



**DEBATES**

OF THE

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FOR THE

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

**HANSARD**

12 November 1997

**Wednesday, 12 November 1997**

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**MR SPEAKER** (Mr Cornwell) took the chair at 10.30 am and asked members to stand in silence and pray or reflect on their responsibilities to the people of the Australian Capital Territory.

**TENANCY TRIBUNAL (AMENDMENT) BILL 1997**

**MR MOORE** (10.31): Mr Speaker, before I present the Tenancy Tribunal (Amendment) Bill, I ask for leave to amend my notice by altering the year of the principal Act from 1995 to 1994. I believe that I have been hoist with my own petard. At the very time I was putting in the wrong date I was in the Assembly giving other people a hard time over putting 13 instead of 14. It comes back to visit you. If members would be generous enough to give me leave, I would appreciate it.

Leave granted.

**MR MOORE:** Mr Speaker, I present the Tenancy Tribunal (Amendment) Bill 1997, together with its explanatory memorandum.

Title read by Clerk.

**MR MOORE:** Mr Speaker, I move:

That this Bill be agreed to in principle.

This Bill seeks to provide a wider coverage of protection for both tenants and, to a much lesser extent, landowners by increasing access to the Tenancy Tribunal for small businesses. This amendment allows for those tenants who are subjected to paying excessive rents to apply to the Tenancy Tribunal for a fair hearing. Members of the last Assembly may remember that, with the passage of the Tenancy Tribunal Bill in 1994, only those who entered into a lease after that date were allowed access to the tribunal in order to have their grievances heard and resolved, even if the grievance arose after the Tenancy Tribunal Bill was passed.

Other members may recall that in 1996 I introduced a Bill to expand the range of people who could appear before the tribunal to include those who entered into a lease before 1 January 1995. I argued that the exclusion of those tenants who were not eligible had allowed a great deal of unfair practice in small businesses to go on without redress. Many of the small businesses who are striving to exist in the face of unfair increases in rent, advantages given to larger, franchise traders, breaches of mediated agreements, key money disputes, ratchet clauses and other generally unfair practices have no redress.

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On 4 September 1996 the Assembly chose not to support those amendments. On this occasion I am not seeking to repeat that exercise, although I would be willing to prepare amendments to this legislation should enough members have a change of heart on that issue.

Let me make myself perfectly clear about the purpose of this Bill. This Bill is not to broaden access to the tribunal so as not to discriminate against those businesses that entered into a lease prior to 1 January 1995. These people who are still experiencing disputes have nowhere to go for justice. I am open-minded on that issue. The legislation today expands access by people to the Tenancy Tribunal in two ways. Firstly, it removes all size restrictions on who can appear before the tribunal. All commercial and retail tenants will be able to approach the Tenancy Tribunal. Secondly, it specifically addresses the issue of excessive rents. A large number of small business people have approached me from the time I was first elected in 1989 seeking a way to challenge the charging of excessive rents. I believe that the same must be true for all members of this Assembly.

For too long we have failed to protect small businesses at the mercy of landlords who simply want to move small businesses out or take advantage of their monopoly status in a particular area. Nowhere is this more obvious than in large shopping malls. I hasten to add, Mr Speaker, that I am aware of a range of landlords in Canberra who have looked after their tenants in a very positive way. I do not for a moment suggest that all landlords are rapacious. However, in a monopolistic situation we have an important role to play to ensure fair competition. With so much emphasis on competition and competition policy over the last few years, it is now time to review the approach we take to the prime issues facing small business. Rent is one of the major factors in the failure of businesses to survive. The tribunal is there to hear disputes and decide a course of agreement what will be fair to both the tenant and the landowner. It is unconscionable that small businesses subjected to excessive rents have not had a guaranteed right of access to a fair hearing. We can remedy that now with this amendment.

In 1995 Mr Gary Humphries informed us that a review of the Tenancy Tribunal Act was then not feasible as only a handful of people had applied to the tribunal for a hearing since the legislation had been passed in 1994. Surprise, surprise, Mr Humphries! Could that be because the bulk of tenants who really needed this access were already in lease agreements and had been denied access? If the Assembly of the day had not denied them this access, I am sure that the tribunal would have received many more requests for a hearing. Indeed, had my legislation passed last time, we would also have seen many more applications. It was those people for whom the legislation was constructed in the first place. It was those tenants, like the former supermarket owners at Campbell and the many small businesses in shopping malls, that needed the tribunal's assistance. Where are they now? Unfortunately, they do not exist anymore. They have gone out the back door. They have been replaced, often by large franchisees. So much for pledging support for small business.

In both cases - access for people who entered into a lease before 1 January 1995 and for those who have been subjected to excessive rents - the Tenancy Tribunal has not been available. Now is the time to make it available for as many people as possible.

Granted, the number of people in the first category is diminishing with time, but in the second category - the issue that I deal with primarily today - the numbers are increasing. The argument put forward at the time to rationalise the exclusion of those who entered into a lease prior to 1994 was that they could apply to the tribunal if the landowners were "harsh and unconscionable". The trouble with that is that the harsh and unconscionable conduct often results in the demise of a business before access to the tribunal can be arranged.

The tenants and landowners excluded need to have access to a tribunal that can deal with disputes caused by alleged breaches of a mediated agreement, disputes about such things as key money in relation to a lease or negotiations for the entering into of a lease renewal, claims by a party to a lease that another party to the lease has breached or is breaching the code, or any dispute at all about a lease, including those entered into prior to 1 January 1995. I am interested in hearing from members who are prepared to support bringing on that form of amendment. Waiting until the landowner is harsh and unconscionable is too late. It is cynical in the extreme and unjust to wait until the operator is out of business before allowing access to a fair hearing. "Harsh and unconscionable" applies both to those who entered into their lease before 1 January 1995 and to those who are subjected to excessive rents.

We must eliminate the possibility of challenges over jurisdiction of the tribunal, the sorts of challenges that a wealthy landlord supported by a bevy of QCs and SCs can mount but that a struggling tenant, under the weight of excessive rent, cannot possibly defend. One only has to wander into any shopping mall in the ACT to see that the same large chain-stores appear in Belconnen, Tuggeranong, Canberra and Woden. Where have all the local, individual businesses gone, the ones that provided diversity, that were owned and operated by local Canberrans? They have systematically been taken over by large, homogenous stores which, because they have huge turnovers, can afford the increased rates and the overhead costs incurred by being in a shopping mall.

I wonder how many small, locally owned businesses have not been able to survive because of the lack of access to a tribunal to sort out an unfair lease agreement, a breach of lease agreement or excessive rents. Perhaps that ought to have been the subject of the review, Mr Humphries. How many small businesses have been killed off for lack of fair and just lease agreements or by takeover by large monopolies? No doubt the Commercial and Retail Tenants Association would be happy to bring to the Minister's attention those tenants who no longer operate as a result of that decision made in 1994. If this Assembly is serious about supporting small businesses in Canberra, which provide the bulk of employment in this region, it will pass this amendment simply to allow fairness and justice for all tenants and landowners, not just a select few.

Debate (on motion by **Mr Humphries**) adjourned.

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## AUDITOR-GENERAL (AMENDMENT) BILL 1997

Debate resumed from 5 November 1997, on motion by **Ms Tucker**:

That this Bill be agreed to in principle.

**MR KAINE** (Minister for Urban Services) (10.41): Mr Speaker, this legislation is of considerable interest to the Government. I think that we have already begun the move towards the kinds of things that are envisaged by the Greens in the Bill that we have before us. I have some words of caution, however, based simply on the fact that the methodology for conducting performance audits of the kind envisaged here is not really yet in place. There is a good deal of work still to be done, so I think we need to be aware that there is a timescale in connection with legislation of this kind. It may not move as quickly as the Greens would like, simply because there is as yet no established methodology for doing some of the things that are inherent in the legislation.

The Government, of course, is committed to the principles of ecologically sustainable development, and that is what the legislation is based on; but I suggest that we need to exercise a little bit of caution in adopting such legislation without understanding the constraints that are likely to be found, and that may not be easily done. Only in September of this year, the Government tabled a status paper on environmental accounting. The Government is still waiting for input in connection with that discussion paper. Apart from their consideration of this legislation, I would urge members to take the opportunity to make their inputs to the Government in connection with the matters raised in that status paper. There is much to be addressed. To proceed through the consultation process in response to that status paper on environmental accounting is something that I can only urge members of the Assembly to adopt.

**MR BERRY** (Leader of the Opposition) (10.44): As the premier environment party in the Assembly, the Labor Party will be supporting this Bill. The Bill does make sense to move ahead. It will impose some new arrangements on the Auditor-General to consider matters which in the past have not been taken into account. In many ways, it will be a new world for the Auditor-General. It has been argued that the Commissioner for the Environment may have dealt with this. That alternative might have been considered in the context of this debate, but the Bill is an approach that we will support and indeed follow closely to see how it develops in the context of the Auditor-General's continuing work. His job is a very important one. It is about making sure that the bureaucracy and the Government perform in accordance with acceptable standards. This new approach will be a new guideline for the Auditor-General to cope with. We trust that it works in favour of the environment but, most importantly, works in favour of the community. If it is not in the better interests of the community, then it will not be accepted. We will be supporting these amendments.

**MR MOORE** (10.46): Mr Speaker, in rising to support the Auditor-General (Amendment) Bill 1997 in principle, I think it is appropriate to congratulate Ms Tucker for bringing this Bill forward and for not letting it go at a time when it looked like it was going to go down. The Bill expands the role of the Auditor-General in a very positive way. No longer will the Auditor-General look at just economic indicators. He will now look at environmental indicators as well. I had some difficulty with the way the legislation

was originally drafted, because it also included social costs and benefits. It is not that I disagree with Ms Tucker in putting up that social costs and benefits should be taken into account by the Auditor-General. But, because the Auditor-General works on pragmatic indicators, it is important that we have sensible indicators which he can measure against; otherwise he would be making a series of value judgments, which is the role of this Assembly. We have to make the value judgments. We have to ensure that we have the appropriate indicators and then proceed. That is why Ms Tucker's amendments to the legislation so that it will concentrate for the moment on just environmental indicators is a major step forward.

There is a second leg to this, as I see it. We must take the social indicators - or the "social cash", in dry economic terms - into account as soon as we possibly can. Just as we have been establishing environmental indicators, we have to ensure that we have proper social indicators. I have personally done quite an amount of work on health indicators, which will be part of the social indicators, so I think some groundwork has already been done. I hope that when Ms Tucker comes into this Assembly next time she will be prepared to work with other people in developing social indicators.

I heard Mr Berry claim that Labor is the premier environmental party.

**Ms McRae:** Who put in the wheelie bins?

**MR MOORE:** That will be for environmentalists and environmental voters to determine. Let them make their decision as to who has worked and delivered most on environmental issues. It was not so long ago that an Assembly committee worked together on environmental legislation that all members of this Assembly can be proud of, rather than trying to play games about who did most to get the legislation through. It was a coordinated effort.

I am pleased to hear today that there is also going to be a coordinated effort on environmental indicators. The matter was originally raised by Ms Horodny or Ms Tucker with the Planning and Environment Committee. We looked at environmental indicators, we reported on them and the Government has responded. Work is being done on them and now it is appropriate for the Auditor-General to further his role. No doubt, in the initial instance those environmental indicators are not going to be perfect. Economic indicators are not yet perfect either. There will be an ongoing process of improving indicators, including social indicators. I think this is a landmark piece of legislation that really takes us to the next step of how an Auditor-General should operate to ensure the healthiest possible society, and that is why I am keen to support it.

**MR SPEAKER:** I would like to welcome students from St Francis Xavier High School in Florey. Welcome to your Assembly.

**MRS CARNELL (Chief Minister) (10.50):** Mr Speaker, the Government will be supporting this Bill because, as part of our commitment to environmentally sustainable development, we are moving to adopt environmental accounting and performance reporting, as everyone in this Assembly knows. As Mr Kaine said, we have some concerns about the methodology for conducting performance audits according to the principles of ecologically sustainable development, because there is no methodology

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in place at this stage. But you have to start somewhere, and we believe the direction is right. We are very pleased that Ms Tucker worked with the Auditor-General to sort out with him what was possible and how to put that into legislation. It has been a very cooperative approach, to ensure that the legislation we put on the table here is innovative, appropriate and enforceable.

Unless we had moved to accrual accounting, we could not have taken this next step. Financial accounting, social accounting and environmental accounting can come together if you get your systems right. Now that we have in place accrual accounting and performance indicators for the sorts of things we have measured in the past and are getting better every year, it is an obvious step forward to determine other issues, both social and environmental, that we should measure to determine what we are achieving as a society.

The Society of Certified Practising Accountants also support the concept of environmental accounting and are working on ways to bring it into effect. What we are all after now is a workable model. Additionally, the Government is studying the work of the Office of the Commissioner for the Environment on improving environmental indicators and environmental evaluation methodologies. We are also assessing ways in which these can be incorporated with financial accounts.

The Government's work to date clearly demonstrates our commitment and the commitment of this Assembly to the practical integration of social, environmental and economic frameworks in a way that will enable planning and decision-making processes to be fully informed not just on what things cost in dollar terms but on what they cost in a broader community sense. Again, unless we had moved to determine what things were costing in dollar terms, in accrual terms, we simply could not have taken the next step.

Next year we will be conducting research work aimed at developing an environmental accounting and measurement model for the ACT. To this end, I would reiterate Mr Kaine's call to members to study the environmental accounting status paper. We really would appreciate the feedback of members. To date we do not have any feedback from members of the Assembly or from associated parties. We certainly hope that that will not be the case in the future.

We are clearly signalling our intention to account more fully for everything that is important in our community - that is, social issues, environmental issues and financial issues. I think this legislation is heading in the right direction. We have a long way to go, but Ms Tucker's working with the Auditor-General to ensure that what hopefully we pass today can be put into place is another step in the process of making sure that our approach to accounting in the ACT continues to lead the world.

**MS TUCKER** (10.55), in reply: I thank members for their support and their comments on this very important piece of legislation. I have heard Mrs Carnell argue on many occasions that the ACT has to take some risks and take the lead. I acknowledge the connection between this legislation and the introduction of accrual accounting. When the Greens looked at it first, we could see the potential within that system to widen what we look at and bring into the web what until quite recently have been regarded as externalities - the social and environmental impacts of our activities.



While I am on that, I might just respond to something Mr Berry said on behalf of the “premier environment party”. He said that as long it was in the best interests of the community, not just in the best interests of the environment, he would look at it. I am afraid that he has just failed as the premier environment party, because these two are inextricably linked. You cannot say that anything that is bad for the environment could possibly be good for the community in the long term.

Of course, the methodology is not nearly as sophisticated for environmental auditing as it is in the economic area, but it is not until we start putting in place new approaches on models such as this that there will be pressure to trial new approaches. If we are looking at effectiveness and efficiency, we cannot separate the purely economic aspects of operations. I certainly look forward to the day when equity is included as a key aspect of audit objectives. If we wait until we have the perfect system, we will never move forward at all.

Implementing ecologically sustainable development - something every government in Australia is committed to doing - does not require just one solution. We need a multifaceted and integrated approach. Mr Berry implied that the Commissioner for the Environment could have taken on this sort of work. That again shows a misunderstanding of the fundamental essence of what we are attempting to do. We have to integrate these concerns within our accounting system, within our audits, so that we see how we are operating as a whole, on the economic, social and environmental levels. We have to have a multifaceted and integrated approach. Canada has realised that broadening the role of the Auditor-General to include responsibilities with regard to the environment has been useful in developing audit methodology and remaining abreast of state-of-the-art developments for environmental performance and other related matters. The Auditor-General would be able to work with the Commissioner for the Environment, but we have to bring that work into the whole.

The ACT can now be seen to be leading the way in taking responsibility for changing accounting systems so that they more accurately represent the total picture and the impacts of our activities as a community. It is a fundamental issue for all societies in developing countries and developed countries around the world, and the United Nations is acknowledging the critical importance of this in its work in developing indicators. I acknowledge the work of the Government in getting the paper on environmental accounting up. I am happy to give more detailed feedback to Mrs Carnell on that matter. I think it is a really excellent start.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to in principle.

### Detail Stage

Bill, by leave, taken as a whole

**MS TUCKER** (10.59): I ask for leave to move together the five amendments circulated in my name.

Leave granted.

**MS TUCKER:** I move:

Page 2, line 2, clause 4, proposed new subsection 12(2), omit all the words after “appropriate,”, substitute “take into account environmental issues relative to the operations being reviewed or examined, having regard to the principles of ecologically sustainable development”.

Page 2, line 4, clause 4, proposed new subsection 12(3), omit the subsection.

Page 2, line 11, clause 4, proposed new subsection 12(4), omit “For the purposes of paragraph 3(b), ecologically sustainable development is to be taken to require”, substitute “In this section, ‘ecologically sustainable development’ means”.

Page 2, line 13, clause 4, proposed new subsection 12(4), omit “and to be”.

Page 2, line 25, clause 4, proposed new subsection 12(5), omit the subsection.

Mr Speaker, as members are aware - and other members have referred to this in their speeches - the original purpose of our legislation was to enable the Auditor-General to take into account social and environmental factors when conducting performance audits of government operations. The amendments I am moving are to make the focus of this legislation on environmental issues. As Mrs Carnell has mentioned, we have worked with the Auditor-General to make this a possible move into widening the scope of the performance audits. We have pulled back from the social aspects of activities being audited. That is not because we do not think social factors should be taken into account in audits of government operations. Quite the contrary; we have been calling for improved social indicators for nearly three years. Tomorrow I will be proposing a matter of public importance on the need for a social plan. That will definitely be related to the way we measure how we are operating on the social level. I am moving these amendments because we appreciate that the Auditor-General’s Office is limited to the extent to which appropriate information such as objectives, indicators and benchmarks is available. This is lacking in the ACT at the moment, so at this point we are focusing just on environmental issues.

The Government's budget model based on outcomes and outputs, which one would believe should include comprehensive qualitative and quantitative targets with respect to social policy in the ACT, has also been seen to be lacking. I hear Mrs Carnell acknowledging that. I guess this Government and other governments around Australia have moved to the outcomes and outputs model without having really done the work. I have criticised governments for this consistently over the last three years, but I am glad to see that at last real work is being done. I acknowledge the Quality of Life project, which is the result of a Government and ACTCOSS partnership working towards determining what we as a society think matters. From that work we will see indicators developed. These amendments are somewhat of a compromise on our part, but we are happy to make that compromise and we are very pleased to have the support of members to start on this approach. It is a sensible approach. I think members need to differentiate between performance audits and financial audits. The Auditor-General's annual report explains the difference as follows:

A Performance Audit is:

“an independent systematic examination of all or a part of an entity's programs, operations or activities to assess economy, efficiency and/or effectiveness. Audits are carried out for the purpose of examining and reporting on matters related to any or all of the following:

- a) the adequacy of management systems, controls and practices related to economy, efficiency and effectiveness of operations;
- b) the extent to which resources have been managed with due regard to economy and efficiency;
- c) the extent to which programs, operations or activities of an entity have been effective; and
- d) the degree to which the entity has complied with legislation, regulations or directions related to its activities”.

As such, performance audits include much descriptive and subjective analysis. As I have said, I have worked with the Auditor-General, so this should be a workable document and something that we will be able to review and improve in the next Assembly. I look forward to having the opportunity to do that.

**MRS CARNELL** (Chief Minister) (11.04): Mr Speaker, we will be supporting these amendments. The amendments came forward as a result of a cooperative approach, which, as many members of this place have indicated, usually ends up with significantly better outcomes than the adversarial approach that we take probably too often. The importance of this Bill should not be underestimated. From my perspective, coming from the financial side of management but having an acute awareness of the importance of the environment, I believe that it gives a sense of two different debates that probably should never have been different debates coming together under a common framework.

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If this legislation and the approach that we have taken with regard to financial management reform can achieve that - and I am confident that they can - then I believe that this really will significantly improve the society that we live in. In deciding whether to buy products or services, we do not consider just how much they cost. There are a lot of other considerations as well. We all agree that that should always have been the case, and hopefully it has been the case; but in this way we can measure whether we are doing the job that I am sure we all believe we are doing. That has to be a good thing for the community generally. So we will be supporting the amendments.

**MS HORODNY (11.05):** Mr Speaker, as someone who has been a member of the Public Accounts Committee for the past three years, it is obvious to me that in many cases you cannot assess the effectiveness of a particular government operation without having regard to social and environmental issues. What is the economy about, after all? It should be a means to an end. We should be concerned about economic outcomes only to the extent that we achieve outcomes that are good for society as a whole. Unfortunately, we have got ends and means all mixed up, and that is why we need a new approach to economics. Economics should be the servant and not the master.

A number of audits conducted by the Auditor-General would have benefited from a broader approach - for example, the examination of the effectiveness of secondary school colleges, the examination of ACTEW, the audit of government passenger cars and the audit of streetlights. Would it not make sense to look at the potential economic and environmental benefits from initiatives such as car pooling when we are looking at government passenger car use? Surely, in all these cases the effectiveness and efficiency must be informed by the outcomes that we are obtaining. As we have said before, improving environmental outcomes is often good for the economic efficiency of operations. As resources are saved, we save money. The same is very often true for social policy, although the timeframes are obviously much longer.

Take health, for example. There is an old saying that prevention is better than cure. It is certainly much cheaper to get in early and prevent illnesses in the first place than to have to spend hundreds and thousands of dollars on expensive hospital procedures. While we are not proceeding with the social aspect today, I am sure that in the next Assembly the Greens will pursue the issue of social auditing as better benchmarks and indicators are developed. As Ms Tucker said in her tabling speech, the Audit Office in Canada has taken this approach to ensure that environmental considerations are taken into account in the Auditor-General's reports to the House of Commons. They have also appointed a Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development.

Mr Speaker, economic indicators have become the main measure of our welfare. I am pleased to see that our constant calls for better social and environmental indicators and environmental accounting systems are being taken more seriously by the Government. This must go hand in hand with ensuring that ecologically sustainable development is incorporated into all aspects of government decision-making, policy and service implementation, reporting and auditing. We cannot just say that because we have the Commissioner for the Environment we do not need to worry about this. The whole point of sustainable development is to bring economic and environmental management and auditing procedures together. I urge all members to support these amendments.

Amendments agreed to.

