



Debates

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Tuesday, 5 June 2007

MR SPEAKER (Mr Berry) took the chair at 10.30 am, made a formal recognition that the Assembly was meeting on the lands of the traditional owners, and asked members to stand in silence and pray or reflect on their responsibilities to the people of the Australian Capital Territory.

Standing orders—suspension

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

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent:

- (1) any business before the Assembly at 3.00 pm this day being interrupted to allow the Treasurer to be called on forthwith to present the Appropriation Bill 2007-2008;
- (2) (a) questions without notice concluding at the time of interruption; or
(b) debate on any motion before the Assembly at the time of interruption being adjourned until the question “That debate on the Appropriation Bill 2007-2008 be adjourned and the resumption of the debate be made an order of the day for the next sitting” is agreed to;
- (3) at 3.00 pm on Thursday, 7 June 2007, the Order of the Day for resumption of debate on the question that the Appropriation Bill 2007-2008 be agreed to in principle, being called on notwithstanding any business before the Assembly and that the time limit on the speech of the Leader of the Opposition and the ACT Greens be equivalent to the time taken by the Treasurer in moving the motion—That the bill be agreed to in principle; and
- (4) (a) questions without notice concluding at the time of interruption; or
(b) debate on any motion before the Assembly at that time being adjourned until a later hour that day.

Legal Affairs—Standing Committee Scrutiny report 42

MR SESELJA: I present the following report:

Legal Affairs—Standing Committee (performing the duties of a Scrutiny of Bills and Subordinate Legislation Committee)—Scrutiny Report 42, dated 4 June 2007, together with the relevant minutes of proceedings.

I seek leave to make a brief statement.

Leave granted.

MR SESELJA: Scrutiny report 42 contains the committee’s comments on two bills, 12 pieces of subordinate legislation and three government responses. The report was circulated to members when the Assembly was not sitting. I commend the report to the Assembly.

Report 6

MR SESELJA (Molonglo) (10.33): I present the following report:

Legal Affairs—Standing Committee—Report 6—*Police Powers of Crowd Control*, dated 15 May 2007, together with a copy of the extracts of the relevant minutes of proceedings—

I seek leave to move a motion authorising the report for publication.

Leave granted.

MR SESELJA: I move:

That the report be authorised for publication.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

MR SESELJA: I move:

That the report be noted.

In 2006 the legal affairs committee decided to consider police powers of crowd control in light of a capsicum spray incident at a Reclaim the Streets rally in October 2004. The inquiry considered police powers under legislation, mainly powers of arrest, and police powers emanating from other sources. Early in the inquiry it was evident that the majority of police powers in these situations are not set out in formal legislation but are to be found in the common law and in rules and procedures developed by the police themselves.

The inquiry became in effect an inquiry into police powers so far as public order law is concerned. It became clear to the committee that public order law operates similarly in all jurisdictions in Australia. The committee looked at operational arrangements in each of the jurisdictions, in particular the use of Tasers and capsicum spray.

The committee had some difficulty in getting hard data on the breakdown of the types of incident in which capsicum spray was used in the ACT, which is most often in domestic violence situations or in subduing prisoners. However, there was detailed data on the use of Tasers, given a trial which concluded last year and the resulting report which was made available to the committee.

The committee notes that the evidence suggests that in the overwhelming majority of cases police exercise their powers appropriately. Indeed, apart from the incident which sparked the inquiry, no evidence of inappropriate behaviour by police was put to the committee.

The committee also briefly considered police complaints and review mechanisms. In view of the recent federal legislative amendments to the Australian Federal Police complaints processes, the committee does not make any conclusions or recommendations in relation to processes in general. It does, however, register its concern at the complaints process which resulted from the incident at the reclaim the

streets rally and the 2½ years which the complaint took to be finalised. The committee considers this to be an inordinately lengthy time for a relatively straightforward complaint to be resolved. However, the focus of the committee's recommendations lies in data collection and access and community liaison for potential crowd control matters. The committee's concerns in relation to data collection access were also reflected in a KPMG report released by the minister late last year.

I would like to thank the committee secretary, Robina Jaffray, for all of her work. I thank my Assembly committee colleagues Karin MacDonald and Deb Foskey. I commend the report to the Assembly.

DR FOSKEY (Molonglo) (10.36): I, too, welcome the report on police powers of crowd control, especially because I referred this matter to the legal affairs committee. However, I am concerned that the issue that gave rise to concern in the community and inspired me to refer the matter for inquiry remains unresolved. That is the issue Mr Seselja referred to: the investigation into what appeared to be an inappropriate use of the crowd control method of capsicum spray on two young people.

The reason I am concerned is that the incident occurred on the day of the federal election in 2004. The demonstration was a reclaim the streets rally, a fairly harmless event where a number of people walked from Northbourne Avenue and gathered on the grassy verge at the corner of London Circuit and Northbourne Avenue. It was while they were on that grassy verge—not impeding traffic in any way, just being absolutely law abiding—that this young brother and sister were treated with the capsicum spray.

The inquiry into that incident has taken a very long time to go through all the processes that exist within ACT Policing and now with the Ombudsman. It is not resolved at a time when we have another federal election coming, when we can expect more demonstrations and rallies. I think we would like to know that the use of police powers will always—as has been the case in other instances—be appropriate. That is my concern.

This is an excellent report. It is a broad-ranging survey of the use of police powers around the country. In that sense it is a very useful report which I commend to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Statement by chair

MR SESELJA: I seek leave to make a statement regarding a new inquiry.

Leave granted.

MR SESELJA: In light of recent bushfire events, including the 2001 and 2003 fires, the Standing Committee on Legal Affairs recently resolved to conduct an inquiry into ACT fire and emergency services arrangements with the following terms of reference:

- 1) Assess issues raised and recommendations made in the McBeth and McLeod reports, the 2003 bushfire coronial report and other relevant reports;

2) investigate and inquire into:

- a) current and proposed structural arrangements in ACT Fire and Emergency Services;
- b) resource issues;
- c) operational processes and procedures; and
- d) any other relevant matters.

This inquiry is an important one. It is an inquiry that will be broad ranging in scope, as is demonstrated by the terms of reference. It will look at our past response to bushfire events and at how we are placed and how we have responded to some of the reports that have come out of those—what lessons have been learned and how we stand ready to improve when we face the next serious bushfire event, which will inevitably occur at some time in the future.

This will be the first opportunity since the 2003 bushfires for members of the Assembly to examine issues around bushfire management in detail. That is because there has been prevention—rightly so—as a result of the coronial inquest. This is the first opportunity. This is an important inquiry. It will take some time for the committee to go through all of this. It is broad ranging. I anticipate that it will be an important inquiry with important recommendations for the future of bushfire and emergency services management in the territory.

Planning and Environment—Standing Committee Statement by chair

MR GENTLEMAN: I seek leave to make a statement regarding a recent report of the committee.

Leave granted.

MR GENTLEMAN: On 3 May 2007 I tabled in the Assembly report 26 of the Standing Committee on Planning and Environment entitled *Report on annual and financial reports 2005-06*. I wish to advise the Assembly that there were two errors in the report: paragraphs 2.85 and 2.86 should have been omitted; and in paragraph 2.87 the word “further” should be omitted.

I seek leave to table a corrigendum to the report.

Leave granted.

MR GENTLEMAN: I table the following document:

Planning and Environment—Standing Committee—Report 26—Report on Annual and Financial Reports 2005-06—corrigendum, dated 10 May 2007.

Land Tax (Interest and Penalty) Amendment Bill 2007

Mr Stanhope, by leave, presented the bill, its explanatory statement and a Human Rights Act compatibility statement.

Title read by Clerk.

MR STANHOPE (Ginninderra—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Business and Economic Development, Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Minister for the Environment, Water and Climate Change, Minister for the Arts) (10.42): I move:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

The Land Tax (Interest and Penalty) Amendment Bill 2007 amends the Land Tax Act 2004 and the Taxation Administration Act 1999. The bill seeks to reinforce the original intention of the Land Tax Act and will prevent revenue leakage.

Land tax is levied in the ACT on certain parcels of rateable land including rented residential property. In accordance with the Land Tax Act, the owner is obliged to notify the Commissioner for ACT Revenue within 30 days of the property becoming rented.

It has always been the intention that interest and penalty tax be levied where an owner of a rented residential property fails in their obligation to notify the commissioner that the property is rented. Under the Rates and Land Tax Act 1926, penalty tax was levied on failure to tell the commissioner about a rented property. Unfortunately, this was overlooked when the act was split into the Rates Act 2004 and the Land Tax Act 2004 with both being brought under the Taxation Administration Act 1999.

The bill will amend the Land Tax Act and Taxation Administration Act so that interest and penalty tax may be applied, as originally intended. Failure to notify the commissioner will now be taken to be a tax default and interest will be levied from 30 days after the tax becomes liable.

I commend the Land Tax (Interest and Penalty) Amendment Bill 2007 to the Assembly.

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

Water Resources Bill 2007

Debate resumed from 3 May 2007, on motion by **Mr Stanhope**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

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

Statute Law Amendment Bill 2007

Debate resumed from 3 May 2007, on motion by **Mr Stanhope**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

MR STEFANIAK (Ginninderra—Leader of the Opposition) (10.45): The opposition will be supporting this bill. It makes the usual minor amendments, which would be rather inefficient if they were done by substantive acts. It is the result of suggestions received from the parliamentary counsel to keep our legislation up to date and to reflect other sensible changes to the law.

There are some interesting minor amendments to several acts. I am pleased to see the commonsense amendment to the Unlawful Games Act. I did not realise we had a potentially difficult situation here, but the amendment will assist a number of groups. Section 3 of the act gives the definition of an “unlawful game” and lists various games. Paragraph (f) states:

any other game of skill or chance, or of mixed skill and chance, in which money or any other valuable thing is staked or risked on an event or contingency.

The amendment would add “other than backgammon, bridge, chess or scrabble” to the end of the paragraph. Unlike most other board games of skill or chance, the four games are typically played in competitions which are actually organised by community bodies and, without the amendment, may offend the act when played for some form of reward, such as in a tournament at which prizes are awarded. These games are not played for gambling purposes even when they are played for reward. The reward is a recognition of skill rather than a gaming reward and it is sensible to exclude those games from the act.

I am the patron of the schools chess association and I have been invited to open a number of Doeberl Cup competitions in the past. That is a classic competition with minor prizes, amounting to a few hundred dollars; they do not have much money. But at least it is a recognition of skill. Then there are the Australian grandmasters and world grandmasters. Competitors might be competing just for the honour of winning \$500 as first prize. But it is a recognition of skill. It is hardly gaming. It is a sensible amendment.

