker, as I have said many times before in this chamber, the tourism industry in the ACT is vital to our economic future. It is good to see visitor figures at a high point despite the flattening out of the domestic tourism market. I was privileged to announce some increased tourism figures here last week. Mr Speaker, the Government continues to initiate projects that will have a positive impact on tourism to our region. Operation Sell Canberra, which Mr Hird wants to know about, is yet another example. Whilst those opposite or others in the community continue to moan and groan and wring their hands, governments like ours are doing something. Operation Sell Canberra is a major familiarisation program which was held over the weekend of 3 to 5 May. I note that Mr Wood and Mr Whitecross participated in it, and I thank them for being there. It brought to the national capital more than 50 leading convention organisers and meeting planners in a bid to showcase our city as a premier meetings, conventions and exhibitions destination to key decision-makers. These decision-makers work for major business associations and corporations in Sydney and Melbourne.

The program also aimed to convince at least 50 per cent of the buyers to book business in Canberra and to get the local convention industry to work together in a cohesive fashion which will bring positive results for Canberra as a destination. We have done that because a lot has been said of recent times to the effect that Canberra does not spend enough on tourism promotion. We say that, whilst we spend less than others, we tend to get more value for our money than, say, Tasmania, which tends to spend \$8 for every \$1 that we spend and gets less value for the dollars that they spend. The Canberra Convention Bureau estimates that the return on the Government's few thousand dollars of investment - I think it was \$15,000 - will be over \$3.7m in convention business to Canberra over the next two years.

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The program and those involved should be commended by the entire community, as this initiative reflects an important partnership between government and business. The convention and meeting planners invited to Operation Sell Canberra have the ability to bring thousands of delegates and millions of dollars into the ACT economy, and the Government is looking forward to showing them the best that Canberra has to offer. We all know that speculation over job losses in the Commonwealth Public Service is hurting confidence in the ACT economy, so golden opportunities like Operation Sell Canberra will go a long way to ensuring a bright future for the national capital. I thank Mr Hird for his question.

MR HIRD: I ask a supplementary question. Minister, Operation Sell Canberra, as you have indicated, was over the weekend of 3 to 5 May. Will this Government initiative, this program, be on a regular basis?

MR DE DOMENICO: Mr Hird, this Government will continue to be actively involved in any projects with the potential to bring \$3.7m into the economy.

Hospital Bed Numbers

MR BERRY: My question is to the Chief Minister in her capacity as Minister for Health. Will the Chief Minister give this Assembly an unequivocal assurance - and I emphasise "unequivocal" - that the advice she tabled yesterday in respect of the bypass situation at our major trauma hospital was the first advice she had received on the matter?

MRS CARNELL: Yes.

ACTION - Advertising on Buses

MS HORODNY: My question is directed to the Minister for Urban Services and relates to the ACTION bus service. Minister, I was recently informed that the Animal Liberation group applied to ACTION to place some advertising in the community service advertising space on the buses with the aim of drawing the public's attention to the suffering experienced by hens which are kept in battery cages. ACTION, however, rejected Animal Liberation's application for advertising space on the basis that it was too political. Could the Minister please explain why ACTION thought that the health of chickens was too political a subject for consideration by bus commuters, when it is okay for the Minister to advertise himself on the first page of the ACTION *Bus Book*? On that topic I would like to table some media reports of Liberal Party criticism of similar actions taken by Ministers of the previous Government. There is a whole batch of them.

Leave granted.

MS HORODNY: Why is it okay for the locations of all the McDonald's stores in Canberra to be specially indicated on the maps in the *Bus Book* when McDonald's is presently engaged in a highly publicised and highly politically motivated legal campaign in England, popularly called the McLibel case, against two environmentalists who publicly raised a number of criticisms about McDonald's, including the sourcing of their meat from intensive agricultural farms? I table this document as well.

Mr Kaine: Mr Speaker, I raise a point of order. Ms Horodny could keep talking under a truckload of wet concrete. I am seeking to determine whether the member is making a political statement or whether she is seeking to ask the Minister a question.

MR SPEAKER: I have to uphold Mr Kaine's point of order about the length of the question. I must also point out that whatever a company is doing in another country is not really relevant to this Assembly. The lead-up to your question, Ms Horodny, related to advertising on ACTION buses. That is perfectly in order. I would ask you, however, to restrict your comments to that area.

MS HORODNY: The question is: Could you explain why ACTION thought this simple ad on ACTION buses was not okay and why you think it is okay for McDonald's to be represented throughout the whole ACTION *Bus Book*?

MR DE DOMENICO: Mr Speaker, first of all, I am not able to answer the question about what other governments in other countries do. Another part of Ms Horodny's question asked for some legal opinion or cited some legal opinion. That part was out of order as well, so I will not answer it. The answer to why ACTION refused the advertising of Animal Liberation is that I do not know but I will find out and let you know. Ms Horodny also referred to the fact that the Government Minister's picture is in the front of the *Bus Book*. That is comparing apples with pears. The picture is there because the Government is telling people what is actually happening.

Ms Horodny also asked about McDonald's. I think you will find that McDonald's contributed quite a deal of money to help pay for the *Bus Book*. This meant that the community had to pay only \$2 for it. They would have to pay a bit more if generous companies like McDonald's and others were not prepared to put their money where their mouth is and actually advertise in the *Bus Book*. I also alert Ms Horodny to the fact that anti-abortion ads by the Right to Life Association were banned in 1993 by the former Labor Government, and perhaps rightly so. If political opinions start coming forward from every organisation that has one, either we knock everybody back or we take everybody on board and leave no room for anything else on buses. I will check why ACTION refused the advertisement Ms Horodny referred to and let her know.

MS HORODNY: I have a supplementary question for the Minister. What guidelines does ACTION use to decide whether proposed advertising on buses is acceptable or not, particularly in terms of its political content, and are these guidelines publicly available?

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MR DE DOMENICO: I will make sure that I get a set of those guidelines, Ms Horodny, and give you a copy. Once again, if ACTION refuses advertising that it determines to be political, I say to ACTION, "Good on you". If we start accepting political ads from every organisation that wants to place one, there will be no space left on ACTION buses. I will get hold of those guidelines and give you a copy.

