



Debates

WEEKLY HANSARD
SEVENTH ASSEMBLY

Legislative Assembly for the ACT

14 FEBRUARY 2012

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Tuesday, 14 February 2012

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Tuesday, 14 February 2012

MR SPEAKER (Mr Rattenbury) took the chair at 10 am, made a formal recognition that the Assembly was meeting on the lands of the traditional custodians, and asked members to stand in silence and pray or reflect on their responsibilities to the people of the Australian Capital Territory.

Leader of the Opposition
Motion of grave concern

MR HARGREAVES (Brindabella) (10.02): Mr Speaker, I seek leave to move a motion of grave concern concerning activities in the office of the Leader of the Opposition.

MR SPEAKER: Has the motion been circulated?

MR HARGREAVES: It has been advised to the office of the opposition and the office of the Greens, and it is available for members.

Leave granted.

MR HARGREAVES: I move the motion circulated in my name:

That this Assembly:

- (1) notes with grave concern allegations that the Leader of the Opposition has failed to adhere to the Members Code of Conduct and the Enterprise Agreement under the LAMS Act 1989, section B6, Record Keeping, clauses B6.1 and B6.2 in relation to the proper acquittal of payments to and acquisition of time off in lieu (TOIL) entitlements for staff employed by him under the *LAMS Act 1989*;
- (2) expresses its grave concern that despite repeated exhortations from the Clerk and Deputy Clerk, this pattern of behaviour continued over an extended period of nearly of two years;
- (3) expresses its concern that attendance records can be compiled and submitted in bulk after nearly two years of non-compliance and that those bulk records have been certified as correct by the Leader of the Opposition;
- (4) notes that:
 - (a) the Canberra Liberals have previously been forced to repay \$10,000 in ACT Grant funding to support volunteer organisations; and
 - (b) Opposition Legislative Assembly staff have been counselled previously about the use of Assembly resources for party political purposes;
- (5) directs the Leader of the Opposition to provide a written statement to the Assembly by close of business Thursday, 16 February 2012, answering the following questions:

- (a) why did the Leader of the Opposition fail to observe his responsibilities under the Members Code of Conduct, paragraph 8 to ensure, in relation to the acquittal of work hours by staff employed by him under the LAMS Act 1989, by allowing periods of up to 22 months to elapse without staff in his office submitting appropriate documentation in relation to attendance, TOIL and overtime;
 - (b) how did the Leader of the Opposition satisfy himself that recollections of attendance up to 22 months earlier were the correct recollection of attendance when he certified those records to be correct;
 - (c) what documentary evidence has been relied upon for the retrospective approvals for unpaid leave and attendance at work during the extensive periods in question;
 - (d) does the Director of Electorate Services in the office of the Leader of the Opposition work in the Leader's Legislative Assembly office in a full-time capacity;
 - (e) if so, does the Director of Electorate Services have written approval to work off-site away from the office of the Leader of the Opposition in accordance with clause E8 of the Enterprise Agreement;
 - (f) has there been consultation with Corporate Services in accordance with clause E8.2 of the Enterprise Agreement and if so, when was that consultation and with whom;
 - (g) does the Director of Electorate Services in the office of the Leader of the Opposition currently occupy the position of the President of the Canberra Liberals;
 - (h) does this person work in the latter capacity from Level 5, 221 London Circuit, Canberra City;
 - (i) if so, has the holder of these positions sought and received unpaid leave from the Leader of the Opposition's employment prior to any work as President of the Canberra Liberals, during normal working hours;
 - (j) have any other staff of the Leader of the Opposition have written approval to work off-site; if so, in what capacity and for what periods;
 - (k) have any staff employed by the Leader of the Opposition undertaken party political campaigning or related activities without having received prior approval for unpaid leave from the Leader of the Opposition; and
 - (l) if so, have these periods of political campaigning been declared as gifts or gifts in kind under relevant ACT and/or Federal electoral campaign finance laws; if not, why not; and
- (6) directs the Speaker to:
- (a) commission an independent workplace audit of staffing arrangements and whether or not inappropriate payments to staff were made in the office of the Leader of the Opposition for the period 2009 to 2012; and

- (b) provide the Independent Auditor with all relevant records including relevant building access records and ICT information for the relevant period.

When I came into this place in 1998 I had the good fortune to go fairly quickly to a Commonwealth Parliamentary Association regional conference and I was able to associate with some very longstanding members. What I was taught at that time—and that teaching was enhanced considerably over my 14-odd years here—was about the principles of parliamentary purity. It was about the expectations of the community that not only would things be done correctly but that they would be seen to be done correctly—that there was, in fact, an expectation in the community that we would look after the taxpayers' funds and expend those funds appropriately and with transparency.

The freedom of information documents which appeared on the Legislative Assembly's website show, in my view, an alarming story. Mr Speaker, I need to advise for the record that I did ask the question about the attendance records that were the subject of the freedom of information request in the annual reports hearing late last year and you did indicate to me that the documents would be put on the website once they had been through the normal freedom of information procedures.

I did not immediately launch into the media then with accusations. I had my suspicions at the time but I did not launch into it. I waited until those documents appeared on the website. And when I saw those documents, it gave me very grave cause for concern. Since the story has hit the media, I have had even greater concern that the way in which the stories have been treated by the Leader of the Opposition has indicated contempt for the process and a dismissal, as though none of this really matters, in an attempt to trivialise the fact that attendance records are indeed accountable documents. They used to be accountable documents under the audit act and I would hope they now come under the Financial Management Act, because those documents authorise the payment of funds from the taxpayers' purse.

We are not talking about the everyday nine to five bits. We are talking about the accumulation of time off in lieu and we are talking about the accumulation of overtime in excess of the seven per cent allowance which has been built into members' staff salaries. There has to be an accounting, a transparent accounting, of those expenditures.

I was concerned to see that over 22 months those documents were not provided. I am assuming—and I am happy for the Leader of the Opposition to come back on Thursday and correct me here—that when those requests from the Clerk's office to have those documents completed were actually complied with, they all came in one hit; they all came in one packet. I am curious to know whether they were signed on the same day, whether they were certified on the same day, and I would like to know how it is that the memory can actually be so good as to remember what happened in one's office some 14 months earlier.

Opposition members interjecting—

MR SPEAKER: Order! Let us keep the tone of this, thank you.

MR HARGREAVES: Mr Speaker, they shall not rattle me. They can try but it will not work. I am very concerned that the transparency and accountability are absolutely missing from this. We need to be assured that those records are a true reflection of what happened in terms of attendance and performance of duties in that period of time.

I have to confess, Mr Speaker, that I cannot remember what my middle-level office staff did in the way of their attendance 12 months ago. I could not tell you. If you named a date, I could not tell you what time they came to work and what time they went home. So I would like to know how it is that not only does the staff member remember it but how it is that the member—not the chief of staff, I would suggest, but the member—would know. If he has a staff of 10, how would he know that those attendance records were correct? I do not know; it mystifies me.

There are some other questions that came to my mind which need answering and that I am sure the community want to know about. I would like to know: is the Assembly precinct the designated workplace of staff members? If it is a designated workplace then section E8 of the enterprise agreement kicks in here, where people require an approval to work off site for such things as home-based work.

I would like to know whether such approval actually applies to the opposition's director of electorate services, who is predominantly employed across the road at level 5, 221 London Circuit, and has been there for in excess of 12 months and is rarely seen in this precinct. If that is a legitimate thing, there needs to be written approval saying that that is okay. If that does exist, I would like to know whether or not there is a perceived conflict of interest where a staff member of a member here can be employed within the office of a political party and whether or not that is a payment by the taxpayer of parliamentary funds for a staff member to work on a party political exercise. I would like to know that, Mr Speaker.

I would like to know whether or not the director of electorate services received any reimbursement for such things as telephone and whether there was a separation between his role as the president of the Canberra Liberals and that of the director of electorate services. I think the people of the ACT are entitled to know that.

I would like to know whether or not there were any other resources put across. For example, were there any computer services allowed to be provided in those offices? I would also like to know whether or not workers compensation applied to that particular staff member working off site. If not then that is a sad dereliction of responsibility from the member to his own staff member. I think that is appalling, if that is so. If it is not so, let it be seen to be not so.

Mr Speaker, we have got the motion here. I have put as much as I can by way of the questions in there, and I will not go into the detail of that, given the time. I am really concerned about the attitude. The community expects members in this place to transact their business according to the codes of conduct that we have here. Those freedom of information documents indicate a crystal-clear breach, in my view, of the members' code of conduct.