I suppose we have a fair number of acts, ordinances and regulations that do, on occasion, need updating. Bills such as this are a sensible way of doing that. The opposition supports the bill.

MR CORBELL (Molonglo—Attorney-General, Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (10.47): I thank Mr Stefaniak and the opposition for supporting this bill. This bill carries on the technical amendments program that continues to develop a simpler, more coherent and accessible statute book for the territory through minor changes to legislation. It is an efficient mechanism to take care of non-controversial, minor or technical amendments to a range of territory legislation while minimising the resources needed if the amendments were dealt with individually. Each individual amendment is minor but, when viewed collectively, they are a significant contribution to improving the operation of the effective legislation.

I would like to express my ongoing appreciation for members’ continuing support for the technical amendments program. I foreshadow that I have circulated one minor amendment in my name. This was brought to my attention by my department yesterday, and I apologise to members for the late notice, but as members will see it is

quite a minor amendment, simply to remove the requirement for both the chief health officer and the coroner to agree to the exhumation of human or foetal remains. It makes it clear that the intention of the act is for either the chief health officer or—not “and”—the coroner to authorise the exhumation of human or foetal remains.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Detail stage

Bill, by leave, taken as a whole.

MR CORBELL (Molonglo—Attorney-General, Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (10.49): I move amendment No 1 circulated in my name [*see schedule 1 at page 1430*]. I table a supplementary explanatory statement.

As I briefly indicated in closing the in-principle debate, this is a minor amendment to clarify that, for the purposes of authorising the exhumation of human or foetal remains under the Coroners Act, the express agreement is required of either the coroner or the chief health officer. Currently the provision provides for both or could be read to assume that the agreement of both officers is required when, in fact, for procedural purposes the agreement of only one of those officers is required, either the chief health officer or the coroner.

Amendment agreed to.

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

Bill, as amended, agreed to.

Environment Protection (Fuel Sales Data) Amendment Bill 2007

Debate resumed from 3 May 2007, on motion by **Mr Stanhope**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

MR STEFANIAK (Ginninderra—Leader of the Opposition) (10.51): The opposition has several concerns about this bill. It was brought on in May, and I am pleased that the government has agreed to adjourn it to Thursday.

The Liberals have a problem with this bill, and that is the total lack of consultation with the stakeholders by the government. The motor trades association first became aware that something was happening when a departmental official, who apparently was not from Environment ACT, asked them for the names and contact details of all the ACT's service station operators. The next time the MTA heard anything about this bill was yesterday, when we contacted them to see whether they had a view on the bill. They certainly do have a view on the bill. They are quite shocked that there has been no consultation

Mr Stanhope: Who is that, Bill?

MR STANHOPE: The motor trades association.

Mr Stanhope: That is not true.

MR STEFANIAK: They are also shocked, of course, because the bill calls for operators to provide highly sensitive commercial information. They are worried that they will be fined if they do not comply, and they are concerned that it adds yet another government administrative burden on small business operators.

I heard the Chief Minister say that they have been consulted. I would be fascinated to hear what he has to say because, quite clearly, that is not the information we have. While it is important indeed to ensure that we measure our greenhouse gas emissions, it has been suggested by the motor trades that all petrol comes into the ACT. We do not have any refineries, and petrol is distributed, in the main, by local distributors. It might be a lot more sensible if the government got its information from there, rather than from the individual service stations themselves.

I think it is crucially important that people who are affected at least are consulted and have the opportunity to give their views on legislation that directly impacts on them. I am very disappointed that the government has not consulted with these people. The Chief Minister interjected to say that they have. That is certainly not what we heard, Chief Minister. I think it would be sensible for you to adjourn this bill and go away and actually talk to the people who are concerned and allay their fears, if their fears happen to be groundless, or at least take on board any suggestions they have. It is important that we get it right.

It is crucially important in terms of climate change that we take appropriate steps, but we should not be taking steps without proper consultation with affected bodies. You might come up with some additional ideas that will further benefit our attempts to counter the effects of climate change. I urge the government at the very least to talk to the affected people, take on board their views and, if need be, amend the legislation. Let us get it right.

DR FOSKEY (Molonglo) (10.54): I welcome this bill. I have certainly called for the actions that it mandates. I have listened to Mr Stefaniak. I look forward to hearing Mr Stanhope outline what kind of consultation took place because obviously we do need the cooperation of service station operators if we are going to gather these statistics, which I believe are really important. Nonetheless, I do not see why we cannot pass the bill today and then work out the mechanism later on. Consultation is not something that this government has proved itself to be consistent at and good at, and I wait to hear what Mr Stanhope has to say.

The collection of fuel statistics is essential if the ACT is to pursue any meaningful reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. Without the ability to quantify the emissions we produce, it is impossible to ensure that we meet any targets to reduce them. To set targets we need to know the starting point. I know that the problem of insufficient data was raised as an issue many years ago when the ACT's original and, at this stage, only greenhouse strategy was released.

The Greens have been actively pursuing the need to deal with the growth in greenhouse gas emissions and, more generally, our profligate use of resources since our inception. It is frustrating that even those from the other parties of government who recognise the need to change appear to be taking the slowest route possible. The slower we are at this stage, the harder it will be on our future economies, our environment and our children and their children.

This is a simple but necessary piece of legislation. It appears to me to deal with the concerns of the service station proprietors, for whom the release of individual fuel sales figures would have commercial implications. I look forward to seeing what the aggregate fuel consumption figures tell us about how much we drive our cars in order to show how much we need to provide alternatives to them, as well as to the eventual release of a climate change strategy that includes realistic but challenging emission reduction targets.

Since hearing yesterday that the government plans to release its climate change strategy soon, I can understand that there is some urgency to this information being available. I look forward to hearing Mr Stanhope outline what consultation has occurred and, if it has not, what consultation will occur with the affected parties.

MR STANHOPE (Ginninderra—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Business and Economic Development, Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Minister for the Environment, Water and Climate Change, Minister for the Arts) (10.58), in reply: The Environment Protection (Fuel Sales Data) Amendment Bill is designed to facilitate the collection of ACT fuel sales data for the purposes of calculating greenhouse gas emissions for the ACT transport sector. The data is best collected from each service station rather than fuel wholesalers, as service stations can obtain their fuel over the year from a number of different wholesalers from areas both within and outside the ACT, or directly from fuel importers or refineries.

Transport fuels are the second greatest cause of greenhouse gas emissions in the ACT—23 per cent compared with 15 per cent nationally. Most ACT greenhouse gas emissions are caused by our heavy and increasing use of electricity and gas to heat, cool and light our houses, offices and other buildings. This is significantly different from the national average, which reflects the lack of industrial and agricultural industry in the ACT and the transport system dominated by private vehicles.

Without effective data it is difficult to keep track of a significant portion of our emissions. To date the ACT has been forced to rely upon indirect estimates based upon Australian Bureau of Statistics survey data of the average fuel consumption and distances travelled by ACT vehicles. Given the significant contribution of liquid fuel use to emissions volumes, this reliance has the potential to undermine the credibility of greenhouse target reporting. With the removal of the ACT fuel excise in 1997 the ACT Treasury ceased collecting fuel sales data. Data currently collected by the commonwealth relates only to national refinery production and imports. Voluntary submission of data by industry has proven to be ineffective.

Over the last two years the ACT has made a commitment to developing an effective climate change strategy. This will require, among other things, a commitment on our part to monitor greenhouse gases. The purpose of this amendment is to mandate the

provision of fuel sales data from the ACT retailers for the calculation of the relevant greenhouse gas emissions. This will facilitate the monitoring of the implementation of the climate change strategy.

Since this legislation will greatly assist in the collection of accurate data and therefore the improved monitoring of greenhouse gases as part of the upcoming climate change strategy, it is instructive to discuss that strategy of which this bill will form a part. The climate change strategy will provide an overview of climate change, our current activities, our vision for responding to climate change and proposed actions to get us there. It has evolved from a discussion paper released in March 2006 to which many submissions from the public, business and community groups were received.

The ACT will be affected by climate change and should prepare for our future to ensure we remain a strong and sustainable community. Climate change will impact on health, agriculture, water availability, the natural environment and urban planning. We need to take actions to abate or reduce our greenhouse emissions as well as to adapt to the changes that will occur. This is a challenge the whole ACT community must embrace.

Discussions with industry indicate that service station owners have this data available but are concerned about maintaining its confidentiality, as this information is a key indicator of a station's financial performance. Indeed, this particular amendment was discussed with the motor trades association and the motor trades association indicated their support of the legislation with the proviso that the confidentiality of individual service station owners be maintained. Therefore, as a consequence of the consultation with the motor trades association and their one explicit stated concern with the legislation—namely, the confidentiality of their members—the proposed legislation clearly states, in response to the motor trades association, that the data collected can only be used for the calculation of the associated emissions and be released only in an aggregated format so that individual service stations will not be identifiable.

This bill is an essential component of our overall greenhouse strategy and will assist us greatly in monitoring greenhouse gases. The government is committed to developing a climate change strategy with a strong response to the issues of climate change. An effective means of monitoring our emissions is an important underpinning of a strong and measurable strategy.

The ACT government has a critical role in providing the right political and administrative culture to nurture and promote sustainable practices in the community and business sector. We will lead by example, ensuring our own practices limit emissions and take into account the impacts of climate change.

Provision of this data will not present any significant administrative burden on the businesses involved. Retailers will only be required to submit their total sales in litres for each fuel type; that is, unleaded petrol, lead replacement petrol, premium unleaded, diesel and LPG. This specific information is already held by service station owners for taxation and operational reasons. The government will be able to produce an accurate inventory of greenhouse gas emissions from the transport sector in the ACT based on precise fuel sales data. This will in turn enable the government to develop appropriate emission abatement measures.

The bill will take effect from 1 July 2007. This will allow a communication strategy to be implemented and first reporting to take place in 2008. Service station operators will be required to report on their fuel sales not later than 30 September each year for liquid fuel sold at the station in the year ending on the preceding 30 June. The ACT government will establish a monitoring and reporting framework to measure both its own progress and that of the ACT community in meeting the climate change challenge, and this bill will greatly assist in the attainment of this goal.

I just indicated that this bill will come into effect on 1 July. In fact, the bill as drafted provides that the bill will commence on the day after its notification day. I therefore propose an amendment to omit that clause and substitute as a new clause 2 that this act commences on 1 July 2007. I now circulate that amendment in my name.