Child and Adolescent Unit

MS REILLY: Mr Speaker, my question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, there are many families in the ACT which are totally dependent on social services for their very survival. Removing even one of these services which they receive can threaten the very viability of a family. We hear frequent criticism that many cuts are being made to individual services without any consideration being given to the flow-on effect of these cuts. Chief Minister, the Child and Adolescent Unit, as just one example, has now been reduced to half a day a week in Belconnen. In that period, the unit cannot come close to handling the demands of the many often severely disadvantaged families living in the Belconnen area. Are you aware that these families are now faced with a two-bus journey to Woden, with all the inconvenience and expense involved, and that the inevitable consequence is that many of those who most need help from the unit are denied it, with a direct link to child abuse and other serious problems? What will you do to remedy this?

MRS CARNELL: It certainly appeared to me that that was much more of a political statement - - -

MR SPEAKER: I took it as general background.

MRS CARNELL: It did not lead anywhere, but that is all right. I am very happy to answer. Ms Reilly, the issue of making sure that our meagre resources will stretch to providing the best services we can is one that every government has to address. The previous Government had to address it as well. It would be lovely to be in a position where we had enough money and enough resources to have every single service in exactly the place that everybody wanted it to be. Unfortunately, that simply cannot always be the case.

Our child and adolescent services and our early intervention services in the ACT are very good services. There are times when they are overstretched - there is no doubt about that - but on the whole I believe that they do a very good job. I am disappointed if there are people in Belconnen who find that travelling to Civic is too much of a burden. If that is the case, I would be very happy to hear from those people. We may be able to organise some sort of pick-up and delivery service for them.

MS REILLY: I ask a supplementary question. What I would like to know is what guidelines exist for individual agencies, to assist them in evaluating the possible consequences of a reduction or a change in the provision of services or their funding, so that the overall welfare of individuals and their families is not affected by the implementation of that, and which area of the Government is responsible for scrutinising these decisions, before or after they are made, to assess their impact.

MRS CARNELL: Every area within government obviously makes decisions every day of the week with regard to service delivery. That is done by the area itself, regularly in concert with the Minister but often not. This Assembly passes a budget. After this particular financial year, the sorts of information that we will have at our disposal will be substantially better because, for the first time, we will be able to see the sorts of services that we are purchasing from the various areas of the ACT government service and what is expected from those services for the taxpayers' dollars that people are willing to spend in particular areas. One of the benefits of a purchaser-provider model is that it achieves those sorts of ends. With a move to substantially more fulsome performance indicators and output indicators, we will be able to see right down to the subprogram level exactly what is happening in particular areas. I know that that will be very useful information for the Government and, I am confident, very useful information for this Assembly as well.

Medical Evacuation and Rescue Helicopter

MR OSBORNE: My question is to the Minister for Emergency Services, Mr Humphries. It is a very short one. Minister, what is happening with the rescue helicopter service, and when do you think this service will be up and running?

MR HUMPHRIES: The short answer to that question is that I wish I knew. Members will be aware that last year a tender process was initiated by the ACT and New South Wales governments jointly to provide for a medical rescue helicopter to be based in the ACT. The service was designed to be a service operating in substitution for one of the three services presently operating in Sydney. However, an open tender process was established to allow anybody to bid for the provision of that service. That got under way late last year. It was designed to throw up an answer by, I think, late in March and operations were to begin by 1 July this year.

For its part, the ACT Government has fulfilled all of its obligations. It stands ready and committed to provide this service. As members will know, money was provided for in the 1995-96 budget for the service to operate. There is considerable enthusiasm among members of the various areas of government that are going to work in the framework of this service, including the Ambulance Service and doctors and others at Woden Valley Hospital.

In fact, Mr Speaker, I am aware of the name of the organisation which has successfully tendered for the service in the ACT and I would dearly like to be able to announce to the house today who that service operator will be, but I have entered into an agreement with the New South Wales Government not to do so prior to its approval. At this point in time the Government in New South Wales has not given its approval, so I am left in the position of not being able to answer Mr Osborne's question.

Kingston Foreshore

MS TUCKER: My question is to the Chief Minister. I have taken an interest in the questions that were raised last week about the Acton-Kingston land swap. I note that on 15 May you told the Assembly that under section 51 of the self-government Act the Commonwealth has to indemnify the Territory for any contamination on national land at the Kingston site. I assume that you were actually referring to the Australian Capital Territory (Planning and Land Management) Act, as I could not find a section 51 of the Australian Capital Territory (Self-Government) Act; but on reading the ACT (Planning and Land Management) Act I noticed that you quoted only part of section 51 and not subsection 51(3), which allows an exemption to this indemnity which is described in section 30. When you follow through other parts of the Act, it implies that, once national land is transferred to the Territory, the Territory government incurs full liability for that land and the Commonwealth ceases to have liability. Chief Minister, you said at various times last week that responsibility for clean-up of the national land at Kingston will be negotiated with the Commonwealth, and on 16 May you said that you will not accept this land until an agreement is reached; but what real bargaining power does the ACT Government have when under the ACT (Planning and Land Management) Act the Commonwealth needs only to put a notice in the *Commonwealth Gazette* to declare ACT national land to be Territory land, and when once land has been passed to the Territory the Territory will incur full liability for its clean-up?

MRS CARNELL: It is a hypothetical question.

MR SPEAKER: It is, and you may also be in - - -

Ms Tucker: It is an interpretation of the Act.

MR SPEAKER: Order! Chief Minister, you may also be requested to give a legal opinion. I simply caution you on that matter.

Mr Wood: It did not stop her last week using the same tactic to talk about things.

MRS CARNELL: I did not interpret it. That was an interpretation. Last week I made it quite clear that, as we had always said, clean-up of the Kingston site will be based upon negotiation with the Commonwealth. To my knowledge, the Commonwealth has never gazetted land to the ACT Government without telling us about it or talking to us about it first. I cannot understand why the Federal Government would ever do that, particularly as they have given us an undertaking that they will negotiate with us on the issue of contamination on the Kingston site. While it stays with the Commonwealth, it is their responsibility. We have an undertaking that they will negotiate with us. We certainly will not be in the business of agreeing to a gazettal until a negotiated settlement is reached.

MS TUCKER: I ask a supplementary question. You said that we have been given an undertaking. I have seen only a very broad draft agreement. What is the legal status of that undertaking?