They also portend a breach of the enterprise agreement, which is subordinate to the LA(MS) Act. That needs to be cleared up. The Leader of the Opposition, the alternative Chief Minister of this territory, has these questions to answer. He needs to answer them, and he needs to answer them in the public arena and not dismiss these queries, these questions, in the public arena as trivial. Attendance records are not trivial. It is not a matter of saying: "Oh well, we've got them all done now, thank you very much. It took us 22 months to put them all together, but we've now got them all together, so the game's over. Don't worry about it anymore. Sorry about that." To me, it is a bit like, say, stealing something from somebody, paying the money back and then saying: "Well, it's all over. It's okay now." It does not work that way in the courts and it does not work like that out there in the court of public opinion either. There have to be some explanations about the period of 22 months. Let us have a bit of a look at that particular—

Opposition members interjecting—

MR SPEAKER: Order! One moment, Mr Hargreaves. Stop the clocks. Members, in a moment, members of the opposition are going to get up and speak, and I would like to be able to ensure that you are also heard in silence. You are going to make it much easier for me to do that if you do not interfere while Mr Hargreaves is speaking.

MR HARGREAVES: There are essentially three parts to consider. One of the concerns is that there is something awry about these attendance records. There is something in the middle that we do not know about. The idea that somebody has a photographic memory does not wash with me. I am sorry, Mr Speaker; it does not wash. I need to understand how it is that somebody can certify those records so long after the attendance was actually performed. I would like to know how that can happen.

I am concerned about the attitude of the Leader of the Opposition in dismissing these allegations—indeed, these questions—because that does not become him and it does not become this parliament. This parliament is supposed to be an example. As employers, we are supposed to set examples on how we manage our offices and how we manage our staff. If there is substance to these allegations and these concerns then it is a very sad story about the ability of the Leader of the Opposition to manage his office and manage his staff. And it does not take very much to consider whether or not he could manage the territory after that. I think that is what we need to know.

I am very concerned that there is the possibility—nay, the probability—that a member of the staff of the Leader of the Opposition has worked predominantly off site without approval, has in fact therefore drawn salary from the Legislative Assembly's appropriations to be the president of the Canberra Liberals. In other words, the Canberra taxpayer is paying for somebody to manage a political party. I think that is a very serious issue, and probably one of the more serious ones in this series of queries that we have.

If in fact it is not so and the director of electorate services for the Leader of the Opposition is a regular attendee in the precinct, perhaps the Leader of the Opposition

can table a printout of the swipe cards which show when we go in and out of this building, or perhaps he could ask InTACT to provide him with a copy of the logins from the computer. As we all know, we all log in and we all log off. That is available. If in fact he has provided all of his services in this building, no problem. I have no difficulty with that. In fact, I applaud it. But I do not think so. My office overlooks the car park and I see who comes and goes. And I can say this, Mr Speaker: the Leader of the Opposition goes frequently but his director of electorate services comes very, very infrequently, and I have a concern about that.

Mr Speaker, if you have contempt for your staff administration in that you do not chase them up for an attendance record, you are going to have contempt for the process in not bothering to authorise off-site employment. We are not talking about the occasional accompanying of a member or in fact the representation of a member at a function or something like that. We are not talking about that. We are talking about somebody who predominantly performs their duties off site, out of the precinct.

If it was a public service office, there is a specific approval process to go through. The enterprise agreement is quite clear about it. There has to be a conversation between the member and corporate services around the arrangements. I would like to know whether that conversation went on, because if that conversation did not occur, the Leader of the Opposition is in breach of section E8.2 of the enterprise agreement. That is where the onus lies. It lies with a member of this place. And this is the Leader of the Opposition.

As the only qualified lawyer in this place, you would think, Mr Speaker, that the Leader of the Opposition would be very picky about the detail, that he would be very concerned about the detail and he would make sure that everything in his office was squeaky clean. I am sorry about this, Mr Speaker, but it would appear, from the freedom of information documents and from observations, that there is something very unclean going on. And we need to get to the bottom of it.

We have asked for an independent audit. We believe in fact that this is a specific issue. There are two very specific points, and we need to have an independent audit of the issues. The Leader of the Opposition needs to come in here by close of business on Thursday and answer those questions. We then need to agree to an independent audit to go right to the root cause of all of this and make sure that not only are the systemic problems fixed but that there has been no inappropriate application of territory funds. I commend the motion to the chamber.

MR SESELJA (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (10.19): Mr Speaker, we have seen the government go from their position on Friday when we had the hysterical claims made by the Chief Minister in relation to all and sundry—allegations that she is unable to back up—to where we have seen them back away today and get the failed former minister John Hargreaves to now lead the charge and bring forward this motion.

On Friday we had Katy Gallagher making all sorts of unsubstantiated allegations. Someone must have spoken to her over the weekend and said: “Actually, you cannot back that up, because it is not true. You can’t actually match your rhetoric with

evidence.” This is what we see as the result a couple of days later: instead of Katy Gallagher continuing to throw the mud, we have John Hargreaves. But we see how they are ramping it down as they see that they do not have the case that they claim to have.

The claims that the Chief Minister made on Friday were wrong. She made all sorts of unsubstantiated allegations in her press release; they were wrong. She will have to justify why she is happy to go out and smear without any evidence—smearing individual staff and smearing members. If that is the Chief Minister’s way of doing things, we can only suspect that the reason it is Mr Hargreaves now moving the motion is that someone has advised the Chief Minister that perhaps she was on pretty shaky ground in making the claims that she made on Friday.

It is first important to address the issues. I have done so publicly; I will do it again. The issues in relation to time sheets and the submission of time sheets are unfortunate. I have acknowledged that that was not handled well by my office, and I take responsibility for that. The question then becomes this: given that we have been through a process with corporate services in resolving those issues, in going through the issues around time sheets, the issue becomes one of what to do from here. As I understand it, those issues have been resolved.

What we are talking about—we see it from the government’s rhetoric, from the government’s change in rhetoric—is the submission of time sheets. All the allegations made by Ms Gallagher are completely unsubstantiated. There has been an acknowledgement by me and my office that time sheets were not submitted in a timely manner. That is something I regret.

Mr Barr interjecting—

MR SESELJA: But in terms of getting—I will just make the point, as we get the interjection from Mr Barr, that I am sure that this is an issue that is not isolated to one office in the Assembly. I would expect that ministers will get up and declare that at no stage have there been any issues around time sheets in their offices: if their claim is that time sheets are such a grave concern, I am sure that all members will get up and say there have been no issues. Perhaps Ms Gallagher can declare exactly whether there have ever been issues around late time sheets.

The issues that were first put forward by Ms Gallagher have been backed away from—backed away from because they had no evidence. They are now looking at a different way of smearing. They are sending Mr Hargreaves out. We will deal with the actual motion that is before us, not with a lot of the allegations that they seem to have run away from.

The central claim in this motion appears to be in relation to the president of the Liberal Party. I will simply make this point: presidents of political parties work in the Assembly across the political spectrum. We have seen that on the Labor side; we have seen that on the Liberal side. To suggest that that is inappropriate—I reject that. To suggest that someone cannot be volunteering for a political party and working for a political party in the Assembly is incorrect. It is not the way that the Labor Party has

approached things over many years, including in Ms Gallagher's office, where the president of the Labor Party has worked. In fact, until recently Labor Party candidates have been working for Labor members in this place. Obviously the government will have to explain those things.

We are very happy to comply. We are happy to answer questions. The motion is calling for my office to answer a number of questions. We will answer those questions. We do not accept the premise of much of the motion, but we are happy to answer questions. But it is important that all members answer questions in relation to the management of their offices—the management of personnel, the management of staff. If we are going to be fair dinkum about this, I am sure that those opposite will not shy away from a similar audit being conducted on their offices and their actions.

The other part of Mr Hargreaves's argument seems to be that you cannot do any work for a member outside the office. Every time a member goes out to a shopping centre and is assisted by a staff member, apparently, according to Mr Hargreaves, they should be clocking off. Every time they go to an event outside the Assembly, they are somehow not working. What a ridiculous claim.

That is central to his claim. That was what he spent most of his time talking about in his motion. Is that what the Labor Party's position is now—that staff are working only when they are in the Assembly? What a ridiculous proposition.

I would add that certainly my staff—and I am sure many staff across the Assembly—work many hours of unpaid overtime. We wish that it were not so. We wish they were able to be paid for every hour that they do. When they are working in budget week, working well beyond midnight—they claimed every hour, and I encouraged them to do so. But there are times when they get calls early in the morning, when they are working. They do not write every hour down. And many of them max out their TOIL and simply do not get paid for every hour that they do. We acknowledge the hard work that they do.

In relation to this issue, we are happy to answer questions. But it is reasonable to ask that, if we are going to apply one standard to the opposition, the same kinds of questions are asked across the board. I think it is therefore reasonable to expand this, and the Canberra Liberals will be seeking to do that.

I just conclude by saying this. We will be very happy to answer those questions. We hope that any auditing will be done in a fair, impartial, transparent way that does not just target one side of politics in an election year.

Let us be clear about why the government are seeking to stir this up. They are seeking to stir this up because, in an election year, they do not want to talk about their record. They do not want to talk about what they have been doing. We see daily failures of administration by this government. We saw them just this weekend: they are failing to pay bills, for five years in some circumstances. The administrative failings by the government and the millions of dollars wasted as a result are an issue of concern, something we will continue to pursue.