Accordingly, I support the passage of the Environment Protection (Fuel Sales Data) Amendment Bill 2007. I am conscious of the concern expressed by the Leader of the Opposition—a concern quite rightly identified that the representative group representing service station owners in the Australian Capital Territory should appropriately be consulted. I am advised—I was not part of the consultation—that the motor trades association was consulted fully about the proposal. I am advised further that the motor trades association expressed support for the legislation with the rider that the confidentiality of each of their members and of each service station owner would be protected, and the bill seeks to address the only concern that I am advised that the motor trades association raised about this bill. I hope that allays the concern of the Leader of the Opposition and I commend this bill to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Detail stage

Bill, by leave, taken as a whole.

MR STANHOPE (Ginninderra—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Business and Economic Development, Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Minister for the Environment, Water and Climate Change, Minister for the Arts) (11.06): I move amendment No 1 circulated in my name [*see schedule 2 at page 1430*].

The amendment is to omit clause 2 and to replace it with a clause providing that the bill commences on 1 July 2007.

Amendment agreed to.

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

Bill, as amended, agreed to.

Sitting suspended from 11.07 am to 2.30 pm.

Questions without notice

Budget—accountability

MR STEFANIAK: My question is to the Chief Minister and Treasurer. Chief Minister, for at least the last 10 years the ACT Chamber of Commerce traditionally has held a function on ACT budget night allowing for discussion of the impact of the budget on the business community and the wider community. We understand this year that you were invited and then at very late notice you declined and that you did pass it on to your deputy, who I understand accepted but then later declined as well. This led to the cancellation of the function. Chief Minister, why aren't you prepared to be held accountable for your budget, as shown by your non-appearance at the Chamber of Commerce function?

MR STANHOPE: It is absurd to suggest that I am not prepared to be accountable for this budget or indeed for any action of this government. I have today already in relation to this budget, in a packed budget lockup, spoken with the largest press gathering there has probably been at the Assembly at any stage in relation to any of its operations. I am speaking at a dinner this evening. I will be available to the media after delivery of the budget this afternoon. I am making a direct cross to the ABC at 7 o'clock. I am appearing before a breakfast organised by the business council, a portion of which will be directly telecast, at which I will be subject to questions, along with my deputy. I am appearing at a lunch tomorrow to address a major forum of representatives of the community.

In relation to the Chamber of Commerce I respect the interest and involvement of the chamber and its members in the budget. I look forward to them attending any of the functions that I will be attending over the next couple of days. Of course, I think it needs to be said that I look forward to the function that the chamber will of course have organised for Thursday evening in order to ensure that the alternative budget, to be presented by the Liberal Party, will be subject to the same scrutiny that I am prepared to have my budget exposed to.

So I look forward to the as-yet delivered invitation by Mr Stefaniak or those that are organising the function at which I will be offered a public opportunity to respond to the alternative budget. I look forward to the invitation yet to be delivered by the Leader of the Opposition for Liberal Party members of the business community that would like an opportunity for me to respond to the alternative budget, because I know that the Leader of the Opposition would not have launched an attack on me and my preparedness to be accountable for or to respond to my budget if he was not already similarly prepared to respond to the alternative budget, to face the community, to face the business community, to face the media and to give me that opportunity which has been afforded to both he and the shadow Treasurer, for instance tomorrow morning, to respond to my budget.

It would be such hypocrisy, it would be such humbug—and I am sure the Leader of the Opposition is not a hypocrite. I am sure the Leader of the Opposition would not engage in such an absurd suggestion as this if he had not himself arranged, through perhaps the Chamber of Commerce, to present his alternative budget publicly on Thursday evening and, similarly, arranged, say with the ABC, for me and the Deputy

Chief Minister to be presented with the same opportunity that will be provided to him to respond to the budget. So I look forward, Mr Stefaniak, to attending a Chamber of Commerce organised function on Thursday night in which I expect to be offered an opportunity to respond to your alternative budget and I look forward, of course, to the function on Friday morning—the breakfast at which you and I and our—

Mr Mulcahy: It's on tomorrow.

MR STANHOPE: Yes, the alternative budget will be delivered on Thursday. The alternative budget will be delivered by the Leader of the Opposition on Thursday and I look forward to the opportunity, along with the Leader of the Opposition, to publicly respond to the alternative budget in the way, of course, that the Leader of the Opposition is being granted an opportunity to respond to the budget.

MR STEFANIAK: Mr Speaker, I have a supplementary question. Chief Minister, I might, and I might even charge like you did. My supplementary is: why do members of the ACT business community who wish to scrutinise your budget tomorrow night have to pay up to \$1,400 to attend a Labor fundraising dinner?

MR STANHOPE: I have a sneaking suspicion—I think this is at the bottom of the angst which the Leader of the Opposition and the Liberal Party feel—that a significant proportion of those attending the function tonight are members of the 250 Club. Perhaps that is the basis of the concern. That is why the question is a nonsense. Issues around dinners that I attend and the basis on which they are conducted are matters for me and my party. It has to be acknowledged that we have a right to make these decisions on our own behalf, and we did do that.

Schools—building awards

MS PORTER: My question is to the minister for education. Minister, the 2007 master builders association awards night was held last week. Can you tell me whether our public schools were recognised at this event?

MR BARR: I thank Ms Porter for her question and for her continued interest in the public education system in the ACT. I did indeed have the great pleasure, along with my colleagues Mr Hargreaves, Mr Corbell and Ms Gallagher, of being able to attend the master builders association awards night last Friday. It was an excellent night and I thank the master builders association for again putting on such a fantastic gala event showcasing the excellence of the building industry in Canberra and the region. Of particular note and great pride for the ACT government and for me as education minister was the nomination of the Birrigai outdoor school and Ainslie primary school in a number of categories, including the prestigious master builders project of the year award.

Ainslie primary school was the winner of a number of awards. Ainslie primary is a great school. I do note that we have in the Assembly a graduate of Ainslie primary in Mr Gentleman. Ainslie primary is an even better school as a result of the recent refurbishment work. This work received two awards at the MBA awards dinner on Friday night. Binutti Constructions was awarded for best refurbishment in the \$1 million to \$3 million category. The judges noted that Ainslie primary school has

been transformed to reflect its past glory. The judges found that all the work carried out exceeded the expectations of the client and met the requirements of the ACT Heritage Council. The judges said that the project and the attention to detail were worthy of recognition and they considered the job exceptional. Modern Plaster was recognised in the conservation and heritage restoration category. The judges noted that they were the clear winner, given the care, commitment and quality demonstrated in the completed project.

I can say that the staff and students at Ainslie primary school are extremely proud of the way the school looks. I know that the principal, Ms Jo Padgham, is glowing in her praise of the work that was undertaken. The official opening of the Ainslie primary school refurbishment will take place on 9 September, to coincide with the 80th anniversary of the school's opening. This event will be a great opportunity to inspect this world-class education facility and to celebrate public education. Ainslie primary school is once again a jewel in the crown of the ACT public school system. It is proof of what a government can do, of the sorts of outcomes that a government that is committed to investing in our public education system can achieve.

Ainslie primary was not the only public school facility that received recognition at the MBA awards. The reconstruction of the Birrigai outdoor school was nominated in the commercial building of \$3 million to \$6 million category in recognition of the project managers, GE Shaw and Associates. I am sure that those amongst us who had the opportunity to attend the opening of Birrigai or the community open day that was held at the end of last year will have seen the fantastic work that has been done in rebuilding the Birrigai outdoor school.

Birrigai was burnt to the ground in 2003 and the consultative group has worked hard since then to develop a master plan for the re-establishment of the buildings. The complex consists of an administration block, accommodation cabins, learning areas and a refurbished kitchen and dining hall. The environmentally sustainable buildings used local materials where possible and were designed by architects from the firm Collard Clarke Jackson.

The buildings showcase the latest technology in sustainable design and have become part of the learning experience at Birrigai. For example, the electronic building management system ensures minimal energy wastage by controlling the heating and cooling systems. Birrigai is once again a centre of excellence for outdoor education and for teaching young people about sustainability. The quality of the facilities is a great example—another great example—of what can be built with community support and government investment.

It is that sort of investment, which the shadow minister labels as throwing good money after bad, that was recognised by the master builders association on Friday night at a function attended by 1,700 people. The firms that were involved in the redevelopment work and the rebuilding of Birrigai and the firms that were involved in the refurbishment of Ainslie primary school deserve our congratulations on a fantastic job. It is just the beginning of the government's commitment to public education to create world-class education environments by investing in our schools. It is investing significantly, more than any government has in the history of self-government in the ACT, to ensure that there are first-class learning environments and the opposition has opposed every step the government has taken in delivering these outcomes.

MS PORTER: Minister, do you think we can expect further nominations of public schools at future MBA award nights?

Mrs Dunne: I take a point of order, Mr Speaker. The question is hypothetical in asking for an expression of what might happen in the future and is therefore out of order.

MR SPEAKER: Yes, I think that it was a hypothetical question.

ACT Housing—shopfront closures

DR FOSKEY: My question is to the Minister for Housing. It concerns the closure of ACT Housing shopfronts. Given the minister's assurance that the closure of ACT shopfronts would not have a detrimental effect on the delivery of government services, could the minister please explain why the director of ACT Housing has written to non-government housing service providers outlining a series of concerns that have been brought to her attention about the impact of the closures and asking them to provide her with information on the increased number of clients presenting to their services, the type of assistance those extra clients are seeking and the time taken to deal with the extra demand?

MR HARGREAVES: Firstly, I have not seen that letter. I have not been made aware of its content. I will seek to become so aware and will look into it.

However, I have to say that one of the reasons why we closed the housing shopfronts was because there was incredible duplication across the system. As well, importantly, we have an incredible one-on-one relationship with our tenants. The people who sought to go on the list more often than not did so. They did their initial contact with housing over the telephone. Forms were then sent to these people and arrangements were made to interview them. There were not that many people actually attending the shopfronts to get that information.

It has been quite some time since the shopfronts were closed. I have not heard Dr Foskey expressing any concerns around this issue at all in that period. I have not had a letter from a constituent on the closure of these housing shopfronts for many, many, many months.

Mr Pratt: Then where do I get the cc copies from?

MR HARGREAVES: If Mr Pratt is so confident that he has had hundreds and hundreds of letters and hundreds and hundreds of constituents come to his office bawling their eyes out and ripping their clothes apart, I challenge Mr Pratt to collect them all together from the last three months, staple them together and deliver them to my office. Then I will respond. I suspect they do not exist. Mrs Burke makes the same claim. People are always ringing Mrs Burke's office and saying things. They are always ringing Mr Pratt's office.