MRS CARNELL: It is an agreement between two governments. I think I adequately answered that at length last week. I tabled the statement from the person who was acting head of the NCPA at that stage. It laid down his understanding of exactly what the situation was. I suggest that Ms Tucker have a look at the papers that were tabled last week.

Employment Statistics

MR WOOD: Mr Speaker, my question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, have you been informed or have you seen the finding in the Morgan and Banks report announced today that 25 per cent of Canberra employers are going to lay off employees in the next six months? The statement I have, which is a media summary, says:

Almost twenty-eight hundred employers, across the public and private sectors

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that is Australia-wide -

have been surveyed on their plans for the three months, May to July. Eighteen per cent say they'll shed jobs, compared with fourteen per cent, the previous quarter.

Most significantly, it states:

In the ACT, almost twenty-five per cent of organisations say there'll be cuts against only twenty-four per cent planning to put on workers.

Chief Minister, how can you reconcile such troublesome statistics with your persistent and discredited claims that your Government is good for Canberra?

MRS CARNELL: Mr Speaker, I understand that the Morgan and Banks job index revealed healthy optimism amongst small- and medium-sized businesses in the ACT - which, remember, are the vast majority of the businesses here in the ACT. It indicated that a quarter of small and medium businesses in the ACT intended putting on staff in the next three months. I think that indicates real optimism about the ACT economy which reflects confidence in this Government and, most importantly, confidence in the future of Canberra. Mr Speaker, those opposite seem to continually want to say, "It is all doom and gloom. We simply cannot get on with the job here". We must. The vast majority of our businesses in the ACT are looking beyond short-term problems, which certainly exist, and looking to a city that has enormous potential and a government that is willing to get behind them.

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

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Hospital Bed Numbers

MRS CARNELL: Mr Speaker, I wish to add to an earlier answer to a question about Woden Valley Hospital. I am told that there were no transfers from ICU to Calvary over the last week.

Budget Revenue

MRS CARNELL: At question time I was asked about monthly financial reports. The April report from Treasury will be finalised next week. We will circulate it to members then. It is still being done manually, unfortunately, because the computer system is still not able to handle it.

ASSEMBLY BUSINESS - PRECEDENCE **Suspension of Standing Orders**

Motion (by **Mr Humphries**) agreed to, with the concurrence of an absolute majority:

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent orders of the day Nos 5 and 9, Assembly business, relating to the Report of the Select Committee on Competition Policy Reform and the Government's response to the report, respectively, being called on in that sequential order forthwith.

COMPETITION POLICY REFORM - SELECT COMMITTEE **Report**

[COGNATE PAPER:

COMPETITION POLICY REFORM - SELECT COMMITTEE -
REPORT ON INQUIRY INTO COMPETITION POLICY REFORM BILL 1995 -
GOVERNMENT RESPONSE]

Debate resumed from 16 April 1996, on motion by **Ms Follett**:

That the report be noted.

MR SPEAKER: Is it the wish of the Assembly to debate this order of the day concurrently with the Government's response to the report of the Select Committee on Competition Policy Reform? There being no objection, that course will be followed. I remind members that in debating order of the day No. 5 they may also address their remarks to order of the day No. 9, Assembly business, relating to the Government's response to the report of the Select Committee on Competition Policy Reform.

MR DE DOMENICO (Minister for Urban Services and Minister for Business, Employment and Tourism) (3.15): Mr Speaker, in presenting the Government's response to the report, I noted that, although the committee was established to inquire into and report on the Competition Policy Reform Bill 1995, its report addressed many issues not directly related to the Bill or to the national competition policy and its implementation. This included its examination of and recommendations on such issues as community service obligations. Nine recommendations were made by the committee, including the recommendation that the Assembly enact the Bill. That recommendation is obviously welcomed by the Government, and I congratulate the committee on recognising the necessity and value of this legislation.

Many of the remaining recommendations related to the processes for enabling the Assembly and the community to scrutinise or comment upon the implementation of competition policy reforms and the development and delivery of community service obligations. Government initiatives, such as the financial management reforms still to be debated and finalised, annual reporting by agencies, and the customer commitment program, together with specific reporting commitments in the competition policy agreements, already provide an adequate level of public and Assembly scrutiny. The Government believes that the combination of these mechanisms, together with established consultative forums and advisory groups, provide sufficient opportunity for public scrutiny and input. No new competition policy- or community service obligation-specific consultative mechanisms are therefore required.

MR WOOD (3.17): Mr Speaker, broadly, the emphasis on competition outlined in this Bill is supported. It is claimed that it will bring efficiencies and lower costs to consumers and assist both national and local economies. The Opposition accepts the Bill on those grounds. Notwithstanding that, there are significant concerns about the delivery of services. It is our view that the aim of the Government should not be just to maintain the services at the existing level, but to use the efficiencies, should they be delivered - and I expect that they will be - to enhance the services delivered to the ACT community. If this is the case, there will be a clear benefit to the consumers through that combination of lower costs and improved services.

I believe that the select committee report was well done. It examined, I believe, very effectively and comprehensively, the impact of this legislation and came forward with sound recommendations. It indicated, as I have seen elsewhere, the likely areas of government business to be affected. They are indeed very wide ranging. The Bill relates to government business activity, not just to business enterprises. Therefore, not only will ACTEW, Totalcare and such organisations be impacted upon, but a whole range of activity will be affected. The Analytical Laboratory, the Pathology Service, ACT Milk, ACT Landscape, ACT Capital Works, EPIC and Bruce Stadium are just a few that have been outlined.

It is important to note that this Bill does not include core service areas such as health, education, welfare, employment and so on. Some components of the departments running those may be affected, but those core services are still required to be delivered. It is important to note that the Bill does not restrict the duty of government to deliver services. It is clear that a government's entitlement to deliver a public service at a cost

below the delivery price is not threatened. Take, for example, ACTION. There is a heavy subsidisation for the route bus services, and that makes competition unlikely; but the operation of the service is clearly a result of a social policy. Indeed, all transit systems in Australia operate at a loss. The aim is service at a level of affordability. This aspect at least is not threatened by the application of the Trade Practices Act. Part IV of the Act allows such anti-competitive aspects to be offset by associated public benefit. So, with ACTION, as with other entities, the Government is, in any case, able to take action to pursue appropriate policies.