In relation to this issue, we will answer questions, but we expect that other members—particularly members who make unfounded allegations, particularly members who throw mud and seek to hold certain members in this place to a particular standard—will be open and transparent. We expect that they will make statements to the Assembly saying that there have never been any issues in their office and that they will be happy with an audit of all of their offices, whether they be working for the Labor Party, volunteering for the Labor Party or candidates for the Labor Party. We look forward to that kind of treatment across the board, and we will be happy to answer the Assembly's questions.

MS HUNTER (Ginninderra—Parliamentary Leader, ACT Greens) (10.28): It is important that today we are very clear about the matter that is being debated and the extent of the issue that has been revealed in the *Canberra Times*. This is no trivial matter and certainly goes far beyond an administrative matter about paperwork being submitted.

Certainly if the issue was just about a few forms that had not been submitted on time, we would not be discussing this matter today. The failure to submit time sheets is not the real issue. Whilst it is certainly a part of it—a very important part of it, and it does show a good deal of incompetence by the opposition leader in managing his staff—the real issue is whether Mr Seselja has authorised his staff to receive a payment that they are not entitled to.

In effect, the allegation that the Greens are very concerned to address is whether or not Mr Seselja has engaged in fraudulent or other wrongful conduct and allowed his staff to be paid for work they did not do. This is what it is about. Were those time sheets correct? Do those time sheets correctly account for work that has been done—

Members interjecting—

MR SPEAKER: Order! Stop the clocks. Thank you, Mr Smyth.

Mr Smyth: There is an imputation in what Ms Hunter has just said. It is not covered by the terms of the motion tabled by Mr Hargreaves. I ask for your ruling as to whether she is in order and whether she should withdraw those comments.

MR SPEAKER: This, of course, will be all the more challenging, as I found it very difficult to hear Ms Hunter. On the point of order, Mr Smyth, I think Ms Hunter's comments remain in order. I think the motion is substantively about the issues raised, and I believe Ms Hunter framed it as a question in the context of the matters that are being debated. If a straight allegation was made, I would be more concerned, but in the context of the debate and the breadth of the motion there is no point of order.

Mr Smyth: Just going to your words there, Mr Speaker, could you point to where the motion talks about fraudulence?

MR SPEAKER: I obviously cannot, Mr Smyth.

Mr Smyth: On that basis, I would ask you—

MR SPEAKER: I am not going to sit here and go through the motion line by line, but I think that through, for example, the direction for the Speaker to undertake an audit there are questions being raised there. I am going to allow the comment to stand, but I will keep a close eye on it. I accept the tenor of where you are going; I do not think Ms Hunter's remarks crossed that line. Mr Hargreaves, on the point of order.

Mr Hargreaves: I can assist. I suggest that the member look at paragraph 6(a), in particular the second phrase in that clause.

MR SPEAKER: Thank you. Ms Hunter, you have the floor to continue.

MS HUNTER: Thank you, Mr Speaker. That is what the heart of the matter is here. This is what the motion is going to today in asking the Leader of the Opposition to come into the chamber to answer a series of questions about staffing matters in relation to the issue that has been raised. The last part of it directs the Speaker to set up an independent workplace audit to be assured that the ACT taxpayers' money that is given to a member of this place to employ staff to do work in this place is being used for that purpose.

It is important that we get to the heart of it. This is about the integrity of this Assembly. In my time here, and I believe for many years, we have not had these sorts of allegations raised. In his speech Mr Seselja spoke about the fact that there could be many staff members in this place who had not lodged their time sheets in a timely manner. That may well happen from time to time. But this is an extraordinary case. We are talking about a series of letters that were sent to the Leader of the Opposition over years, asking the Leader of the Opposition to abide by the rules.

As employers in this place we all sign a contract with our employees; part of that is that documentation is kept that shows that staff are entitled to the pay they receive. We all signed those sheets to be assured that the right thing has happened. This motion is very much about saying, "We need to understand that that was properly carried out." And it is also about saying that the money that was allocated, the pay that was received by a staff member, was paid to that person because they performed duties within this place. It is not necessarily physically within this place. Mr Seselja talks about staff going outside. Of course our staff go outside to community events. There is a range of duties that they perform. But this is about whether taxpayers' dollars were paying the salary of someone who was not doing the work of this place, was not performing duties to do with Mr Seselja's duties in this place. We need to be assured that that has not been the case.

There have been a series of allegations raised that we need to get to the bottom of. It is about the integrity of the Assembly. If it turns out that there has not been any wrongdoing then we move on. But at this point there are a series of questions, quite serious questions, that need to be answered.

If we were in New South Wales, for instance, this matter could be referred to the Independent Commission Against Corruption. There have been matters about time sheets and record keeping that were referred in New South Wales. Back in 2010 Ms Angela D'Amore, a former New South Wales member of parliament for Drummoyne, had a matter referred against her. It was with regard to putting in forms that did not claim the right staff allowances. This totalled about \$4½ thousand that staff received that they were not entitled to. I would like to quote a statement in the introduction to the commission's report:

The role of a Member of Parliament is wide-ranging and demanding. Members are provided various allowances and entitlements to facilitate their activities in this role. However, they are held strictly accountable for their use of public resources and specific mention of a Member's responsibility to apply public funds in a manner consistent with applicable guidelines and rules is made in the Code of Conduct for Members. There is an overarching responsibility of Members of Parliament to maintain the public trust placed in them by performing their duties with honesty and integrity. In the view of the Commission, it is generally a matter of public interest to determine whether a Member of Parliament has dishonestly exercised their official functions and instructed or authorised others, especially employees, to do likewise.

There was another case as well, with Ms Karyn Paluzzano. She was a New South Wales member of parliament for Penrith. That involved about \$3,400 in entitlements to staff.

In this case, given that the concerns raised in relation to Mr Seselja cover a number of years, we need to be taking this matter seriously. We need to be properly investigating. That is why there is this series of questions that Mr Seselja has been asked to respond to, to report back to this Assembly on. And part of the motion directs the Speaker to set up the independent workplace audit.

There is another thing that I found curious in all of this matter. It is in regard to a series of questions that were asked by Mr Coe in estimates last year. These questions from Mr Coe were quite odd. Looking back on it, it seemed quite strange and curious. It relates to 6(b) of this motion. In 6(b), we have asked to provide the independent auditor with all relevant records, including relevant building access records and ICT information for the relative period.

Mr Coe asked a series of questions about how long CCTV data and swipe card information recording staff activity was kept by the Assembly. In the context of what has come up, it seems quite curious that those questions were asked. That could be perfectly innocent, but it is important that in this motion we ensure that we provide the independent auditor, whoever he or she may be, with the information they will need to properly conduct this audit. Again, I would say that this cannot just be swept under the carpet.

Mr Coe interjecting—

MS HUNTER: Mr Coe finds this incredibly amusing. It is not amusing. This is a matter that cannot be swept under the carpet. It is an important matter that needs to be looked at. It needs to be independently audited. We do have questions. Mr Seselja said in his speech that he is very happy to come back into the Assembly and answer those questions. I look forward to Mr Seselja's response to those questions. It may well clarify many matters.

I state quite clearly that the Greens will be supporting this motion. We also support the direction to the Speaker to set up this independent workplace audit. With these two lines of questions and questioning, we may be able to get to the bottom of this matter. But at the end of the day we do have the privilege of being elected members, we do have responsibilities to the electorate for the use of taxpayers' dollars, and we do have responsibilities as employers to our employees. We need to ensure that our records are kept; we do account for money. Therefore the Greens will be supporting this motion.

MS GALLAGHER (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Minister for Health and Minister for Territory and Municipal Services) (10.40): This motion today deals with several serious concerns and allegations that have arisen from the revelations last week about the administration of the Leader of the Opposition's office. Firstly, it notes with concern that this is the third in a series of ethical fault lines in the Leader of the Opposition's office, and I go back to the issue of having to repay \$10,000 that was taken from charities to fund the Canberra Liberals' volunteer work.

We also note that the Leader of the Opposition has had to come into this place and apologise for staff using for political purposes photocopying resources provided to members of the Assembly. And now we find out that for three years the Leader of the Opposition failed to adequately manage his staffing responsibilities, which are clearly set out in certified agreements, legislation and, indeed, several reminders over a number of years from Secretariat staff.

This motion notes those concerns. It then seeks further information from the Leader of the Opposition in relation to a number of matters. Alongside that, it seeks an independent audit into those records that have been kept—and that the Leader of the Opposition assures us are accurate—to provide the Assembly with some assurance that taxpayer funds have not been used for any inappropriate purpose and that the records which have been signed off in the Leader of the Opposition's office are accurate and a true reflection of the hours and leave and TOIL earned by particular staff.

I have to say it is unfortunate to say the least that the Assembly is faced with dealing with this motion this morning. This is an unprecedented motion. I do not recall in my time in this place the Assembly having to deal with basic administration matters of members' entitlements. This is not an issue of the Assembly's making—despite what I am sure we will hear from those opposite in subsequent speeches and, indeed, in the speech we heard from the Leader of the Opposition this morning—but it is up to the Assembly to make sure that an appropriate response to the concerns that have been raised is provided.