MR SPEAKER: Order, Mr Hargreaves! Come back to Dr Foskey's question, please.

MR HARGREAVES: I have already said that I have not had any constituent complaints given to me, nor have I had any correspondence from Dr Foskey's office on this issue. I can only assume from that lack of correspondence that people are enjoying the usual quite high quality customer service that they get. Unlike these guys opposite, I do not have hundreds of people stopping me in the streets saying, "I have got these problems." People are not always ringing my office. I am surprised that Mrs Burke and Mr Pratt can get anything done in a day with the number of people who constantly ring them up and say, "I have got this complaint."

As I said in answering Dr Foskey's question, I have not seen the letter. If she wants to give me a copy of it and short-circuit the process, I am happy to receive it. In the meantime, I will take some advice and address the issue accordingly.

DR FOSKEY: I ask a supplementary question. Given the increased number of clients now presenting to the service's non-government housing providers, does the government now require these providers to provide ACT Housing services to its clients? How is it equipping them to do so?

MR HARGREAVES: I am sorry. I do not understand the question.

Dr Foskey: You have got a problem there.

MR HARGREAVES: I do not understand your question.

Budget—accounting standards

MR MULCAHY: My question is to the Treasurer. In a media release dated 30 May 2007, you stated:

Labor, by contrast, has delivered five successive audited accounting standard surpluses ...

The 2006-07 budget states that GFS is required "to provide an accurate assessment of the longer term sustainability of the budget position". It also says:

Over the past several years, the Territory has recorded large GFS deficits, while achieving operating surpluses under the AAS measure.

The 2006-07 budget paper says:

... Territory governments have traditionally included such windfalls as revenues, creating a situation where the underlying reality of the Territory's fiscal position has been less than clear.

Treasurer, why do you continue to boast about AAS surpluses when, by your own admission, they do not accurately portray the territory's fiscal position?

MR STANHOPE: Once again, I comment on the fact that the shadow Treasurer glories in drawing attention to the accounting standards applied in the territory over the last 10 or 12 years and glories in raising issues around who produced surpluses

and who delivered deficits under the Australian accounting standard, a standard which was introduced in 1996 by the then Liberal government and which applied in the territory for the following 11 years.

The figures are released again today in the budget papers for the edification of members and to explain what, under the Australian accounting standard—which, in relation to each budget for the last 11 years, has been independently audited by the Auditor-General—has been a feature. We see a deficit in 1996-97; we see a deficit in 1997-98—significant deficits, in excess of \$150 million. We see a deficit in 1999-2000—

Mr Mulcahy: Why don't you answer the question?

MR STANHOPE: I am getting to it. We see a deficit in 2000-01. We see five deficits in a row under the Liberal Party. Why does Mr Mulcahy continue to draw attention to these five deficits in a row under the Liberal Party? Because he knows that they were delivered by cabinets in which were the two people within the Liberal Party that he has on his side—one of whom he has already knocked off and one of whom he is waiting to knock off. It points and draws attention to the fact that Mr Mulcahy—the new light, the brave new Treasurer—

Mr Mulcahy: I raise a point of order, Mr Speaker. I am simply asking that—

MR STANHOPE: —has knocked off one leader and is waiting to knock off the second on the basis of their appalling record in government.

MR SPEAKER: Order!

Mr Mulcahy: I am simply asking the Treasurer to explain to me about the GSF deficits that have been a feature of his government and that, as confirmed in his own budget papers last year, tell the real story. Can't he just answer that question instead of worrying about the Liberal Party's future?

MR STANHOPE: After six years of Liberal Party Australian accounting standard budgets—

Mr Pratt: Paying off your \$344 million debt.

MR STANHOPE: We did continue. We continued in government with the accounting standard which we inherited from the previous government. We did that. We continued in government for five years with the accounting standard introduced and utilised by the Liberal Party, against which their budgets were measured.

Last year we changed. Last year we moved from the Australian accounting standard to the GFS. Today we see the first budget delivered consistent with that accounting standard. I think we would all now admit and be prepared to accept in retrospect that it is a decision that perhaps should have been taken much earlier. It is an accounting standard that we should have applied. It is an accounting standard which the Liberal Party deliberately chose not to embrace.

We know the reason why they chose not to embrace it: they immediately delivered five Australian accounting standard deficits in a row. If those five deficit budgets were back cast to GFS, it would be interesting to see the extent of the GFS deficit delivered by the Liberal Party in those five years—if we exposed their budgets to the level of accountability and transparency of this budget this year, and all budgets into the future, until perhaps the Liberal Party one day get back into government, do what they did last time and immediately embrace the Australian accounting standard.

That is what they did last time. They embraced it; they utilised it. They delivered budget after budget—deficit budget after deficit budget—under that accounting standard. We continued with that accounting standard for five budgets in a row and produced five surpluses. The graph is stark. Under the same accounting standard, the Liberal Party budget is under the line and the Labor Party is above the line. It is there for the world to see. Five Liberal Party budgets under the line; five Labor Party budgets above the line. Five Liberal Party deficits in a row; five Labor Party surpluses in a row—five Labor Party surpluses in a row.

I am happy to back cast those five Liberal Party deficits. What we have now is Mr Mulcahy, in his desperation, back casting an Australian accounting standard budget delivered in exactly the same way as Liberal Party budgets were delivered—back casting to GFS and saying, “Oh, look, the underlying position is not what it is represented as.” We have always known that there was a difference with the Australian accounting standard—the standard introduced and utilised by the Liberals, the standard which we did utilise for five years but which we no longer use.

MR MULCAHY: I have a supplementary question, Mr Speaker. Treasurer, why have you imposed in the last year new and increased taxes on the people of Canberra when, and I quote from your media release, Labor has “delivered five successive audited accounting standard surpluses”?

MR STANHOPE: I thank the shadow Treasurer for the question. Once again it does intrigue me that this new shadow Treasurer, the current shadow Treasurer, is at great pains always to ensure that the record of his colleagues in government is highlighted in this place. Why does the shadow Treasurer want continually and constantly to highlight the record of his colleagues in this place? We know why. He has knocked his last leader off, he has got his current leader in his sights, and he will do anything he can to actually enhance his own apparent credibility at the expense of his last leader. Interestingly—we do not forget—he knocked him off in this week last year. It was in this week last year, straight after the budget, straight after Mr Smyth had made such a hash of last year’s budget process, that Mr Mulcahy swooped and knocked him off. So, Bill, watch out, mate.

Opposition members interjecting—

MR SPEAKER: Come back to the subject matter of the question.

MR STANHOPE: You knocked your previous leader off at Mr Mulcahy’s behest following last year’s budget—and I would be nervous if I were you!

MR SPEAKER: Chief Minister, order! Come back to the subject matter of the question, please.

MR STANHOPE: The reason—the reasons have been explained regularly and quite constantly—that last year’s budget was in the form that it was as a result, as we all know, of a raft of decisions not that were taken most specifically over the previous 16 years but essentially as a result of decisions that were not taken; the decisions that Mr Smyth did not take, the decisions that Mr Stefaniak did not take, the decisions that Mrs Dunne as a senior adviser did not advise, in seven years of Liberal Party government.

They were decisions that led us over that period to fund, for instance by way of example, health at a level 24 per cent above the national average. They were decisions that were not taken in relation to public education that led to a situation in which 32 per cent of our schools were not being utilised—32 per cent of our schools or our school capacity was not being utilised. They led to a situation in relation to our growing, burgeoning superannuation liability where within less than 30 years our annual cash requirement to meet our superannuation liabilities would have grown from \$60 million a year to \$450 million a year—as a result of decisions that were not taken.

In relation to health alone, that difference between our revenue effort and our expenditure decisions not only led to a circumstance where we were expending on health, our largest single budget item, at a level 24 per cent above the national average at the point of last year’s budget but which, if we had continued expending at that level, would by the year 2020, in 13 years time, have led to a circumstance where 50 per cent of our entire budget would have been needed to meet that incremental increase in the cost of health care and delivery of health care to this community—20 per cent; by 2020, 50 per cent. It is unsustainable. We all know it is unsustainable. But nobody else acted. Nobody else moved on it.

MR SPEAKER: Order! Draw a connection with the question, please.

MR STANHOPE: The question was: why did we introduce the revenue measures we did last year? We introduced the revenue measures last year as a result of decisions that were not taken and as a result of the need for us as a community to better ensure that our revenue effort and our revenue efforts better met the decisions that we had taken collectively in relation to the funding of government services. It is quite simple; it is a simple equation that revenue effort has to broadly meet expenditure decisions.

There has been an enormous mismatch over 17 or 18 years of self-government between our revenue effort and the level at which we invest it in community services, and it was simply unsustainable. I am concerned about the future. This government was concerned about the future. We were concerned about ensuring that we had the capacity to meet this community’s continuing needs for world-class health facilities, for world-class education facilities, for world-class government services—and we can only do that with a strong balance sheet and sustainable surpluses into the future. That is what we sought to achieve. That is why we took the hard decisions, the politically unpalatable decisions, that we took last year—in order to achieve that sort of future for the people of the ACT. *(Time expired.)*

It being 3.00 pm, questions were interrupted pursuant to the order of the Assembly.

Appropriation Bill 2007-2008

MR STANHOPE (Ginninderra—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Business and Economic Development, Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Minister for the Environment, Water and Climate Change, Minister for the Arts) (3.00): I present the Appropriation Bill 2007-2008 and the following papers:

Explanatory statement to the bill.

Human Rights Act, pursuant to section 37—compatibility statement, dated 5 June 2007.

Budget 2007-2008—Financial Management Act, pursuant to section 10—
Speech (Budget paper No 1)
Taking the Territory Forward (Budget paper No 2)
Budget overview (Budget paper No 3)
Budget estimates (Budget paper No 4)
CD—Budget 2007-2008

Later this afternoon I will be presenting statements of intent for territory authorities.

Title read by Clerk.

MR STANHOPE: I move:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

Mr Speaker, it is my pleasure today to present the 2007-08 budget—my second as Treasurer, and a set of numbers that has only been made possible because of my first—the budget I handed down one year ago.

Mr Speaker, last year's was a budget for the future—a prescription that involved tough and politically unpalatable decisions, a budget that asked Canberrans to bear some pain now, so that they and their children would not be burdened with a debt too crippling to be met in 10, 20 or 30 years time.