I should point out again, as I did in my in-principle speech, what this Bill does not do, because it is very important. It does not require a program of privatisation of government enterprise or of corporatisation. It does not encourage governments to privatise or corporatise. It does not even provide a basis to argue for privatisation or corporatisation, as the Minister appeared to indicate in his introductory speech. The legislation is about competition. It has nothing to do with privatisation or corporatisation. When the former Chief Minister, Rosemary Follett, debated this within COAG she made this quite clear, as did other State leaders. Then Federal Minister Gear in his speech to the Federal Parliament said:

... privatisation and the introduction of competition are entirely separate decisions. It is possible, and in many cases clearly desirable, to introduce competition and to realise its economic benefits while retaining public ownership.

This legislation and the agreement the current Chief Minister signed have nothing to say on the question of public or private ownership. In indicating the Opposition's support for this Bill, I therefore make it absolutely clear that the Government should never seek to argue that the Bill provides some form of backing for a program of privatisation or of corporatisation or of outsourcing. I say again that those issues are quite separate.

This Bill should be seen in a broad context, not just as one stand-alone Bill. Improved economic performance is just one element of any government's program, which must also encompass social, environmental and other considerations. The Bill recognises this, but we do rely in large measure on governments to ensure that those principles are maintained. I have to say that I am a little less confident about this legislation now that we have a Liberal-National Party government at the helm.

I am disappointed that this Government did not accept certain of the committee's recommendations. Let me alert the Government to the fact that the Opposition - and, I expect, the crossbenches too - will maintain a close interest in associated social issues. A little time ago I put a question on notice concerning the definition of ACTEW's community service obligations. The answer I got was a little disappointing. It indicated ACTEW's record in this respect but gave no assurance of the rapid issue of a statement by ACTEW. It appears that that is still some time away. I had expected a more forthright response.

For that reason, because of little evidence of concern, or certainly insufficient evidence of concern, the Opposition is likely to look favourably on the Greens' motion on the notice paper on this issue. The community service obligations are very important. We all look to them for such statements of principles, which will reassure those who rely on sympathetic and considered policies from government. It does not seem that this Government, and perhaps other governments, necessarily realise this. Mr Speaker, in supporting this Bill, the Opposition states clearly that we will monitor most closely its outcomes. We will ensure that the benefits claimed, yet to be delivered, will truly benefit the people of the ACT.

MS TUCKER (3.25): Mr Speaker, I seek leave to speak again on this matter.

Leave granted.

MS TUCKER: Earlier on, in 1995, the discussion about Hilmer was heating up, and I will quote the beginning of an article by Brian Toohey in the *Canberra Times* on 15 April:

No-one should ever be surprised by what otherwise intelligent people are prepared to swallow when it comes to economic modelling. Nevertheless, the level of gullibility displayed in the response to the modelling work on the Hilmer "reforms" is astonishing.

To listen to just about every politician, public servant and commentator in the country after last week's Premiers Conference in Canberra, you could be excused for believing that Nirvana was just around the corner.

Later in the article he claims in relation to the Industry Commission:

The commission, to its credit, warns that it is important to understand that the results are sensitive to the assumptions underpinning the model - a warning which is promptly ignored by politicians ...

The article goes on to quote a professor of economics at James Cook University, John Quiggin, who also had some very insightful questions about the whole concept of competition policy reform and whether it is the wonderful solution it is being touted to be.

The micro-economic reforms within government associated with national competition policy are among the most far-reaching reforms to the public sector in Australia's history. I heard Mr De Domenico claim again that this Bill is not about CSOs and it is not about the broader concerns that were expressed to the committee. I state again, as we have stated continually through this discussion, that the community does not think so. The community recognises that there was something called a competition principles agreement signed, which is very much related to the Competition Policy Reform Bill. The community had not had any opportunity to discuss the implications of this agreement, so they took the opportunity when this committee looked at the whole issue of competition policy; they were quite right to do so and we welcomed their submissions.

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There has been plenty of hype about all the benefits of competition, but careful analysis of some of these benefits has demonstrated that these are based on a number of quite unrealistic and potentially unachievable assumptions. The benefits of competition policy could be quite small or even cancelled out by the waste of resources associated with duplication, monitoring, or other added administration costs. There has been no analysis of the downsides of competition, and this was something the committee noted in its report.

The committee took 13 submissions and held a number of public hearings, and, as I said, we did look at the broader agenda of competition policy, including the agreement. Unfortunately, the Government still does not seem to have taken the very important work of the committee seriously. The committee raised many legitimate concerns about the potential negative impacts of competition policy and the way the Government is proceeding with the implementation of competition policy in the ACT. The responses prepared by the Government seem to indicate that they read only the recommendations and not the body of the report.

I would like to make a general point about this. It is very easy to respond to committee reports in a narrow, tokenistic way. A theme I have noticed in responses is, "Oh yes, we agree with this or that, but we are doing it already". This is very disrespectful of committee work. Obviously, a committee recommends something because they do not believe that the Government is adequately addressing the issue at hand. I think it is also inappropriate to read the recommendations in isolation from the rest of the report. The only recommendation the Government responded to enthusiastically was the recommendation that the Bill be enacted, but if you read the body of the report it says:

The Committee considers that the implementation of competition policy may provide some economic benefits to the ACT and consumers, although this has not been shown conclusively, and that the costs and negative impacts have not been adequately investigated. The Committee notes there is little choice but to enact the Bill but believes there must be serious considerations given to developing mechanisms for the protection of social and environmental concerns.

One of the key mechanisms the committee recommended was the establishment of a forum to advise the Government. This forum was to include consumer, union, environmental, business and academic representatives. A common theme running through the submissions and public hearings was the need for public input into the implementation of the reforms. These reforms need close monitoring, and not only on an ad hoc basis through existing consultative mechanisms. Even the Commonwealth Government has established a committee to advise on the regulation legislation review, which includes consumer, union, environmental and business representatives.

It is not good enough to say that the Government will consult through its existing mechanisms. These are significant reforms. The impacts will be felt throughout the community. Some of the existing mechanisms referred to include the budget consultation. I have not seen a very good response about the process for that consultation. We were given outcome statements which were a bit like a policy statement of the Liberal Party:

Promises of outputs and more detail to come, but we are still waiting for that. Many of us feel that we were not given nearly enough time to respond anyway, and I do not think the issue of competition policy was being addressed in those consultations, although I would be delighted to hear that it was addressed by the Government in consultations.