As Ms Hunter said, in other jurisdictions other avenues are available for investigation of concerns like this. The ACT does not have those options available, and the government believes a motion outlining the process as set out in this motion is the adequate response at this point in time. That does not mean to say that the matter will end here; it may well end here. We have listened to the Leader of the Opposition this morning, and if we are confident in the responses that he has provided and he can assure us of that in his written report to the Assembly and if the audit verifies that, it may end with this motion. But it may not.

This issue goes to matters of ethical leadership and accountability. It goes to code of conduct adherence and adherence to ACT laws. It goes to whether adequate leadership as an employer has been followed or whether we have got a leader here who cuts corners or brushes aside inconvenient process for his own gain. This goes to appropriate use of taxpayer funds and to the issues of accountability back to the community.

We all know the Leader of the Opposition is very quick to come in here and point the finger to seek to create scandal where there is none, but now it is time for the Leader of the Opposition to come in here and face his peers and to provide the assurance we need that there has not been any misuse of Assembly resources.

I know the Leader of the Opposition has tried to trivialise this back to a mere matter of compliance with the administrative requirements in his office, but it goes further than that, and Ms Hunter has pointed out some of the concerns. Concerns have been raised about staff who were not on approved leave, who may not have accrued TOIL at the time and who have now been retrospectively granted TOIL to work on Gary Humphries's election campaign. It is not just a matter of time sheets. There are rumours in this place around phantom staff arrangements, and it is appropriate that we be—

Mr Smyth: Now you are peddling rumours.

MS GALLAGHER: No, there are rumours.

Mrs Dunne: Point of order, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: Stop the clocks, thank you. Mrs Dunne has the floor.

Mrs Dunne: Is it appropriate that the Chief Minister should slur members of the Assembly by referring to "rumours"? It is entirely disorderly. In this place, which is essentially a court—and it has been treated like a kangaroo court this morning—we are supposed to deal with matters of fact and truth and not rumours. I ask you to draw this to the Chief Minister's attention, because we are not dealing with rumours.

MR SPEAKER: I think we come back to the same issue that was dealt with under Mr Smyth's point of order. We are debating a substantive motion. Chief Minister, I remind you to try and stick with the facts that are known as you continue with your remaining time.

MS GALLAGHER: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I am sure the issues I go to around staff arrangements are covered off in the motion, where we are seeking assurance from the Leader of the Opposition that people who are employed to work on Assembly business in the Leader of the Opposition's office actually are fulfilling those responsibilities. That is part of the motion, and we will await further information from the Leader of the Opposition.

It is no surprise to me that the Liberal Party will seek to spread this issue across every office in this place, but the advice to me is that 16 out of 17 members get their processes right. That is the advice that I understand to be the case. I certainly can rule out the possibility that any member of the Labor Party has had two to three years of warnings from anyone around adherence to administrative process in their office. In fact, when the Auditor-General came in and had a look at these processes a number of years ago, I was informed that my office led the way in terms of adherence to time sheets within the building.

But the issue here will be that the Liberal Party will seek to try and spread this out to be a systems issue. It is not a systems issue. They are issues that have been raised around compliance and other related matters which sit firmly and squarely within the Leader of the Opposition's office. To try and spread the blame is an obvious tactic and one that we expected, but this motion keeps the issue focused on where the concerns have been raised.

In relation to any statements that I have made publicly or indeed in a media statement, I have reviewed those and I do not believe there are any unsubstantiated claims that I would need to correct the record over in any of the comments I have made. As I said, this is not an issue of anyone else's making but that of the Leader of the Opposition. Yes, it is embarrassing and yes, he can say, "Well, I'm sorry and now I've got my house in order." But the documents released under freedom of information require the Assembly to ask further questions and require the Assembly to take further action, and that is what this motion seeks to do today.

MR HANSON (Molonglo) (10.50): Let us be very clear about what has happened and what is happening here today. Administrative errors have been made in Mr Seselja's office and he has been very clear in acknowledging those. Those issues have been rectified. Indeed, Ms Hunter said on the radio this morning that they have been cleared.

But let us also acknowledge what is happening here this morning. This is a deliberate political attack by the Greens and by the Labor Party on the Liberal Party. That is exactly what is occurring today. Let us be very clear, because if you listen to what Mr Hargreaves said, what Ms Gallagher said and what Ms Hunter said, there is a confected outrage. There is some confected outrage that the president of the Liberal Party works in Mr Seselja's office. Somehow that seems to be immoral. If you read what Ms Gallagher said in her press release, she said that Mr Seselja doing that shows "someone whose moral and ethical compass is completely directionless". That is a quote from her press release.

But Garrett Purtill, who is the branch president of the Labor Party, worked in her office for what—for about four years, Chief Minister? Now I believe he works in Dr Bourke's office. So it is okay for the Labor Party to have their president working for the Chief Minister and for a minister, but not for the Liberal Party to have their president working for Mr Seselja. I do not understand the hypocrisy here, because that is what it is. Often we will look over at those benches and we will see the president of the Labor Party, who is also a staff member in this place, sitting there basically doing both roles.

I have been to briefings, Mr Speaker, where Garrett Purtill as a staffer for either Ms Gallagher or Dr Bourke is present providing a role with bureaucrats and myself. But he is also sitting there with everybody knowing that he is the president of the Labor Party. Let us be quite clear: this is not an issue that affects just the Liberal Party. This has an impact on all the political parties here and it does not make Ms Gallagher or Dr Bourke unethical or immoral because they are simply doing exactly what the Liberal Party is doing.

We have seen Labor Party candidates preselected and endorsed, as they were back in December, continuing to work in the office of Ms Gallagher. Indeed, Ms Drake, who was preselected as a Labor Party candidate, went on a tour of health facilities with me in her role as an adviser to Ms Gallagher. There am I walking around health facilities with someone who is also, quite publicly, a Labor Party candidate. That is okay for the Labor Party, but it would not be appropriate for the Liberal Party.

We know that Ms Porter's husband worked for her for a great number of years and now works for the ACT public service. Where does this line stop? If your partner, your sister, your spouse, works for the ACT public service, is that immoral? Is that unethical? Is that inappropriate? I believe that there are people who have family members working in the ACT public service in their own directorates. Is that immoral? Is that unethical? There are people here who have spouses or partners who are working—

Mr Hargreaves: Point of order, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: Yes. Order! One moment, Mr Hanson. Stop the clocks, thank you. Mr Hargreaves, on a point of order?

Mr Hargreaves: Yes, Mr Speaker. Mr Hanson has been talking, for the last 45 seconds or so, about such things as Ms Porter's spouse—that sort of thing. There is nothing in this motion which talks about that aspect of staff engagement, Mr Speaker. So I would ask you to ask Mr Hanson, as you did in fact with the Chief Minister, to address his remarks to the motion at hand.

MR SPEAKER: Yes, Mr Hanson?

MR HANSON: On the point of order, Mr Speaker, quite clearly this is about an alleged conflict of interest. Mr Hargreaves in his opening remarks made extensive comments about the fact that the president of the Liberal Party is working for

Mr Seselja. The point is this: is that appropriate or is it not appropriate? What I am pointing out is that there are many incidences in this Assembly where we have not only party members working in offices but spouses and other family members working across the Assembly and also the ACT government.

MR SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr Hanson. On the point of order, there is no point of order at this point, although I would ask you, Mr Hanson, in respect of drifting into the realm of families, to consider that it might be best if we keep the families out of this debate and focus on the staffers, which I think is the tenor of the debate.

MR HANSON: Let me address that point of order, because—

MR SPEAKER: Are we going to start the time again, Mr Hanson? Do you want to continue with this?

MR HANSON: On the point of order, Mr Speaker—

MR SPEAKER: No, we are not. We are just going to start the clock again. It was not a direction; it was an invitation to just consider what realms, what boundaries, we want to put on this debate. Let us start the clock again.

MR HANSON: Mr Hargreaves is reported in the *Canberra Times* as saying, “We will ask for an examination of Mr Doyle’s employment in light of clause 8 of the Assembly members’ code of conduct.” So the Labor Party, as we heard on 666 this morning, were going after family members. That is exactly what they were trying to do. We heard Ms Hunter say on behalf of the Greens that she had seen a draft of that and she is unhappy with it. This is exactly what you will see from the Labor Party here—a direct attack wherever they can on the Liberal Party.

Let us not pretend that Katy Gallagher was not going directly after family members. That is exactly what she was doing. Now Mr Hargreaves is trying to get on some high moral horse about it. He is the one that put in the motion that he wanted to attack the Liberal Party because they have a family member. But when it comes to raising questions about a similar incidence in the Labor Party, where they have spouses working in the Assembly, where they have spouses working in the ACT government, we are told: “No, you cannot mention that. That would be immoral. That would be unethical.”