Bill, as a whole, as amended, agreed to.

Bill, as amended, agreed to.

## **PUBLIC TRANSPORT SYSTEM**

**MR WHITECROSS** (11.09): Mr Speaker, I move:

That this Assembly:

- (1) condemns the degrading of Canberra's public transport system by the Liberal Government over the last three years including:
  - (a) the reduction of ACTION's budget by \$12m including \$2m in the most recent budget;
  - (b) the cuts in services which have resulted in patronage losses of 25 per cent in 1996-97 alone;
  - (c) the rise in fares of over 50 per cent;
  - (d) the 10 per cent reduction to school bus services in the current school year; and
  - (e) the effect that reduced services have had on increased motor vehicle use and, consequently, greenhouse gas emissions.
- (2) expresses grave concerns about the lack of action by the Minister for Urban Services to implement the Graham Report; and
- (3) calls for immediate action by the Government to implement the Graham Report in order to address the crisis of confidence in Canberra's public transport system.

Mr Speaker, I think now is the time for us to be having another look at public transport in the ACT and at where we are going with public transport as we move towards the end of the term of the Carnell Liberal Government. I think it is appropriate that we see where we have got to with public transport and look at where we appear to be going with public transport under the Liberals, so that we, as individual members of the Assembly, and the community at large can consider the implications of the next election for the future of public transport in this city.

Mr Speaker, I do not want to spend a lot of time this morning rehearsing the appalling litany of failure by this Government over the last three years in relation to public transport. Over the last three years, Mr Kaine and his Government have presided over a very vicious and sustained attack on public transport in this Territory, an attack on infrastructure which is at the very heart of the efficient and effective running of our city, infrastructure which is important to achieving social justice outcomes for our community, infrastructure which is important to achieving significant environmental goals in reducing greenhouse gases and in reducing the demand for road infrastructure, infrastructure which is fundamental to the effective working of any modern city.

What have we seen from the Liberals over the last three years? Mr Speaker, the Liberals came to government with the intention of taking \$27m out of ACTION over three years. We have seen a cut of \$12.7m to ACTION's budget by the end of the three years, an absolutely massive cut to ACTION's budget, which could be funded only by reductions in services and increases in fares. Mr Speaker, over the three years, we have seen some absolutely huge assaults on the level of service offered by ACTION. In my electorate, which is the electorate of Mr Kaine and Mr Kaine's predecessor Mr De Domenico, services were cut by 20 per cent by this Liberal Government. Across Canberra, services have been cut by over 10 per cent. Mr Speaker, only this year, the Liberal Government introduced cuts to the school bus services amounting to 10 per cent of services. In fact, they cut out any service carrying fewer than 20 passengers; that is, a half-full bus. This is their commitment to providing a service to the people of Canberra - cancelling services which were carrying 20 students.

Mr Speaker, this is the record of the Liberals. What has been the legacy of that record of cutting and cutting bus services and at the same time charging patrons 50 per cent more to use those services? The legacy of that has been a 25 per cent reduction in patronage in one financial year, 1996-97. Mr Speaker, it is not as if all of this has crept up on the Government and it has had no warnings about it. Over the last three years, the Labor Party has consistently sounded the warning, about the Government's approach to public transport, that, if you cut back services, it will inevitably lead to cuts in patronage; that, if you combine cuts in services with 50 per cent increases in fares, it will inevitably lead to cuts in patronage.

But what has been the Government's response to that? Mr Kaine's response was that it was all John Howard's fault because he had sacked all the public servants. That was why no-one was catching the bus anymore. It was not because the Liberals had cut 20 per cent of services in Tuggeranong and 10 per cent of services across Canberra; it was John Howard's fault. When I pointed out that in one 12-month period, from September 1995 to September 1996, patronage had dropped by 13 per cent, Mr Kaine's response was to say, "Mr Whitecross does not know what he is talking about. Patronage is up again". This is what he told us earlier this year. Yet, when the annual report came out, it showed that my 13 per cent assessment was actually conservative; that the situation was worse; that it was actually 25 per cent, not 13 per cent. So, Mr Speaker, while Mr Kaine was trying to tell us that the problems had all been fixed, the reality was that patronage had continued to decline.

So, what has the Government been doing about this? Mr Kaine and his Government have shown little commitment to public transport. As they say, "If there is a horse called Self-interest in the race, you should back it". Mr Kaine might not care much about public transport; but he as sure as hell cares about being re-elected. The pollsters said, "This public transport issue is starting to bite. We are going to fix the supermarkets issue. We are going to do a backflip on that one".

**Mr Kaine:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Will Mr Whitecross affirm that he is not interested in getting re-elected?

**MR WHITECROSS:** It is always interesting to see Mr Kaine pop up, because you usually know that you are starting to get to the nub of the matter.

**Mr Kaine:** I have been here for 20 years, mate. How long have you been here?

**MR WHITECROSS:** Mr Kaine, we could talk about the last time I saw you bob up like this, which was when I reminded you about how you sent the report back to be rewritten, because the report had originally been written to wind down the public transport system, and then you received the results of the polling, which said, "Public transport is turning into a bit of a problem for the Government. We had better come up with a report which says that we are going to fix it".

Mr Kaine, to give him his due, does know about preserving his own political hide, and he knows that public transport is a problem in the ACT. So, he came out with a nice little report that said, "We see that there are a few problems with public transport. We do not know how that happened; but there seem to be a few problems with public transport in the ACT. Maybe we should make a few changes and fix a few things". So, Mr Kaine dutifully came into this place and said, "Yep, we agree with this report, and we are going to do everything in it. It is such a good report that we are going to do everything that is in this report to make sure that we improve the public transport system. A lot of it can be implemented this year. Mind you, all the really big improvements to public transport, like actually fixing the route structures and actually fixing the fare structures, we will leave until, say, July next year, after the election, because that will give us plenty of time to change our mind if we do get re-elected. But, in the meantime, it will sound good in our election material going into the next election".

But he did say that he was going to do some things, Mr Speaker. What did he say that he was going to do? He said that he was going to introduce more frequent services on selected routes during the day, between commuter peak services, which Graham said could be done at no additional cost except for 60c a kilometre running costs, which would be more than made up for by additional patronage. What else did he promise to do? He promised to trial some additional services later at night from night areas such as Civic and Manuka. We have the absurd situation where, if you are in Civic and you want to catch a bus to Woden, then you will not want to see the late movie, because the last bus leaves at 10.47 on a Friday night. Mr Kaine might be in bed before 10 o'clock at night; but I can tell you, Mr Speaker, that there are some people who actually like to go out on Friday night, and 10.47 pm is a little bit early to be shutting down the bus system.

What else did they say? They will introduce better timetabling information. How complicated is it to put up a bit of timetable information in some suitable places so that people, when they are catching the bus, can actually see when the next bus is coming? They will provide customer-friendly service staff in interchanges and, progressively, timetable information at major bus stops. What has the Government done on that? We used to have customer-friendly staff in Civic. We used to have people in Civic who could answer your questions about buses. What did the Government do? They closed down the service and they moved all the staff to the first floor of some building, behind security doors. That is how well they implemented that recommendation, Mr Speaker. But now they are madly scrambling to figure out a way to do a backflip on their decision to put all the staff on the first floor.

Mr Speaker, the fact is that, far from doing what Mr Kaine said and immediately implementing it, they went in the opposite direction. They said that they would ensure that feeder bus services interconnect at interchanges and that services do not depart before connecting services arrive. What action have they taken on that? None. They said that they would continue negotiations with the Transport Workers Union on work reform to allow additional services to be implemented and redesign of the network to be introduced. Mr Speaker, surprise, surprise! The one thing that the Government is doing is continuing negotiations with the Transport Workers Union. Never mind all the things that are in their power to do; the one thing that they are getting on with is talking to the unions and making out that it is all the unions' fault, because, when in doubt, a little bit of tub-thumping about the unions is always a good thing. So they say, "We are continuing negotiations with the Transport Workers Union". Mind you, they have not negotiated with the Transport Workers Union over the last three years.

Mr Kaine comes into this place and tries to blame the Labor Party for all the work practices which Graham identifies as needing to be further discussed with the union. But, of course, under the Labor Government, we reformed a number of work practices. We introduced work practices which allowed mechanics to drive buses. We introduced work practices which allowed part-time drivers to work alongside full-time drivers. The Labor Party did those things. The Labor Party was making progress on workplace reform. What did this Government do? They had a long, costly industrial dispute, which cost the community \$5m, which put buses off the road; and, at the end of it, what did we get? They rushed out and signed up an EBA, without actually securing any of this workplace reform, without actually making any progress at all on workplace reform, because they do not know how to negotiate with unions. They know how to have a fight; they know how to cost the community \$5m with an unproductive industrial dispute; but do they actually know how to get a result? No. It is just like the VMOs. They know how to give away \$3m of the taxpayers' money; but do they actually know how to negotiate any reform? No.

Mr Speaker, what else did the Minister promise that they would do? He referred to "additional services to be implemented and redesign of the network to be introduced". Mr Speaker, I have not seen any work on that yet. He said that they would improve the summer network and public holiday services. We have been made a promise about that.



We have been made a promise that, come Christmas, they will not repeat the disaster of the summer holiday timetables, which they were happy to repeat for two years. So, there might be a chance that we will actually get some progress on that one. But, of course, it has not happened yet.

The Minister said that they would ensure that the bus purchasing program meets the needs of the improved network, and that they are already introducing midi-buses on selected routes as part of that. Interestingly, the Graham report suggests that midi-buses might not be particularly economic and that mini-buses might actually be more economic. But, Mr Speaker, that is perhaps a story for another day. The Minister said that they would carry out community-wide surveys and consultations to provide an up-to-date information base for network redesign. Mr Speaker, they are doing some community consultation. When in doubt, continue negotiations with the union; but have some community consultation. But, whatever you do, do not actually do anything to improve the bus system. Do not actually take any actions that you could take now to improve the bus system. Do not actually put on an extra bus anywhere or improve any route.

Mr Speaker, one of the interesting things in the Graham report is that it says, "Do not go for these wholesale 'redesign everything from the ground up' network redesigns. Do it progressively. Do a bit here and a bit there. Respond to the needs. Be smart". But what have they done? They have said, "We are going to do a ground-up redesign of the network. We will not be able to implement it for another year and a half; but it will be good when it comes. Trust us". Mr Speaker, these people do not deserve the trust of the Canberra community, because they do not understand public transport. Public transport is fundamental infrastructure for the Canberra community. The way to implement this infrastructure is not on the basis of demand. These people keep cutting out services because they say that there are not enough people on them. The way to improve bus services, Mr Speaker, is to implement a service which is going to be attractive to patrons. If you keep making it less attractive, you will get fewer users. We should be implementing a public transport system which is more attractive. We should be looking at the fare structures to make them more attractive. We should be identifying the things which are causing concern to potential users and addressing them. We should be doing it now, not waiting for the by and by, as the Minister is doing.

**MR KAINE** (Minister for Urban Services) (11.25): Mr Speaker, I do not know where to begin. Mr Whitecross started off with some false accusations about the Government. He has not even got his facts straight. One minute, he is telling me that I have not done anything yet; then he is telling me that I should do things gradually. I am not too sure what I can do to satisfy Mr Whitecross. What I would like to do, Mr Speaker, is put some facts on the table. I will make just a couple of comments about Mr Whitecross's remarks, before I get down to the facts - and there is no similarity between Mr Whitecross's comments and the facts, let me assure you.

Mr Whitecross started off by saying, "Now is the time that we should review ACTION to see where we are going". I started that process nine months ago. What has he been doing? Has he been having a sleep for nine months? Only now has he discovered that it is time to have a look at ACTION. He made some snide remark about my needing to get re-elected. I do not need this sort of gimmickry to get re-elected; but, obviously, Mr Whitecross does. It is the only reason why this motion is on the agenda today.

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On that sort of track record, Mr Speaker, I would remind Mr Whitecross that this is my sixth election coming up. Five down and one to go. I will be successful. What is Mr Whitecross's record? He got up once, full stop. We will see the proof of that in February. It is obvious that Mr Whitecross does not want to get re-elected. He would not be pulling this sort of funny trick if he did.

He talked about the vicious attack by the Government on ACTION over the last three years. I would point out, Mr Speaker, that what we were doing with ACTION for the first couple of years was exactly a continuation of what the Labor Government did for five years. If it was vicious over the last three years, how come it was not vicious in the five years before that, when the Labor Party was doing exactly the same thing? He might as well have said that Mr Connolly was vicious, too. I do not think Mr Connolly was, and I do not think we are. That is just to deal with a couple of the strange comments that Mr Whitecross made.

Mr Speaker, the motion begins with some notion about condemning the Government for degrading the bus service. Frankly, we have not degraded the bus service, and Mr Whitecross put nothing on the table as evidence that we have. What we have been doing, as I say, is a continuation of what Labor did. We have sought to ensure that our public transport system keeps pace with the efficiency improvements and meets the community's needs, which is exactly what Terry Connolly tried to do for the last three or four years of his term in this place. When I came into the ministry in January, it was pretty obvious that there was some loss of public confidence in the system. There were some problems with that. I was getting lots of telephone calls and lots of letters, just as Mr Whitecross and others were. But I wanted to ensure that we embarked on some real improvements and made some changes in ACTION services that were beneficial. I am not one to sit in my office and direct change without having the facts first. Mr Whitecross does not seem to have suffered from that at all. He does not go and get any facts; he just attacks.

I wanted to know first what was wrong with ACTION. I initiated the review by Roger Graham in February. Within three weeks of coming into the ministry, Mr Speaker, I had acted to find out what it was that was wrong with ACTION, because, if you do not know what is wrong, how on earth can you fix it? Mr Whitecross thinks you can fix it, I presume, by sitting in your office and directing change, without first of all knowing what the problem is. My objective was to identify the problems and then set about fixing them. I think that is what we are doing, Mr Speaker.

I tabled the Graham report only in June of this year, just over three months ago. That report outlined some major changes that it recommended the Government adopt. This Government made a commitment to implement those recommendations. We indicated that a number of those measures would be taken this year and that some would run into next year, because of the very nature of the changes that were proposed. Incidentally, that report was endorsed by this Assembly and by Mr Whitecross. He did not get up and say that he objected to the report, that he did not like the recommendations or that he did not like the implicit timescale for implementing what Mr Graham recommended.

A public transport network is not a static thing. You cannot take a snapshot of it on a given day, in a given month, in a given year, and say, "They are all the problems. We have fixed them. We have got it fixed forever". You have to keep your eye on it and you have to make sure that you evolve to keep pace with the requirements of the city and its residents. That is what Roger Graham said. Of course, this Government is not only implementing his recommendations but also building on them.

The recommendations of the Graham report fell into four major areas: Network design, customer service, employee work practices and organisational structures. We are dealing with all of those, and we are dealing with them in the graduated approach that Mr Whitecross just said that we should adopt. Some of them we can deal with quickly; some of them take a little longer. In terms of customer service, you can relatively easily get information out to the consumers in a form that they find friendly and easy to use; but it takes a lot longer to restructure the network and to come up with a different timetable to run the buses to. You do not do the latter without a community consultation program to find out just what the people want and where they perceive the system is not working; otherwise, you are probably fixing things that do not need fixing and doing a Whitecross and not fixing the bits that do need fixing.

A major body of work has been commenced to plan the implementation of those recommendations. Community consultation has to play a major part in that process. That public consultation process has been going on, and is going on, all over Canberra as part of that task of obtaining input from the community as to what they want from the bus system. In fact, there is a meeting tonight in North Canberra. Mr Whitecross might care to go and find out what is really happening. This follows some other meetings over recent weeks in other areas, and quite a number more are planned over the next few weeks. While we are going through a comprehensive consultation process, we are not sitting on our hands.

Mr Whitecross seems to assume that nothing has happened with ACTION. If he thinks that nothing has happened with ACTION, how is it that, nine months ago, when I came into office, I was getting literally dozens of letters and phone calls of complaint every week and, in the last three weeks, I think I have had one letter from one lady where the bus was eight minutes late? What happened to that flood of letters and telephone calls that we were all getting a few months ago? If ACTION is not better today than it was nine months ago, why have all the complaints stopped? The complaints have stopped because ACTION management has moved quickly to address those things that can be addressed quickly.

Let us look at things that have been addressed in the last three months. We are planning for a new shopfront in the city interchange, which will be opened early next year. The first of the new bus stop information signs are about to be installed. In fact, I was up in Brisbane recently and I noticed some interesting bus information signs at bus stops out in the suburbs, and I inquired about them. They were there on trial. Mr Thurston has already been onto the Brisbane City Council to find out about them, to see whether we should adopt them here. We are working quickly to fill the gaps and make up for the deficiencies that Roger Graham identified.

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When Mr Thurston took control, the first priority was to make sure that the buses that we run now run on time and that they do run. The meeting of bus timetables has been achieved, I guess, close to 100 per cent of the time right now. That is a major improvement. I suggest that that is why the number of complaints has fallen off. We have put in better timetabling information. We have Austouch terminals in the interchanges. That night services trial that Mr Whitecross made so much of is actually starting next month. The Government will make sure that we have an improved summer network service; that is, we are not going to operate on the reduced services over the holiday period that we have operated on in previous years. We will be introducing those more frequent services on selected routes throughout the day that Mr Whitecross also talked about.

But you do not reschedule buses on the spur of the moment. The rescheduling is in hand, and we will have those more frequent services, where they are required, in the very near future. We are introducing midi-buses so that we do not have those huge buses running around with three passengers in them. If there is going to be a bus with three passengers in it, it will be a midi-bus, which operates at three-quarters of the operating cost of the bigger bus. We have already introduced fully accessible buses on two routes so that people who have disabilities and who have difficulty getting on and off buses can now do so much more easily. More of those will be introduced over the next few weeks. The particular needs of those newer customers out in Gungahlin, who came to see me and complained that they did not have a direct bus service to Canberra, are being met. They will soon have a service to Civic.

**Mr Corbell:** He does not like to mention who went with them.

**MR KAINE:** Here comes Little Sir Echo up at the back. He knows what the need was, because he was in my office when it was articulated by people from the Gungahlin Community Council, and he knows that we are moving to rectify it.

On the question of loss of patronage, certainly ACTION lost patronage. That is one of the reasons why I was concerned about it. But it is nothing like the 25 per cent that Mr Whitecross claims. He needs to do his homework. In fact, it is quite mischievous for him to be making that claim. If he read the annual report of the Department of Urban Services, he would get the facts. It is not a fact that patronage fell by 25 per cent. Recent weekly patronage returns suggest that the decline in patronage has been arrested. In fact, it has stabilised. Service improvements that we will be making over the next few weeks, we expect confidently, will see an increase in patronage growth. They are some of the things that the Graham report recommended.

Mr Whitecross talked about a fare increase. Prior to the increase in fares in July 1995, the average fare charged by ACTION was about 50 per cent of the average fare charged in other States for similar services. In other words, the passengers were not making a fair contribution. We made a commitment to bring these fares into line with New South Wales over a two-year period. But in 1997-98, because of other pressures, we decided that there would be no fare increases in this current year.

We have provided reduced fare options for the majority of ACTION's passengers in one way or another. A pensioner off-peak daily ticket was introduced, providing unlimited rides, between peak periods and in the evening and at weekends, for \$1. This ticket has become the most popular form of ticket for the target group. The seniors love it. Student travel tickets have been introduced. At 45c a ride, they are 35 per cent cheaper than the already discounted concession ticket. Family tickets and shoppers tickets have been introduced at discounted levels to meet the travel needs of those passengers. In July this year, a \$1 "city saver" off-peak fare was introduced. It covers trips between the city and Northbourne Avenue, Parkes, Barton, Parliament House, Russell and Constitution Avenue.

So, we have attacked the question of fares, and we believe that they are far more equitable than they were. Roger Graham said in his report that the current fare structure was inequitable and should be reviewed. We have done that. We also have a consultant to the Department of Urban Services at this moment who is examining a range of fare models aimed at providing fairer prices for public transport in the ACT in the future and a structure that will encourage more people to use the buses. That is what it is all about.

Mr Whitecross attacked us over school travel. About 25 per cent of students graduate or change school each year, and the demand for school services is constantly changing. It is not static. It does not stay the same. The high cost of peak-period school bus operations demands the highest level of productivity in connection with them. The use of part-time drivers will be a feature of this service in the future, to get the costs down. The school transport liaison committee, comprising members of the ACT education bodies and their community representatives, takes particular account of the special travel needs of students. We do take advice from people who understand the problem.

Services are being combined, rather than cancelled. The availability of other transport options such as route buses is considered before changes are made. In every case where school services have been rationalised, there are normal route services available to transport those children to school. (*Extension of time granted*) It might interest Mr Whitecross and Assembly members to know that, while there are about 14,000 trips per day on school buses, there are about 17,000 school trips on normal route services. More students travel on regular scheduled services than travel on special bus services. That is, presumably, because in many cases the parents have decided that it is the most convenient service for them. The objective on the part of ACTION and the Government, of course, is to quantify the need and to meet that need - not to maintain unwarranted services simply because we used to run them. That seems to be the implication of Mr Whitecross's motion - that, even if the need changes, if the need reduces, you still run the same number of buses. How absurd can you get?

Mr Speaker, in 1992-93, the then Labor Government proposed a budget savings objective of \$10m over three years, or \$3.3m a year. That objective was met by ACTION. It was a rational action on the part of Mr Connolly to force ACTION to get its operating costs down, and it worked. At the end of that time, the current Government extended ACTION's savings agreements - and they were agreements; they were not arbitrarily imposed - for a further three years, with a \$12m target. Subsequently, however, that target completion date was deferred for a year. So, it did not achieve the \$12m in the three years, but it still has the target of ultimately achieving the \$12m.

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To get back to Mr Whitecross, if that is a vicious attack on the buses, it was just as vicious when Mr Connolly did it. But I do not believe that it was vicious at all. ACTION has achieved its savings under both Labor and Liberal governments, primarily through the labour productivity and efficiency measures. Much of this was long overdue. I think we should be congratulating ACTION management for those achievements, rather than taking Mr Whitecross's dog-in-the-manger approach and criticising them for it. He would do far better if he were to acknowledge their achievements and offer them a word of praise.