Of course, we also have reference made often to the customer commitment program. That is touted as a mechanism for community consultation, but I would quote here from ACTCOSS's response to the Government response:

... the Customer Commitment Program is predicated on a commercial model of service and emphasises individual "customer" feedback and reductionist "units" of service. As there has not, to date, been any detailed analysis of the social impact of services being delivered, it is difficult to see how this model would allow for the identification of the needs of particular classes of consumer. Thus there is the potential for articulate and advantaged "customers" to set the standards by which services are delivered. Producing a situation of increased rather than minimised social inequities in access to Government services.

There are some inherent dangers in calling citizens customers.

Another issue that was of concern to the committee, and this is only reaffirmed by the Government's response, is the extent to which the Government is bundling the competition reforms up with all their other reforms. This is inappropriate, but it is a nice neat way of preventing public scrutiny and debate about when and where competition policy is appropriate. Another issue of concern was the lack of a holistic strategy for the implementation of competition policy. We are told that the Government will be preparing its policy statement on implementation of reviewing legislation for anti-competitive effects and implementation of the competition principles agreement by June this year, but the reforms are being implemented now. There is still no overall strategy for the implementation of competition policy in the ACT which takes into account the full range of public interest factors and weighs up the costs and benefits of competition across the public sector. Nearly every submission expressed concern that the proposed reforms should be carefully assessed on a case-by-case basis rather than being steamrolled as part of a package of measures based on an ideological notion of promoting competition.

Some of the costs of competition the committee explored included unproductive rivalry and waste through duplication of services and facilities when competition is introduced - I am surprised that the Government is not interested in this; consumption of time and resources in preparing tender bids; the cost to the Government of administering the tender process; the failure of private contractors to provide access and equity to services, and an emphasis on quantity over quality; contract failure; the environmental effect of competition in the electricity industry leading to a neglect of demand-side measures to reduce consumption; reduction in public safety and health standards associated with deregulation; increasing the intensity of work through job shedding and reduced conditions of employment; increasing the vulnerability of the most disadvantaged in the labour market; the impact on weaker consumers of services of all kinds; and the list goes on.

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In its response the Government referred to the competitive tendering and contracting guidelines for use by the ACT Public Service. These guidelines basically enshrine the very notion that competition is the norm and that any exceptions must be proved. I would like to read something from this:

Remember also that no benefit can accrue to you by virtue of being government owned or having unfair or preferential access to other government facilities. Just as external providers have commercial rules to follow, so too will you, to ensure a level playing field for all competitors.

This is a major shift in the culture of the public sector. It is a shift from seeing the Government as a provider of services to the community to a set of businesses whose purpose is to provide an output to customers. Even so-called in-house competition, which is being implemented through the purchaser-provider model, imposes this level of competition into every aspect of government activity. (*Extension of time granted*) I would say that this is fairly blunt; not, as the committee recommended, a careful assessment of the costs and benefits of introducing competition. The committee recommended that competitive tendering and outsourcing be accompanied by a public interest test. The Government has responded by saying that this will be applied where appropriate. Who decides where it is appropriate?

As for the recommendations about community service obligations, there were a number of concerns raised about the process for developing community service obligations. I have to say that I think the whole concept of community service obligations is of great concern. For example, how do we assign monetary values to the non-commercial functions of government? This is of particular concern where many of the so-called benefits are less tangible and may not be able to be cashed out. But, once again, the horse has bolted, and CSOs are here to stay, at least until the next fad comes along. If there has been a public consultation for the development of CSOs, the organisations who came to speak to the committee certainly have not been involved. About the development of CSOs for ACTEW, I would like to remind the Government that it was ACTEW who said that they thought it was just for government to determine what their CSOs should be. I think it is quite serious that ACTEW was corporatised before these CSOs were made explicit, and a year after corporatisation ACTEW still does not know what they are.

Mr Speaker, the role of government is more than just the delivery of services in the most cost-effective and efficient manner. It has broader obligations in terms of access and equity, environmental protection, and also support for policy development and advocacy. All these roles will frequently mean the provision of uneconomic services, and that is why we have governments providing these services in the first place. In all this enthusiasm to emulate the private sector, I think it is worth remembering that even the private sector treats competition with caution. Do we really believe that BHP or Woolworths or News Ltd, or any other number of private sector firms, do not wield huge amounts of market power? But, suddenly, it is evil for governments to hold any market power.

It is particularly ironic that governments all around Australia do not have the courage to stop the takeovers and consolidation of market power. The real-world complexity of competition has been largely ignored by the Hilmer report, and even more ignored by governments jumping on the bandwagon of competition. Government business enterprises have been especially targeted as a major source of economic inefficiency. No-one questions the mindless competition between States, initiated by State governments trying to steal companies from each other. So much for the uniformity between States.

Mr Speaker, the Greens are aware that this Bill and, indeed, the whole agenda of competition policy have support from both of the major parties in this Assembly. In principle, we are opposed to these reforms and this Bill because we think the gains that are sought could be achieved without resorting to such radical reforms. I was on a committee which recommended that the Bill be enacted; but this committee also raised a number of other issues, which I believe have been largely ignored by this Government. Our greatest fears that the safeguards that are written into the agreements will be largely ignored look like being realised, but we will continue to monitor closely the implementation of competition policy in the ACT and do whatever we can to ensure that the interests of consumers, workers and the environment are protected.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

COMPETITION POLICY REFORM - SELECT COMMITTEE
Report on Inquiry into Competition Policy Reform Bill 1995 -
Government Response

Debate resumed from 14 May 1996, on motion by **Mr De Domenico**:

That the Assembly takes note of the paper.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

PRIVATE MEMBERS BUSINESS - PRECEDENCE
Suspension of Standing Orders

MS TUCKER (3.40): Mr Speaker, I move:

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent notice No. 18, private members business, relating to a recommendation contained in the report of the Select Committee on Competition Policy Reform, being called on forthwith.

I ask that members support the suspension of standing orders because it is quite clear that, unless we do, we are going to have a competition Bill passed in this place without any safeguards. If we have an opportunity to debate this motion, I believe that most members in this place will see the sense of our motion. The community, as well as other concerned groups, therefore will feel more comfortable that the implementation of this Bill will be carried out with more care.