We have complete hypocrisy, Mr Speaker, between what is being put forward as acceptable standards for the Labor Party and what is somehow immoral and unethical for the Liberal Party. Ms Hunter, with her confected outrage this morning, was asked on the radio by Ross Solly, “Can Ms Hunter put her hand on her heart and say that she and other Greens’ offices are shipshape?” No, she could not. She refused to answer that question. She revealed that there is documentation and matters outstanding and not always on time. She said that these are sort of administrative matters. It seems that it is acceptable that she has some tardiness in her office and across the Greens, but not in the Liberals. We are being kept to some different standard.

This is rank hypocrisy, Mr Speaker. We know that Ms Gallagher, for example, has her partner working in the Assembly. We know that he is involved in the production of Assembly documents. We know that he works on the same floor as the Liberal Party between two different offices. We do not consider that a problem. We have never raised it as an issue. We do not see it as an issue.

But if we were to judge the same way the Labor Party is trying to judge us, where is the double standard? Where is it that we cannot have someone who is employed as a distant family member, whereas the Labor Party can seemingly do what they want, have their president working for them and have preselected candidates working for them? I do note that Ms Drake has now moved on to Senator Lundy's office.

This is politically motivated. If there is an examination of Mr Seselja's office—and he welcomes that—let us have an examination of other offices. For example, let us have a look at Mr Barr's office. I am sure that Mr Barr or none of his staff spent a moment of their time in the Assembly gearing up for the national conference this year where he led the debate on gay marriage. I am sure he never made a single phone call, nor did any of his staff members, nor were there any emails at all about the issue of the national conference of the Labor Party. I am sure that would be the case. I am sure that if we had a fearless examination of Mr Barr's office, that could be confirmed.

Let us see Mr Barr welcome an examination, because I am sure he was not lobbying on the phones using taxpayers' resources. He was not using his email system. He was not using his time when he was meant to be a minister and the Treasurer of the ACT. No, he was not using any of that time to lobby and to work the numbers for the national conference of the Labor Party. Unless he is going to be prepared to have an open examination of his office, all his phone records, all his email transactions, then how is that not rank hypocrisy? That is absolute hypocrisy.

What we have seen from the Labor Party over the last number of years is a series of failures of governance of the ACT. We have seen problems with systemic bullying at the Canberra Hospital that Katy Gallagher denied. But when the report came through, it found evidence of systemic reticence to address staff performance issues, a total lack of cohesion with the executive staff at Canberra Hospital, staff members stretched to the limit with workloads and extensive barriers for medical staff interested in working at the Canberra Hospital. So there were extensive problems.

We saw the downgrading of elective surgery patients inappropriately. We saw the whole Calvary hospital fiasco where Katy Gallagher said that all her plans were on the table but, in reality, they were not, because she had written letters to the Little Company of Mary asking that there be a heads of agreement. She did that before the last election.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, can you remain relevant, please?

MR HANSON: Yes, I will. We have seen mismanagement from this government. There was \$900,000 just last year that we missed out on for missing elective surgery

targets. We have seen at the last election where Ms Gallagher used the Canberra Hospital for election ads—most inappropriate—with no documentation to support that. We saw the opening of the prison as an election stunt.

Mr Hargreaves: Point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

MR HANSON: Will you stop the clock, please?

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Resume your seat, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Can you stop the clocks, please?

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, I will ask for the clock to be stopped. Could you stop the clock, please.

Mr Hargreaves: Madam Deputy Speaker, you did ask Mr Hanson to become relevant. This motion is about administrative practices in a member's office and it talks about that in quite specific terms. Madam Deputy Speaker, this is—

Mr Seselja interjecting—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Could you sit down, please.

Mr Hargreaves: Certainly.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Seselja, I cannot hear what Mr Hargreaves is saying.

Mr Doszpot interjecting—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Doszpot, I do not want your commentary.

Mr Hargreaves: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. This motion before the chamber today is quite specific. It is about the administrative arrangements in the office of a member as a direct result of the freedom of information documents which were released on the Legislative Assembly's website. This is not about government programs. This is not about policies and philosophies. This about a very specific issue.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr Hargreaves. Mr Hanson, I would ask you to remain relevant, please—

MR HANSON: Can I discuss the point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker?

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: No.

MR HANSON: No?

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: I uphold the point of order and I ask you to remain relevant.

MR HANSON: Certainly. Let us talk about the incompetence of administration in ministers' offices. What about all of the late questions that we get? How many late questions have we got? I can see a whole series of them from Ms Gallagher. All of them are only followed up once we ask in this place. What about letters that are due within 30 days? Let us see how many have been late. Just in the last year, Ms Gallagher had five letters late; Mr Corbell, 14 letters late. We had to follow him up two times on one and three times on another letter. If you want to look at administration of offices, if that does not include the administration of ministries then what does it include? So Madam Assistant Speaker—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Deputy, actually.

MR HANSON: Madam Deputy Speaker, what we have seen here today is rank political opportunism. We have seen hypocrisy. If the government and the Greens do not open their doors to a similar review, a similar audit as being demanded by the Labor Party then what we are seeing is simple politics in an election year. It is nothing more, nothing less. It is hypocrisy.

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (11.02): I move:

- (1) In subparagraph 6(a), insert after “staffing arrangements” the words “for all staff of Ministers and Members of the ACT Legislative Assembly”.
- (2) In subparagraph 6(a), omit all words after “inappropriate payments”, substitute “were made to staff during the period of the Seventh Assembly”.

The Chief Minister said a large part of this motion was based on rumours. She used the word “rumours”—there are “rumours”. I refer the Chief Minister to her own ministerial code of conduct, which says:

Ministers should take reasonable steps to ensure the factual content of statements they make in the Assembly is soundly based ...

Nothing we have heard from those opposite this morning is soundly based in fact. The allegations and the slur are easy. It is quite amusing when you look at what happened on Friday. There she was with a glint in her eye and a smile on her face and she could not wait to get in front of those cameras to throw the slur and put the hyperbole out. But what we see today is that reality has caught up with the Chief Minister's hyperbole. What we see today is actually a reflection on the office of the Speaker and the office of the Clerk. The Chief Minister said that assurance is required. Do you not trust the Speaker? Do you not trust the processes of the Clerk? That is where the slur is today.

Indeed, as pointed out, Ms Hunter said on the radio this morning that this thing has been cleared up. Well, if this thing has been cleared up to the satisfaction of the Clerk and the Speaker, what are we doing here this morning? I will tell you what we are doing: we are doing politics. And politics, of course, is the business of places of assemblies and parliaments, and let us not have any doubt about this—this is not about an attempt to get to the truth, because we have got to the truth. Ms Hunter told

us this morning that the matter had been cleared up. So why are we here? We are here because it suits the Labor Party and it suits the Greens to cast slurs and allegations on the Leader of the Opposition. Despite the Chief Minister's denials on the radio this morning, this is an election year, and they see this as a hot button, so they are going to push it for as long and as hard as they can. But the reality does not match the rhetoric.

Mr Hargreaves says, "How can we believe anything the Leader of the Opposition"—the soon-to-be Chief Minister—"says because how would he know?" Mr Hargreaves has informed me and others that he is going to have a few trips overseas this year, so it will be official Assembly business to go to a CPA meeting. He will come back and sign off the time sheets of his staff, but how will he know? He will not even be in the country when some of those times are posted. We have all done overseas trips; we have all been on interstate trips where staff continue to fill out their time sheets.

Let us get to the heart of this; let us get to the nub of this. What is this about? This is about politics. But if you open the political door on one party then the political door is opened on all parties, and it should be opened. I am sure those opposite will not be afraid to widen the scope of this inquiry. If they are afraid to widen the scope of this inquiry then you have to ask why. As Mr Hanson has already said, Ms Hunter was asked, "Can you say that everything in your office is shipshape," and she could not. Ms Hunter's inability to answer questions about her own members' administration of their offices has left them all open to the question: what is wrong in the offices of the Greens?

If you applied the same to those in government, we would ask: will all of the members of the government please stand up here and give us a guarantee, a hand-on-heart guarantee, that everything that has occurred in their offices in the last three and a bit years is above board and shipshape? You will not see a single one stand up and do that because they know they cannot. If they can, I will withdraw my amendments. If all seven members of the government and all members of the Greens get up and put their hands on their hearts and say to this Assembly, "Everything is 100 per cent shipshape in our offices and has been for the entirety of this Assembly and across all members of staff employed during that time," I will withdraw my amendments. It is very simple. I will take you at your word. All of you stand up and say that. But none of you will because a simple inquiry of any public service office or any office anywhere in this country would probably find inconsistencies or errors, most of them human, because, at the end of the day, we are all human.

But I expect four Greens and seven Labor members to stand up and say they are above board, they are without sin. We can get a little bit biblical—they are casting the first stone. Well, just be careful who casts the first stone, because stones sometimes ricochet.

We know there are issues now. Somebody texted Ross Solly this morning, pointing out that the president of the Labor Party works in this building. He has worked in a number of offices, including that of the Chief Minister, and now in Dr Bourke's. Is that inappropriate?