Mr Speaker, in summary, the Graham report was tabled in this Assembly only in June, a new general manager was appointed in July, and community consultation for the design of a network has commenced. A community meeting - one of a number - is taking place tonight. It follows others held over recent weeks, and more will follow. Personally, I am delighted that the Opposition has expressed such strong support for implementing the Graham report; but I wish that Opposition members would be consistent. Either you implement it or you do not. The Assembly adopted the report. The Government is implementing it. That is precisely what we are doing, and we are in the middle of it now. We are on target for the introduction of a new network by July next year. This new network will reflect the input from the extensive community consultation process currently under way.

Mr Speaker, the service is already greatly improved, compared to what it was a year ago; community confidence is increasing; complaints have dropped to the point where they are negligible; further major improvements are proceeding - new routing, new timetables, user-friendly bus stops, innovation - everywhere you look. Unlike Labor, Mr Speaker, I applaud ACTION for its achievements - a sentiment which I believe is now shared by a majority of Canberra's commuters.

**MR CORBELL** (11.44): Mr Speaker, we must have hit a raw nerve with the Minister this morning, because what we received in the Minister's rebuttal on ACTION was a lot of talk but not much demonstration of what he is doing now to fix services in ACTION. He could have been doing something, but he has not been. That is the whole point of this motion today. Mr Speaker, fundamentally, this Government does not understand what public transport is about. Public transport is about providing connections in our community. It is about allowing those in our community who choose not to use a car, or who are unable to use a car, to travel around their city. But this Government does not understand that. It prefers to view public transport as something that has to be fitted into a balance sheet, into a ledger. That is why we are in the position we are in today.

Mr Speaker, in February of this year, in the very first speech I made in this place, I highlighted one aspect of ACTION's failure to deliver services and, more broadly, the failure of this Government to understand that services are about helping people and are not about just balancing budgets. I raised the issue of two elderly sisters who live in Weston Creek. They purchased a home in Weston Creek which was right beside a bus stop. They did that because they were both in their eighties, one of them had a heart condition and they were unable to use a car. They chose a home which was on

a bus route so that they could use the bus - just once a week, to get to town, to get out of the home, to go and do some shopping, to have a meal, to connect with the rest of our community, instead of being isolated at home. ACTION cut their service, presumably because the route was not financially viable. This happened at the beginning of this year.

Mr Speaker, when I raised the sisters' case in my first speech in the Assembly this year, Mr Kaine said, "Now that Mr Corbell has raised this issue, I will have ACTION look at it". I am sorry to report, Mr Speaker, that those two sisters are still unable to catch a bus, unless they are prepared to take a 30-minute walk uphill to the nearest bus stop. Mr Speaker, that is indicative of this Government's failure to address the problems in ACTION and it is indicative of the old, worn out and tired approach of this old, worn out and tired Minister.

**Mr Kaine:** That is ageist. I am going to take you to the Discrimination Commissioner.

**MR CORBELL:** Mr Speaker, this is just an example of nothing happening. Public transport is a key environmental issue. Mr Speaker, I know that Mr Kaine enjoys standing up in this place and suggesting that young whippersnappers like me have no role to play in this Assembly; but I want to assure Mr Kaine that I intend to be here well after he has gone and I want to assure Mr Kaine that, when he fails to address issues of public transport in this city, I am going to stand up on behalf of my constituents and make sure that he is aware of exactly the problems he is facing and exactly the problems his Government has caused.

Mr Speaker, public transport is also a very important environmental issue. The average Australian car emits into the atmosphere each year four tonnes of carbon dioxide. The Government's failure to provide effective and responsive public transport services in this city has led to increased car use, and that means increased greenhouse gas emissions. This Government has simply failed to understand the environmental consequences of its policy of cutting ACTION. Unfortunately, this shows up not only in the approach of the Minister for Urban Services on ACTION but also in the attitude of the Minister for the Environment towards greenhouse gases. A couple of months ago, the Minister for the Environment stood up in this Assembly and said, "I do not really think greenhouse gases are a problem. The evidence is unclear". This Minister refuses to accept the findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which is a United Nations organisation, that there is clear evidence that the activities of human beings are making a difference to our environment and are contributing to global warming. That is something which the Minister for the Environment has failed to recognise - except, I must say, Mr Speaker, when it comes to getting his photo on a pamphlet about global warming - and which the Minister for Urban Services has failed to recognise, as evidenced by his and his Government's continued attempts to pare back the public transport system.

Mr Speaker, this debate is not just about the last year, when Trevor Kaine was Minister for Urban Services, although he would like us to believe that everything is sweet and rosy now because he is a Minister and he is doing the right thing. This debate is also about the last almost three years of this Government. I want to highlight some of the activities of the Carnell Government prior to Mr Kaine becoming Minister. In March 1995, at the very beginning of their term, they reneged on the promise of free school buses.

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In June 1995, fares went up by 27 to 30 per cent. In September 1995, \$12m was cut from ACTION's budget. In October 1995, Minister - listen to this as you are walking out the door - a report identified high levels of customer dissatisfaction with ACTION services. So, what did the Government do? In December 1995, they introduced the holiday timetable. They introduced that one timetable which perhaps more than any other has driven people away from ACTION. Whilst this Government thinks that everyone stays on holiday until the middle of January, or perhaps even later, the reality is that people go back to work maybe one week after Christmas, and they have to rely on a holiday timetable. That is what this Government did in response to a report identifying high dissatisfaction with ACTION services.

Mr Speaker, in April 1996, services were cut by up to 30 per cent in some areas and 10 per cent across Canberra. In June 1996, fares went up again, by 21 to 28 per cent. In October 1996, figures revealed that ACTION patronage had dropped by 13 per cent. What a surprise, when all you do is introduce a holiday timetable which makes it harder for people to catch a bus and get to work, and increase fare levels. In December 1996, again we had the chaos caused by holiday timetables. In January 1997, there was a further reduction of services with the release of *Bus Book '97*, which, I have to say, Mr Speaker, was so full of inconsistencies as to make it completely unreliable and to further drive people away from using public transport. That is the history of this Government before Mr Kaine became Minister. My colleague Mr Whitecross has already outlined all of the failures of the existing Minister for Urban Services in relation to ACTION; but we must not forget the activities and the actions of this Government prior to Mr Kaine becoming Minister.

Mr Speaker, the last issue I want to raise is services for people in a newly developing area of Canberra - Gungahlin. I am the only member of this place who lives in the newly growing Gungahlin area, and I have taken a close personal interest in the delivery of bus services to people in that area. Mr Speaker, there are three suburbs in Gungahlin where, if you want to go to Civic, you have to go via Belconnen - you pay twice if you go via Belconnen - or you have to catch a commuter bus, limited as that service is, which is also double fare.

Mr Kaine stood up in this place and said, "I heard from the Gungahlin Community Council. They came and saw me, and I am responding to their demands". Mr Speaker, they went and saw him as a result of an appointment I made with him to go and see him with them. I am their local member, and I was doing my job in representing the concerns of my constituency. (*Extension of time granted*) Six hundred residents in those three suburbs alone - Amaroo, Ngunnawal and Nicholls - signed a petition, presented in this place by me, indicating that the services from their suburbs to Civic were inadequate. If you live in Palmerston you can catch a bus directly to Civic at any time of the day. If you live in Ngunnawal, Amaroo or Nicholls, you have to catch two buses and you have to pay twice; or you have to catch a commuter service bus, and again you have to pay twice. That is grossly unfair.

Is it any wonder that people in a growing area like Gungahlin, where ACTION should be focusing its attention on increasing demand from customers, do not catch the bus? Is it any wonder that we have this raging debate about transport in the Inner North, and particularly links to Gungahlin, when we have a completely ineffective bus service?



Mr Speaker, I am very proud to have raised with the Minister the issue of the bus services for Gungahlin. I do not think the Minister would have ever paid any attention to bus services in Gungahlin unless I had raised the issue in this place. I am very pleased to see that ACTION is now listening to the demands of the Gungahlin community. But it is about time, and it has taken the actions of this side of the house to make it an issue for this Minister. That is a disgrace. It is a disgrace that this Minister is so unaware of what is happening in his own public transport system that he has to act on complaints rather than focusing on exactly what is happening in the bus system.

Mr Speaker, this motion is an important one. It is about the level of services that people in Canberra receive. It is about the ability of people in our city to travel from one place to the other. They should be able to have the choice of travelling on an effective and responsive public transport system that takes them where they want to go and when they want to go. That is what this motion is all about. It is about highlighting the failure of this Government to deal effectively with the issue of public transport and the failure of this Government to provide a fair, equitable and responsive bus service for Canberra.

**MR SPEAKER:** I would like to welcome the pupils of St Francis of Assisi Primary School, Calwell. Welcome to your Assembly.

**MS HORODNY (11.57):** Mr Speaker, there is no doubt that the public transport system in Canberra has been severely run down in the last three years. Services have been reduced. There is no doubt about that. Routes have been short-circuited. We now have loops in our bus services and people are forced to stay on the bus for a longer period. They are forced to go around suburbs rather than directly to where they want to go, and they face delays in getting to where they want to go.

The fares are certainly not attractive. Mr Kaine said that ACTION has done some research on fares and this has shown that fares in the ACT are cheaper than in other States; but, Mr Kaine, you do not look at bus fares in isolation from the competition, and the competition is always private car transport. Bus fares might be more expensive in Sydney, but parking is so difficult and parking fees are so expensive that overall those bus fares are comparatively cheap. In the ACT we do not have that balance between bus fares and parking fees.

Bus fares in the ACT are certainly not cheap when you have to catch two or more buses. One of the things I would like to see implemented in an improved ACTION bus service is transfer tickets, so that people who need to catch more than one bus are not disadvantaged by having to do so. Their need is to get from A to B, and the fact that there is an interchange in between is not really their problem. They should not be having to pay for that design. The fares are also not attractive when you look at the fact that parking in the ACT is abundant in all town centres and probably in most other shopping centres, possibly with the exception of Manuka, and parking is relatively cheap. It is very cheap in Civic and Woden. I believe it is free in Belconnen, and I think it is free in Tuggeranong as well.

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We have watched over a number of years as patronage on the ACTION bus services has gone down. Mr Whitecross says in his motion that it has gone down by 25 per cent. I believe that is not correct. I believe the budget papers this year indicated that that decline is actually 18 per cent. That is still an enormous decline in patronage and it is certainly something that worries me. What we have here now in the ACT is a continuing downward spiral.

We heard regularly from the previous Minister, Mr De Domenico, that if buses were not full he would ensure that the service was pulled off the road. I am concerned that Mr Kaine still has this approach. He said today that if a bus service has only three passengers it is not worth running that service and that service should be pulled. This shows that Mr Kaine has a real problem with a proper integrated transport strategy. If you have a bus service where you have only three people on that service continually, the question I would like to ask is, "Why are not more people catching that bus service? Why can we not fill that bus, rather than get rid of that service and disadvantage the three people who are catching it?"

What we should be doing is looking at how we can improve the bus service, make it an advantage for people to catch buses over driving cars, and attract people away from cars and onto buses. The more buses we take off the road, the less attractive the service becomes. More people than who would prefer to catch buses are forced to drive. Mr Corbell talked about the lack of services to Gungahlin. I have heard continually from people in Gungahlin who would like to catch one easy bus to Civic. I have heard that they have needed to purchase a second car in their family in order to get to work. That is an appalling situation.

The lack of services to Gungahlin, in particular, has caused all sorts of unnecessary congestion and problems for traffic from that area, particularly in the mornings. I believe it is one of the main reasons for the push for a John Dedman Parkway, and that is a very serious issue. I have been saying time and time again that we need a proper service for Gungahlin. We need to take as many people as we can out of Gungahlin on buses in order to see what the real demand is for a road from that area.

Due to the huge public response to the changes and the cuts to ACTION, Mr Kaine did, to his credit, in February, of this year, I believe, commission a study into ACTION. He commissioned Roger Graham to conduct that study and Mr Graham reported in May of this year. I believe that the Roger Graham report is a frank and fearless report. I believe it tells it like it is about the ACTION bus service. Mr Graham found that there are, indeed, efficiencies to be made in the ACTION bus service, and he has said that savings from those efficiencies, if they were put back into the service, could result in a much better service at no extra cost to the Government.

Mr Speaker, I have circulated two amendments to the motion that Mr Whitecross has put up today. I seek to include two additional clauses. One of the clauses condemns the previous Labor Government for also cutting ACTION's budget, and that was by \$10m over three years. Not only did the Labor Government cut the budget. As well, neither they nor the current Government have grappled with the transport problems of the ACT.

The second amendment that I will be moving calls on the Government to develop a transport strategy to increase the proportion of travel in Canberra on public transport because, Mr Speaker, this is the real issue here. Developing a direction for our future transport needs is the real issue here. Budgets for ACTION, while they are vital to this, are still only one element of the total package. This package must include looking at making car travel less attractive and bus travel more attractive, and in order to do that you have to work with both of these elements.

The Labor Party has been very quick to jump up, particularly in recent months, and talk about greenhouse gas emissions, and they are happy to bag the Government on cuts to ACTION, again forgetting the enormous cuts that they themselves made to ACTION. Also, the Labor Party is not prepared to grapple with the total picture. The Labor Party, like the Liberals, believe that we should not interfere with people's right to drive. They say we should continue to allow more and more car parks to grow to accommodate the increase in car use as bus use continues to decline. Mr Speaker, the argument often put up by the pro-car lobby is, "We cannot go shopping on the bus". The other more recently used one is, "We need to drop our kids off at the creche or at school". The reality is that only 7 per cent of commuters drop their kids off at creches or schools. That is 7 per cent, not 100 per cent of commuters.

**Mr Whitecross:** So you do not care about that 7 per cent. Is that what you are saying?

**MS HORODNY:** I am addressing this point, Mr Whitecross. As for bussing for shopping, Mr Speaker, this is not the primary focus of a public transport strategy. (*Extension of time granted*) The primary focus is work-related travel. Our roads in the ACT were designed and built for peak hour travel. For the rest of the day, as we know, those roads are sparsely used and simply encourage speeding. In the meantime, the road maintenance bill in the ACT is escalating to the point where we cannot afford to maintain the roads that we have. According to the Auditor-General, we are way behind in maintenance; but this Government still has the audacity to contemplate the approval of roads like the John Dedman Parkway, and I believe that this is totally irresponsible. We cannot afford to pay for the maintenance of the roads that we have. Why are we putting in more and more roads?

Mr Speaker, a transport strategy is vital for Canberra at this point in time. I believe it is long overdue. We cannot continue to have this willy-nilly approach to transport. It is not clever and it does not give Canberrans any hope about the way this Assembly and this Government are leading Canberra on transport issues. This Government is very good at hiring consultants. It does it at the drop of a hat. Some of those consultancies have been very good. I believe that the Graham report is an excellent example of that, in that it has looked at the comprehensive issue of ACTION buses in the ACT; but it is only the start. It deals with only ACTION buses, and that is just one part of dealing with improvements to our transport system. Now is the time for the Government to get another consultancy to develop a strategy with the aim of reducing car use in the ACT, and this, of course, must be done with the community and with public transport experts in other areas.

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The Conservation Council of the South East Region and Canberra has developed a paper. It was written by Paul Mees and is called "Canberra at the Crossroads". It is an excellent document and I hope that the Minister takes the time to read it, because I think there are a lot of excellent ideas and thoughts in it. The document begins to devise a strategy for improving transport in the ACT. The transport issue in Canberra has reached a point where some hard decisions must be made. It is no good having people talking about developing greenhouse targets without a strategy for dealing with a reduction in greenhouse. Getting more people to use public transport and not just talk about greenhouse is about making our city safer, cleaner, less noisy and more pedestrian and bike friendly. There is every reason to improve our public transport and reduce car use. In this way we can reap the benefits.

**MR SPEAKER:** Ms Horodny, would you mind moving the amendments. You will need leave because you are moving two amendments.

Leave granted.

**MS HORODNY:** I move the amendments circulated in my name, which read:

(1) After proposed paragraph (1) insert the following paragraph:

“condemns the degrading of Canberra’s public transport system by the previous Labor Government which cut ACTION’s budget by \$10m over 3 years”; and

(2) After proposed paragraph (3) add the following paragraph:

“calls on the Government to develop a transport strategy to increase the proportion of travel in Canberra undertaken by public transport.”.

**MR STEFANIAK** (Minister for Education and Training) (12.11): Mr Speaker, I note that Mr Whitecross included a 10 per cent reduction in the school bus services in his motion. Really, Mr Speaker, I wonder whether Mr Whitecross has nothing better to do than waste the time and effort of this Assembly by dragging out this hoary old chestnut. Much time is already expended on the logistics of running a school bus service, but I will spend a little bit more time to explain the facts for Mr Whitecross’s edification.

The Department of Education and Training takes very seriously its membership of the school bus liaison committee and it has an important role in school bus planning and advising on appropriate service delivery standards. The non-government school sector is also represented on the committee, as are the respective parent bodies of the government and non-government school sectors. It is, Mr Speaker, a committee that works very well. ACTION reviews school bus services every year, and adjustments are made on the basis of patronage levels, the opening of new schools, changes to school opening and closing times, alterations to the road network, and similar things that affect the delivery of that service.

During the debate today we have heard that ACTION, over the last few years, has rationalised services to improve the efficiency of the bus network. Changes to school bus services over the term of this Government have led to far greater efficiencies and they have largely involved schoolchildren making greater use of route services where it is efficient and practical to do so, and also combining services so that one school bus services a number of schools; that is, one bus, for example, could service government and non-government schools and also primary and secondary schools. They are sensible and practical things to do. I am sure any sane human being would agree, Mr Speaker.

There will always be pressures on any school bus network. I think that is a simple fact of life. We have some 14,000 school bus trips per day across the Territory and I believe we are running a remarkably efficient service - a service that has processes in place to deal with problems as they arise from time to time. When problems do arise my office is made aware of them. I am pleased to say that the frequency of problems is getting less and less. I am also pleased to say that when problems have arisen they have been worked out in a sensible manner by the committee and in conjunction with ACTION. So I make the point, Mr Speaker, that the school bus network is certainly meeting the needs of students. It is operating considerably more efficiently than it did prior to the term of this Government, and the Minister should be commended for his role in ensuring that that occurs.

**MR MOORE** (12.14): Mr Speaker, when I look at this motion and the amendments I think there is some confusion here today. The motion says:

That this Assembly:

- (1) condemns the degrading of Canberra's public transport system by the Liberal Government over the last three years including:
  - (a) the reduction of ACTION's budget by \$12m including \$2m in the most recent budget;
  - (b) the cuts in services which have resulted in patronage losses of 25 per cent in 1996-97 alone;
  - (c) the rise in fares of over 50 per cent;
  - (d) the 10 per cent reduction to school bus services in the current school year; and
  - (e) the effect that reduced services have had on increased motor vehicle use and, consequently, greenhouse gas emissions.
- (2) expresses grave concerns about the lack of action by the Minister for Urban Services to implement the Graham Report; and

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- (3) calls for immediate action by the Government to implement the Graham Report in order to address the crisis of confidence in Canberra's public transport system.

We have that, on the one hand, and then we have a very sensible amendment from Ms Horodny, on the other hand, to insert a new paragraph that puts it in perspective - that we also condemn "the degrading of Canberra's public transport system by the previous Labor Government which cut ACTION's budget by \$10m over three years". So the idea is that we condemn the Liberals and we condemn Labor. I am in on that, and appropriately so.

**Mr Whitecross:** Needless to say, Michael.

**MR MOORE:** I accept that this is Mr Whitecross's motion and I recognise that he was not in that Labor Government at the time that the budgets were cut. Ms Horodny also moved a very sensible amendment to add the following words:

calls on the Government to develop a transport strategy to increase the proportion of travel in Canberra undertaken by public transport.

The confusion, I think, is that there are two issues. One of them is about cutting funding and the other is about increased patronage, increased use and increased efficiency in the public transport system. It is possible to cut funding and still have an even more efficient and better public transport service because, as I think everybody here would recognise, there have been some work practices operating in public transport which have made for a very inefficient system. So it is possible to make significant cuts to the costs associated with public transport. The real question then is what happens to the money when you have made those efficiencies.

The two areas are being confused and I do not think they are mutually exclusive. When this money was saved - the \$12m over the last three years and the \$10m over the three years before that; \$22m in all - what happened to the money? The concern we have here, I think, is that the money has not gone back to making public transport much more efficient and much more effective. We have heard speaker after speaker here today saying, "We can deal with public transport issues in a far more effective way". Mr Corbell, in particular, was talking about public transport coming from Gungahlin. There is no doubt that we have to have a more effective system of public transport coming from Gungahlin, just as we need to ensure that we have a more effective public transport system coming from Belconnen and Tuggeranong, and going to those places, as well as in Central Canberra.

The issue that comes with this is the whole idea of providing disincentives for people to use their motor vehicles. I would argue that what we ought to be doing is ensuring not so much disincentives, although some of those can be applied, but, rather, a decent competitive system. If you can get into Civic, for example, from Gungahlin on an efficient direct line bus service or other direct form of transport very quickly and cheaply, then why bother using your car? Why bother using your car when there is a more efficient and better system operating? That is what we should be aiming at in terms of public transport.

There will still be people who, even when we have the most efficient systems, will need to use their vehicles. They will need to use their private vehicles for a number of reasons; for example, to drop the kids off at school because it is their responsibility to deal with the kids going to school before they go to work. They will need to bring their vehicles into Civic perhaps, if that is where they are working, or into Belconnen or Gungahlin, because they know that during the day they will have five or six appointments in different places around Canberra. If they relied on public transport, even a very efficient system of public transport, there simply would not be time to make those appointments. All of us here understand that because we all have appointments like that. That is why we use our vehicles in this way. So we have to make sure that we can cater for both.

Canberra was specifically designed not just as a motor car city, as many argue; it was specifically designed to have efficient and good public transport. The fact that we have not put the money into public transport and have not got the city working effectively from the public transport perspective is a challenge that we have to face, and that is part of the strategy that Ms Horodny is suggesting.

There is another important aspect that has to be taken into account, and I think it applies particularly to Gungahlin at the moment. If we put all our effort into making a very efficient public transport system that gets people to move from Gungahlin to Civic, for example, then I think we are doing a disservice because the most important thing we should be trying to do, first and foremost, is to ensure that there is appropriate employment in Gungahlin, in the town centre there, so that, where possible, people do not have to travel as far. Priority one is to reduce the amount of travel that people undertake.