MR MOORE (3.42): Mr Speaker, I rise to support the suspension of standing orders. As a rule, I am reluctant to bring on private members business at such times. However, there is here an important issue about protection in the recommendations of the select committee report, and I believe that it is appropriate for us to consider this issue. It is a way of dealing with what is essentially a response from the committee to what we are dealing with. It would seem to me to be an appropriate time to take this issue, which has a direct relation to what we are dealing with today, from private members business, where Ms Tucker had correctly given notice, and bring it on to be dealt with as part and parcel of this debate. The alternative we would wind up with is Ms Tucker moving an amendment to the legislation to force the Government to establish this sort of thing as part of legislation. If Mr De Domenico wants this sort of thing as a part of legislation, I suppose that that could be organised too; but it seems to me to be a much more awkward way to go about it. It would be much better to suspend standing orders now and get on with this.

MR KAINÉ (3.43): Mr Speaker, I oppose the motion. The time for private members business was this morning. There is a great deal of Government business on the agenda. We seem to be getting further and further behind in dealing with that because we spend too much time dealing with extraneous matters. As far as I am aware, the member gave no prior warning to the Government that she intended to bring this matter on this afternoon. I believe that it is an inappropriate use of the time of this Assembly, and I oppose the motion.

MR WOOD (3.44): Mr Speaker, this has caught me by surprise. I had a very brief discussion with Ms Tucker before. I hope that I did not misunderstand things, but we had expected that there would be some variation. There will be an amendment to the legislation. For me, the question is whether we do this now or consider it later. I had indicated in my speech that we were likely to be sympathetic to this motion, but now or later is the question we are about to decide.

MR DE DOMENICO (Minister for Urban Services) (3.44): Mr Speaker, the Government will be opposing the motion for one very simple reason. We have got to the stage where we are about to debate a Bill the Government considered and allowed a committee to report on, for heaven's sake. It needs to be passed because it is template legislation that has been passed by every other parliament. All of a sudden, on the floor of the house, before the Bill is going to be debated, and without notice - the Government did not know that this was going to happen - Ms Tucker tries to suspend standing orders in order to bring her motion on. I do not think that is the way we run things in this place. Mr Moore, quite rightly, said that ordinarily he would not allow this to happen.

Mr Moore: Yes, but this is different.

MR DE DOMENICO: It is not different. The principle is that Ms Tucker expects us to drop everything in Government business and go on to private members business. All of a sudden, without any notice, she wants to do something else. That is fine for Ms Tucker, perhaps; but that is not the way things ought to be done. You should perhaps

have advised the Government of what your intention was; we might even have agreed with you. I have not yet spoken to my party about what they intend to do with this motion, Ms Tucker. I am not in a position to make decisions on behalf of everyone in the Liberal Party, believe it or not. You have a phone box of members over there on your side. You might be able to do whatever you like, but perhaps out of common courtesy you could have told us that you intended to do this.

We need to pass this Bill, Ms Tucker, or miss out on a lot of money from the Federal Government regarding competition policy. Your committee was aware of that and, quite rightly, that committee, of which you were part, said that you wanted to pass this Bill.

Mr Moore: There is the rest of the day, and we have tomorrow.

MR SPEAKER: Order! Mr De Domenico has the floor.

MR DE DOMENICO: I suggest that we go ahead and pass this Bill, and then consider talking about whatever you want to talk about at a later date, when we have had prior notice so that we know how to respond to your motion.

MR WHITECROSS (Leader of the Opposition) (3.47): Mr Speaker, I have some sympathy with the view put by Mr De Domenico about prior consultation on these sorts of things. I know that Mr Moore has not a long suit in prior consultation just at the moment. Our party room this morning discussed a proposal, which we understood was a proposal for an amendment to the Bill, and we are now faced with a piece of private members business that is different from what we discussed. We are sympathetic to the proposition the Greens are putting and we are happy to consider it favourably in due course, but we are not terribly enamoured of bringing it on now. It certainly was not a proposition that was put to us. We would like to discuss this at a later stage, in the appropriate timeslot in the Assembly, and we can negotiate about what the appropriate timeslot is.

As an aside, Mr Speaker, I suggest that it might be more appropriate to pass the legislation before we set up a forum to scrutinise it. We will certainly be interested to look at the Greens' proposal. As I said, discussions in our party room were sympathetic to this forum. We certainly supported the recommendation of the committee, and we hope that the Government will think again about adopting it, but on another occasion.

Question resolved in the negative.

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COMPETITION POLICY REFORM BILL 1995
Detail Stage

Clause 1

Debate resumed from 24 October 1995.

Clause agreed to.

Clause 2 agreed to.

Clause 3

MR DE DOMENICO (Minister for Urban Services and Minister for Business, Employment and Tourism) (3.49): Mr Speaker, in the Government response to the report of the Select Committee on Competition Policy Reform, I forewarned the Assembly that the Government would propose a minor amendment, which is necessary to clarify the definition of “calendar month”. This is a technical matter that has been brought to our attention by New South Wales Parliamentary Counsel and is being implemented in each of the States and Territories. The necessity for this minor change was advised to the select committee, and I believe that everybody is in accord with the amendment. I therefore move:

Page 3, line 18, subclause (1), definition of “month”, insert “a day of” after “beginning of” (first occurring).

Amendment agreed to.

Clause, as amended, agreed to.

Remainder of Bill, by leave, taken as a whole, and agreed to.

Bill, as amended, agreed to.

TIMBER INDUSTRY - IMPLEMENTATION OF ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION
Ministerial Statement

Debate resumed from 13 December 1995, on motion by **Mr Humphries**:

That the Assembly takes note of the paper.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

**URBAN DESIGN - CRIME PREVENTION AND COMMUNITY SAFETY
Paper**

Debate resumed from 14 December 1995, on motion by **Mr Humphries**:

That the Assembly takes note of the paper.

MS McRAE (3.51): I think the Assembly should take note of the paper. Our opinion is that it is a very good report. It began when we were in government, I believe. It has some very sound practical, commonsense approaches. The standard application of the measures that are outlined in this report should go way beyond Civic, in terms of designing out crime and designing out bits and pieces of the city that are clearly easier for people to commit offences in than others. All we can say is: Hurry up; get on with it. There is full community support, there is full Assembly support, and there is no need for much further debate.