We throw a slur on all people who want to be involved in the political process when we start down this track. You have started down this track, Chief Minister, you and your gleeful smile on Friday and your hyperbole where you went out with your outrageous allegations, none of which I see are backed up today. So we have made some allegations, now let us go and see if we cannot go on a little bit of a fishing trip here and find some facts.

I remind people again of the ministerial code of conduct:

Ministers should take reasonable steps to ensure the factual content of statements they make in the Assembly ...

But, no, what does Ms Gallagher say? “There are some rumours, so I will just act on the basis of these rumours and we will go on a bit of a trawl through the Leader of the Opposition’s records.” Well, let us look at all of our records. There you go. We are moving a motion that will put all of our records on the table. I am sure in the new era of—what was it she said?—openness and accountability, the Chief Minister will not have any problem whatsoever with widening the reach of the net that she has just cast.

Let us face it: she did not have the nerve here to stand up herself and cast the net. She got Mr Hargreaves to do the dirty work. She does not have the convictions of her beliefs, because her beliefs are based on rumours. She will come a cropper moving on rumours. She did not have the courage to stand up like the Leader of the Opposition to put his case, which he did with dignity and calmness. No, she just uses rumours.

So let us broaden the reach of the net and see how happy people are. I expect the full support of the Greens. At the end of the day, this motion is a slur on the office of the Speaker, it is a slur on the office of the Clerk and it is a slur on the Secretariat. The Secretariat has done this work and, according to the Speaker—I think he said it a couple of times on Friday—“Matter resolved. Matter closed.” Ms Hunter this morning said: “Matter closed. Oh, until the politics gets into it.” Well, that is okay. We are politicians. We understand that.

But those who throw stones should be very careful, particularly when you have had the president of your political party working in your office, particularly when people who are related to you work in this building and particularly when people who might be related to any of us work in the public service. Where does the line stop? Where do you want to draw this to? Everyone has a right to participate in the political process, and good luck to those that do it actively. I often say I welcome people who join any political party because they are having their say.

If we are going to go down this slippery slope, let us all go down together. Let us see how happy you are to go down this slope together. I suspect there will not be support for this. I suspect I will not have four Greens and seven Labor members stand up, hand on heart, and say, “Nothing untoward ever happened in my office for the term of this Assembly.” I suspect I will not get support for the amendments.

What do the amendments do? They amend paragraph 6(a) where this apparent independent workplace audit will apply only to the Leader of the Opposition and extends it to all of the staff of ministers and members in the ACT Legislative Assembly. We have had from those opposite the rhetoric that the people of the ACT deserve to know that everything is above board in one office. Well, let us give them the guarantee that everything is above board in 17 offices in this place. Are you game to go down that path? I suspect you probably are not. I will be absolutely delighted when you all vote for my amendments.

The amendments then go on to refer to whether inappropriate payments have been made to “any staff” in this place. Let us see if you are so keen on that. You are keen to hold one member to account. Let us make sure that those who cast the first stone are without sin. Let us see where this lands, because the problem with throwing stones is that sometimes they ricochet. I suspect that if this is done in agreement with what I propose, there will be some very embarrassed members in this place.

We are all human; our staff are human. We do what we can within the bounds of the time that we have as we prioritise what we do. The problem with this motion for me is that we have some of the worst health results in the country from the Chief Minister herself, who is the Minister for Health, but we are not debating that today. When we said, “Let’s have an inquiry into obstetrics”—no. When we said, “Let’s have an inquiry into children in care”—no. Mr Doszpot asked for an inquiry into time sheets for teachers, but that did not get up either. When we said, “Let’s have an independent inquiry into the bushfire,” that did not go either. This is ridiculous. I challenge you to support my amendments. Let us see if you have that much courage. (*Time expired.*)

MR HARGREAVES (Brindabella) (11.13): Madam Deputy Speaker, I am speaking on the amendments. Mr Smyth made much that the Chief Minister’s comments were based on rumour. That needs to be refuted in the strongest possible terms. The Chief Minister, in fact, was actually basing her comments on facts. And those facts, Madam Deputy Speaker—

Mr Doszpot interjecting—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, Mr Doszpot!

Mr Doszpot interjecting—

MR HARGREAVES: are the freedom of information documents which—

Mr Doszpot interjecting—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Resume your seat, Mr Hargreaves. Stop the clock for a moment, please. Mr Doszpot, I do not want a commentary across the chamber, please. Will you remain silent while Mr Hargreaves is speaking?

Mr Doszpot: Well, he is misrepresenting the Chief Minister, Madam Deputy Speaker.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Doszpot, will you remain silent while Mr Hargreaves is speaking to the amendments?

MR HARGREAVES: Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. The facts to which I refer are those contained within the freedom of information documents on the Legislative Assembly website. I suspect that only the Leader of the Opposition's office has actually bothered to read them, otherwise they would not make such silly assertions that this stuff is based on rumour. Those documents, in fact, are quite clear. Those documents talk about how the documents were 22 months in coming forward. Those documents reveal that only one office had at one point in time eight out of 10 staff in breach of these administrative arrangements. Those documents also reveal that only one office was the subject of repeated exhortations from the Clerk's office to fix the matter up—repeated—and they got stronger and stronger each time.

You would have to be either blind or stupid not to understand the message that the Clerk was giving. He talks about being subject to embarrassment. That is what we are seeing here today. When people are embarrassed, they thrash around trying to divert attention. The suggestion that this is a slur on the Speaker's office and the Clerk's office has got to be an all-time low in this place. I reject that absolutely unequivocally.

Mr Smyth talked about the president of the Labor Party, and so did Mr Hanson. Let me put this to you, Madam Deputy Speaker: I think it was Mr Hanson who said he occasionally looks across the chamber to the benches over here and he sees Mr Purtill. Let me say to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, I, too, have looked across the chamber at the benches over there and I have rarely seen Tio Faulkner sitting there, because he is too busy at 221 London Circuit.

The issue is not whether somebody can in their own time be the president of a political party. The issue is whether they spend predominantly their time off site actually discharging one of those roles which is not that for which they are being paid by this Legislative Assembly. That is the issue. So the comparison with other people is quite inappropriate.

This question has to be answered: is Mr Faulkner being paid as the president of the Canberra Liberals or is he being paid as the director of electorate services in the Leader of the Opposition's office? Mr Hanson and Mr Smyth both perpetrated the furphy of saying he works in the office of the Leader of the Opposition. Well, he does not. He works on level 5 at 221 London Circuit. That was also admitted by Mr Hanson when he tried to tell us about the accommodation arrangements there. You cannot have it both ways. He is not that schizophrenic. Quite clearly he cannot be in two places at once.

I suggest to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, that we need an independent person to go and check that out. If it is fine then let it be known that it is fine. Let us dispel that. Those opposite did not mind quoting Mr De Landelles and Ms Porter. I remind those members that there was a change in the legislation which said that that was not possible. A member cannot employ a close family member. It was not me that raised

it, Madam Deputy Speaker—there is nothing in the motion—but those opposite raised this. It says, “A close family member in the office of the member.” Let us be crystal clear—“in the office of the member”.

Those folks across there need to think about whether or not the members’ code of conduct—which clearly talks about it in paragraph (8)—has actually been respected. They need to check it out. If they can put their hands on their hearts and say, “No, I do not have a close relative in my family working in my office as a member,” then fine. I suggest they ought to examine themselves a little more.

Opposition members interjecting—

MR HARGREAVES: They can talk to me as often as they like, but I do not listen to them. I do not listen to them until they stand on their feet appropriately in debate.

Mr Hanson says this is a confected outrage and it is a political attack on the Liberal Party. Mr Seselja said that Ms Gallagher has now backed out or is putting less gravitas on it. I remind the chamber that I raised it in the annual report hearings; it was not the government that raised it. Members would remember me asking the question of the Speaker: “Was this in one office or more than one office?” I saw the annual report myself and I checked it out and I asked a question. Now, I could have been political at the time, but I chose not to be. I wanted to see whether there was any substance in this by examining the freedom of information documents myself.

When did we get access to them, Madam Deputy Speaker? A few days ago. This is not a political attack confected over a long period of time. This is something we have now had revealed. The seriousness of the revelation is unbelievable. These people over here are saying that this is a political exercise. Well, the fact simply is that there is a track record here. The Chief Minister referred to some of the track record: the fact they had to repay \$10,000 worth of community grants. But that is not the only scandal. Of course, there was the issue about the photocopying. But what about the issue in the Leader of the Opposition’s office before Mr Seselja became the leader? What about the hacking into the emails of Minister Wood? What we are seeing here is a culture of contempt for process.

I believe the Leader of the Opposition’s dismissal of this issue as trivia and the way he has said, “This isn’t an issue; it’s done now; it should go away,” is showing a contempt for the processes of this parliamentary precinct. I remind those opposite to be particularly cautious about the language they use and examine, if they will, the criteria for the creation of a privileges committee. A contempt of the parliament is right up there at the top end for examination by the privileges committee.