There is a second priority. When people have to travel, and of course people are going to travel, particularly on journeys to and from work, we should be looking for a more efficient system. We already have a particularly efficient 333 system. It is one of the few systems in the world that pay for themselves, in terms of public transport. One of the reasons why it does so is that people travel in two directions on that service. The same should happen with Gungahlin. We can consider all sorts of great toys with which to do that. We can consider light rail. We can consider the O-Bahn transport system that operates in the north-east of Adelaide. We could consider a light version of the Maglev levitation train. We could consider a whole range of efficient ways to do that. In the end, we will look at the most cost-effective way of moving people, but we should also be looking at the most flexible way of dealing with public transport.

In developing a strategy, we will also need to take into account another major factor, and that is the change in work practices of people who are using information technology. A growing number of people are spending more and more time in their own homes, doing their work at home, because they can do a great deal of what they wish to achieve with a computer and often do not need to have a workplace in the central business district or in one of our town centres. Whatever happens in terms of public transport, we ought to be taking into account the needs of these people.

There is a range of ways that we can approach flexible public transport. In one of the recent motoring magazines there was a system of linked electric cars which can then be divided and driven by the user. These may even make a major contribution to the reduction of greenhouse. On the other hand, they may be entirely impracticable. What we do have to do is look at them, along with a range of other ideas, and see whether we can manage to find a way to get a more flexible, more practicable and more attractive public transport system where people say, "Why bother using the car? Why not proceed with public transport?".

There is another issue that is very pertinent today. I was in Civic with Ms Horodny and Mr Kaine this morning when Mr Kaine launched Bicycle Week. We must not forget that part of the public transport system ought to include the network of bicycle paths in this city. It was a great joy for me to ride my bike, with a couple of my children, over to the opening of that. I had an even greater joy because I was taught to ride a penny-farthing. I have now mastered that and I have to thank Mr Rod Driver, whom many of you know, for teaching me that skill. I wondered whether I might be known as Mulga Mike on this bike after that little episode this morning. Mr Speaker, we have available to us a whole range of alternatives and we must ensure that we improve our public transport system.

**MR WHITECROSS** (12.24): Mr Speaker, I rise to speak to Ms Horodny's amendments. Ms Horodny has two amendments. The second one is, of course, a very sensible amendment and deserves support. The first is a very silly amendment and the Labor Party will be opposing it. Maybe I should start by talking about the first amendment, which goes to Ms Horodny's assessment of Labor's record. Ms Horodny has just written down the standard parroting line from the Liberal Party and is now arguing that the Labor Party was also hacking into the public transport system. Only yesterday the Greens were lecturing this place about giving credit where credit is due, about how the Greens call it how they see it and are not ashamed to give credit to the Liberals where they have done something and decline to identify any areas where the Liberals have done badly. Here again today, on a very serious issue like public transport, the Greens cannot bring themselves to say that the Liberals have done a bad job on public transport, without somehow dragging the Labor Party in as if somehow it is our fault that the Liberal Party have done a bad job.

The reality, Mr Speaker, is that the Labor Party have consistently criticised and consistently advocated for a better public transport system over the last three years. I have been the spokesperson on transport for those three years and we have consistently run the argument. In fact, it was the pressure that the Labor Party applied to the Government about their poor performance in public transport which moved Mr Kaine, when he became Minister, to turn around and commission a report to find out what they had done wrong and how they could fix it. So I think it is pretty extraordinary now that the Greens should turn around and somehow say that the state of public transport is our fault as well as the Government's. It is unequivocally the Government's fault, Mr Speaker.



There is an amazing piece of logic that the Greens and the Government use. It goes like this. If the Labor Party reduced the subsidy to ACTION from \$60m to \$50m, then it is okay for the Government to reduce it from \$50m to \$40m. There is no logic to that. Just because you reduce it by \$10m in one three-year period does not justify a second one. On the basis of the Greens' logic, we can keep taking \$10m out, and whoever takes out the last \$10m is no more culpable than the person who took out the first \$10m.

Let us go to the facts, Mr Speaker. The Labor Party paid for those savings with efficiencies. The Labor Party paid for those savings by going to the unions and negotiating new workplace arrangements which delivered savings to the public transport system, such as getting mechanics driving buses, rearranging shifts, and allowing part-time drivers into the system so that you were not paying people who were not driving buses. These are the reforms that Labor negotiated. We were not doing what this Government has done, namely, simply taking out wholesale huge numbers of services and hiking the fares by 50 per cent.

What does the record show, Mr Speaker? The record shows that under Labor the number of passenger boardings remained stable at around 24,000. Under the Liberals they have dropped to 18,000. Labor achieved sensible, intelligent efficiencies by working in conjunction with their labour force, maintained passenger boardings and increased the number of kilometres that buses travelled. The Liberals, driven only by the desire to cut \$12.7m out of ACTION, have driven down the number of people using public transport. That is the difference between Labor's record and the Liberals' record, but the Greens cannot tell the difference between maintaining and improving services as Labor did and cutting services to the extent that a quarter of the patrons walk away. I think that attitude on the part of Ms Horodny defies belief.

What also defies belief, Mr Speaker, is that Ms Horodny has the gall to come in here and say this when the Greens voted this year to cut the ACTION budget by \$2m. They had the chance in this place to severely embarrass the Government by voting with Labor against the further \$2m cut to ACTION. Rather than embarrass the Government, rather than put the Government on the spot about its record on public transport, they turned around and voted for another \$2m cut to public transport. I do not believe that the Greens can really expect to be taken seriously when they will not distinguish between the appalling record of the Liberals and the quite serious record of the Labor Party in advocating improvements in public transport and in paying for efficiencies we made through negotiations with our work force. Let it be quite clear that there was no agenda by the Labor Party to come into this Assembly, if we had been in government, and cut another \$12m out of ACTION. It would not have happened, Mr Speaker; so let us be quite clear about that. It was never part of Labor's agenda, but it was part of the Liberals' agenda.

Mr Speaker, I believe that the Greens' other amendment does deserve support. I believe that there is a need for an integrated transport strategy which takes account not just of public transport but also of other transport infrastructure like bike paths, roads and other planning issues that Mr Moore raised as well, such as the location of centres of employment and ensuring that we do not concentrate all the employment in the CBD,

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as is done in other places. I think all those things are important elements of an intelligent integrated transport strategy. I am quite happy to support that amendment. I think it adds to the motion and I commend Ms Horodny for moving it.

I believe it is all the more important to carry that amendment when you consider the Minister's apparent understanding of the need for an integrated strategy. In the Estimates Committee earlier this year Mr Kaine was asked, by Ms Horodny, I believe, whether he was concerned that car usage was increasing and greenhouse gas emissions were increasing, and whether he felt that had any implications for the public transport system. Mr Kaine's response was, "No, that has nothing to do with me; that is an environment matter. That has nothing to do with the public transport system". I am sure Ms Horodny recalls that exchange. That was an absolutely extraordinary statement from a Minister responsible for public transport; that it is not his problem if, as a result of his Government's cuts to public transport, more people are driving cars emitting greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. It is not his problem; it is not his concern; that is a matter for the Minister for the Environment. What the Minister for the Environment is meant to do about it I do not know, but the Minister responsible for transport could have done something about it if he took the issue seriously.

The problem is that the Minister responsible for transport does not understand the concept of an integrated transport strategy. The Minister does not even understand how to run a bus system, so putting some pressure on the Government to start thinking about integrated transport planning might be a good idea. Quite frankly, considering the pace at which Mr Kaine does things, there will be a Labor government before he gets the chance to get very far with an integrated transport strategy. I can assure the Greens that a Labor government after the next election will take seriously the issue of transport. We will have an integrated transport strategy. Unlike Mr Kaine, who thinks that car use and greenhouse gas emissions have nothing to do with him, we believe that they are inextricably linked. The public transport system is inextricably linked to the whole planning of the city. It is inextricably linked to car usage, greenhouse gas emissions and all those other issues.

Labor does take these issues seriously, and that is the reason why I am so disappointed that Ms Horodny has gone down the path of trying to tar us with the same brush as the Liberals. I understand politics. I understand that the Greens and the Independents have to say for electoral purposes that the Liberals and the Labor Party are all the same. At every opportunity they try to put us in the same box. I would have thought that it would be more honest, that it would show more integrity, that it would show their ability to call things how they see them and give credit where credit is due, if the Greens had been willing to acknowledge that on the issue of public transport the Labor Party has a distinctly better record and distinctly better policies than the Liberals. I think that would have been fair. I urge Ms Horodny to reconsider her amendment No. 1 in the interests of a fair motion.

**MR SPEAKER:** Order! The member's time has expired. It being 12.34 pm, the debate is interrupted, in accordance with standing order 74.

**Sitting suspended from 12.34 to 2.30 pm**

## QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

### Former Deputy Chief Minister

**MR BERRY:** My question without notice is to Mrs Carnell in her capacity as Chief Minister. Chief Minister, I refer to the events of December 1996 when, on your recommendation, the then Deputy Chief Minister, Mr De Domenico, signed a letter dismissing Ms Jacqui Rees from the Interim Kingston Foreshore Development Authority. As a result of this action, Mr Moore threatened a vote of no confidence in Mr De Domenico, with a view to forcing the Government to reverse its decision. Chief Minister, can you confirm that on 12 December 1996, less than a week later, Mr De Domenico was invited to Sydney by Mr Knop to discuss the prospect of employment with a private company?

**MRS CARNELL:** I have no personal knowledge of Mr De Domenico going to Sydney to speak to Mr Knop.

**MR BERRY:** I have a supplementary question. Were you aware of the efforts to find Mr De Domenico a job? If so, when did you become aware? How did you become aware?

**MRS CARNELL:** Mr De Domenico did come to see me. He indicated that he had been offered a job in the private sector and indicated that he was looking at it seriously. I cannot remember what date that was, but it was certainly a couple of weeks before he finally resigned.

### Intoxication Defence

**MRS LITTLEWOOD:** My question is to the Attorney-General. Is the Attorney-General aware of comments by the Commonwealth Attorney-General and the Minister responsible for the status of women about the so-called drunk's defence used recently to acquit Noa Nadruku of charges of assault? I understand the Commonwealth referred to three jurisdictions which still have the common law defence of intoxication. What are the implications of the Commonwealth's statement that it has legislated to impose the provisions of the Model Criminal Code? If that is the case, are there three jurisdictions which have this defence?

**MR HUMPHRIES:** I thank Mrs Littlewood for that question. I think members will be aware that the Commonwealth Minister responsible for the status of women and the Attorney-General have, at various stages, made reference to the three jurisdictions which have retained the common law defence of intoxication. Soon after Mr Nadruku's acquittal, I announced that the ACT would review that defence. I indicated earlier today that I propose to introduce tomorrow legislation to remove the availability of intoxication as a defence for basic intent offences such as assault. In the course of preparing that response and reviewing the law I have looked at the situation in other jurisdictions.

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That examination has revealed a rather interesting result. To answer Mrs Littlewood's question in part, there are not three jurisdictions that still have this so-called drunk's defence; there are, in fact, four. The ACT has always supported the development of a Model Criminal Code. The former ACT Attorney-General in 1994 took the decision that the code would be introduced only when complete. That is a decision that I support.

The Commonwealth rightly points out that it legislated the Model Criminal Code provisions in 1995, as did code States like Queensland, New South Wales, Western Australia and Tasmania and the Northern Territory. But that legislation has not commenced, Mr Speaker, and will not do so until the turn of the century. My advice is that the Act does not commence until proclaimed by the Governor-General; and, in fact, it has not been proclaimed. If there is no proclamation, the provisions of the Criminal Code at the Commonwealth level are set to commence five years after royal assent. Therefore, the Commonwealth laws to eliminate the drunk's defence in respect of its own laws will not come into effect, will not start to operate, for three more years.

Let us assume that the legislation I introduce tomorrow is passed next month. We will have eliminated the drunk's defence in the ACT three years before it will be eliminated for Commonwealth crimes, despite the lecturing from the Commonwealth about the need for us to get rid of this anachronistic provision. The Federal Attorney-General, Daryl Williams, said on 29 October:

Since 1994 the Model Criminal Code has provided that evidence of self-induced intoxication is not to be considered in determining whether intent existed in basic offences like assault. That approach has been enacted by the Commonwealth ...

That is not the full story, unfortunately. He went on to say:

The use of this defence has sent a disturbing message to those who get intoxicated and engage in violent behaviour. It has given them a supposed excuse for their behaviour when there is no excuse.

He is absolutely right, Mr Speaker; but he needs to make sure that the laws enacted at the Commonwealth level actually start to have effect. Since the Criminal Code Act 1995 was passed, only a small number of offences have been created at the Commonwealth level to which this legislation applies. They include things like making a false declaration in claiming a payment relating to hearing services or offences under the aged care income testing Act, such as providing false information. So, someone who fills in the form incorrectly for a hearing services rebate and who claims that they did not intend to fill it in incorrectly but were too drunk to fill it in correctly will be convicted because the self-induced intoxication defence does not apply to code offences. That is great to know.

Unfortunately, there are a number of Commonwealth offences to which the drunk's defence still applies. Putting to one side quaint offences like treason, sabotage, sedition, treachery, inciting mutiny, assisting a prisoner of war to escape, forming an intent to counterfeit and interfering with a telephone line, there are a number of quite serious offences to which the drunk's defence still applies and has a chance of success.

They include destroying or damaging Commonwealth property, destruction of evidence, intimidating a witness, most family law offences, child sex tourism offences, any offence relating to harming, intimidating or impersonating a police officer, all postal and telecommunications offences, and all Commonwealth drug offences. The irony is that, if this legislation I will be proposing tomorrow were to be passed and the situation that was the subject of Mr Nadruku's proceedings were to occur again, we would have the anomalous situation that if a person came out of the nightclub and assaulted some women he would not be able to rely on the drunk's defence, but if he assaulted a police officer he would.

I think the message I am getting across with this answer is very clear, that is, that the legislation which the Commonwealth has urged on us ought to be remedied at the Commonwealth level with at least as much urgency as it is being remedied at the ACT level. In fact, if the Assembly sees fit to pass the legislation I will be bringing forward tomorrow before, say, the end of December, our legislation will have been fixed up, so to speak, some three years before the Commonwealth legislation is to be fixed up.

### **Former Deputy Chief Minister**

**MS McRAE:** My question without notice is to Mrs Carnell in her capacity as Chief Minister. Chief Minister, can you confirm that you phoned the former Deputy Chief Minister, Tony De Domenico, in Melbourne in the days immediately before Christmas last year and told him that Lend Lease was about to phone him with a job offer and that he should take it?

**MRS CARNELL:** I can absolutely guarantee that that is not the case. But it is certainly true that Lend Lease did do a character check on Tony with me. That is true.

**MS McRAE:** Chief Minister, can you further confirm that Lend Lease is a 50 per cent shareholder in Australian Water Services, the company which subsequently offered the Deputy Chief Minister a job?

**Mr Whitecross:** What did you say in the character reference?

**MR SPEAKER:** Order!

**MRS CARNELL:** You did not ask that. That is not the supplementary question.

I actually understand that that might be the case. I suppose I have always assumed that that was why Lend Lease was doing a character check in the fullness of time. It is actually quite normal for people who are head-hunting someone to check with people who might know that that is the case. I think I actually did speak to Mr De Domenico about it. I think it is very important here - - -

**Ms McRae:** Oh!

**MRS CARNELL:** Why would I not?

**Ms McRae:** You just said you did not, in answer to my previous question.

**MRS CARNELL:** No, I did not say that. I said it is true that Lend Lease did ring me and do a character check on Tony. I think it is very important here to make some things very clear for those opposite. No taxpayers' money at all was spent with regard to Tony De Domenico leaving the Assembly. Tony left of his own accord, and he made that clear at his press conference. I just thought I would let you get over a few of your problems. No negotiations were had by anybody with Tony with regard to his leaving and no deals were entered into with regard to Mr De Domenico. That might mean that those opposite might be able to get back to some questions on matters that actually matter to the people of Canberra.

### **Fairbairn Park - Noise Levels**

**MR MOORE:** I have a question of that kind, Mr Speaker. It matters not only to the people of Canberra, but to the people of the region. My question is directed to Mr Humphries as Minister for the Environment, Land and Planning. Minister, your Government has announced at various times, most recently with a media release from Bill Stefaniak today, that the Government will apply a noise limit of 10 decibels above background levels to motor sport activity at Fairbairn Park under the new environment protection legislation, as opposed to the current standard of five decibels above background levels, which the motor sport clubs were not able to achieve and for which you constantly allowed exemptions. Minister, could you explain why the Government's new noise regulations are not going to apply equally to all noisy activities in the ACT? For example, a noisy activity like a party or a concert at Oaks Estate would not be allowed to exceed 45 decibels under the proposed regulations under the environment protection legislation, yet the noise from Fairbairn Park that affects Oaks Estate, amongst other places, and the Ridgeway in Queanbeyan will be allowed to reach 50 decibels. The critical part of the question is: Why is there one law for motor sports under the proposed new legislation and another law for other noisy activities?

**MR HUMPHRIES:** Mr Speaker, I am not sure whether I should be answering this question or Mr Stefaniak, but - - -

**Mr Moore:** I am asking you as Environment Minister.

**MR HUMPHRIES:** All right. I concede that the law in respect of this activity at Fairbairn Park is different to the law applying elsewhere, but the reason for applying it in this way is quite simple. This Government happens to believe that the operation of motor sport in the ACT is a matter in which a great many Canberrans have a strong recreational interest. Some even have a business interest in it, such as suppliers of various equipment used in that recreation. We do not wish to end their pursuit of motor sport in the ACT. We believe that, if the regulations are not provided in such a way as to permit the continuation of motor sports at Fairbairn Park, then they almost certainly will not continue at all in the ACT.

**Mr Moore:** What rubbish! They will have to put on mufflers.

**MR HUMPHRIES:** I am not an expert in noise in that respect. Maybe Mr Moore has the magic solution to the problem. Let me say that we have received advice, and we accept the advice, that it is not possible for motor sports to comply with the provisions unless an exemption at 10 decibels above background noise is provided. We do not wish to see an end to motor sport in the ACT. We believe it is an activity which many Canberrans enjoy, and they are entitled to continue to enjoy it without having to leave the ACT to do so. As such, we will be putting before the Assembly in the regulations made under the environment protection legislation the argument that that sport ought to be allowed to continue with that provision.

**MR MOORE:** I have a supplementary question. When it all boils down, is it not really another case of this Government discriminating against the residents of Queanbeyan? At the same time as you make noise and mouth platitudes about regional approaches, you discriminate against people of Queanbeyan with your lack of concern, first of all, over aircraft noise and, now, over motor sport noise.

**MR SPEAKER:** I am not sure that Queanbeyan is part of your responsibilities, Mr Humphries, but never mind.

**MR HUMPHRIES:** No, indeed. Mr Speaker, the Government has had extensive discussions with the Queanbeyan City Council, with the residents of the Ridgeway, with the New South Wales Department of the Environment and with other people who have been concerned about this area, such as the Conservation Council.

**Mr Moore:** What did the Queanbeyan Council say?

**MR HUMPHRIES:** I do not have the details with me at the moment and I did not personally conduct the negotiations; so I cannot give you any information about that. Let me say that I think it is clear that in any decision of this kind there is a trade-off between the capacity of people to be able to protect their amenity and the capacity of others to conduct a legitimate recreational activity. We do not propose that no regard be had to the amenity of New South Wales residents. If we did, we would not place any limit on the amount of noise that can be generated by motor sport at Fairbairn Park. We are doing that. We are setting the level at, you say, 45 decibels. I am not sure whether that is the right figure; but, whatever it is, we are setting that level at the Ridgeway.

**Mr Moore:** Ten above background.

**MR HUMPHRIES:** It is 10 above background, which works out to be either 40 or 45 at the Ridgeway. I forget which it is now. But, whichever it is, we have attempted to strike a balance in these matters. We have put it to the Assembly that it is appropriate to have that balance. The alternative, unfortunately, is the black-and-white view of the world which says, "Motor sport can just drop off the end of the trailer. We do not care about motor sport". We will continue on and we will take this particular interest into account. Governments have to balance these considerations, and we have attempted to balance them with this decision.

**Former Deputy Chief Minister**

**MR WOOD:** Mr Speaker, my question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, are you aware that on 30 December 1996, just a week after your call to Mr De Domenico in Melbourne, only a fortnight after his first meeting with Mr Knop, and only three weeks after Mr De Domenico dismissed Ms Rees, Mr De Domenico met with Mr Knop and Mr Pierre Alla, the managing director of AWS, in Sydney; and, further, that on 4 January 1997 Mr Knop offered Mr De Domenico a package worth \$165,000 on behalf of AWS? When did you become aware of these matters, if you did, and how did you become aware of them?

**MRS CARNELL:** I am not sure, Mr Speaker. I have to say that what Tony does or any of my Ministers do with their private lives is not something that I spend a lot of time keeping a day-to-day and minute-to-minute account of. What I do keep a day-to-day and minute-to-minute account of is what we are spending taxpayers' money on and whether any inappropriate behaviour is involved. Whom Mr De Domenico met with, at what time, and who offered Mr De Domenico private sector jobs, I do not believe is any of our business here, I have to tell you. My perception is that it certainly was none of my business.

**MR WOOD:** I have a supplementary question, Mr Speaker. Chief Minister, you responded to a character check on Mr De Domenico. What was your understanding of the reason behind that check?

**MRS CARNELL:** Again, I make the point: I have to assume that people were looking at Mr De Domenico for a job of some description. But I have to say that character checks are things I do lots of.

**Mr Whitecross:** Which other Ministers have you done them for?

**MRS CARNELL:** I did not say "Ministers". The bottom line here is that if Mr De Domenico or, for that matter, anybody else - people like Rosemary Follett and Terry Connolly, who obviously were looking for other jobs - - -

**Mr Kaine:** Have you done one on Andrew Whitecross lately?

**MRS CARNELL:** Obviously, members of this Assembly from time to time look for jobs elsewhere. It is certainly not something that I believe is the business of anybody in this house. What is the business of people in this house is that no taxpayers' money is spent on such things. I can certainly guarantee that that is the case, and that there were no deals and there were no enticements or anything else you can think of. If Mr De Domenico wants to have meetings with people with regard to jobs in the private sector, that is his business. Mr Speaker, when or on what date Mr De Domenico was offered a job, I have no idea. As I said in answer to the first question, I knew about Mr De Domenico's job offer when he told me about it.