There was no imminent crisis at the time that tough budget was delivered and there is no crisis today. Indeed, today I announce Labor's sixth consecutive surplus—all the more remarkable since it is a surplus under the new, rigorous government finance statistics system, all the more remarkable because this time last year we were preparing for a significant deficit under that measure.

Mr Speaker, there was no imminent crisis on 6 June last year, but there was a looming one. It was born of almost two decades of ACT governments living beyond their means, trying to maintain levels of expenditure and a style of living dating from the days when the commonwealth was subsidising a road to cityhood that was gold plated.

Last year, as a community, we took a deep collective breath and struck out on something of a new path—one that we were determined to pay for as we went along. We decided to stop living beyond our means.

We have shaped our bureaucracy to focus our resources more sharply on what matters most—the delivery of priority services to Canberrans.

We have embarked on the creation of a health system that is more affordable, without compromising our great quality and great outcomes. We have embarked on a reinvigoration of our government schools, so that they will, in time, again become the first choice of Canberra families. We have aligned taxes and fees so that they better reflect the real costs of delivering services.

Today I can announce that the budget is in GFS surplus. A surplus one year ahead of schedule. A surplus that maintains Labor's unbroken record of consecutive surpluses.

Mr Speaker, the budget I present today provides a net operating surplus of \$103 million in 2007-08, \$51.6 million in 2008-09, \$64.3 million in 2009-10 and \$101.5 million in 2010-11.

In part, the significant turnaround in the operating balance in 2007-08 is due to some one-off effects. It also reflects increased returns from land development and releases as part of the Government's affordable housing strategy.

Across the forward years from 2008-09, however, the budget broadly maintains the forward estimates position.

Mr Speaker, a surplus is not a virtue in itself. But it is certainly something governments strive for, particularly at the state and territory level. So much of the revenue-raising capacity of governments has been concentrated in commonwealth hands, particularly over the past decade. For states and territories, surpluses, particularly surpluses over the life of a budget cycle, are evidence of prudence. In the ACT, the results announced today reward a community that has accepted change and absorbed some pain, in return for long-term sustainability.

And, of course, once pain has been endured, it would be folly to squander the gain.

That is why today I announce a budget that takes the territory forward, not backwards. A budget that maintains fiscal restraint while ensuring that the social outcomes this community most desires are heightened, and that spending is maintained in priority areas and the areas that will prove the greatest challenges in the future.

Across the forward estimates period, the government now forecasts a surplus of \$320 million. This represents an average of \$80 million a year—approximately 2.5 per cent of the annual budget.

These are modest surpluses, but surpluses that provide some buffer against fiscal shocks, unforeseen circumstances and emerging pressures.

They are also surpluses which allow the government to return to the community some of the dividend of the restructures undertaken in last year's budget.

Today's budget provides for new recurrent spending of \$91.3 million over the next

four years—\$23.2 million in 2007-08, \$22.4 million in 2008-09, \$22.9 million in 2009-10 and \$22.8 million in 2010-11.

This spending is strategically targeted at areas of high need and emerging environmental challenge. Areas such as services for people with a disability, addressing climate change, improving housing affordability, boosting ambulance and fire services, addressing skill shortages, supporting business, and delivering municipal services.

Areas that must grow, to meet growing needs, will continue to grow—but more cleverly, more strategically. For example, the budget allocates almost \$70 million to extra health services over four years—\$15.4 million in 2007-08, \$16.5 million in 2008-09, \$17.1 million in 2009-10 and \$17.9 million in 2010-11. These investments are in line with the parameters we have prudently built into our forward estimates as part of our structural reforms.

The priorities will be additional hospital beds, expanding aged care and rehabilitation services, boosting mental-health services, expanding youth health services, reducing waiting lists for dental services, preventing chronic disease, supporting children and families at risk of dysfunction, and reducing elective surgery waiting lists—a total of \$66.8 million over four years.

The forecast surpluses also give the government the capacity for investment—investment in the suburbs where Canberrans live and play, investment in the roads upon which they commute, investment in public transport, investment in the amenity of the town centres where they congregate for work and communion.

The total value of capital works in this budget is \$288.7 million. This includes the capital upgrades program, which will be expanded in 2007-08 by an additional \$12.2 million—an increase of 38 per cent. A further \$5 million will be allocated to repairs and maintenance across facilities all over the territory—the kind of minor works that make a real difference: painting, fixing, keeping up the fabric of our community life.

Total cash allocated for new capital works and works in progress in 2007-08 is \$420 million.

Mr Speaker, this is a substantial investment in the city. It is an investment that will make Canberra an even better place in which to live. It is an investment that will “Take the territory forward”—one park, one shopping centre refurbishment, one school gymnasium, one bus shelter at a time.

This is an investment in the infrastructure we use every day and often take for granted: roads, bridges, stormwater systems, health facilities.

It is also an investment in the kind of city we have become culturally and socially. It is an investment in public art, in swimming pools, in open parks and public places. It is an investment in the livability of our city.

Mr Speaker, there are certain risks to this budget that relate specifically to the continuing drought and the probable introduction of stage 4 water restrictions. These risks relate to some of the funded initiatives, as well as to our possible expenditure needs and our revenue streams.

At this stage, it is too early to quantify and incorporate these risks into the budget in any meaningful way. But we know that they are potentially significant.

The best advice we have, based on the best modelling from the best scientists, is that the drought will break. Consequently, and in line with the approach taken by the Australian government in its own budget last month, my government has not incorporated drought impacts in the 2007-08 ACT budget.

But the risk is real. That is why, Mr Speaker, it is just as well that we have delivered a surplus, and a comfortable one. We may need it. Anyone who thinks otherwise should ask themselves if they would have preferred to see me stand here today and deliver the deficit we were forecasting this time last year. Which is better? A surplus, exposed to real risk, or a deficit, at risk of worsening? I know which one the people of Canberra would prefer to see.

The strength of our economy

Mr Speaker, the risk posed by a continuation of the drought aside, the ACT economy is strong and the outlook is positive.

There are high levels of public and private investment—greater than those achieved even during the construction heyday of the 1980s, when the building of our new national parliament dominated the local economy.

Real growth in private investment over the past five years has been higher than the growth over the previous 12 years, higher than at any time since the advent of self-government.

The ACT labour market is one of the strongest in the country. Job growth remains strong with participation at near record levels and unemployment close to record lows.

The ACT recorded the strongest growth in building approvals in the country in March 2007 and growth in retail turnover in the ACT outstripped the national average for the year to March 2007.

In 2006-07, state final demand is forecast to grow at four per cent. Employment growth is forecast at three per cent. Over the past year about 6,600 new jobs have been created. Since 2001-02, a total of 18,000 new jobs have been created, with almost 17,000 of those being full-time jobs.

The outlook is exceptionally positive.

Demand is expected to remain strong. The budget forecast for state final demand is an increase of four per cent in 2007-08, reflecting solid growth in Australian government

outlays, private consumption and housing investment. Across the forward estimates period, projections for state final demand are 4¾ per cent a year.

The outlook for employment remains positive. In 2007-08, employment is forecast to grow at 1½ per cent. The continued shortage of skilled workers is likely to constrain growth in key industry sectors. I will explain in a moment how today's budget will help address that threat in just a moment.

Mr Speaker, the message, in short, is that Canberrans have confidence in the future of the ACT economy. And they have confidence in the financial management of this Labor government. They know we are a government prepared to take not just the hard decisions, but the right decisions for the greater good of the community.

Growing into the future

Mr Speaker, businesses in the ACT are optimistic and buoyed by strong consumer demand. For very many businesses, times have never been better. And while the drought remains as a potential deflator of the general optimism, the outlook is for further business investment over the budget and forward estimates periods.

Labor is proud to have created an environment conducive to getting on with business.

Mr Speaker, as a government, we continue to reduce business costs, abolishing a range of business taxes and working with other jurisdictions to make payroll tax rules consistent.

We come at the question of business support from many angles. Our aim is to create an environment where business can simply get on with the job.

Some of the initiatives I announce today are in the area of skills development. Others relate to research support. Others show our continuing commitment to the wider region, including a \$1.85 million boost to regional and trade development activities. This will support an active program of trade missions and provide continuing support for our overseas business promotion infrastructure and networking initiatives.

We have extended our contribution to national ICT centre of excellence by \$6 million over five years to further support the pre-eminent information communications technology research facility and further integrate NICTA into the economic fabric of Canberra.

I am particularly pleased at these investments because they are not about top-down business development. They are about partnerships: government and industry working together.

These initiatives will allow ACT businesses to leverage off the territory's existing competitive advantages and reputation, and will complement actions taken last year to strengthen information, advisory and mentoring services to business through the new Canberra businessPoint Service.

An investment in training and skills

Mr Speaker, successful businesses depend, first and last, on skilled workers. Growing businesses need a constant supply of such workers, ready to sign up and raring to go.

In the ACT, as elsewhere, there are too few skilled workers to meet our needs. And our already high participation rates and low jobless rates mean that finding solutions must be systemic and will take time.

The Skills Commission, chaired by the vice-chancellor of the ANU, Professor Ian Chubb, is examining this issue in detail and will advise the government in the near future. I have asked the commission to come up with realistic, affordable, practical solutions. I look forward to making its recommendations public and responding.

In the meantime however, today's budget continues Labor's historic investment in training and skills—an investment that has already helped deliver us the highest labour force participation in the country, and that has fed the astounding growth of the private sector over Labor's time in government.

In the 2007-08 budget, we provide \$7.6 million in recurrent funding over four years and \$1 million in capital funding for vocational education and training and skill shortages.

We are investing in extra trainee and apprenticeship places in areas of known skill shortage. In particular, we are boosting capacity in some of the remaining pockets of less than full participation, helping women on low incomes and from indigenous and culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds return to work.

We are also freeing up resources worth about half a million dollars for new traineeships for young indigenous men and women.

This budget also makes provision for the creation of a memorial scholarship in honour of Audrey Fagan, the first female ACT police chief. Today I announce that \$250,000 will be made available over four years for the tertiary scholarship, which will be open to Canberra women in leadership positions working in law enforcement, care and protection and allied areas.

I hope that the scholarship will keep bright and fresh the memory of a woman who was admired and held in deep affection by many thousands of Canberrans, and whose name will endure in our collective memory.

Mr Speaker, another means of boosting our skilled workforce is to make sure that the world knows what a great place this is to live and work.

In the past two years, the revived skilled and business migration program has made a significant impact, bringing 1,130 new Canberrans to our workforce and community from overseas.

And the live in Canberra campaign has proved to be a best-practice example of government, business and community sectors working together to tackle Canberra's skills shortage and low population growth, attracting skilled workers and their families from interstate and around the world.