Those opposite say there are people who work here in a voluntary capacity. Of course they do. Reference was made to the minister’s office supporting him for the national conference. I can remember seeing staff members of those opposite getting trips interstate on the taxpayers’ purse to attend these things. I do not criticise that at all, because it contributes to the political policy making of those opposite. What I do criticise—or suspect, rather—is the fact that you pay for the director of a—

Mrs Dunne: Point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Hargreaves, resume your seat. Stop the clock, please. Point of order, Mrs Dunne.

Mrs Dunne: I raised a point of order about Ms Gallagher speaking about rumours. Now Mr Hargreaves is “suspecting”. I draw members’ attention to the code of practice, which says that you deal with the truth. Madam Deputy Speaker, can you ask Mr Hargreaves to deal with the facts and not with his suspicions?

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Hargreaves, will you stick to the facts, please?

MR HARGREAVES: Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. This whole issue is about the truth. This is the place where we can bring our fears, our suspicions and so on and then come up with a vehicle to have those fears dashed or satisfied. That is what this motion is all about. We reject Mr Smyth’s amendments. He is trying to cast a net and see what he gets. Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, the FOI documents themselves say that 16 out of 17 offices are squeaky clean, that eight out of 10 people in the Leader of the Opposition’s office had to be pulled up because they were in breach, and in fact only one office had repeated pleas from the Clerk. This is just flapping around to put smoke around the issue to hide the fact that we have a very serious public perception of this office.

MR HANSON (Molonglo) (11.24): I think the public perception is indeed the point here. These are allegations that have been thrown around. There have been things said that I think were out of order by Ms Gallagher in terms of people’s ethics and their morals. Slurs have been made about individuals who work in this Assembly and now there is going to be a witch-hunt perpetrated against one of the people that lead the party. It seems that there is rank hypocrisy. A member of staff who holds a political office in a political party, who works for one political party, is to be investigated—and that is the root of all evil—whilst the same thing occurs on the other side and is without consequence. Essentially, Mr Hargreaves and those opposite are saying: “No, we’re all squeaky clean. You’re a pack of mongrels.” It is just inappropriate, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr Hargreaves: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker, this is a very serious debate. Mr Hanson has just said that we on this side have called those opposite a pack of mongrels. Never in this debate thus far has that accusation been made or that appellation been used—never, and neither should it. If Mr Hanson feels that way, that is his problem, but he should not use that language in this place.

MR HANSON: On the point of order, I consider that a debating point. I said that essentially what Mr Hargreaves has said is that we are a pack of mongrels. When you consider the language that has been used, the hyperbole around the comments made and the press statements from Ms Gallagher, which include absolutely defamatory accusations that Mr Seselja lacks a moral and ethical compass—it is absolutely disgraceful language—I think my interpretation of it is quite appropriate. I do not think it is a point of order.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, would you like to continue, please?

MR HANSON: I will. I just encourage members to support Mr Smyth's amendments. What Mr Smyth's amendments say essentially is that perhaps we are not all without blame here: if it applies to the Liberal Party, it would apply equally to the Labor Party and to the Greens. I would say to those members opposite: if you do not support this, what do you have to hide? The perception will be—Mr Hargreaves talked about perception, and that is the point—if you do not support Mr Smyth's amendments, you have something to hide. That is the way that this will continue. So be very careful about the way you vote on this. You are damning yourselves to a perception that you are hiding something in all your offices if you do not support the amendments to the motion today.

MS HUNTER (Ginninderra—Parliamentary Leader, ACT Greens) (11.27): The Greens will not be supporting Mr Smyth's amendments. I will explain why we are not supporting Mr Smyth's amendments today. It has been very clear through all of this that there is not a systemic issue in this Assembly with regard to this matter. Mr Hargreaves has spoken about the annual report hearings. I remember that I was in attendance as well. Mr Hargreaves had found in the annual report a sentence which spoke about chasing a member up around attendance records and that it had been an ongoing issue.

Let us be very clear about this. There is a system in place here where if you have a member of staff who may have missed a few weeks of time sheets, you will get a note. You will get an email just to alert you to that and you can chase it up. What happened in the case of the Leader of the Opposition's office was that this was not just an email over a few weeks of time sheets that had not been lodged. This was repeated requests over three years for time sheets to be submitted. It was about, I understand, more than one staff member. Quite a bit of this also relates to one in particular where we are not talking about a fortnight, we are not talking about a month; we are talking about numerous months. It appears that we could be talking about 14 months in one go. That is extraordinary.

This is not a systemic problem. Let us be very clear: this is a tactic to try and throw up a smokescreen. I can see the Liberal Party press release now. I could put in *Hansard* what the Liberal Party press release is going to say in a few minutes, and that is exactly what Mr Hanson has outlined to us. He has told us what their press release is going to say—that is, that this is about everyone. I am sorry, it is not about everyone. No other office was mentioned in the annual report of the Secretariat. Why was no other office mentioned in the annual report? Because they had not had repeated requests for a member to comply with very simple rules in this place. It is not difficult.

Mr Doszpot interjecting—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Doszpot!

MS HUNTER: As an employer, we have responsibilities. We sign a contract—

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Resume your seat, Ms Hunter, for a moment, please. Stop the clock. The interjections from this side are unacceptable and they are continuing, even though I am asking you to stop. Next time somebody interjects—I do not care from which side of the house—I will warn them. We will listen to Ms Hunter in silence.

MS HUNTER: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Let us be very clear. This is about an ongoing issue. This is not a systemic issue. We had the Auditor-General's investigation some time ago and it set up new systems. Everybody else is complying, except for one office that was mentioned in the annual report of the Secretariat. Mr Hargreaves asked the question and from there flowed an FOI request for that information, and now this information is out in the public.

Let us not try and put up a smokescreen, let us not try and muddy the waters here, because that is exactly the tactic that is going on here this morning. We need to be clear that this is about a particular matter, an ongoing matter, in one member's office. We have a way forward to be able to clear up the matter if that is what happens after these processes are completed. This is a little bit of flailing about by the opposition. Let us get on to voting on the motion. Let us get on to getting those processes underway. If there is no issue here then those processes will show it.

Mr Smyth interjecting—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Smyth, you are warned.

MS HUNTER: If there is an issue then we will need to address that matter if it arises. But for these reasons—and let us be very clear—we will not be supporting the amendments. It is not a systemic problem. It is to do with the Leader of the Opposition's office. Let us focus our attention on where—

Mr Doszpot interjecting—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Doszpot, you are warned.

MS HUNTER: it needs to be focused.

Question put:

That **Mr Smyth's** amendments be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 6

Noes 11

Mr Coe
Mr Doszpot
Mrs Dunne
Mr Hanson
Mr Seselja

Mr Smyth

Mr Barr
Dr Bourke
Ms Bresnan
Ms Burch
Mr Corbell
Ms Gallagher

Mr Hargreaves
Ms Hunter
Ms Le Couteur
Ms Porter
Mr Rattenbury

Question so resolved in the negative.

MR HARGREAVES (Brindabella) (11.34): In closing the debate, Madam Deputy Speaker, the motion is in three parts. The first part deals with matters of grave concern to the chamber. You will see that paragraph (1) is quite specific. It is about a failure to adhere to the members' code of conduct and the enterprise agreement under the LA(MS) Act—section B6, record keeping, clauses B6.1 and B6.2. That stems out of those freedom of information documents.

Contained in those documents also are the repeated exhortations from the Clerk and the Deputy Clerk. It is unheard of in my time that such a thing would have to happen. Usually there is a good relationship between these offices and the Clerk's office where things can be fixed up if they are slightly off the rails. This is not slightly off the rails, Madam Deputy Speaker; this is a train wreck.

There seems to be a systemic cultural issue. That is why we are expressing concern that the Liberals have had to repay 10,000 bucks worth of grants and that they have had to be counselled over use of Assembly resources for party and political purposes. Now there is a suggestion that the president of the Liberal Party is being paid out of Assembly appropriations to perform a job as president of the Canberra Liberals. Those people opposite made a lot of noise about comparing the president to Mr Purtill. I remind those opposite, firstly, that Mr Purtill attends this precinct. He signs his time sheets. They are not and have never been in question. He provides services, quite clearly, as adviser to a minister and he has provided those services to the opposition as well. None of the above can be applied to Mr Faulkner—none of them.

The second part directs the Leader of the Opposition to provide a written statement on a whole range of questions from the freedom of information documents. Contained in there, of course, is a revelation that, as Ms Hunter said, there is not a systemic issue in this place. There is no suggestion, for example, that there is an issue in Mr Smyth's office, in Ms Le Couteur's office or in Dr Bourke's office. There is no suggestion about that at all.

These freedom of information documents and the annual report itself refer to one specific office. That one specific office brings this parliament into disrepute. The questions that we have put need answering. Out of those questions will come other questions, hence the third part of the motion. We believe that the Speaker should commission an independent workplace audit of staffing arrangements and look into whether or not inappropriate payments were made in the office of the Leader of the Opposition. The amendment talked about the Seventh Assembly. In fact, these transgressions go back to the Sixth Assembly. In fact, some of them go back to 2008.