MR WOOD (3.52): I am interested in speaking in this debate because I was in there at the beginning. I recall attending a briefing session in a building nearby when people who had been carefully sourced from the community went, with their check lists, out into the streets around Civic and the back lanes and the corners here, there and everywhere, and pointed to all the areas of difficulty - what was dark, where the pavements were bad, all sorts of things. They went in a variety of groups, with different people in each group; so there were not three young people going into one area but business people, young people, public servants, a whole range of people, to assess the difficult areas around the city.

Now, some time later, in stage two the report has come down, pointing out what improvements ought to be made to the design of Civic to make it a better place. Stage three is actually doing something. Stage three is getting there, getting on with it, and attending to those areas of difficulty - whether it is poor lights, opening up an area, better paving, removing some of the landscape that might obscure things, or putting landscape somewhere else to improve the site. These are the things that now need to be done.

I took the view as Minister that Civic needed to be a safer place. I think it is good advice to any person to stay out of the back alleys in the early hours of the morning - not advice that everybody takes, it seems; but there is a great deal that can be done. At the same time, there were other processes in place to work towards making Civic the cultural heart of Canberra, so that this precinct where we are becomes a focus for entertainment, for the arts. I think there is still active consideration being given to that concept. I will not get into any other discussion at this stage. These are very important processes to work through to improve the city.

I wish that there was a better process to remove the unsightly graffiti. I know that the Minister will claim that he has been working at that, but it is something of an intractable problem. I think our city is, by most standards, blighted by the graffiti. It can look very untidy, despite the persistent efforts of some, including shopowners, to keep their area clear. I wish that we could find some safe and easy solvent that would get the chewing gum off the paved areas and other areas adjacent to shops. Many of the shopkeepers

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have spent quite a deal of money; the Government has spent quite a deal of money in other places to provide better surfaces. A simple thing like that does make the city look very untidy. It is very difficult to contain. I really wonder at the habits of some people. I do not know how their floors at home survive. This is a productive report. I read it with a great deal of interest. I think it has taken us fairly well along the track, and I can assure Minister Humphries and his colleagues that I will be very interested in the follow-up action.

MR HUMPHRIES (Attorney-General) (3.56), in reply: Mr Speaker, I thank members opposite for their support for what this process puts in place. I would be surprised if they were not supportive, since they were involved in initiating it. Perhaps it is unfortunate that there has been a relatively brief debate on this subject, because designing out crime, I think, holds an enormously important place in the overall strategy we pursue in this Assembly towards reducing the level of crime in our community. Members who have taken the opportunity in recent years of wandering around some places in Civic, in particular after dark, would have had a very eloquent illustration of how large a problem we have to overcome, both through forward design of new public spaces in the Territory and in overcoming the deficiencies of our existing public spaces, which need to be comprehensively rethought.

Areas such as the back alleys behind the Melbourne and Sydney buildings are very good examples of how badly the ACT has been served by some designs, which probably were very progressive in their day and which probably served certain purposes. Probably that dark alleyway behind the Sydney Building was of no particular consequence in terms of the safety of the city, because when it was built - it was one of the very first public buildings to be built in the city - there was a very small population in the ACT, only a few thousand people, and the idea of feeling unsafe in Canberra was a quite novel concept. Unfortunately, our city has grown up, and there are now a number of people who feel unsafe in areas of Canberra such as that, and it is our job now to reconsider the purpose and the role of those public spaces, to redesign them, and to bring them into a different way of serving the community.

Redesigning does not mean necessarily that they should be knocked down and some new building built in their place or even that, for example, in that alleyway I spoke of before, the trees should be taken down in order to improve lines of sight. Those sorts of things are possible, but probably not the best solutions. In many ways, we can overcome problems in these areas by redesigning the way in which they are used. For example, if some of the shops and licensed establishments in the Sydney Building were to have entrances on the back as well as on the front, that is, onto the alleyway as well as onto Northbourne Avenue and East Row, we would find a considerable improvement in the flowthrough of people in those areas. They would not be at the back end, they would be simply at the other entrance, and there would be more light and more life, and at night those areas would not be so intimidating. Canberra has a number of areas with these sorts of problems, but I think it is fair to say that there are fewer areas of that kind than in places such as Sydney or Melbourne.

Mr Speaker, I hope that members will take seriously the blueprint outlined in this document. It is a very important plan for how we approach the design and redesign of our city for at least the next decade. We will need to implement the recommendations contained in this document on a progressive basis. Members should not imagine that the Government will announce in the coming budget a program to put in place all the recommendations in this report; that simply would be impossible. It is a task for at least the next decade to progressively put in place changes in design and outcome that we feel will acknowledge and respect the role we need to play in redesigning our city. Mr Speaker, I thank members for their support, and I hope that this will be an important milestone towards getting a safer city.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

ADJOURNMENT

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

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Timber

MS HORODNY (4.00): I will speak in the adjournment debate, as I missed the debate on forests and timber before. One of the first points Mr Humphries makes in his ministerial statement on the Assembly resolution on the Australian timber industry is that the ACT is a small player in the national scene. Mr Humphries, unfortunately, this is only half the story. I do not know whether you frequent hardware stores in the ACT, but if you did you would know that we are major consumers of a lot of timber that is not just plantation softwood. We sell Victorian ash, we sell brush box, we sell Tasmanian oak, and we also sell meranti, which is harvested from the forests of Malaysia. That is a rainforest species that grows in Malaysia and often sells at a much lower price than our locally grown plantation pine because of the pillage mentality of some of the multinational companies that work in Malaysia. Indigenous people are displaced, while their homes in the forests are destroyed for this timber.

This is the wood we are selling right here in the ACT, so I refute absolutely the proposition that because we harvest only plantation timber in the ACT we can therefore wash our hands of the whole forest debate and say that we are behaving appropriately and that it is not our problem. It is very much our problem because of the timbers we do sell in the ACT. This situation is, unfortunately, one that successive governments have actively endorsed. Mr Humphries said that it is unlikely that plantations will be able to replace production from native forests in the near future. Already over 60 per cent of our demand for veneers, plywoods, medium hardboards, sawn timber and pulp is supplied by plantations. These are all value-added products, and that is the reality of the

industry today. The huge volume of value-added products is already coming from plantations, while native forests are being used for a quick dollar for overseas companies at the expense of our economy and our ecology here in Australia. While we debate the sale of Telstra to put funds towards correcting some of our environmental degradation, we continue to allow wholesale destruction of huge areas of forested land in Australia, with little or no environmental accountability by these companies. This is absolutely absurd.