**MR SPEAKER:** I remind members of standing order 114, which states:

Questions may be put to a Minister relating to public affairs with which that Minister is officially connected, to proceedings pending in the Assembly or to any matter of administration for which that Minister is responsible.

### **Fairbairn Park - Noise Levels**

**MS HORODNY:** Mr Speaker, under standing order 116, I have a question for Mr Moore as chair of the Standing Committee on Planning and Environment. Mr Moore, you have, no doubt, seen the press release issued today by Mr Bill Stefaniak in which he claims that the rules that the Government intends to impose have the same noise limits as would have applied to a New South Wales facility classified as existing at the time the New South Wales regulations were introduced. That level is 10 decibels above the ambient background noise at the nearest affected residence. Did your committee take any evidence which supports this claim by Mr Stefaniak, including evidence from the Environment Protection Authority in New South Wales?

**MR SPEAKER:** I will allow the question because a question of the same nature was allowed last Thursday, but I would remind members that that matter is still under investigation by the Clerks and I will be making a statement in due course. You have a puzzled expression, Ms McRae. It refers to whether a member still has charge of a report which has been tabled in the Assembly.

**Ms McRae:** He has not. You do not need any profound research for that; he has not. But, if you allow the question, you allow the question - end of story.

**MR SPEAKER:** I will allow it.

**MR MOORE:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I thank Ms Horodny for the question. Indeed, I have seen the press release in which Mr Stefaniak says that the rules that the Government intends to impose have the same noise levels as would have applied to a New South Wales facility existing at the same time as the New South Wales regulations were introduced. That level is 10 decibels above the ambient background noise for the nearest affected residence. That is according to Mr Stefaniak. The evidence which was presented to the committee and which the committee made public on this issue is a letter from the Environment Protection Authority in New South Wales. It reads as follows:

Additionally, it has been reported in the press -

they did run a series of issues not to do with this part -

that the ACT Government is considering drafting a specific Regulation for the Fairbairn Park motor sport facilities. The reports indicate that the proposal will bring the ACT approach in to line with that of NSW.

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This appears not to be the case. The EPA understands that the proposal is based on a blanket 10dB(A) above background permissible noise emission level. The background is apparently to be determined by taking the average of background levels over a week period. This differs significantly from the NSW approach in two key aspects.

Ms Horodny, there is a difference. I hope that Mr Stefaniak, in particular, will listen to this, so that he does not mislead the people of Canberra. The letter continues:

Firstly, determination of a background level based on a weekly average does not take into account the change in amenity most residences experience during a 24 hour period or on weekends and public holidays ... Motor sports at Fairbairn Park occur almost exclusively on weekends and predominantly on Sundays. The averaging approach is understood to give a background level of 40dB(A) which, under the proposed Regulation, may give an acceptable noise emission level from the facilities of 50dB(A) at the receiving residence. Actual background noise levels have been measured on a weekly basis as 38-40dB(A) and on Sundays as 36-40dB(A) (based on Environment Act and EPA data). This indicates that the intrusive noise level from Fairbairn Park could be as much as 14dB(A) above the background level.

That is the first aspect. The letter continues:

Secondly, the NSW approach to motor sport facilities provides for a noise exposure approach with a sliding scale of number of events and allowable noise emission levels (see Attachment 1 from the Environmental Noise Control Manual). Under this approach the Fairbairn Park facility would be treated as a single venue and the overall impact on noise amenity would be significantly lower than that under the ACT proposal.

I think I had better repeat those words:

the overall impact on noise amenity would be significantly lower than that under the ACT proposal.

Mr Speaker, I think the evidence is very clear. I hope that Mr Stefaniak will not continue to perpetuate things that simply are not the case. I should add that the committee also had a submission from the Queanbeyan City Council. That submission is also public. Mr Stefaniak says it is only about three people. I think it is important that the Queanbeyan City Council did put in a submission that is a public document and the Minister is able to read it. What we ought to be on about in terms of this legislation - - -

**MR SPEAKER:** Order! Mr Moore, you are answering a question.

**MR MOORE:** That is right. What we should be doing, in terms of this legislation and this issue of noise, is making sure that we get the same approach to the environment as we have had for the rest of the Environment Protection Bill, that is, taking appropriate steps to enhance our environment, not taking a backward step. Yes, sometimes that will

mean inconvenience to some people; but it certainly will not mean the destruction of the sport, as Mr Stefaniak and Mr Humphries suggested earlier. That is simply nonsense. Of course the sport will call out if that is what is going to happen, so that they are not inconvenienced in any way. In protecting our environment we should take a regional approach to this matter and ensure that we do not put in place a special regulation which results in somebody who lives across the border getting a lower standard than the residents of the ACT.

### **Australian Water Services Pty Ltd**

**MR WHITECROSS:** Mr Speaker, my question without notice is to Mrs Carnell in her capacity as head of the Government. Chief Minister, are you aware that Australian Water Services - the company that employed your former deputy, Tony De Domenico - are currently providing support in the form of advertising to the Canberra Cosmos, whose president, coincidentally, is Mr Ian Knop? Can you explain what interest Australian Water Services might have in raising their profile in the ACT? Chief Minister, does it have anything to do with the Water Resources Bill, which provided, among other things, for the sale of allocations of Canberra water on a commercial basis? Can you rule out now, or in the life of the next government, using those provisions to introduce private competition to the Canberra water market? Will you rule out selling ACTEW's water business to Australian Water Services or any other company?

**MR SPEAKER:** Chief Minister, I do not know whether there is Executive policy involved in that or whatever.

**MRS CARNELL:** That is just hypothetical. The whole thing is hypothetical. I think I can answer the first bit before it got hypothetical on what may happen in the future. Am I aware that Australian Water Services are sponsors, did you say, of the Cosmos?

**Mr Whitecross:** Something like that; support by way of advertising.

**MRS CARNELL:** What did you say? What do you mean?

**MR SPEAKER:** Mr Whitecross, either you know or you do not.

**Mr Whitecross:** I know.

**MRS CARNELL:** I am just wondering what the question was.

**Mr Whitecross:** I can ask the whole question again if you like, Mr Speaker.

**MRS CARNELL:** No, just the first bit, because the rest was hypothetical.

**Mr Whitecross:** No, it was not hypothetical. Chief Minister, are you aware that Australian Water Services - the company that employed your former deputy, Tony De Domenico - are currently providing support in the form of advertising to the

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Canberra Cosmos, whose president, coincidentally, is Mr Ian Knop? Can you explain what interest Australian Water Services might have in raising their profile in the ACT? Does it have anything to do with the Water Resources Bill, which provides for the sale of allocations of Canberra water on a commercial basis?

**MR SPEAKER:** It is all right. We have got it now.

**Mr Whitecross:** Okay. As long as you answer all parts of the question.

**MRS CARNELL:** Okay. The answer to the first bit is, actually, no, I was not aware that AWS was providing advertising or something for the Cosmos. I do not actually read all the signs when I am there, I have to tell you. No, I was not aware; but I am very pleased they do, because every single sponsor that the Cosmos have got they need and I have to say that any company that is willing to come into the ACT and support our sporting teams is a company that I would think was doing a very good job for Canberra, particularly as the Cosmos have had a pretty tough time. I think that is a very big tick for Australian Water Services, and I am very pleased about that.

With regard to why they would want to increase their profile in the ACT, I would imagine that, as an Australia-wide company, they are interested in lifting their profile everywhere. As to the other hypothetical questions, I do not think there is anything whatsoever to do with the water Bill, as far as I can tell. The rest of the question was about policy in the future. Certainly, we have no plans to sell ACTEW's water or our water, electricity or anything else, really.

**MR WHITECROSS:** I have a supplementary question, Mr Speaker. Mrs Carnell did not actually answer all parts of my question, but my supplementary question is: Is it not the case, Chief Minister, that Australian Water Services were willing to help you out by doing you a favour and employing your former Deputy Chief Minister, Tony De Domenico, by giving him a job to build favour in the Government for their program to enter the Canberra water market?

**MR SPEAKER:** There is a clear imputation in that and, I am afraid, a question cannot contain imputations.

**MRS CARNELL:** Mr Speaker, in terms of absolute grubby approaches, it is, to start with, I think, an absolute put down for Mr De Domenico. Are those opposite suggesting that Mr De Domenico could not get a job in the private sector if it was not for somebody doing a favour? I do not accept that at all. I think that is an unacceptable comment about Mr De Domenico. It is not true to suggest that AWS did some sort of deal with the Government. AWS has done no deals with the ACT Government with regard to Mr De Domenico or, I do not think, anything else; but certainly not with regard to Mr De Domenico - end of deal.

### **Domestic Violence Coordinator**

**MS TUCKER:** My question is to Mr Humphries as Attorney-General. Mr Humphries, whom have you appointed as the Domestic Violence Coordinator?

**MR HUMPHRIES:** Mr Speaker, I attended the first meeting of the Domestic Violence Prevention Council about three weeks ago, at which I raised the question of Domestic Violence Coordinator and sought the advice of the committee on the process for considering the appointment of that person. That is where the matter stands at the moment. When I get that advice, I will move to make a decision on the subject.

### **Lend Lease Group - Woden Plaza Development**

**MR CORBELL:** Mr Speaker, my question without notice is to Mrs Carnell in her capacity as Chief Minister. Chief Minister, can you confirm that, at the time that Australian Water Services, which is 50 per cent owned by Lend Lease, was offering the former Deputy Chief Minister, Mr De Domenico, a job, Lend Lease were also, as far as I can ascertain, seeking approval for the expansion of Woden Plaza?

**MRS CARNELL:** In terms of longbows, this is a really good one. Mr Humphries might be able to help me here. When did Lend Lease first start talking about the expansion of Woden Plaza?

**Mr Humphries:** In about 1995.

**MRS CARNELL:** In about 1995. It has been an extraordinarily long process.

**Mr Humphries:** We knocked half of it back.

**MRS CARNELL:** The proposal that Lend Lease put forward has been on the drawing board for a very long time - in fact, I would suspect, since before 1995. The process that was put in place has been subject to all of the normal requirements of the Land (Planning and Environment) Act. In fact, as Mr Humphries just said, Lend Lease wanted to go ahead with a proposal that was something like 50 per cent bigger.

I can also guarantee that, apart from no deals being done with AWS, no deals have been done with Lend Lease either. There were no deals with Lend Lease and no deals with AWS with regard to Mr De Domenico or a job for any of my Ministers or anybody else in this house, Mr Speaker - absolute, categorical, no deals, no enticements, no negotiations, no taxpayers' money. Mr De Domenico left this Assembly, as he said, because he was offered a job in the private sector for, as I think he said, a six-figure amount.

**MR CORBELL:** I have a supplementary question, Mr Speaker. Chief Minister, when was the Lend Lease application approved? Is it not the case that Lend Lease were willing to help you out because they thought it would help build favour to progress their development application?

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**MR SPEAKER:** The second part of the question is out of order. There is a clear imputation in that.

**Mr Corbell:** Under which standing order, Mr Speaker?

**MR SPEAKER:** Standing order 117(b)(iv).

**Mr Berry:** Mr Speaker, what was the imputation?

**MR SPEAKER:** The imputation was that there was something improper between Lend Lease and the Government.

**Mr Berry:** No; there was merely a question asked about Lend Lease approvals.

**MR SPEAKER:** I said the second part of the question was out of order. If you choose to answer the first part, Chief Minister, it is up to you; though I have forgotten what it was, actually.

**Mr Berry:** Mr Speaker, I insist that there was no imputation in the question. There was merely a question after facts, and it would be appropriate for the relevant Minister to provide them.

**MR SPEAKER:** I would have to disagree with you on that, Mr Berry. I rule the second part of the supplementary question out of order, but the Chief Minister can answer the first part if she wishes.

**MRS CARNELL:** Mr Speaker, I have to say that the dates that Lend Lease applied or did not apply, or that it was approved, are not in my portfolio area; but I can guarantee that the process was done under the appropriate legislation. I think Lend Lease would suggest that the process took longer than they would have liked it to take. Again, I make the point, although I should not have to, that there were no deals with Lend Lease - in fact, I do not believe there were ever any discussions with Lend Lease property people locally - with regard to Mr De Domenico's job.

**Mr Berry:** Except the character approval.

**MRS CARNELL:** That was with Sydney. That was not local. Mr Speaker, imputations are being laid not only at Mr De Domenico's feet but also with AWS, Lend Lease and whatever. I do not believe that that is acceptable, particularly as those opposite appear to have no evidence. They could not have any evidence at all, Mr Speaker. They are only using this place to have a go at companies about which they have absolutely no evidence.

Mr Speaker, I think it is important here to read onto the record the statement by Mr De Domenico on 31 January.

**Mr Whitecross:** Who wrote that - your office or Mr Humphries's?

**MRS CARNELL:** Mr De Domenico does not put out on his letterhead things that he does not agree with. The statement reads:

Now that I have finally resigned from the Legislative Assembly it is important to clarify my future intentions so as to avoid any misconception.

I have established my own company AVPLANE ASIA PACIFIC PTY LTD, the main business of which will be to advise Australian companies on how to better export services onto the booming Asian market.

I am pleased to confirm that I have secured a first order from Australian Water Services to assist them in promoting Australian expertise in operations and technology in the overseas market.

Naturally any other company that wished to secure my services is welcome to do so. I am open for business.

Mr De Domenico made it clear that he has gone into the private sector. He has set up his own company and is willing to deal with all sorts of different companies.

### **Labour Market**

**MR HIRD:** Mr Speaker, you never hear anything about jobs from those people over there - not a word. My question is to the Chief Minister, who is very conscious of jobs. I understand that three separate assessments of the ACT labour market have found growing demand for labour and falling unemployment. Chief Minister, can you summarise the findings of these surveys and inform the parliament whether they are consistent with a strengthening economic recovery?

**MRS CARNELL:** Is it not extraordinary, Mr Speaker, that we have actually had a question about jobs, a question about something that the people of Canberra actually care about, a question about something that people in this town actually need, that is, jobs? Mr Speaker, if issues were running in last week's Melbourne Cup, as far as the people of Canberra went, jobs would come first and daylight would come second. Those opposite simply do not realise what is important to the people of Canberra. Yet here we are, five days into a sitting period, and how many questions have the Opposition managed to ask about the important issue for the ACT - jobs? Not one question.

In the past two days we have seen the release of three separate assessments of the state of the labour market in the ACT, and all three show a significant improvement in job prospects. First, there was the Morgan and Banks job index, which was a survey of the hiring intentions of small, medium and large employers. It shows that 35 per cent of Canberra employers plan to increase their staff numbers and 50 per cent plan to maintain their staff numbers in the coming quarter. Only 15 per cent plan to reduce staff. That means the organisations planning to increase or maintain staff outnumber those planning to cut staff by six to one. They are not bad figures, Mr Speaker. This is a dramatic turnaround on about a year ago, when more employers were planning to reduce staff than were planning to increase staff.

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Also encouraging is the fact that strong growth areas include information technology and that most of the increasing demand is coming from the small- to medium-size businesses. This Government has unashamedly sought to stimulate growth in the information technology industry and to support small- to medium-size businesses through our various employment and business programs - those same employment and business programs that those opposite just love to have a go at or to criticise. What we are seeing is a strategy that, clearly, is bearing fruit.

Also produced today was the monthly EL executive demand index, which found that the total demand for executives in the ACT increased by a massive 37 per cent in October. Once again, information technology showed strong growth, along with the finance sector, engineering and management. It is worth reflecting here that yesterday we had the Opposition arguing that we should rebuild the wall and try to isolate the ACT when it comes to hiring executives, that we should not be in the market at all. They want to go back to the appalling record that they had in government whereby merit selection was shunned. When you see figures indicating a 37 per cent increase in executive demand in the ACT in just one month, you have to wonder about the wisdom of isolating the ACT and refusing to hire from interstate. Again you can see just what a mess this place would be in if we went back to the bad old days of those opposite.

The third labour market assessment was released by the Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs, DEETYA, and revealed a sharp decline in unemployment in the ACT from June 1996 to June 1997. The drop was even more dramatic when you look at the trend from March this year, when unemployment was at 8.2 per cent - - -

**Mr Whitecross:** It was 8.4.

**MRS CARNELL:** Not at all. It dropped by June to 6.8 per cent under the DEETYA figures. In the same period the actual number of people unemployed dropped by more than 2,500. Mr Speaker, all of these surveys are consistent, and they all point to a strong rebound in the local economy over the last year, following the recession in 1996 which was brought about by Commonwealth spending cuts.

They are also consistent with a raft of other economic indicators, including gross State product, which has shown two consecutive quarters of increase; retail trade, where the ACT is posting the strongest growth in the country; new motor vehicle registrations, which have recorded 11 consecutive months of growth; and job advertisements, which are also growing very strongly. On top of that we have seen 6,100 new full-time jobs created in the ACT since last November, according to the ABS labour market data. All of the indicators are pointing in the direction of economic recovery. This Government, unlike those opposite, continues to focus on jobs and business growth as the key issues for the ACT.

**Ms McRae:** Ho, hum!

**MRS CARNELL:** Ms McRae says, "Ho, hum!"



**Ms McRae:** Yes, because you are just distorting. Tell us about the ABS statistics; tell us about the 8.4.

**MRS CARNELL:** I just did - 6,100 new jobs. Ms McRae is the person who said in this assembly:

We have this fairytale notion that somehow the Opposition is here to create ideas, to do things for the good of the Territory.

She is actually showing that yet again. Obviously, those opposite are not here to do things for the good of the Territory because they are not interested in jobs or business growth. I will requote Ms McRae's words:

We have this fairytale notion that somehow the Opposition is here to create ideas, to do things for the good of the Territory.

It is a fairytale notion! Those are Ms McRae's own words. Every day that Opposition shows that that is the way they operate.

### **Temporary Accommodation Allowance**

**MS REILLY:** My question is to the Chief Minister and relates to the temporary accommodation allowance. Chief Minister, in an answer to the Estimates Committee you advised that 19 executive officers were in receipt of a temporary accommodation allowance. You supplied a list of 17 of them. How many are still in receipt of a temporary accommodation allowance? Did any officers from ACTEW or Totalcare receive this allowance in 1995-96 and/or 1996-97 and do any of these officers currently receive this allowance?

**MRS CARNELL:** I will take it on notice, Mr Speaker.

**MR SPEAKER:** Thank you. I would expect you would have to, actually.

**Ms Reilly:** Can we have an indication of when we will get that, Mr Speaker.

**MR SPEAKER:** Is that your supplementary question?

**Ms Reilly:** No.

**MR SPEAKER:** I am sorry, but I will accept it as such.

**Mrs Carnell:** Either it is your supplementary question or it is not.

**Ms McRae:** You took it on notice. It is a point of clarification. Do not be pedantic.

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**Mr Humphries:** Since when do people supply a timeframe? When did you ever supply a timeframe?

**Ms McRae:** When we were asked, and you are being asked.

**MR SPEAKER:** Do you have a supplementary question? The question has just been taken on notice, Ms Reilly.

**Mr Berry:** I will just move a motion that it be provided by the close of business, and that would clarify the matter. Would you like that?

**Mr Humphries:** We will do so, but we will do it when we can do it, in reasonable time.

**Mrs Carnell:** Like we always do.

**MR SPEAKER:** Ms Reilly, do you have a supplementary question? Everybody else over there has asked a question.

**MS REILLY:** Chief Minister, just what does “temporary” in “temporary accommodation allowance” mean?

**MRS CARNELL:** Mr Speaker, “temporary accommodation allowance”, I am confident, is defined under the regulations. I would be very surprised if it were not.

**Mr Whitecross:** Where is your brief? Do you not have a brief? Why do you not read the brief?

**MRS CARNELL:** Mr Speaker, temporary accommodation allowance is an allowance that has been in the regulations under the Act since those opposite were in government and were using the same rules and the same indications that they used before. Mr Speaker, it is wrong if those opposite are saying that temporary accommodation allowance and other allowances were not paid to people under those regulations. Temporary accommodation allowance is in the regulations under the Act. I am confident that it would be defined in some way under the Act. It is an entitlement.

I would assume, Mr Speaker, that those opposite are not arguing that public servants should not get their entitlements under the Act. Mr Speaker, I think those opposite had better come clean on these questions. Are they planning to remove these entitlements when they get into government next year, because it certainly looks like they are a good show, looking at the polling? Are they saying that temporary accommodation allowance - - -

**Ms Reilly:** Which Act?

**Ms McRae:** Is yours better than ours?

**Mr Hird:** I am starting to worry!

**MR SPEAKER:** Order! The Opposition will stop getting excited and the Government will stop groaning.

**MRS CARNELL:** Mr Speaker, my understanding is that temporary accommodation allowance is a general term for a range of benefits available to officers who transfer from interstate. These arrangements were put in place by the previous Government. They mirror the Commonwealth arrangements and those for most other jurisdictions. Mr Speaker, the provisions of these entitlements are currently set out in a schedule - someone said, "What Act?", which is why I am trying to help here - to the public sector management standards, No. 14, chapter 6, and apply to all officers transferring from interstate. Mr Speaker, this is not just about executives. It is about all officers that are transferring from interstate.

If those opposite are really saying here that they plan to get rid of these entitlements, they had better tell the public servants in the ACT, our public servants, that right now. It is an entitlement of our public servants - not just senior managers, not just the fat cats, as those opposite call them and seem to want to have a go at. This is for all public servants. Mr Speaker, it would appear that those opposite plan, if the polls are right and they get into government next year, to cut those entitlements totally. I think public servants need to note that.

### **Council of Australian Governments**

**MR OSBORNE:** Mr Speaker, my question is to the Chief Minister, Mrs Carnell. Chief Minister, this morning I received a letter from you saying that the Commonwealth-State roles and responsibilities for the environment are under review and that a number of changes have been recommended to the Council of Australian Governments. Your letter says that you have passed on the information because Mr Moore currently has before this house a Bill which will, if passed, require the Government to refer all intergovernmental agreements to Assembly committees for consideration. I thank you for today's letter and I congratulate Mr Moore on his Bill. The letter says that this issue kicked off in May 1996, and goes on to say that COAG will seek to finalise the agreement within two weeks. Chief Minister, do you concede that this letter only serves to demonstrate the flaws in the way COAG operates, as yet another major change is afoot and this Assembly gets to glimpse it as it crosses the finish line?