A settlement program has also been established, with new residents provided with support and assistance.

More than 100 people have moved to Canberra—many with families—since the campaign began. In this year's budget the government commits further funding of \$400,000 for the campaign and another \$240,000 for a campaign to encourage people who move to Canberra to update their residential address with Medicare. More accurate Medicare records will give the government better estimates not just of the overall ACT population, but its age profile, helping us to better plan for services and infrastructure. We see today in the release of the census statistics the need for that particular campaign.

Making Canberra an even better place to live

Mr Speaker, Canberrans are fiercely proud of their city. Labor shares that pride and today's budget makes a significant investment in the city and its infrastructure, where it really matters, to make the national capital an even better place to live.

Waste management, horticulture, cleaning and asset maintenance services will receive new funding of approximately \$5 million over four years to cater for growth in the city.

We are investing \$755,000 to improve the look of our civic heart. Another \$3.2 million will be spent upgrading a further section of the Lake Ginninderra foreshore, work that will encourage more Canberrans to make use of the lake and the fantastic precinct that is evolving along its shores.

An additional \$1.6 million has been earmarked to create a Floriade that is better than ever, and \$2.4 million in new funding over four years will be spent on our public libraries.

Canberrans are blessed with world-class parks and reserves, places that have become part of our city's personality and that allow us to combine the best in city living, with easy access to stunning natural environments.

The nature discovery centre at Tidbinbilla has been provided with \$2.6 million in additional funding for its environmental programs and \$1.5 million has been devoted to the pruning and watering of the city's trees, to help minimise the impact of the drought over the next three years.

This budget devotes significant resources to our roads.

Much of Canberra's road infrastructure was built during a few heady years of growth, some decades ago. While there has always been an active program of refurbishment,

there is no doubt that the simultaneous ageing of kilometres of pavement and other infrastructure poses a challenge for even the most vigilant of repair programs.

That is why the government is putting a special focus in this budget on infrastructure upgrades, including roads, the alleviation of traffic congestion and safety improvements. New capital funding of around \$51 million is provided in this budget for new roads and upgrades to the existing road network. Most notable, and most welcome for thousands of daily commuters and air travellers, will be the planned upgrades to airport roads.

Motorists in Civic and the Woden area will also benefit from a significant investment in extra parking spaces, with \$32.5 million earmarked for parking at the Canberra Hospital, Acton and Woden.

Of course, our love affair with the car, a consequence of decades of planning decisions, is a very mixed blessing, in an age where climate change challenges the behaviour of each of us.

That is why we must—against the odds—continue to encourage greater use of public transport.

In fact, patronage on our bus network is up.

But costs continue to be high and the government is committed to simultaneously achieving greater efficiency and greater responsiveness.

We have invested \$73 million in public transport services since coming to government. Today I announce new operating funding of \$2 million in 2007-08 for additional services and bus maintenance. A comprehensive service plan involving community consultation is being developed. Reforms will be in place later this year.

I also announce \$16 million over two years in capital funding to modernise the bus fleet and its ticketing system and a further \$400,000 for ACTION's CCTV security network.

Mr Speaker, Canberrans have long enjoyed the highest participation rates in the country when it comes to sport and recreation.

Making Canberra an even better place to live means, among other things, ensuring that all Canberrans have opportunities to stay fit and healthy.

There is no doubt that the drought and water restrictions make this a challenge, but it is a challenge we must, as a community and as a government, rise to.

Today I announce a significant investment in building and upgrading sporting facilities across Canberra. Labor will spend almost \$13 million over four years on sport and recreation activities, including \$10 million in capital works.

Major improvements are being made to the Lakeside Leisure Centre at Tuggeranong and the Canberra Olympic pool, with a total of \$6 million in capital funds improving these popular facilities.

While the prolonged drought has prevented us from delivering on the proposal we announced last year of rehabilitating and restoring a large number of drought-affected ovals, creative approaches are possible.

Today I announce \$3.8 million for the establishment of the Harrison district playing fields—fields that will incorporate a host of water-saving devices and technologies and that will be a model for future facilities and rehabilitation work on existing facilities.

Today I also announce \$1.6 million over four years for the Stromlo Forest park to assist in promotion, development and operation of the facility as a local, national and international recreation and sporting venue.

The ACT's profile as a sporting city and as a destination for world-calibre events will be enhanced, with \$1.1 million earmarked for initiatives including an iconic Rob de Castella invitational cross-country event, Olympic athlete support for Beijing and the 2009 world mountain bike championships.

Mr Speaker, a city without a robust artistic and cultural life is a cold and sterile place. The arts help a community know and define itself. They enrich life.

I recently announced the percent-for-art scheme, that will ensure that a proportion of each year's capital budget is devoted to public art, where Canberrans work, live and play. That scheme starts in earnest from today.

The 2007-08 budget involves a significant boost to other areas of the arts. In particular, I am delighted to announce \$9 million for the Belconnen Arts and Cultural Centre, on the shores of Lake Ginninderra. In all, this budget provides an additional \$1.3 million in recurrent and around \$11.6 million in new capital funding for initiatives such as the Belconnen Arts and Cultural Centre and public art activities.

A health system which delivers

Mr Speaker, Canberrans expect nothing but the best from their health system. And that is what, under Labor, they get.

The government's record on health services is exceptional. Since coming to government we have increased expenditure on health by 70 per cent, to over \$760 million.

Our community health services are better able than ever before to help Canberrans get well, stay well and live well.

And the capacity of our world-class public hospitals to meet the needs of Canberrans and our neighbours from nearby New South Wales has been dramatically boosted.

Today, there are more hospital beds, more elective surgery, more medical and nursing staff and greater operating theatre capacity than when we came to government. And Canberrans are feeling the benefits.

Over the five years from 2001-02 to 2005-06, our hospitals have confronted and met an extraordinary 32 per cent increase in demand for inpatient services. Total inpatient separations rose from around 54,000 in 2001-02 to 71,000 in 2005-06. This total is expected to rise by a further three per cent during 2006-07 to about 73,150 separations.

Services for the treatment of cancer have been strengthened to meet demand growing at around eight per cent a year for some services. There have been improvements to diagnostic testing and medical and radiation infrastructure and greater numbers of nursing and clinical staff.

We have almost doubled the expenditure on mental health, and expanded drug and alcohol services by around 42 per cent over the past five years.

Community-based health services continue to grow each year. Older patients now spend less time in hospital, and have better access to a wider range of outpatient, community and outreach services.

Expenditure on the dental health program has grown by 22 per cent since 2001-02, to plug the hole left by the withdrawal of the commonwealth from this area of health. The result of Labor's investment has been that more low-income Canberrans are able to access dental health care.

At the same time as we have been ploughing money into health, we have been conscious of the need to make every one of those dollars work hard for Canberrans. We have improved efficiency, reduced administrative overheads and targeted resources to areas of greatest priority and greatest effect. Overheads as a proportion of total costs have reduced significantly.

Labor has created a responsive, efficient and sustainable health system, at a price affordable to the people of the ACT.

Today, I announce funding that will make the public health system deliver better health, to more Canberrans, in the areas that most matter.

This budget builds on an outstanding record of achievement. It allocates \$66.8 million over four years in new initiatives and to areas of high priority.

Today, I announce funding for 20 additional acute-care beds at the Canberra Hospital, at a cost of \$12.6 million over four years. At least 10 of these beds will be allocated to orthopaedic services. Since 2004-05 the government has funded 147 new hospital beds.

A further \$2.1 million will meet the growth in demand for cancer services.

The mix of services provided by the aged care and rehabilitation service will be enhanced, with an additional \$10.4 million allocated in this budget.

This budget allocates a further \$12.6 million over four years devoted to more acute-level inpatient care. This will directly benefit all patients requiring admission to the acute and subacute rehabilitation units, including many older patients.

Critical care capacity will be increased, with the creation of an additional intensive care unit bed at a cost of around \$5 million over four years. This investment will help meet the growing demand for trauma care and complex care.

Demand for elective surgery continues to grow—and will keep growing into the future, as we age as a community. Over the past four years the government has invested almost \$22 million in additional elective surgeries. The results are clear for the community to see: record levels of elective surgery in each of those years and almost 5,000 additional operations over the period than would otherwise have been possible.

The 2007-08 budget allocates a further \$10.5 million over four years, to boost the number of elective surgery procedures by a further 300 a year. A tenth operating theatre at the Canberra Hospital will be commissioned to cope with this additional activity.

In addition, the budget allocates funding for an integrated response to patients with chronic conditions, targeted support for at-risk mothers and babies and increased access to dental health care.

Excellence in education

Mr Speaker, one of the most significant financial and social investments a community makes in its future comes in the shape of government schools.

Philosophically, practically and financially, Labor's commitment to public education in the ACT has never been equalled in our history.

As in so many areas, when it comes to public schooling we confront the consequences of a physical infrastructure designed for another age, another Canberra. In last year's budget we tackled some of those infrastructure issues, but we also set out a vision, and we backed that vision up with a financial investment in our government schools greater than any investment made in the past two decades.

This included \$90 million for capital upgrades of our government schools, as well as \$20 million for improvements in information and communications technology. More than \$67 million was earmarked for new, state-of-the-art schools across Canberra—an investment of more than \$177 million in the future of every child who attends an ACT government school.

Today, I announce that Labor will build on this deep commitment, committing \$60.7 million for the construction of the secondary college in Gungahlin, to open in 2010. And I announce an additional \$50 million for the construction of a new P to 10 school in Tuggeranong, to open in 2011.

And it is not just the students at these new sites who will be winners. To ensure that the facilities at every one of Canberra's public schools are a matter for pride and are capable of delivering the best possible education, we will continue to make available \$11.6 million a year for capital upgrades.

Mr Speaker, that is another \$122.3 million in new capital funding for government schools, another vote of confidence in public education, another investment in government school students and their teachers.

Between July 2006 and 2010-11 Labor will invest more than \$350 million in our public schools, giving every government school student access to the kind of quality learning environments that have been shown to have a positive impact on performance.

The transformation of our public schools has already begun. At Chapman and Aranda primary schools, at Stromlo, Calwell and Belconnen high schools, at Cranleigh special school and Telopea Park school, students and teachers are already enjoying the benefits of this historic capital investment.

Over the next four years every ACT public school will benefit from Labor's investment in facilities. Science and computer labs and kitchens are being upgraded. Grounds and sports areas are being enhanced. Student amenities are being improved. Internal and external refurbishments are sending the message that public schools are places of which students and teachers can rightly feel proud, places where students want to come to learn, places teachers look forward to fronting up to each day.