Last week there was a protest in nearby Monga State Forest, which is an area of pinkwood rainforest. These rainforests are the last examples in the world of these types of ecosystems, yet State Forests are logging these communities. This will expose these areas to increased fire threats, feral animal invasion and all the other problems that ensue when these areas are degraded and destroyed. Mr Humphries recently made a statement on endangered species in the ACT, again paying lip-service to endangered species. But I say to Mr Humphries that endangered species cannot be protected in isolation. As I have already said on a number of occasions, we need to ensure that ecosystems are protected and, as consumers in the ACT of wood that is grown in important ecosystems, we need to look at this issue very carefully to ensure that we are not simply importing it and creating problems in other areas, yet washing our hands of it by saying that here in the ACT we are plantation-based and, therefore, it is not our problem.

Mugga Mugga Homestead

MR WOOD (4.05): Mr Speaker, I want to make some comments about one of the great assets of the ACT - the Mugga Mugga property - with which members of this Assembly will be quite familiar. I should comment on the generosity of Miss Sylvia Curley, who has donated that property to the ACT community. The property has long been in her family. There is a long history of residence there, and Miss Curley lived there until relatively recently. She remains a very active, dedicated and alert lady, and she has done a great deal to get that property restored and up and running as one of our historic sites.

I want to pay credit to officers in the Heritage Unit who, with others, have provided expert advice and assistance in the way that the original building has been refurbished. It has been done with great sensitivity and with a very good feeling for the times in which that building was occupied. I should also pay credit to a great number of people in the community, including government agencies, who have provided an education resource centre on the site. It has been constructed in sympathy with the building and it is some little way away, not obvious when viewing the historic building and so not at odds with the site. I think it was Mr Humphries who, some months ago, opened that education facility and launched the refurbished Mugga Mugga homestead. The original building is not in pristine condition, and it was not intended that it should be; but both areas have been done very well. The CFMEU was one of those bodies that provided very substantial assistance in getting the education centre up and running.

The purpose of my speaking today is once again to make a plea to the Government - it has been done before - now to provide someone to staff that education centre on a full-time basis. I know that resources are tight; but a great deal has gone into that centre by so many people, most particularly by Miss Curley. It is such a good facility - both the original homestead and the education facility - that it really needs to be fully occupied and to have someone there who is well versed in the history and the related aspects and who can provide on-the-spot guidance to the school students who are going there. I think it is something that is important for the Government to consider. I am sure that within the Education Department or in the Environment and Land Bureau - somewhere amongst our areas - there are sufficient resources to provide that further small, but vital, level of assistance.

Members' Behaviour : Health Budget

MR BERRY (4.08): I rise just to complain, I suppose, about some of the tactics that have been used in this place to get certain matters on the record. Today in question time Mrs Carnell made a point of saying that I was smiling and joking about the issue of workers compensation, as if to say that I regarded it as an unimportant issue. Anybody who knows me or knows the Labor Party knows that that is patently untrue. It is a dishonest way to try to recast history in the *Hansard*. I would just say to members opposite that there is always room for some provocation in this place, but I found that a little offensive. I would have been prepared to argue a charge of gratuitous body language, but I certainly would not be prepared to contemplate a charge of regarding workers compensation as unimportant.

In relation to another matter, Mrs Carnell also said that Labor - and I think her gaze passed across my personage - was saying that we should not be treating more patients. That is nonsense. We do not say that we should not be treating more patients. We essentially criticise the Chief Minister for her management of the health budget and the health portfolio. I need not go any further than that. My purpose is not to get into a debate about those issues, but to say that we are saying that Mrs Carnell should not be treating more patients and to imply that we are saying that she should be closing beds and winding back the hospital system is just a wee bit unfair. I am not being precious about these issues. I just think it is a trifle unfair, and it is a practice that we do not need to engage in, because, indeed, history is as it is, and these sorts of comments are not going to change one bit of it.

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Mr Clive Scollay : Members' Behaviour

MR DE DOMENICO (Minister for Urban Services and Minister for Business, Employment and Tourism) (4.11): Mr Speaker, very briefly, I would like to say that Mr Clive Scollay, whom some people would know as the chief executive officer of Exhibition Park in Canberra and also as a member of the Cultural Council, has sadly decided that he no longer wants to work for us.

Ms McRae: You have driven him away.

MR DE DOMENICO: No. I say that with a smile on my face, because he came to tell me that he has reluctantly accepted a position as chief adviser in arts and tourism to the Prime Minister of Vanuatu. I am serious. He suggested that, being 50 years old, perhaps it is about time he spent two years in Vanuatu lying under the date palms and not spending the winters in Canberra.

Mr Berry: He can drop down to the Numbawan Betting Shop and have a bet on - - -

MR DE DOMENICO: Exactly. It is interesting that Mr Berry is here, and smiling, because Mr Berry would be aware that other things happen in Vanuatu besides arts and tourism - perhaps to the chagrin of Mr Berry and others in this place, I have to say - from time to time. I would just like to say that I appreciate the work that Clive Scollay has done for EPIC and also as a member of the Cultural Council. I am aware of his involvement - he played a big role, in fact - in establishing Arts House in Deakin. He will be sadly missed by the people of the ACT, and we wish him well in his future exploits.

Let me also briefly comment on the remarks made by Mr Berry about what he found to be unfortunate comments made by Mrs Carnell. To a certain extent, I think it behoves us here in this place to perhaps sit back and reflect on what we say from time to time about one another and about other things that come up. As far as the Government is concerned, we would be very happy if remarks made about personalities and their demeanour in this place were not made as often as they are. There is nothing to stop the political banter and the political dogfights. We expect them in a place like this. But I can assure Mr Berry that all members on this side of the house try very hard, I must say, not to get into the personal side of things, and we will continue to do that. It is refreshing that we all agree that these sorts of things should not happen. We will take note of what Mr Berry has had to say, and I am sure that he will take note of what we have to say.

MR SPEAKER: The Speaker would like to endorse those remarks from both sides of the chamber.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Assembly adjourned at 4.13 pm