**MRS CARNELL:** I think we can always improve the way that we operate in this place. That is the reason that we have been having discussions with Mr Moore on his Bill. The issues that you are talking about have been on the public agenda. They have not been secret in any way. In fact, a communique comes out at the end of every COAG meeting. I always make a statement in this place about the issues that were raised. It is certainly not as if any of these issues have in any way been secret.

Mr Speaker, we have indicated that we are more than willing to work with the Assembly on working out better ways of having information on the table in a timely fashion. That is what a number of the debates we had last week were about. I think we have come to a quite appropriate set of words to achieve what the Assembly seems to

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want with regard to COAG. What has happened over the last week and a half with regard to COAG shows that if you do work cooperatively you really can end up with some significantly better outcomes.

I would like to quote Ms McRae again, just for a moment, to show that this side of the house is really quite different from the other. Mr Speaker, Ms McRae said:

You may criticise what we do until the cows come home; but it is the most important role that the Opposition has - to actually face that conflict, to create that conflict, to sharpen that conflict, to argue that conflict and to ensure that the people for whom we stand are not forgotten in any debate ...

I believe that conflict is not an essential part of this Assembly, unlike those opposite. When you get rid of the conflict you can come up with results, and I think we have with regard to Mr Moore's Bill.

**MR OSBORNE:** I have a supplementary question. Chief Minister, you said that you did make a statement on this issue in the house. I would just like to remind you that I think you just presented a one-page summary on this issue. Nevertheless, given what you have just said, will the Government be supporting Mr Moore's Bill?

**MRS CARNELL:** Mr Speaker, I do not think that is in order particularly, but I think I made it clear in my statement that Mr Moore and I have had discussions on this and I am confident that the outcome will be acceptable to all parties.

**MR SPEAKER:** You cannot announce Executive policy, Mr Osborne. It is out of order.

**Mrs Carnell:** I ask that all further questions be placed on the notice paper.

### **Fairbairn Park - Noise Levels**

**MR STEFANIAK:** Mr Speaker, after Mr Moore's question to Mr Humphries my office provided me with a document entitled "Chapter 152 - Noise Control Guideline - Motor Sport". I understand it is from New South Wales. It states, amongst other things:

General Motor Sport Including Motocross and Mini Bikes

Operating times: 10 am to 5 pm for 50 events per year.

Noise level restriction: 5dB(A) above background at residential boundary (+10dB(A) for existing venues).

**Mr Moore:** I raise a point of order, Mr Speaker.

**MR SPEAKER:** Are you tabling a paper, Mr Stefaniak?

**MR STEFANIAK:** I table that, Mr Speaker. Might I also remind Mr Moore - - -

**Mr Moore:** What is he speaking under?

**MR SPEAKER:** He is tabling a paper.

**MR STEFANIAK:** It is just a paper I am tabling. Might I also remind Mr Moore that the Government came to its decision after many years of consideration of the issue.

**Mr Moore:** Now what is he speaking under? I raise a point of order.

**MR SPEAKER:** Order!

**MR STEFANIAK:** I remind Mr Moore - - -

**MR SPEAKER:** Order! Mr Stefaniak, you cannot debate this matter now; you have tabled the paper.

**MR STEFANIAK:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I think we will have a debate tomorrow.

### **PATIENT ACTIVITY DATA Papers**

**MR HUMPHRIES** (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, for the information of members, I present information bulletins relating to patient activity data for the Calvary Public Hospital and the Canberra Hospital for August 1997.

### **LABOR OPPOSITION Discussion of Matter of Public Importance**

**MR SPEAKER:** I have received a letter from Mrs Littlewood proposing that a matter of public importance be submitted to the Assembly for discussion, namely:

The extent to which the completely negative approach demonstrated by the Labor Opposition, together with its lack of vision, initiative and leadership, is impacting on the operation of government in the ACT.

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**MRS LITTLEWOOD (3.27):** Given the display in question time, I think what the matter of public importance says is very well demonstrated. Since February I have sat in this chamber and, regrettably, during that time I do not believe I have heard a positive thing from the other side; nor have I read anything positive from them in the newspaper. “Berry attacks Carnell over Bruce Stadium development”, “Berry calls for probe into new private hospital”, “‘Feel The Power’ a second-hand slogan”, “Assembly to examine private hospital”, “Carnell’s secret deal may leave taxpayers with the Bill” and “Everyone wants Olympic soccer but at what price?” have been just some of the headlines.

All I have heard is negative comments and whingeing - no initiatives, no ideas, no vision, not even constructive criticism; just a continuous whinge. Maybe I should have expected nothing else, given the comments made by Ms McRae on 27 August 1997 and quoted by Mrs Carnell, namely:

We have this fairytale notion that somehow the Opposition is here to create ideas, to do things for the good of the Territory. It is an absolute fairytale notion that is held by people who do not understand the Westminster system.

That is rather negative stuff, Mr Speaker. If those are the assumptions that the Labor Opposition, the alternative government, are coming from, then heaven help the people of Canberra. I again quote Ms McRae:

... this fairytale notion that somehow the Opposition is here to create ideas ...

Create ideas! The Labor Opposition, the supposed alternative government, would not know an idea if it bit them on the leg. Let us look at the record. Let us look at the lack of leadership, vision and ideas and the negative whingeing from my colleagues opposite. Did the Opposition offer any alternative to this year’s budget? No; just more negativity and more whinges. Talk about whingeing Wendy! We have a ready-made whingeing Wayne. I go on to Olympic soccer. Did this alternative government say, “What a great positive for Canberra!”? No. Mr Whitecross raised the scare that the ACT would be faced with a bill of \$42m.

**Mr Humphries:** It was \$422m.

**MRS LITTLEWOOD:** Was it? Heaven only knows how he arrived at that figure, but I suspect it has a touch of the old overtime model about it. There was not one word about the positives. I quote from a letter that went to the *Canberra Times* from a member of the community, Mr Lee. Mr Lee wrote:

We all know cheap shots are easy. Constructive criticism is so much harder. In today’s economic climate, often their sport is one of the few positive factors in the life of many of our young. Yet again, we see one of our community “leaders” pouring cold water onto every significant aspect of Canberra’s immediate future.

Those are very telling words indeed. Mr Lee could see the positives and had the grace to say so, but not those opposite. Mr Speaker, let us look at some more. More recently, an initiative of the Government has been the Feel the Power of Canberra campaign. Did the Labor Opposition say, "Well done; what a good initiative!?" The rest of Australia does not even place Canberra on the map when it comes to relocating or starting a business. We need to increase our tourist numbers. Did the Labor Opposition say, "Great; this may help create some jobs."? No. It does not care about jobs.

What we heard this time was from Mr Corbell. I quote from an article in the *Canberra Times* of 22 October. He said, "Drop slogan and start again". In the Estimates Committee Mr Berry did not even know what the slogan actually was. That is how much he knows. The article talks about companies which have supported the initiative and have been helped through government industry assistance programs. Mr Corbell obviously has an interest in the issue of business incentive schemes and industry assistance. He has quite a number of questions on the notice paper which, to my way of thinking, are really ferreting about for negatives. Nowhere have I seen any positive comments, let alone congratulations of the Government for its success in this area.

Let us look at the record in this particular area. From the inception of ACTBIS in February 1996 to the end of September 1997, 26 businesses have been approved for support under the scheme. Of those 26 supported businesses, 18 are local firms or joint ventures between local and national or international firms. These businesses are projecting employment of 1,900 people and an investment of \$55m over three years. The remaining businesses are a mix of national and international companies with projected employment of over 1,000 and an investment of \$16m. Has the Government received a pat on the back? No way. Mr Berry and company find it easier to just whinge.

What about jobs? On a trend basis, total employment in the ACT is above the level of March 1995 by 2,200. We have 2,200 more people employed than we did in March 1995. Do we ever hear that from those opposite? Are they ever positive? Do they ever try to engender some confidence in Canberra? Do we hear about the positives of the Government's job creation schemes? Do the Opposition even know what these job creation schemes are? They are graduate administrative assistants, Volunteering Australia, the Business Development Fund, Youth500, Youth Joblink, the security training program, Active Australia, the annual employment grants program, open access centres, Working Connections, New Future in Small Business, the women's work force development scheme, Trades and Technical Women on the Move, Youth SelfStart, ACTBIS, ACT Supplier Development Committee, Partners in Progress, helpShop fund, events funding for Canberra, the accelerated data collection program, and the trainee ranger program. Do we ever hear a good word about these programs? Of course not. It does not suit the people opposite to be at all positive. They just whinge, carp and be negative.

Even on the new private hospital which is going to create 120 jobs, what did the glorious leader - and I use that word with tongue in cheek - of the new Labor Party say and do? Mr Berry has done his utmost to stop the project from going ahead. Did this alternative government say, "Well done; another 120 jobs."? Of course not. Mr Berry, the pretender for the Chief Ministership, tried to stop those jobs.

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I have not heard one remark from the other side that has even acknowledged the Government's initiatives. Ms Reilly's contribution has been her obsession with Kick Start. Ms Reilly has put out 10 press releases bagging the initiative at every turn. Absolutely pathetic! So it goes on - National Museum, VFT, international airport. They are all very exciting and important projects for Canberra, but have they received support from those opposite? Of course not. They have been bagged in one way or another. Even Mr Wood is starting to whinge. He does not want to see a resort developed on the northern end of Lake Tuggeranong. Even at this early stage he cans it. Why not look at the proposal? Why just cast it aside? What about the jobs that it would create? Never mind; just be negative. It is a lot easier than coming up with ideas.

This Labor Opposition is a disgrace. It has no vision, it has no ideas, it demonstrates no initiative, and it certainly lacks leadership, although there have been many leaders. It chooses to be totally negative. It contributes little value to the operation of this Assembly and even to the development of the city for the people of Canberra. What policies does it have for job creation or business development? Absolutely none, Mr Speaker. It really is very sad, because the people of Canberra deserve better. The Labor Opposition really is a disgrace and I hope the people of Canberra see it for what it is.

**MS McRAE (3.35):** According to Mrs Carnell's polls, we are a shoo-in. I would love to see these polls of hers. They are a little bit different from the ones we have been seeing. Mrs Littlewood, you just might have to put up with us in government next year.

**Mr Hird:** I will look after you out at Belconnen; no worries, Roberta.

**MS McRAE:** It is Mrs Littlewood who needs looking after, Mr Hird. I will not be patronising and say that you might view the world a little differently when you have been in the Assembly a bit longer, Mrs Littlewood; but I think it is important to put on record some views on what opposition is about and why we are all here.

Firstly, let us take it in the broader context of the world that we all live in. The overwhelming impression of negativity is, of course, built up by the media, and necessarily so, because that is the job of the media. They build on conflict, they build on difference, they build on challenging opinions and they look for the differences in opinions, not the sameness. I would challenge Mrs Littlewood to find any story anywhere that has included a positive comment which has been made. It is not in the nature of the world that we live in for the media to do that. The media overwhelmingly look for differences in opinions, variations in opinions and the reasons why whatever is being said is wrong. That is fine. I have no problem with that. I think that that is indicative of the world. Politics plays into that world and has to acknowledge that world and feed it, and we all do.

I have contended many a time that parliamentary conflict has been heightened since the televising of the Federal Parliament. Nothing feeds good media better than a sharp question time. Since the televising of question time began, that is what we have seen the greatest concentration on. Many a time television was used very effectively to portray Mr Keating as the monster that he could become in question time, and it is now used very effectively to portray Mr Howard as the monster he does become in question time.



The idea of what politics is about, what politicians are about and what actually happens in the political process is very much fed by that very direct and very intense conflict in question time. The media pay very little attention to whatever else happens in the Federal Parliament and to what else happens in this Assembly. I am not casting aspersions on the media for what they choose to do. They reflect what the constituency wants to read, what the constituency wants to know, what the constituency is interested in. That is how they sell their papers; that is how they get their programs watched; that is how they maintain interest by the public. Overwhelmingly, they reflect what the community wants to hear - whether this is right, whether this is wrong and what the other view is.

Every now and again you get pictures of people working together, usually for charitable causes, usually for things that the media have an interest in promoting because those things deserve support. I think we were all pictured in the *Canberra Times* receiving blankets for the Smith Family. We have all been pictured at various times doing things together for the good of the community in those charitable ways. But, for the most part, people want to know from us, "Why do you disagree with that? How do you disagree with that? What is wrong with what is in front of you? What are you going to say about it?"

I have no problem with Mrs Littlewood viewing all of that as negativity. That is her prerogative. But I think what happens is the day-to-day reality of the world that we all live in and the day-to-day reality of our responsibilities to the media and the general public. It may be viewed as negativity, but it adds up to a very thorough scrutiny of what the Government is doing and a very thorough assessment of just what is going wrong. If there happens to be one story after another, then it means that there is one mistake after another. That is what the Opposition is for.

Labor has absolutely no problem with the view that is often espoused by Mr Moore and the Greens that the Independents play a crucial role in all of this. We acknowledge that role. We see it as a valuable role for the ACT. But their role is fundamentally different from ours. Their role is quite different by both character and interpretation. They play a very important role in the city of Canberra because they hold the balance of power, because they have the option of changing views and of manipulating the system - I do not mean in a negative way - and through their vote bringing about one outcome or another. They have found in many cases that it is not our views that they want to support. That is fine. I think that their role is fundamentally different.

The way that the community seems to be evolving, in time you may be able to reinterpret the role of the Opposition and the role of all the members of the Assembly. I as yet have no understanding of how that could work, and I will staunchly defend the right of the Opposition and the need for the Opposition to find the mistakes, to find the loopholes, to criticise, to put up vigorous counter-debate, to put the views that people have about the mistakes that governments make, or even the perceived mistakes. We are not elected by the same people. We are not elected to represent the same issues. Every single criticism I bring forward comes with a body of evidence behind me from people who have rung, from people who have talked to me, from people who are concerned that Labor represent their views on the issues. That to me is of fundamental importance.

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Mrs Carnell, of course, may choose to mock my words as often as she likes. She is very good at finding quotes and throwing them back at me, but fundamentally there is a very important role and responsibility for the Opposition to say, "Hang on a minute. This is not right. Hang on a minute. This is wrong. There is an alternative point of view". An Opposition that does not maintain that pressure is an Opposition that is not doing its job. The Opposition does not write the headlines, the Opposition does not edit the news and the Opposition does not choose the quotes that are actually put in the paper; but the Opposition must in all cases where relevant produce the counter-argument, produce the alternative point of view, negate the effect of government activity.

The Opposition, as I have said before, has a fundamentally different role from that of the Independents. The Opposition has never been there to support the Government. The Independents are constantly put in that position through the decisions they make. Will they or will they not support this Government? Will they or will they not worry about the stability of government for the ACT? That is fundamentally different to what the Opposition is there for. The Opposition is there not to let the Government proceed but to challenge at every pass what the Government is doing and what the Government is doing badly and to find points of criticism at every point of relevance.

What we are hearing today is the Government's side of scrutiny. It is very easy to bag it as pure negativity. It is very easy to say that people are just bagging every issue. I would challenge anyone to say that in what we have asked questions about and what we have queried we have been wrong. In most cases there is potential expenditure of public money in ways that we see as inappropriate. We have seen time and again money being given to companies and to projects that have not come through and been fulfilled.

I have never heard the Government apologise for its negativity about Harcourt Hill, about which we heard heaps when we were in government. Now, all of a sudden, they are rubbing their hands together in glee and saying, "Look at this terrible mess. It is all the Labor Government's fault". They were very negative about it when they were in opposition. They chose to stay negative about it in government. They are still negative now, and appropriately so. It was a huge expenditure of public money. The questions that were raised were valid. The outcome is still very serious and it is very important that the then Opposition put its name on the issue and put the issue on the record. Now everyone can say, "We said it would go wrong and it has gone wrong". It was very damaging and unpleasant criticism at the time, because the Harcourt Hill venture was an outstanding venture. It had a lot of potential. It was something that people went into with high hopes. The Opposition at that time rightly chose to criticise it and has now got that on the record.

I could cite any number of similar examples where the negativity has been unpleasant, the criticism has been unpleasant, the applying of the torch to the belly in the good old Neville Wran way has been unpleasant; but it is an essential part of the good workings of government to know that there is a watchdog there at every point, to know that there are people willing to be unpleasant and negative. It is not a role that comes easily, let me tell you. Nobody was elected to the Assembly to whinge, I can assure you. Every one of the 17 members in this chamber was elected because they felt that they could do something

to

improve the lot of the people in Canberra and they had a vision for that. But each of us has a different responsibility. It is the responsibility of the Opposition to maintain pressure at whatever cost and to withstand this nonsense of someone saying, "You have no vision. You have no ideas. You are just negative". It is just nonsense.

Ultimately, it is up to us how we work the ground rules. When I had to move into the fast lane when I became Speaker, what I found most interesting in looking at the history of standing orders and the history of the Westminster system was how cleverly the Westminster system was put together to cope with conflict. I refer back to my earlier comment on the televising of parliament. Our standing orders are a historical consequence of those in the House of Commons. I could go to the House of Commons now and I would know most of the standing orders that Betty Boothroyd operates under. They are the same as ours.

From the very beginning, most of the standing orders had within them a requirement that members of parliament be of good and steady character. Parliamentarians were not supposed to lose their tempers, to raise their voices or to be very unpleasant with each other. The management of conflict assured that. That is why we address the Speaker. That is why we do not refer to each other by personal names. That is why so many of the standing orders reflect a high level of courtesy and formality, which has of course eroded a little over the last 600 years or whatever it is. In my mind, that erosion is partly due to the contemporary pressures of the press and television and our changing public role. From the very beginning the intent was that we operate in a courteous and formal manner. I would like to put on record that it is up to us to reorganise and to do that again. Maybe the notion that we are uncivil and negative has been exacerbated by the way we have allowed ourselves to behave within our parliaments. It is up to us, not the Speaker, to determine the standard of behaviour in parliaments. It is done by a process of agreement. We should all go back to basics and look at the origins of our democratic system.

For my final point, let me turn to something that Mrs Littlewood seems to give very little credence to. Every single Labor member is on a committee. Some us chair committees; some of us are just members. There is absolutely no way that any member of a committee does not participate fully in whatever is in front of that committee. I would say that every Labor member comes fully briefed, fully on top of the issues and fully prepared to keep an open mind on whatever is in front of that committee. The Opposition has never said, "We will not participate in this committee. We are preserving our right to be the Opposition and we will never work toward a good outcome". In every instance the Opposition has taken its committee responsibilities seriously and facilitated outcomes which, in most cases, have been extremely positive for government. They have been negotiated outcomes.

Where is the acknowledgment of that? There has been none whatsoever. It is not a sexy issue for the press, but I think it is amazing that a member of our Assembly is completely unaware of that and unwilling to acknowledge it. That has been the most constructive and positive and proper role that the Opposition has played, but that in no way detracts from the fact that the responsibility of the Opposition is to criticise, to create conflict where necessary, to create the issues and to maintain the pressure, no matter how unpleasant Mrs Littlewood or anybody else finds it.

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**MS TUCKER** (3.50): The crossbenches conferenced on this so-called matter of public importance and I am saying, on behalf of Mr Osborne, Mr Moore and my colleague Ms Horodny, that we are of the unanimous view that we do not want to waste valuable time indulging Mrs Littlewood in her pointless and, may I point out, negative debate; so we will not be participating.

**MR HUMPHRIES** (Attorney-General) (3.51): Mr Speaker, I will be participating in the MPI debate.

**Mr Moore:** And enjoying the negative.

**MR HUMPHRIES:** And enjoying it, indeed. I have heard today the great apologia for the misbehaviour of those opposite. I note that the last of them seem to be walking off the floor, so I do not know where the Labor Opposition thinks it is going to have a chance to contribute. Let me comment, Madam Deputy Speaker - I should have made this comment before you took the chair - on the remark that Mrs Littlewood needs looking after. I simply make the observation that in the most recent opinion poll conducted by the *Canberra Times* Mrs Littlewood's recognition rate, after less than one year in the Assembly, was considerably higher than your own, Madam Deputy Speaker.

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** And I am proud of that, Mr Humphries, so you can read whatever you like into that.

**MR HUMPHRIES:** That is not very good chairmanship, Madam Deputy Speaker, to be - - -

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** If you wish to attack the Chair, Mr Humphries, the Chair will attack you back.

**MR HUMPHRIES:** I am attacking Ms Roberta McRae, Madam Deputy Speaker.

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** It is the votes that count, Mr Humphries, not the recognition.

**MR HUMPHRIES:** Indeed it is. None of us stand in judgment of the others, Madam Deputy Speaker. The fact of the matter remains that there is a case for opposing and for putting the alternative point of view. There is also a case for being constructive in opposition and for using the facts and the truth to build a case against the government of the day or against a proposition of the day which an opposition happens to oppose. Anybody observing the process of opposition over the last three years in this place would, undoubtedly, reach the conclusion that truth, fairness and constructiveness have not been part of the weaponry used by the Labor Opposition in this place.

Evidence of that negative attitude, that complete disregard for the opportunity to build not just the credit of the ACT Opposition but the credit of the Assembly itself - we are talking about the Assembly and its capacity to prove itself to members of this community - can be found in the comments by Mr Berry reported on the front page of the *Canberra Times* yesterday. Here we saw the most extraordinary and ill-advised attack on

the conduct of public affairs in the ACT. Not only was it mean spirited, not only was it very badly advised, not only did it play loose with the truth in the most extraordinary way - not only were all those things true - but also it showed complete disregard for the capacity of people to understand the issues better by reading anything that he has to say. Mr Berry specialised, as he always does, in the hurling of mud. If the Labor Party spent half the time they spend on digging dirt on developing, for example, a jobs policy, then we might hear something productive from them. We might hear some advance in the position that the ACT finds itself in today.