Not only are our schools being rejuvenated and renewed. They are also being made environmentally efficient. New schools will incorporate features such as solar passive design, water tanks and solar heating. The next generation of Canberrans will be absorbing messages about sustainability by seeing it in action, on their ovals, in their classrooms, even in their washrooms.

Our \$20 million investment in information and communications technology will ensure that every government school student leaves school with that extra dimension we have come to think of as technological literacy. The smart schools, smart students project will give every student in every government school access to a fast, reliable and stable internet connection. Whole families will benefit. Parents will be able to access detailed information about their child's learning program and their results, online.

Mr Speaker, Canberra's public schools have always been exceptional, keeping faith with the belief that every child, whatever their prospects, whatever their circumstances, whatever their challenges, deserves the opportunity to reach his or her potential.

The investments the government began to make in last year's budget, and which are continued today, restate that commitment.

The challenges of climate change and water security

Mr Speaker, climate change is perhaps the single biggest challenge to confront humanity. Already, its effects have permanently altered our rainfall patterns, with potentially grave implications for our water security. The implications are equally profound in a host of other areas. The increased risk of megafires and monster storms

has implications for how and where we should build our homes. As a nation we may have to rethink the economic viability of certain industries. There may be health implications that are barely perceptible yet.

And while this is a global challenge, responsibility for wrestling with it comes down to individual nations, individual governments, individual households, ultimately, to each of us as individuals.

This is not a challenge that can be met and mastered in a single budget or over the life of a single government. Nor is it a challenge for which the solution is sitting on the shelf. Human behaviour, we all know, is hard to change. But we must and we will.

Mr Speaker, the government will shortly release its climate change strategy—Labor's plan for tackling climate change locally, and as a global citizen. Obviously, not all of its elements will be budgetary. It will incorporate legislative change and cultural change. But there will be a cost too. Today, on World Environment Day, I announce \$4 million over four years to implement a number of initiatives contained in the strategy.

A further \$1 million in capital funding will establish an energy efficiency fund for energy and water sustainability in ACT government buildings.

A renewable energy technology showcase will also be established, with another \$1 million in funding.

This \$6 million investment will complement other regulatory and legislative actions. These include the Environment Protection (Fuel Sale Data) Amendment Bill 2007, passed today, which will help the ACT accurately measure fuel sales and so calculate greenhouse gas emissions. The use of hybrid vehicles as hire cars in the ACT has been approved. The government is on track to meet its commitment to increase the proportion of fuel-efficient and low-emissions vehicles in its fleet to 10 per cent by 2008.

Mr Speaker, as I said earlier, partnerships are critical to meeting some of the biggest challenges we face as a community. Today I am pleased to announce \$350,000 for a joint ACT government-CSIRO project that will showcase sustainable urban design at Eastlake.

Mr Speaker, intimately connected with the issue of climate change is that of water.

Most of us are painfully familiar with the statistics. Last year, inflows into ACT dams were 90 per cent below our long-term average. Over the course of the year we consumed, as a community, 40 gegalitres more water than entered our dams—more water than is contained in Lake Burley Griffin. And this year, to date, our inflows are even lower than last. We are told the drought will break. But what if it does not? The risk may be small, but the consequences of accepting that risk, and of losing the bet, are too great to tolerate.

That is why the government and Actew Corporation have been exploring and implementing a suite of measures to secure our water supply into the future. These

include the Cotter to Googong bulk transfer scheme and the installation of submersible pumps in the Murrumbidgee.

Mr Speaker, little of this massive investment is reflected in the budget papers published today, because it is expenditure made by Actew on the Government's and on the community's behalf.

But the numbers are sizeable, even staggering. Actew will make capital investments of more than \$250 million over the next four years to address this city's water treatment, storage and distribution infrastructure.

This figure will rise massively to more than \$600 million if the government, at the end of its community consultation, approves Actew's plans to recycle the used water we now allow to flow from the lower Molonglo plant, and store it in an enlarged Cotter dam.

Keeping the community safe

Mr Speaker, since coming to office in the ACT, Labor has made a financial investment in emergency services that is probably unmatched by any city of this size, anywhere in the world.

At the same time, we have taken care to preserve our reputation as a safe city, with relatively low levels of crime.

Since its election in 2001 Labor has increased expenditure on emergency services by 119 per cent—from around \$36 million in 2001-02 to \$79 million a year.

In the same period we have increased the capacity of ACT Policing to fight crime, improved police visibility, tightened response times and improved clearance rates. There are now 120 more police, keeping their fellow Canberrans safe. Expenditure on policing has grown by 56 per cent to \$106 million in 2006-07.

Today, the investment continues. The 2007-08 budget earmarks almost \$15 million in new recurrent funding and around \$18.2 million in capital funding over four years for a range of community safety and justice initiatives.

Funding of \$1.2 million for the forward design of the new Belconnen police station has been provided, and almost \$4.7 million will be spent upgrading court facilities and security. Additional capital funding of \$2.6 million has been provided for the new youth detention centre.

The capacity of the ambulance service is being boosted, with \$4.2 million over four years for 16 extra staff, patient transport and training. Fleet capability is being increased with \$718,000 in capital funding for two additional intensive care ambulances, one patient transport ambulance and one special ambulance to transport morbidly obese patients.

The budget sets aside \$1.597 million over four years to implement more of the recommendations made in the coroner's report into the 2003 bushfires.

More than \$830,000 will be spent upgrading fire stations and \$6.5 million will be spent on firefighting vehicle replacements over the next four years. This represents a major upgrade, across the board, involving light units, heavy tankers, water tankers, heavy pumpers and command vehicles.

More than half a million dollars will be spent on additional rescue equipment and more than a quarter of a million dollars will be spent creating 10 new community fire units, taking the total number across the territory to 38.

This budget continues to improve the facilities, equipment and training for the fire and SES volunteers who give tirelessly of their time to protect the ACT community.

Today's budget also increases support for victims of crime by \$2.2 million over four years.

Help for those in need

Mr Speaker, just as the right of every youngster to a quality education represents core Labor values, so too does the right of society's most vulnerable to enjoy lives of dignity and worth.

Disadvantage takes many forms. That is why the government's approach to tackling disadvantage is multipronged, with assistance delivered through mainstream as well as targeted programs.

Almost \$16 million will be spent over the next four years increasing support for young people and adults with serious intellectual and physical disabilities. Non-government schools will share in an extra million dollars to improve access for students with a disability.

Today I announce \$12.6 million over the next four years in recurrent funding and \$3.5 million in capital funding to improve mental health services. This investment will increase the number of specialist mental health providers, give Canberrans in need greater access to community mental health care and create community-supported accommodation options as alternatives to hospitalisation. The capital funding will be used for forward design work for a major construction project—dedicated mental health facilities at the Canberra Hospital comprising a 40-bed adult ward and a 15-bed forensic facility.

Today I also announce additional funding of \$209,000 for a residential detoxification and withdrawal program for women and women with children and a massive boost of \$1.7 million over four years to help reduce the waiting list for dental services.

Mr Speaker, the abolition of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander commission by the Australian government has had ramifications symbolic and practical. Where are the indigenous faces and voices on our nightly news these days? Where are the community leaders? Where can the next generation of Aboriginal leaders turn for the training they need to become effective advocates for their people?

ACT Labor is committed to giving Aboriginal Canberrans a louder voice. Today's budget earmarks \$700,000 over four years for the establishment and operation of an elected Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander body, which will provide advice and guidance to government on the needs and priorities of the ACT's indigenous people. The model of the elected body is now being finalised and I and my ministers look forward to the day when we can receive, from the mouths and hearts of local Aboriginal men and women, robust advice on how we as a government are meeting their needs, supporting their aspirations and extending to every indigenous Canberran the opportunity to engage fully in the economic, intellectual, social and cultural life of our community.

Affordable, appropriate housing

Mr Speaker, access to affordable and appropriate housing is one of the government's highest priorities and one of the most basic entitlements of those living in a prosperous, caring community such as ours.

Earlier this year the government released a comprehensive action plan to help those Canberrans finding it hard to gain access to affordable and appropriate housing, including those pursuing the dream of home ownership, those renting in the private market, those who depend upon public and community housing and those needing emergency accommodation.

Today I announce a commitment worth \$9.25 million to support the initiatives in the affordable housing action plan.

That is a massive injection into an area of real priority. Canberrans will soon see the roll-out of a number of strategies, ranging from the release of new house and land packages priced between \$200,000 and \$300,000, regular in globo land sales and over-the-counter sales of affordable housing blocks.

Community housing will have access to a revolving finance facility of \$50 million. Initiatives to increase the number of private rental properties will be pursued with private sector providers and land rental and shared equity schemes will be put in place.

Targeted stamp duty concessions alone will cost an estimated \$6 million in forgone revenue over four years.

I also announce today that the government will spend \$4.3 million in 2007-08 purchasing more public housing stock to house those most in need.

Mr Speaker, a roof over one's head is a basic need for each of us, whatever our age, whatever our family size or our financial circumstances. That does not mean we should all aspire to an identical detached house and garden in the suburbs. What we need is choice. What we need are stepping stones. What we need are options. That is what Labor is determined to create, and today's budget will help us do it.

Streamlining the public service and its processes

Mr Speaker, last year the government embarked on a significant generational, structural reform of the public service. Our aim was to create an efficient and effective public service that was focused unambiguously on front-line services.

The Shared Services Centre became operational earlier this year.

Improvements in internal practices and processes have already flowed. Efficiencies have been delivered by common systems and transactional processes. New approaches to doing the business of government have been developed.

By consolidating common corporate service functions into the Shared Services Centre, the government will save around \$20 million in 2007-08 in back-office costs.

But other dividends flow from these structural reforms too. Career paths have significantly improved and training and advancement opportunities have blossomed for individual public servants, as small corporate units have come together.

Change is often daunting and I thank all ACT public servants for the professionalism and enthusiasm with which they participated in the changes wrought over the past year.

Labor is proud to have, working to deliver its priorities, a public service that is responsive and dedicated. This budget will provide \$400,000 each year to build further on our public sector capacity. Strategies will focus on workplace culture, investing in staff, providing training and leadership development opportunities in line with best practice, and recruitment and attraction strategies.

Commonwealth-state financial relations

Mr Speaker, our federal system of government has a significant influence on the fiscal capacities of the states and territories and on the decisions they make around budget time. The ACT is no exception.

Some of the principles upon which the system is based are well-founded and fair. The system of equalisation, for example, ensures that states and territories that have higher needs, perhaps for reasons of remoteness or size or lack of raw materials, are compensated so they can provide services broadly equal to the services provided elsewhere.

The GST revenue is distributed on this principle.

Unfortunately, inherent in such a system is the potential for blame shifting and cost transferring.

Thus, in recent months, we have heard much about the supposedly high taxation regimes of the states and territories, not to mention the alleged “rivers of GST gold” we have supposedly squandered.

Mr Speaker, in truth the fiscal imbalance between the commonwealth and the states and territories has increased significantly over the past six years—the period in which Labor has been in power in the ACT. The commonwealth now has a larger share of taxation revenue than it had in 2000-01.

And contrary to popular myth-making, the growth in commonwealth taxation has been higher than the growth in state and territory taxation. Between 2000-01 and 2006-07, Australian government taxes grew by an average of 6.6 per cent a year. State taxation revenue grew at an average rate of 5.8 per cent a year.

In the ACT, territory tax revenue grew even more slowly, by an average of just 4.2 per cent a year.

And yet, while the commonwealth's share of tax revenue continued to climb, its contribution to crucial services actually declined.

Five years ago, the commonwealth contributed around 31 per cent of our hospital costs. Now it is 23 per cent.

Five years ago, the commonwealth contributed around 18 per cent toward the cost of disability services. Now it is around 14 per cent.

Funding for housing assistance has been decreasing in real terms at a time when housing affordability has been worsening nationally.

For the ACT, per capita specific purpose payments from the commonwealth—contributions for services such as hospital care, disability services, housing assistance and home care—have actually decreased by around 10 per cent in real terms over the past five years.

ACT Labor has picked up the slack, in many cases not just making up for the comparative decline in the commonwealth's contribution, but catering for growth too.

We make no apologies for doing so. But as we made clear last year, the time has come when we must close the fiscal gap and ensure that the services we provide are paid for, today, by us, not tomorrow, by our children.

Conclusion

Mr Speaker, the budget I have detailed today is good for the people of Canberra, good for the community, good for the environment, good for business. It will make a real difference, where people live, where they work, where they play, where they catch a bus, where they park their cars, where they buy their milk and walk their dogs. It will ensure that their health priorities are met, that the education they receive is as good as it gets.

Last year's budget was about setting a course for the territory's finances for the future. This budget maintains that course and takes the territory forward. It is prudent and it delivers. It maintains fiscal discipline while addressing our real priorities as a community.

This is a budget that makes significant investments in the infrastructure and services needed to take the territory forward.

It is a budget that allows a buffer against risk. It strengthens our capacity to meet challenges, if and when they arrive.

I commend this budget to the Assembly, Mr Speaker, and I commend it to the people of Canberra.

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

Visitor

MR SPEAKER: I acknowledge the presence of Mr Michael Moore in the gallery. Welcome!

Papers

Mr Stanhope presented the following papers:

Statements of Intent—2007-2008

Financial Management Act, pursuant to subsection 62(1)—

ACT Building and Construction Industry Training Fund Authority, dated 23 and 29 May 2007.

ACT Cleaning Industry Long Service Leave Authority, dated 17 May 2007.

ACT Construction Industry Long Service Leave Authority, dated 17 May 2006, including corrigendum, dated 17 and 28 May 2007.

ACT Gambling and Racing Commission, dated 21 May 2007.

ACT Insurance Authority, dated 25 May 2006, including corrigendum, dated May 2007.

ACT Public Cemeteries Authority, dated 22 and 29 May 2007.

Canberra Institute of Technology.

Cultural Facilities Corporation, dated 23 May 2007.

Exhibition Park Corporation, dated 22 and 29 May 2007.

Independent Competition and Regulatory Commission, dated 22 May 2007.

Land Development Agency, dated 21 May 2007.

Legal Aid Commission (ACT).

Public Trustee for the Australian Capital Territory (PTACT).

Young people's plan 2004-2008—progress report Paper and statement by minister

MS GALLAGHER (Molonglo—Minister for Health, Minister for Children and Young People, Minister for Disability and Community Services, Minister for Women) (3.46): For the information of members, I present the following paper:

ACT Young People's Plan 2004-2008—Progress report, dated May 2007—

I ask leave to make a statement in relation to the paper.

Leave granted.

MS GALLAGHER: Mr Speaker, I am very pleased to table today the 2006-07 progress report on the young people's plan 2004-2008. The report reaffirms the ACT government's ongoing commitment to young people in Canberra. In 2004, the young people's plan 2004-2008 was developed to align with The Canberra social plan. The Canberra social plan states that we will "invest in children and young people", "increase education participation, engagement and achievement of children and young people" and "improve the transition between school, further study, and the workforce". The young people's plan 2004-2008 clearly articulates government's commitment to young people.

Mr Speaker, I am proud of the achievements by government in implementing the priorities under the young people's plan 2004-2008. There are many stakeholders involved and each has—in their own way—been influential in their involvement with young people. As Minister for Children and Young People, my clear mandate is to work with the community to substantially enhance the lives of all young people in Canberra.

The government does this through a number of funded programs and through its own service delivery. In 2004 the government committed \$4.5 million to the youth services program which funds organisations to provide services to "at risk" young people aged between 12 and 25 years. Additionally, \$100,000 was provided to fund the government's youth participation initiative, Youth InterACT. Youth InterACT includes the Youth Advisory Council, Youth InterACT website and consultation register. Included in this funding is \$32,000 in grants and scholarships for young people to participate at conferences, and through personal development, activities, sporting or career development.

This progress report of the young people's plan 2004-2008 provides an overview of the range of services and activities that government has undertaken from June 2006 to July 2007. There are a number of significant achievements in the 2006-07 progress report. These include a new curriculum framework initiated by the Department of Education and Training, entitled "Every Chance to Learn". The framework has 26 essential learning achievements and is being trialled in schools in 2007 with a view to implementation in 2008.

Further there are a number of new initiatives to be implemented including an ACT strategic indigenous arts development initiative, with a major project funded to develop indigenous arts and which has a focus on young and emerging artists. A number of peer education pilot programs will also be implemented for young people including those who are engaging in high-risk behaviours including alcohol and drug use. Additionally, a program will be implemented to inform young people of the legal implications of possessing small quantities of illicit drugs. Both these programs will be provided and funded through ACT Health.

Through the disability education program within ACTSPORT the government will provide introductory pathways for young people with a disability and the Special Olympics programs. The government has already provided funding of \$79,000 for the delivery of services to support participation pathways for young people with a disability in partnership with the Australian Sports Commission.

Mr Speaker, in the second half of 2007, the Children and Young People Commissioner will establish an advisory group of young people to develop a website to inform young people of opportunities for participation and consultation. We are also developing a number of strategies to assist young people transitioning to longer-term accommodation, transitioning from Quamby and who are in foster care and have attained the age of 18 years but are still attending school. Funding of \$3 million per year is provided for 10 supported accommodation assistance program services for young people. All SAAP services are designed to support people to transition to sustainable, long-term accommodation.

There are many successes to date highlighted in the progress report of the young people's plan 2004-2008. In tabling this progress report, I would like to acknowledge the work of my colleagues, their respective departments and many community agencies for their ongoing commitment to the young people of Canberra. I look forward to future reports and achievements as we address and respond to our commitment as a community and government to all young people and commend this report to the Assembly.

I move:

That the report be noted.

Debate (on motion by **Dr Foskey**) adjourned to the next sitting.

Land (Planning and Environment) Act 1991—schedule of leases

Papers and statement by minister

MR BARR (Molonglo—Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Planning, Minister for Tourism, Sport and Recreation, Minister for Industrial Relations): For the information of members, I present the following papers:

Land (Planning and Environment) Act, pursuant to section 216A—Schedules—
Leases granted, together with lease variations and change of use charges for the
period 1 January to 31 March 2007—

I ask leave to make a statement in relation to the papers.

Leave granted.

MR BARR: Section 216A of the Land (Planning and Environment) Act 1991 specifies that a statement be tabled in the Legislative Assembly outlining details of leases granted by direct grant; leases granted to community organisations; leases granted for less than market value; and leases granted over public land. The schedule I now table covers leases granted for the period 1 January 2007 to 31 March 2007. During the quarter, fifteen leases were issued by direct grant.

For the information of members I am also tabling two other schedules relating to approved lease variations and change of use charge payments received for the same period.

Papers

Mr Corbell presented the following papers:

Subordinate legislation (including explanatory statements unless otherwise stated)

Legislation Act, pursuant to section 64—

Legal Profession Act—Legal Profession (Barristers and Solicitors Practising Fees) Determination 2007 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2007-107 (LR, 17 May 2007).

Public Place Names Act—

Public Place Names (Forde) Determination 2007 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2007-105 (LR, 10 May 2007).

Public Place Names (Franklin) Determination 2007 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2007-106 (LR, 10 May 2007).

Public Place Names (Kingston) Determination 2007 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2007-109 (LR, 25 May 2007).

Public Place Names (Lyons) Determination 2007 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2007-110 (LR, 24 May 2007).

Road Transport (General) Act—Road Transport (General) (Application of Road Transport Legislation) Declaration 2007 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2007-108 (LR, 18 May 2007).

Adjournment

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

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

The Assembly adjourned at 3.53 pm.

Schedules of amendments

Schedule 1

Statute Law Amendment Bill 2007

Amendment moved by the Attorney-General

1

Schedule 1

Amendment 1.1

Page 4, line 5—

omit amendment 1.1, substitute

[1.1] Section 23 (1) (b) and (c)

substitute

(b) the person is not authorised to exhume the remains.

Explanatory note

This amendment relates to the amendment below.

[1.1A] New section 23 (1A)

insert

(1A) For this section, a person is *authorised* to exhume human or foetal remains if—

- (a) a warrant under the *Coroners Act 1997* authorises the exhumation; or
- (b) the chief health officer has given written permission under this section for the exhumation.

Explanatory note

This amendment clarifies the type of authority that is necessary to exhume human or foetal remains buried in a cemetery. It is not an offence to exhume remains if there is either—

- a warrant under the *Coroners Act 1997*; or
- written permission from the chief health officer.

Schedule 2

Environment Protection (Fuel Sales Data) Amendment Bill 2007

Amendment moved by the Minister for the Environment, Water and Climate Change

1

Clause 2

Page 2, line 5—

omit the clause, substitute

2 Commencement

This Act commences on 1 July 2007.

Note The naming and commencement provisions automatically commence on the notification day (see Legislation Act, s 75 (1)).