It is not the responsibility of just the Government of the ACT to deal with the ACT's current economic problems. It is not the responsibility of just those on the treasury bench to formulate strategies to help the many Canberrans without jobs to find jobs. It is the responsibility of every person in this place, duly elected to represent the citizens of the ACT - every single last one of us. No-one is exempted from that process. Yet we see an opposition that attacks every revenue measure taken by the ACT Government, opposes every reduction in expenditure made by the Government, calls on us endlessly to increase expansion in a whole variety of areas and implies that if they were in government they would engage in those increases in expenditure. To see them engage in that activity, yet not contribute a single new concept for creating wealth, producing development and growth and stimulating the creation of jobs, is reprehensible in the extreme.

My advice to the Opposition is very simple. Spend less time digging dirt and more time on the issues that matter. The issues that matter are jobs and the creation of jobs in this community. What is the policy of the Australian Labor Party in the ACT on the creation of jobs? How would they do this? Is this not a fundamentally important issue that the citizens of this Territory are entitled to hear about prior to 21 February next year? Perhaps they will, but to hear about it in the last days of an election campaign or any time after the end of this year allows the electorate far too little time to assess properly the issues being raised. What are the strategies? What are the policies? Where are they going? What do they propose to do? We do not know. The Government does not know. The community of Canberra does not know. That is an utterly irresponsible approach.

Looking at this Assembly and its work over the last three years, who has been responsible for producing ideas, for putting forward policies, for developing approaches to meet Canberra's problems, for even simply introducing legislation designed to address these problems I have described or a range of other problems facing the community? Certainly, the Government falls within that category and, certainly, the crossbenches can claim to have assumed that role. Look at the Bills List. See how many Bills have been produced by the crossbenches and compare that number with the number of Bills produced by the Labor Opposition. If my memory serves me correctly - and I might be wrong - the Labor Opposition have introduced one Bill in the last two months, and that represents probably only the second or third Bill in this entire year produced by the Labor Opposition. Even that Bill, as we heard yesterday in the question Mr Moore asked Mr Wood, is in all likelihood going to have to be scrapped because it is so misconceived.

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So, where are the ideas? Is what you said, Madam Deputy Speaker, true? You said:

We have this fairytale notion that somehow the Opposition is here to create ideas, to do things for the good of the Territory. It is an absolute fairytale notion that is held by people who do not understand the Westminster system.

The Chief Minister has already quoted the comments about the duty of the Opposition being to create conflict. Madam Deputy Speaker, let us be quite clear about this. It is not a fairytale notion for members of this place to be expected to create ideas. It is not a fairytale notion to be expected to be positive about the future of this Territory and to build that in a positive way. It is a fundamentally important part of our job, no matter where in the chamber we sit, no matter what our role in this place might be. It is everybody's duty to do that.

We are not seeing it from this Opposition - this slapdash, negative, completely contemptible Opposition, this collection of people who are more interested in their own divisions, their own factional concerns, their own willingness to throw mud for the sake of power. It is that group of people who are responsible for the weaknesses in that approach. To blame the Westminster system for that, Madam Deputy Speaker, is complete garbage.

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The discussion is concluded.

## **PUBLIC TRANSPORT SYSTEM**

Debate resumed.

**MR HIRD** (4.00): It was disappointing this morning to hear Mr Corbell going over old ground, referring to things that happened years ago. What this Government is about is the future of Canberra's public transport and the implementation of the Graham report. In making a commitment to implement the Graham report, this Government has embarked on two very significant and challenging reforms - the redesign of the existing network and a review of the fares structure.

Mr Kaine, the Minister for Urban Services, outlined this morning the steps that are being taken to consult with the community on the design of the new network. Details of these meetings are set out in a media release. Mr Kaine indicated that three meetings have been held to date - one each in Belconnen, Gungahlin and Weston Creek - and another is to be held tonight in North Canberra. Tomorrow night there is to be a meeting in Telopea Park High School. Next week, Torrens Primary School is the venue for another consultation meeting. Tuggeranong Library is the location for a future meeting. I am sure that all members would agree that this is a significant commitment on the part of ACTION to listen to its customers and of the Minister to listen to his constituents. It is vital that any changes introduced to the network are in response to the needs of the community.

That is why we are talking and taking the time to consult with those within the community. We are also undertaking statistically sound surveys to complement the consultation processes. This information will give the Government a firm basis on which to plan.

The Graham review reported that ACTION's current flat fare structure is inadequate and is a substantial constraint to increasing patronage levels, particularly for those who want to travel short distances or through interchanges. The current fares system has been in place for a long time. We all know that people travelling from, say, Gungahlin to Civic, through the Belconnen interchange, pay twice as much as those who travel on the direct service. That is one of the issues we asked Graham to consider. The report recommends that the current system of a flat fare with forced transfers be abandoned and replaced with a more equitable system - one that does not erode ACTION's required levels of revenue, but more equitably apportions ticket prices according to distance travelled and the cost of service provision.

It is not the Labor Party that has made these suggestions; it is this Government's own report which has suggested that a new fares system be adopted in Canberra - one that restores equity and encourages patronage growth for ACTION. The Minister is to be complimented for that. ACTION has developed a zone-based fares model, and this is currently being assessed by a consultant to ensure that it meets the objectives outlined by Roger Graham. It is proposed that a new fares structure be introduced around the same time as the new network. The fares model will need to take into account the broad features of the new network.

There were suggestions that we could fix the transport problems of our city by making car travel less attractive. What did those members really have in mind? Does the Labor Party have a plan to introduce tollways? I do not know and neither do they, I think. We believe that ACTION's services can be made a viable alternative to the car. So, rather than increasing the cost of travel, we need to foster habits of use of public transport. These changes will not happen overnight. Even the Conservation Council, in their recent report, acknowledged that it will take time. The Government has started its improvements to ACTION services. I would like to repeat, for Mr Corbell's information, that the Government will operate a summer network as in previous years.

We are addressing the transport needs of Gungahlin. That is where we held the first meeting on the new network. I compliment the Minister for that. You on that side of the house did not compliment him. While it is difficult to introduce public transport into suburbs that are still under construction, we are progressively improving our services. Well done, Minister! Let me give an example. From February next year a new express service on route 251 will service Harcourt Hill, Nicholls, West Ngunnawal and Amaroo. Additional trips will start on route 500 between Palmerston and the city. When the town centre opens the buses will stop at the town centre.

This morning, Mr Corbell referred to excess walking distances from bus stops. I would like to assure him and those opposite, and the house, that we have not changed the standards of yesterday, 12 months ago, or years ago. They remain at 500 metres and are comparable to the standards in Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth.

Mr Kaine, the Minister,

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was absolutely right this morning: We ought to focus on the reform of ACTION, rather than the past. If those opposite really supported public transport, they would get behind our reform process to secure the future for ACTION and the travelling public within the ACT.

**MR KAINE** (Minister for Urban Services) (4.06): I would like to speak briefly about Ms Horodny's amendments. Before doing so, I would like to commend Mr Hird for his comments. If I had had the opportunity to write his speech myself, it could not have been better. I thank him for his comments.

I think the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Mr Whitecross, learnt a political lesson this morning, and if he is smart he will not forget it; that is, that if you live in a glass house you should not throw rocks, because Ms Horodny's amendments threw the rocks right back into his glass house. Mr Whitecross appears to have taken the view that what was okay under a Labor government for three to four years is somehow not okay when the same things happen under a Liberal government. When he comes in here and starts talking about degradation of the ACTION system - something that, in fact, has not occurred - he cries out for a response. When I get up and say those things, everybody says, "You are just defending yourself. Of course you are going to get up and say those things, whether they are true or not true". I think it has a greater impact - Mr Whitecross should listen carefully - when a crossbencher gets up and says to him, "You did not do any better; so who are you to throw rocks?". I think it is a salutary lesson. Mr Whitecross took great umbrage at the fact that Ms Horodny got up this morning and told him that he had nothing to crow about. It was something that needed to be said.

I agree entirely with Ms Horodny's amendments. I have no particular objection to her calling on the Government to develop a transport strategy. That is something that we are doing already because it is important to whatever we do, whether it is in terms of road transportation, cars, buses, bicycles - we had a discussion about bicycles this morning - or light rail systems and the like. Whatever we do should be done in the context of some sort of long-term strategy. Mr Moore and I were agreed on the fact that the Territory Plan, when it was finally brought down some years ago, lacked that strategic view. I think it still does. There does need to be a strategy, and we are working on that. Upgrading ACTION buses so that they become a more attractive proposition to people to ride in than driving their own cars is high on our agenda. Perhaps Mr Whitecross will learn something from this morning's experience and not criticise when he leaves himself wide open to being criticised in return.

**MR OSBORNE** (4.09): I rise today to talk as much about courage as about the buses. I want to make it known in this place that I, for one, am all but speechless with admiration for the stand taken by Andrew Whitecross on this issue. It is an act of sheer guts, of grim and bloody-minded determination. It is the political equivalent of going over the top without helmet, rifle or bayonet to do the full Monty in no man's land. "Why?", I hear you ask. The last paragraph of Mr Whitecross's motion reads:

... calls for immediate action by the Government to implement the Graham Report in order to address the crisis of confidence in Canberra's public transport system.



It is only when you read the recommendations of the Graham report that you begin to realise that Mr Whitecross is making a stand which, in my view, makes him worthy of the political equivalent of the Victoria Cross.

Let us look at some of the recommendations. Graham calls for the implementation of a purchaser-provider model of service. Mr Whitecross wants - no, demands - this, despite the constant criticism by the Labor Party of this model. Andrew has decided to kick sand in the face of Labor solidarity and embrace an idea just because he sees the merit of it. Not for him the straitjacket of caucus. Well done, Andrew! I am right behind you. But there is more. Mr Whitecross supports putting the entire school bus service out to private sector tender. I fear I will soon have to sit down because the audacity of this move, coming from a member of the Labor Left, all but takes my breath away. Mr Whitecross wants the school bus system privatised. That is courage. Here before us is the kind of open-minded and strong politician we want in this place.

But wait, Madam Deputy Speaker, there is more; and it is not steak knives we are selling here, but a fundamental shift in ideology. Mr Whitecross has decided to go for the Transport Workers Union. In supporting the Graham report, he is calling for changes to the current enterprise bargaining agreement, which will see a reduction in work time and conditions. That is the way, Andrew! Let us hop into the hopeless, layabout drivers and the pack of Trots over at the TWU. By the time we are finished with them, they will be humming the *Internationale* out of a completely different orifice.

I know you want more, Madam Deputy Speaker; and, yes, there is more. While he is about sorting out the union, Mr Whitecross has decided to attack the bludger managers by supporting the Graham call for a revised management structure. Andrew and I both know that any government revision is simply code for job losses. But Andrew is not frightened by a few fat cat managers getting the chop. This new Andrew, this super-Andrew, is a "damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead" man. Now, we have done the full sweep, Madam Deputy Speaker: Kicked out party policy and savaged the unions and management. But where does a politician still brimful of courage go? Why, he goes to the passengers, of course. Graham calls for the introduction of zone-based fares, that is, the further you are from your destination the more you pay. What a courageous idea, Mr Whitecross!

I was unsure about this one, and I still think I am against it; but the fact that Andrew has thrown his weight behind the idea makes me think again. I would have thought that being a long way from, say, Civic might mean that you were from a poorer group and that you might actually need to use the buses cheaply more than someone who lived nearer their destination. But Mr Whitecross is not bothered by such things, is he? Those lazy losers who want to spend hours lolling around on a bus from Banks to Ngunnawal can damn well pay for the privilege! Is that right, Mr Whitecross?

**Mr Whitecross:** No, it is not, actually.

**MR OSBORNE:** If that is not enough, Madam Deputy Speaker - - -

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**Mr Moore:** What - there is more?

**MR OSBORNE:** There is more. Then comes the coup de grace, the shot that proves Andrew is no ordinary politician. So driven by a good idea is Mr Whitecross that he will risk his political life to push it. Silence, Madam Deputy Speaker. Despite this being in the lead-up to an election, despite what the polls are apparently saying about him, Andrew Whitecross is backing the closure of the Tuggeranong interchange. There is a deathly silence. He sees Graham has a point and is willing to snatch a service from his own constituents, not because of some blind commitment to ideology but simply because he believes that it is the right thing to do.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I am in awe. This is the kind of leadership that deserves to be in the Lodge, not here in this small Assembly. Let us flick the visionless pygmy who occasionally occupies that house and install a man of real political courage and leadership. Andrew, if you survive this quixotic charge against your party, your human comrades, humble bus drivers and your own constituents, you have my vote for PM.

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The question is: That Ms Horodny's amendments be agreed to.

**Mr Whitecross:** I ask that the question be divided.

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Is it the wish of the Assembly that the question on Ms Horodny's amendments be divided? There being no objection, that course will be followed.

Question put:

That amendment No. 1 (**Ms Horodny's**) be agreed to.

The Assembly voted -

*AYES, 11*

Mrs Carnell  
Mr Cornwell  
Mr Hird  
Ms Horodny  
Mr Humphries  
Mr Kaine  
Mrs Littlewood  
Mr Moore  
Mr Osborne  
Mr Stefaniak  
Ms Tucker

*NOES, 6*

Mr Berry  
Mr Corbell  
Ms McRae  
Ms Reilly  
Mr Whitecross  
Mr Wood

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

**MR SPEAKER:** The question now is: That Ms Horodny's amendment No. 2 be agreed to.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

**MR SPEAKER:** The question now is: That the motion, as amended, be agreed to.

**MR WHITECROSS (4.20):** Mr Speaker, I rise to conclude the debate. I will come back to the Minister in a minute; but a couple of other contributions that were made along the way need to be addressed. The first is poor old Mr Stefaniak's contribution. Mr Stefaniak explained that the 10 per cent cut to school bus services had nothing to do with the Government; it was all down to the school bus liaison committee. He gave us a long dissertation from his brief about the school bus liaison committee. Unfortunately, the school bus liaison committee has nothing to do with it. The decision to cut buses is a policy decision that was made by this Government not to run school buses where they had fewer than 20 customers. Of course, Mr Stefaniak does not know that. He knows only what is written in the brief, and that was not written in the brief; so he did not know it. Unfortunately for Mr Stefaniak, he was wrong again. The fact remains that school bus services have been reduced by 10 per cent, as we said in the motion. Interestingly, the Graham report does have something to say about school bus services. It says that parents of school children usually require services that travel between home and school that avoid any crossing of roads and avoid interchanges at locations perceived to be unsafe.

Interestingly, in introducing the new school bus timetable at the beginning of the year, the Government did not seem to think it was any sort of problem having primary-school-age children - in fact, Kindergarten, Year one and Year two children - crossing roads in order to get to school, because they wanted them to catch a route bus rather than a school bus. I am afraid that Mr Stefaniak, as usual, is not really across it and, because it was not in his brief, he got his facts wrong.

**Mr Hird:** He was certainly spot on the money.

**MR WHITECROSS:** Mr Hird just had something to say. I really have to focus for a moment on what Mr Hird had to say, because Mr Hird made an important policy announcement on behalf of the Government which I think we all should take notice of. Mr Hird said that we are going to have a summer timetable this year, just like we have had in previous years. That is what Mr Hird said. Mr Hird's office will have to run round to Hansard and try to get them to put a "not" in there somewhere, because what Mr Hird has just announced is that the disastrous holiday timetable we have had for the last two years will be on again this year. Maybe he wants to be a Minister instead of Speaker, Mr Speaker.

**Mr Kaine:** I think you misunderstood him.

**MR WHITECROSS:** I think not. I think he just did not read it properly.

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Most importantly, I have to turn to the remarks made by Mr Osborne. Mr Osborne gets full marks for entertainment. I am always happy to be complimented, even by Mr Osborne. Unfortunately, when your primary objective is to have a laugh, when your primary objective is ridicule, when your primary objective is to make a joke, you do not worry about the facts, you do not worry about whether what you are saying is true and you do not worry about whether you got your story straight; you just have a joke. And so it is with Mr Osborne. Most of the things that Mr Osborne said are just not true. For example, Mr Osborne said that the Labor Party is trenchantly opposed to purchaser-provider models and never supports purchaser-provider models. That is simply not true, Mr Speaker. There are times when purchaser-provider models are appropriate and there are times when they are not appropriate. That is the first thing to say.

The second thing to say is: What does the Graham report say about purchaser-provider models? What did Mr Osborne say? Mr Osborne said that the Graham report recommends a purchaser-provider model for ACTION. No, it does not. What it says is:

The replacement of the current ad-hoc arrangements regarding the determination of school bus services -

are you listening, Mr Osborne? - not all bus services, school bus services -

with a purchaser-provider model which places responsibility of eligibility and funding with the Department of Urban Services and responsibility for service provision with ACTION.

In other words, Mr Graham is saying that the way we organise school bus services is very unclear. Who is responsible for what is very confusing. If you needed a better demonstration of that, you only had to listen to the Minister for Education's contribution. Clearly, he has no idea whose responsibility it is and who makes the decision. We are talking about a specific set of services for school buses, and Mr Graham says a purchaser-provider model would be a way of clarifying responsibilities and replacing the current ad hoc arrangements. Who can argue with replacing ad hoc arrangements with some sort of structured service agreement?

The second thing that Mr Osborne said is that the Graham report called for the tendering out of school bus services to the private sector. Are you listening, Mr Osborne? Are you paying close attention? Wrong, wrong, wrong! What it says is that if tenders were called they could run the school bus services cheaper. What it actually says is:

This appears to be a compelling argument for ACTION to introduce appropriate management reforms in order to reduce the excessive overheads, fixed costs and restrictive work practices of drivers that currently prevent the provision of more cost effective school bus services ...

Unlike what Mr Osborne said, Graham does not say we should contract out the bus services. Graham says that ACTION needs to get its act together to reduce the cost of providing the school bus services, so that we can provide them on a more cost-effective basis. Of course, Mr Osborne has not read the report; so he would not know. As usual, Mr Osborne is wrong.

I could go through a lot of the other factual errors in Mr Osborne's remarks, but let me point to just a couple of others. One, restructuring management does not necessarily mean sacking people, Mr Osborne. Two, the Labor Party have never been afraid to sit down with the Transport Workers Union and talk about reforms in ACTION buses. In fact, Mr Osborne - - -

**Mrs Carnell:** Mr Berry was. Mr Berry would not let them go ahead with the reforms they wanted to go ahead with.

**MR WHITECROSS:** Are you going to call the Chief Minister to order, Mr Speaker?

**MR SPEAKER:** Yes. Order, Chief Minister!

**MR WHITECROSS:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. The fact is that the Transport Workers Union and the Labor Party have a good record of working together to improve public transport, because we have a common objective. That common objective is having a good public transport system. The fact is that this Government - the Government you voted for, Mr Osborne - have never been able to work with the Transport Workers Union. Instead, they had a long, costly dispute - it cost the community \$5m - and at the end of it what workplace reforms did they get? None. It cost the community \$5m and there were no workplace reforms. The Labor Party does not mind working with the unions; we never have. Poor old Mr Osborne had five minutes of glory in making a few jokes, but the fact is that he was wrong. I am happy to have his praise, but I would rather have it on a factual basis. Unfortunately, Mr Osborne's speech was not factual.

In relation to fare structures, let me just say - Mr Osborne might not have noticed - that if you catch a bus from Tuggeranong to the city it does cost you more than it would if you lived in Ainslie. It costs more now, Mr Osborne. I do not think it is a remarkable thing that if we change to a new fare structure it might still cost more. But, Mr Osborne, if we can come up with another fare system which is even better, I would be happy to talk to you about it.

The poor old Minister, in his response, had a lot to say about all the things that they had done to implement the Graham report.

**Mr Osborne:** What about the closure of Tuggeranong interchange?

**Mr Hird:** Who was in government when the TWU picketed the Assembly?

**MR SPEAKER:** Order!

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**MR WHITECROSS:** Mr Speaker, I will have to get an extension of time because Mr Osborne is so interested in my speech. The fact is that Graham says that the interchanges - Mr Hird ought to know this because Belconnen interchange is even worse than Tuggeranong interchange - are not where the main sources of commuters for ACTION are. Therefore, in order to improve the public transport system, to make it more customer friendly, you need to ensure that you are picking up and setting down customers where they want to go - not in some remote location, but where they want to go. That does not necessarily mean you have to close interchanges. What it does mean is that you have to ensure that there are bus stops where the customers actually want to go, rather than dropping them off in the middle of nowhere and making them walk long distances.

**Mr Osborne:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: It appears that Mr Whitecross wants to change his motion. Could you ask him to do it properly, rather than doing so on his feet? He does not want the Graham report, it appears; he wants just some of it.

**MR SPEAKER:** There is no point of order.

**MR WHITECROSS:** As I have indicated, Mr Osborne is simply wrong in his assessment, as usual. *(Extension of time granted)*

I need to address some of the remarks of the Minister because it would be a shame to spend too much time pointing out how wrong Mr Osborne is. I know he has been busy the last couple of days moving house and has not had much time to read the Graham report; so I will not go on about it too much. Mr Speaker, let me just get back to the Minister. The poor old Minister had to come in here and try to make out that he had actually done something to implement the Graham report, to improve public transport in the ACT, when in fact he has done nothing.

What was his explanation of how he had spent his time in recent times implementing the Graham report? It made interesting listening to. He has organised some consultation. He is planning for a new shopfront at Civic. It is to replace the one that he closed, moving everyone upstairs and saying that a shopfront was not necessary. He has now decided that a shopfront is necessary and is planning to reintroduce one. The Graham report actually says that they ought to put people on the ground at the interchanges to make them more service-friendly places. What has the Minister done about that? He does not have to build a shopfront. All he has to do is put some people outside where the customers are, but he has done nothing.

Then you have the bus stop information signs. Mr Kaine says they are going to do something about that soon. They have not done anything yet. But he saw a bus stop in Brisbane and he has asked Mr Thurston to make a couple of phone calls to see whether we can get a couple like them and he thinks we might get some soon. In other words, they have done nothing. What have they done about increasing night services? Nothing. Maybe they will do something next month.

Then there is the introduction of more frequent daytime services, which, I remind members, Roger Graham said could be introduced at no cost for off-peak daytime services. How much time do you want to think about that? What has the Minister done to implement that recommendation? Nothing. But he says that they will. The reality is that the Minister is, once again, asking us all to believe that he is going to do something when, in fact, he has done nothing. If moving this motion achieves nothing else but getting the Minister off his backside and actually starting to do something to improve the public transport system, it will have achieved its effect, because the Minister certainly has not done anything yet.

Let me pick up on one other thing the Minister said which I think ought to be of concern to members who actually are concerned about having a better public transport system, that is, that the Minister still seems to be carrying around with him the same tired old ideas that got the Government into the mess they are in in the first place. The same tired old ideas like cutting a bus service if we see that there are not enough customers on it, just like we cut the services over Christmas, just like we reduced the frequency of services from the suburbs, just like we do not run services on public holidays, and just like we cut out the night services.

The Government did all those things because they did not think there were enough passengers on them. What does Graham say? Graham says that it is wrong to do that, because if you do that you discourage people from using the buses. Those customers you lose because they cannot catch a bus for three weeks over Christmas make other arrangements and never come back. The problem with the attitude of the Minister is that it is budget driven, it is cost driven. He is not interested in providing a decent public transport system. He is just interested in saving his money, just like his predecessor - the same tired old ideas we have seen before.

In conclusion, let me say this: Public transport is important. It is fundamental to the effective running of a city like Canberra. It is integral to the planning of Canberra that there be an effective public transport system to move people around the city. It is not a city just for cars; it is a city for everybody - car users and public transport users. If we really care about having a well run city, we will be trying to make the public transport system more effective, more efficient and more productive. We should be trying to get rid of the tired old ideas we are getting from Mr Kaine about cancelling a service if we think that we can save a bit of money. We should start getting into some new ideas about how we are actually going to encourage the patrons back onto the buses. Labor's record was one of maintaining bus patronage. The Liberals' record is one of a 25 per cent cut.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

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### PERSONAL EXPLANATION

**MR HIRD:** Mr Speaker, under standing order 46, I wish to make a personal explanation.

**MR SPEAKER:** Proceed.

**MR HIRD:** If Mr Whitecross had stopped interjecting, and I know that interjections are not permitted, he would have heard what I said.

**MR SPEAKER:** Would you mind making the personal explanation.

**MR HIRD:** The personal explanation is in respect of what I said. The Government will not operate with reduced services over the summer as in previous years. I seek leave to table that part of my speech.

**Mr Whitecross:** Mr Speaker, I welcome the fact that Mr Hird has now correctly read the speech that was written for him by the Minister.

**MR HIRD:** He is interjecting again, as usual.

Leave granted.

### EARLY INTERVENTION CENTRE - PROPOSED FEASIBILITY STUDY

**MS REILLY (4.36):** Mr Speaker, I ask for leave to amend my notice by omitting from paragraph (2) "in the November sittings" and substituting "as soon as possible".

Leave granted.

**MS REILLY:** I move:

That this Assembly calls on the Government:

- (1) to do a feasibility study on the possible establishment of an Early Intervention Centre in the ACT modelled on the Stimulus Early Intervention Centre located at South Windsor, NSW.
- (2) to table the study with recommendations either for or against such a centre as soon as possible.

I want to start by looking at some of the recent history of the development of early intervention services in the ACT. In June 1994 the Assembly Standing Committee on Social Policy reported on early intervention services in the ACT. The terms of reference for that inquiry were quite broad. The committee looked at the provision of early intervention services to children aged from zero to five years in the ACT who had been identified as experiencing developmental delays and/or disabilities of any kind.



They looked at the philosophical premise of the models that were available, the extent and frequency of services, gaps, the degree to which the provision of services was integrated and coordinated and the desirability of incorporating conductive education into the range of early intervention services available to children.

The report was followed by a draft discussion paper on early intervention services in the ACT that was issued in December 1994. This resulted in the early intervention policy delivered in August 1996.

**Mrs Carnell:** By me. There was a big gap.

**MS REILLY:** There was. It took you nearly two years to get that together.

**Mrs Carnell:** We were not actually in power; it was you guys.

**MS REILLY:** You may note, Mrs Carnell, since you have pointed this out for us all, that this paper for discussion was actually issued in December 1994, within six months of the standing committee reporting. It took you nearly two years after you came into power, which I might remind you was in February 1995, to develop the policy. The report was actually progressed, Mrs Carnell, but it took you two years to develop your policy.

I am putting up a proposal to look at enhancing the services that are available, but already the Government is defensive. You have to ask why. The policy that Mrs Carnell has brought to our attention - I am not saying there is anything wrong with it - sets out the principles under which the policy is set out. It says:

The policy aims to provide a framework for coordinated and easily accessible services for all children and their families in the target population with physical, intellectual, emotional and social needs as well as those children at risk of neglect or abuse.

There is no dispute about the statement of principles. We are not disputing what the early intervention program is at the moment. I am proposing that a type of early intervention therapy program which is not currently available in the ACT should be examined. I am not saying that it should be implemented, Mrs Carnell. It should be examined to see whether such a therapy program would be beneficial and extend the range of services which are available to ACT children and their families who require such services.

I was hoping that we would not get a defensive response. We are not suggesting that there is something wrong with the services currently available. We are talking about enhancing those services. As I am sure members are aware, reading and research indicate that early intervention therapies give the best result for those who require therapy. You can see the changes in practice by looking at what happens now. Tests are done as soon as children are born to determine whether there are any disabilities. This allows therapy to be started as soon as possible. I am quite sure that this is something that none of us would disagree with.

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I am proposing this feasibility study because the ACT does not have a centre which could provide important integration therapy for children with special needs, as the early intervention program at South Windsor does. I am not suggesting that we are deficient at this point. I am suggesting that there should be an examination of this centre to see whether it would be suitable to provide additional services to children in the ACT.

The Stimulus Early Intervention Centre in New South Wales combines child care and early childhood education for a diverse group of children from birth to age five, including both children with special needs and those who may have no disability. The types of services offered include speech pathology and specialised therapy treatment. These continue throughout the time children attend the centre. The mix of children with differing needs gives opportunities for all children involved to develop their potential and learn positive skills from each other. That is one of the basic principles of this centre.

Broad, structured intervention programs have been found to be beneficial for those who have been given the opportunity to take part in them. There are a number of services already available in the ACT. I am not disputing that. One of the hallmarks of the Stimulus Early Intervention Centre in South Windsor is that all the children have the opportunity to participate in the program in a child-care setting where the associated medical and rehabilitation services are delivered in one place. Consequently, it is not necessary for the children to be taken to different services to receive different types of treatment. This has been recognised as a good methodology for many aspects of the child's life. It is important that you get consistency and opportunities for children to receive the services in one setting rather than being moved from place to place. It gives some stability to the children's lives and it is less confusing, particularly for very young children. It also takes away some of the additional stress on parents who, quite often, have to ferry their children from service to service for appointments. This is also beneficial for the family. The service in South Windsor, I understand, includes the parents in a number of activities. Obviously, the parents are integral to the success of any program.

Integrated service delivery for children with disabilities is a grave concern for many parents. This matter was raised with the ACT Social Policy Committee when we were looking at violence in schools and children with disabilities. We need to ensure that sufficient services of a broad enough range are available to meet the differing needs of children in the ACT community. We had a number of complaints while we were looking at disability services in the ACT. I have also received other complaints about the lack of services, particularly speech therapy in some settings. Children need continuity of service. It adds to the difficulties for parents if services are available in the various locations around the ACT community. It is easier if the services are available in one spot.

I am suggesting that we look at this centre in South Windsor as one model of early intervention, look at their style of operation, look at the way in which they deliver various types of therapy in one location to children from birth to age five years, and see whether we should add to the range of services available in the ACT. One of the aims since the report of 1994 has been to find the best services to assist young children with disabilities to develop to their full potential. A holistic approach to early intervention services

for

children with disabilities may be shown to have the best results. We should look at the South Windsor service with an open mind, examine what it delivers, examine the outcomes for the children concerned and see whether we can enhance services available in the ACT. My motion suggests that the ACT Government look at this service and see whether it would be useful for the ACT. I ask for support for the motion.

**MR STEFANIAK** (Minister for Education and Training) (4.47): Mr Speaker, I certainly share the concern Ms Reilly obviously feels about the needs of children with disabilities. However, for a number of reasons, I do not share her view that the Government undertake a study to determine the feasibility of operating an early intervention centre such as the one operating in New South Wales. A lot of work has already been done on this. I will come to that later. As members of this Assembly would be aware, the ACT Government already provides a range of very good quality services for children with special needs. I am interested to hear that Ms Reilly concedes that she is not suggesting that we are deficient in any way. These services are delivered by professional staff working in partnership with parents. The Child Health and Development Service, or CHADS, provides services in a range of settings right across the ACT - at community health centres, at CHADS centres at Kaleen, Holder and Homeworld Tuggeranong, at child-care centres, at preschools, at schools and in family homes.

Early intervention, which is critical to giving young people with disabilities a sound start, is provided through a range of services which focus on children prior to school starting age. In the age range from 18 months to three years, individual therapy is provided to children with varying and multiple disabilities by occupational therapists, physiotherapists, speech pathologists, early childhood teachers and social workers. Intervention is also provided in small group settings for these children. There are also programs that provide parent support. For three- and four-year-olds, we have early intervention units which operate on nine sites, in addition to regular preschools. There are 24 places in a language preschool. One hundred and sixty-eight children take advantage of this service. We also provide a special program for children with severe communication disorders and provide services to special schools.

The establishment of the Children's, Youth and Family Services Bureau within the Department of Education - an initiative of this Government - has made possible an even more integrated service for children with special needs, particularly in the areas of preschool and early childhood education. If Ms Reilly is concerned about the provision of early intervention services for children in the ACT, I suggest that she come to see me. I would be delighted to arrange for her to familiarise herself with the range and quality of services that we provide through the Children's, Youth and Family Services Bureau.

Mr Speaker, last year we, in fact, investigated the Stimulus Centre that Ms Reilly is asking the Government to implement a feasibility study of. As a result of documents they sent to us, there were a number of conversations between staff from the Children's, Youth and Family Services Bureau and people from the centre. I had a meeting with a couple of people and we looked into it. I met with the Hon. Kevin Rozzoli and someone from the centre on 17 June last year, and a bit of work went on in relation to that. I understand that a number of documents were also sent to my department, as well as a video outlining what the centre could do. I understand that there were a number of conversations as well between officers of my department and people at the centre.

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I understand that its primary claims to fame - and I am now quoting from material which has been submitted to the department from a proponent of the centre - are that it caters for the development of a diverse group of children with special needs ranging in age from birth to school entry; that it has an open-door policy for parents in need of both specialised care for the children and respite in an environment of confidence that their children are in good hands; that there is a special philosophy of caring at the centre which encourages children with different special needs to learn positive skills from other children, that is, the children are not grouped according to disabilities; that there is also a high level of voluntarism which bonds child to parent and family to family; and that on Tuesdays and Wednesdays the centre operates individual therapy programs for children who require special needs therapy. When we looked at all that, I wonder whether it is really going to advance us any further on what we have at present.

Let us have a look at our own CHADS. It has in the order of 2,500 new clients from the ACT community referred to it annually, it provides 29,500 occasions of therapy, it offers 250 early educational placements to children with developmental delays or disabilities, it conducts 90 educational programs annually for other carers and service providers and it employs approximately 60 professional staff. In addition to these services, families with young children with disabilities may seek respite at any of the 11 ACT government-funded occasional-care centres across Canberra. Hands-on support for children with special needs is funded by the ACT Government and is available at these centres. Families may also access any long-day-care centre or family day-care scheme. Additional support is also provided through the Commonwealth supplementary support and special needs subsidy schemes.

To look further at the feasibility of establishing a centre such as the one suggested by Ms Reilly would be tantamount to seeking a cure for which there is really no disease, when the level of service already provided to children with special needs in the ACT, I believe, is already clearly far ahead of the service provided by that centre. I do not think Ms Reilly has established that there is any aspect of that centre which really offers a better service to children with special needs or to their families. Devoting resources to undertaking a further study - and I stress that it would be a further study because work was done on this over a period of a couple of months last year - would be a waste. Any funds that might be spent there would be better devoted to assessing the effectiveness of our existing service provision.

If no work had been done last year and if Mr Rozzoli and the other people had not contacted me and my office, it would be a good idea. It would certainly be very worthy of being looked into. I suggest to Ms Reilly that, given that work has been done, perhaps she should have a chat to Jill Farrelly, the appropriate person in the department, who could just take her through what has occurred. If she still feels that anything further could be usefully done, she can get back to me; but work has been done already and I do not really see any need for a further study.

**MR MOORE** (4.54): I was on the Social Policy Committee of the previous Assembly when we looked at early childhood intervention. On the one hand it was incredibly moving but on the other hand incredibly distressing. I am sure anybody who deals with these issues realises that that is the case. I listened to Ms Reilly put up a very good case, and I listened to the Minister respond. If I may summarise, he said, "If we spend any more money on this, we cannot spend money on the way we are already working on intervention. Secondly, we already understand what is going on at South Windsor and as yet we have decided not to implement it". I think that is a reasonable summary.

The committee were not looking specifically at the model that Ms Reilly is talking about. I want to make that very clear. I think there will always be new models and there will always be models such as this one for early intervention which we need to examine, which we need to keep our eye on. Since there has been a report of an Assembly committee and that report has been largely implemented, it is appropriate that enough evidence be gathered before we say that it is time for us to take a particular approach. There will always be a range of new approaches to this sort of intervention.

It seems to me that the best way to proceed is for a committee of the next Assembly to take into account the issue Ms Reilly has raised and to determine whether or not it merits a further thorough investigation. That is the approach that I would prefer to take. If we were not towards the end of an Assembly, I would be saying that we should refer this matter to the Social Policy Committee now for them to do a two-stage investigation. They could say, "Is this worth pursuing?". If it was not really worth pursuing, if the committee believed that it was a good idea but that we were already doing well enough, it could make a statement in the Assembly saying, "No, we are not going to proceed down this line". But, if it did look like there was enough in this idea, then the committee could proceed to a proper and thorough investigation.

The reason for suggesting that is that I think new ideas about early intervention will keep coming up again and again. Some of them will work extremely well for some people but not for others, some will work very well for a very small number of people and, perhaps, if we are very fortunate some will be particularly effective for a wide range of people. We cannot ignore them, but I think we should develop an appropriate process to deal with such issues. I think the process Ms Reilly is proposing is not the best process. There should be a role for the Social Policy Committee or whatever follows in the next Assembly.

**MR WOOD** (4.58): Mr Speaker, I speak in strong support of the motion. It calls for the Government to look at an early intervention centre model and report back to us. The reporting date has, necessarily, changed as we are past that time. Mr Speaker, a number of reports of this Assembly and otherwise point to inadequate coordination of services; yet coordination is a key to the adequate treatment of a quite significant number of young people in our society. Young people in particular circumstances need a variety of forms of attention. They need specialist services, whether physiotherapy, speech therapy, social work or a variety of others. They need intensive treatment, not just treatment once a week, once a fortnight or once a month, as too often occurs. That treatment needs to be early. That is a critical point.

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Another factor is that that treatment needs to involve parents and others who may not be professionals. Mr Stefaniak spoke of the professional attention given by people working in government. They are professional. They are very competent, very skilled and very dedicated. I do not question that at all. But let us not forget that there is a significant role for other people - for parents, carers and others in our society - in working with these people.

### ADJOURNMENT

**MR SPEAKER:** It being 5.00 pm, I propose the question:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

**Mr Stefaniak:** I require the question to be put forthwith without debate, Mr Speaker.

Question resolved in the negative.

### EARLY INTERVENTION CENTRE - PROPOSED FEASIBILITY STUDY

Debate resumed.

**MR WOOD:** I stress that this community values the work of those professionals. But the imperative is for a variety of services, and it is not always easy to accommodate that through having people working together in our bureaucratic structure. I recall when I was Minister and Education was providing certain facilities for young people, as was Health, and there were social workers somewhere else. It was not always easy to have a child with one case manager even; so the services were coordinated. The spirit behind this motion is that bureaucratic impediments because of the way we are structured not intrude into the treatment of individual children; that individual children who have this considerable need have their cases considered as a whole and not have to run around to different places.

A good example of the troubles we sometimes run into comes to mind. When I was Minister for Education, I had approaches from the Conductive Education Society looking for support. All they wanted was a room somewhere to run their program. The advice I was getting suggested that we did not need to do this, that the credentials of this body were not universally accepted and that, in any case, what government was providing was quite sufficient. When I went out to look at what was being done, I was mightily impressed. Parents were involved. They were working to a structured program. It was quite clear to me that the young children there were receiving quite considerable benefit from the programs that they were following. Yet the advice I was getting was suggesting that we did not need to provide any form of assistance - even a schoolroom somewhere - to these children.

Under the new Government, I have to say, I think they have a room somewhere, or had one while they were continuing. Congratulations to the Government for that, because it did not occur in my time. That was, in part, because of the background briefings I was getting. There seemed to me to be some sort of concern on the part of our professionals about the work of people they saw as non-professionals. That is just one example. I remember back to my own time as a teacher, when a very significant part of my teaching experience was with children with special needs. That reinforced in the early stage of my life the need for coordination of services.

I think this motion has great validity. Mr Stefaniak would not stand up and say, "We deliver everything to the ultimate possible degree". Mr Stefaniak would say, "We can improve on what we do". Let us see whether we can do that by putting this motion into practice. I heard what Mr Moore said. I would regard that as a fall-back position, a second choice, for me if the first choice does not get up. That is the one I am supporting today.

**MRS CARNELL** (Chief Minister) (5.04): Mr Speaker, I seek leave to move a motion under standing order 216 for the referral of this motion to the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

Leave granted.

**MRS CARNELL:** I move:

That the motion be referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

Let me speak to that for a moment. Mr Speaker, Mr Stefaniak has already indicated that the department has had a look at this issue, has been down to look at the centre, and has spoken to various people; so a lot of the work has already been done. The department has determined that the service does not value add sufficiently to the services already being provided. That information has been provided in the speeches today. Mr Stefaniak also indicated that the service was a good service but that the department had determined a particular outcome. I would suggest that the best way to look at a situation like this is to refer it to the Social Policy Committee and get it to look at the information, the data, and speak to the department, as they have already done some work on it, and allow the Social Policy Committee to provide a brief report to this Assembly. Alternatively, if they believe that this requires a significant amount of work to be done, they could suggest it go to a Social Policy Committee in the future.

I do not believe that it is appropriate to have another study if we have already had one, but I think it is appropriate that this Assembly have an opportunity to look at the work that the department has already done. The information that Marion Reilly put on the table today did not tell us a lot about the service. It is very hard to vote for having a look at a service that we know very little about, apart from the fact that it is an integrated service. We have lots of integrated services around. I think it is appropriate that we allow the committee system to look at what is on the table now and determine whether further work needs to be done. That is why I moved the motion.

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**MS REILLY (5.07):** Mr Speaker, I would like to speak against that motion. As Mrs Carnell has just pointed out, and as Mr Stefaniak made some reference to in his speech, the department has looked at various aspects of this service. I fail to see why they are being so modest in not wanting to provide a report on this service. Why do we have to refer this matter to the Standing Committee on Social Policy, recognising the timing of that, as we have nearly finished the work of this Assembly? There have been suggestions that it would be a waste of effort to repeat the work previously done. I am surprised that there has been no offer at this point to provide a report on this service, if work has been done to the extent suggested by both Mrs Carnell and Mr Stefaniak. I think there is no point in putting this study to the Social Policy Committee when you consider the timing of the finishing up of this Assembly and the claims about the work that has been done in examining the various aspects of this centre.

**MR WOOD (5.08):** I think the Chief Minister put a good case for the motion that is on the notice paper here, for the motion that Ms Reilly has moved.

**Mrs Carnell:** There is no report.

**MR WOOD:** You have said that the department has had a look at this service and that quite a deal of work has been done there. That being the case, there is not an enormous amount of work involved in the department providing the report requested in this motion. To refer it to a committee of this Assembly seems to be a tactic simply to delay it. It is not going to advance anything. We all recognise that this Assembly is nearly complete. Committees are moving rapidly to conclude their reports before the parliament rises. It will be only a few weeks before that happens. Everything on the notice paper falls off for the election next year; so we would have to resurrect it. I think it would be quite possible to come out with a report as, from what you say, work is well advanced.

**Mrs Carnell:** There is no written report.

**MR STEFANIAK (Minister for Education and Training) (5.09):** As the Chief Minister alluded to, there is no written report. My department certainly has looked at it. I understand that it has talked to people from the centre. The centre provided it with written material and a video. The matter was looked at, but there is not anything actually in writing. That was last year. In terms of having a thorough look at it, there is certainly merit in what the Chief Minister suggests.

**MR SPEAKER:** Mrs Carnell, the motion, at the moment, reads:

That this Assembly calls on the Government:

- (1) to do a feasibility study ...

**Mrs Carnell:** I am just suggesting that the issue be referred to the Social Policy Committee. Can I do that?



**MR SPEAKER:** Are you calling for the Social Policy Committee to do the feasibility study?

**Mrs Carnell:** No. I am suggesting that the issue of the Stimulus Centre - - -

**MR SPEAKER:** You are suggesting that Ms Reilly's motion be referred to the Social Policy Committee?

**Mrs Carnell:** Yes. And then they can have a look at what is on the table.

**MR SPEAKER:** I understand. Are we clear on that?

**MR MOORE (5.11):** Indeed, Mr Speaker; I am clear on it. It is quite appropriate that the motion be referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy. Indeed, this is consistent with the way I argued when I was speaking to the substantive motion - Ms Reilly's motion. I think the Social Policy Committee could do a number of things with this matter within the timeframe they have. They could actually do a report; but I think it is highly unlikely, considering the amount of work that members are doing. It could fit into a two-part process. A number of things were referred to the Standing Committee on Planning and Environment recently. I shall be making a statement tomorrow on behalf of the Planning and Environment Committee about one of the things referred to us.

It is possible to do a small amount of research and say, "Is there enough in this idea for it to proceed to a proper full study by a committee or for government to do a more thorough study?", in which case it would be recommended by the committee to the successor of the Social Policy Committee. Indeed, a number of committees of the last Assembly made recommendations to that effect. One I remember that was not taken up by this Assembly was a recommendation for a further committee to look at citizen-initiated referenda. Instead, Mr Humphries tabled the legislation and in that case it was not referred to a further committee of this Assembly. However, that was a recommendation that could have been taken up. I would have been happy to support it. This may fit into that category. I think there are a number of things that could happen, and I think this is an appropriate way to deal with this matter.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Motion (by **Mr Humphries**) agreed to:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

**Assembly adjourned at 5.13 pm**