We need to make sure that it is not about "he said, she said" because you cannot prove this and you cannot prove that. ICT information around when you log on and when you log off and the building swipe cards do not lie. The television cameras of the precinct do not lie. I came into this office on the weekend to do a bit of work and go to the Multicultural Festival, which was a blast. So my access to this building, this precinct, is recorded. Let that information be known to the independent auditor.

I wanted also to address a couple of things. I am not sure which member opposite actually made this point, but he said, “Now you’re saying, guys, that people can’t go and work with their member at the shopping centres, with constituents.” That is not what I said at all. That is a misrepresentation of what I said. What I said was that it is about where the work is predominantly done off site. It means that if you are doing work as representing a member off site these are episodic happenings. They are not five days of the working week. They are not from nine to five. They are episodic. That does not happen, on my understanding, in any one of the other offices. That needs to be cleared up.

In seeking the chamber’s support of this motion and the issues which will stem from it, I make this observation: the Leader of the Opposition stood up in his contribution and used the words “time sheets”. We use the term “attendance records”. They are interchangeable terms. He said: “I take responsibility for that. It is regrettable.” What responsibility? “There may have been, there may not have been, inappropriate payments. Well, sorry about that. There may have been payments made to the president of the Canberra Liberals instead of to the role of the director of electorate services. Well, sorry about that. There may have been no attendance records done for 22 months”—and as Ms Hunter pointed out, 14 months in one hit—“Well, sorry about that.”

Then, of course, we have got this certification for 14 months. Mr Smyth asks if we can honestly say whether our people were there when we were overseas. The short answer is yes, we can. We have diary entries sitting up there to see whether or not people are there or not. If we have the slightest doubt, we will access those log-on records ourselves. Do we? No, we do not. If the Auditor-General says there is something smelly here then it is incumbent upon the member to check it out. Not only did we find the Leader of the Opposition not checking it out when the flags went up from the Auditor-General but also we found he did not check it out when the Clerk repeatedly asked him to check it out. But what he could do—because this guy must have a photographic memory—was certify them as all correct.

Let me pose this: if, in fact, we find that there has been a claim made for attendance that was not official duty, that person is in breach and everybody will know that. But I argue that the person that certified it as correct is equally as guilty. That is something that we need an independent auditor to clarify. Mr Seselja says he takes responsibility for that. I want to see a little bit more responsibility accepted for that than “well, I’m sorry about that”. “Sorry about that” does not cut it with me.

We are talking about the alternative Chief Minister. The community expects the alternative Chief Minister to be like Caesar’s wife—not only to be doing the right thing but to be seen to be doing the right thing. There is smoke out there and there is a suspicion out there. Trying to flick it to a general audit, to hide behind it, is not going to cut it. To blame the Secretariat is not going to cut it. This is something that the Leader of the Opposition is under the spotlight for.

If the situation was reversed, those opposite would be hammering us from one week to the next. They would not just be getting an independent person in to check it out

and taking it from there. They would be hammering us lock, stock and barrel for months and months and months. The shoe is on the other foot. The spotlight now is on the Leader of the Opposition. These FOI documents speak ill of his administration of his office. By extension, it speaks ill of his chief of staff's administration of his office and, by extension, it speaks ill of this Assembly that we cannot manage our own affairs. If this Leader of the Opposition cannot manage his office, how on earth is he going to manage the territory if we are unfortunate enough to have him on this side of the chamber?

Let us have these audits done into this office. Let us be forensic about this. If he has got nothing to worry about, he will produce the lot and we will all come back and say: "Well, congratulations, Mr Seselja. You've got a very well run office." But I do not reckon that is going to happen in the time I have got left in this chamber. Madam Deputy Speaker, I ask members to support the motion.

Question put:

That **Mr Hargreaves's** motion be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 11

Noes 6

| | | | |
|--------------|---------------|------------|----------|
| Mr Barr | Mr Hargreaves | Mr Coe | Mr Smyth |
| Dr Bourke | Ms Hunter | Mr Doszpot | |
| Ms Bresnan | Ms Le Couteur | Mrs Dunne | |
| Ms Burch | Ms Porter | Mr Hanson | |
| Mr Corbell | Mr Rattenbury | Mr Seselja | |
| Ms Gallagher | | | |

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Chief Minister and Deputy Chief Minister

Motion of censure

MR SESELJA (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (11.48), by leave: I move:

That this Assembly censures the Chief Minister, Katy Gallagher MLA, and Deputy Chief Minister, Andrew Barr MLA, for:

- (1) misleading the Assembly and community in relation to the proposed government office building; and
- (2) wasting millions of taxpayer money to pursue this flawed project.

This is a project that started as a bad idea but it was compounded by a lie to back up that bad idea. Not only did we have that lie put out there in the public arena by the Chief Minister at the time. We then had it backed up by the Treasurer and current Chief Minister Katy Gallagher and by the current Deputy Chief Minister Andrew Barr. They have lied and lied and lied in order to support their flawed project which they have now walked away from.

We are going to put the scrutiny on not just why they walked away from this project, not just the millions of dollars they wasted in pursuing this flawed project which blind Freddy could see was not going to fly, but the lies that they put out there. They put their public servants out there, they put false numbers out there in the Assembly and in the community to try and back up that lie. How do we know that? We know because, if what they had said was true, there is no way they would have walked away from it.

If the lie that they put to us that they were going to save taxpayers \$34 million per annum by building this building and owning it were true, they would not be walking away from it. In fact, if it were true, no government would walk away from it because, if you can make that much money just by building an office, you would go into the office business for sure.

On that principle that was put to us by the government, you would go into the business of building offices. You would be able to have a wonderful return for taxpayers. You would be able to spread the love in terms of other core services, but it was not true. They were telling porkies left, right and centre. Madam Deputy Speaker, they should be censured for that. They spent months going out into the community—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Seselja, I would ask you to withdraw the imputation that the Chief Minister and the Deputy Chief Minister have lied.

MR SESELJA: Madam Deputy Speaker, the motion says they have misled the Assembly and the community.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: I ask you to withdraw the statement that they lied, please.

MR SESELJA: Madam Deputy Speaker, sorry, I am just seeking your ruling because we just had—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: I have ruled.

MR SESELJA: I am seeking a ruling and I would seek clarification. We just had a ruling from the Speaker that, because of the nature of the motion, words such as “fraud” could be bandied about with gay abandon. I am just seeking your ruling now on whether, in respect of a motion that is actually saying that the government misled the Assembly and the community, we actually cannot use language in relation to the government. Is that—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: It is an accusation that the member has lied. I wish you to withdraw it.

MR SESELJA: There are a lot of accusations thrown at us and they were allowed to stand, Madam Deputy Speaker.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Seselja, I wish you to withdraw it. Are you going to stand there and argue?

MR SESELJA: I will withdraw. I will withdraw. We now have a situation where the opposition, in pursuing a motion about a half billion dollar backflip and millions of dollars wasted, cannot criticise this government, cannot criticise this government in the standards of this Assembly. We will criticise this government. We will use whatever language you want. They misled; they deceived; they did not tell the truth.

Why did they not tell the truth? It was because they had to justify this project that they were so committed to. They went out there and they said: "This is the best project. We are going to spend \$430 million on this office building." We said: "Hang on, don't you think there are better things to spend this money on? Don't you think it would be better if, instead of building an office, perhaps you invested in health, education, roads or local services?" In response, they said: "No, no, no, this will help. This will actually help us invest in those very services."

They claimed savings—how much in terms of savings? The misleading, deceptive and dishonest claims that were made by Jon Stanhope, by Katy Gallagher, by Andrew Barr were that they were going to save \$34 million a year. One of them is going to have to stand up and tell us why they are abandoning a project now that they claim would have saved us \$34 million a year.

What government would actually walk away if they believed that? The truth is that they did not believe it. They were happy to put out misleading statements. They were happy to put out incorrect information. They were happy to mislead the Assembly and the community time and time again on this project, this project of significant interest to the community.

We saw just how sensitive they were about their porkies. We saw how sensitive they were about that when they brought in every public servant and consultant under the sun to try and retrospectively fill out their \$34 million in savings. But in the end it amounted to this, Madam Deputy Speaker: an A4 sheet of paper that was contradicted by virtually every other document that was put into the public arena by the government.

There was an A4 sheet of paper that said: "Here it is. We will save \$12 million on rental; \$4.6 million in workforce efficiencies; \$2 million on churn; office consumables, \$0.2 million; IT, \$1.1 million; interagency travel costs, \$0.4 million; reduction in electricity, water, gas, \$2 million; reduced attrition, \$0.5 million; \$4 million in productivity benefit; \$4 million for increased coordination across workgroups also gave a productivity benefit; \$2 million on another productivity benefit by better technology utilisation; reduced interagency travel time, \$1 million."

Madam Deputy Speaker, none of this is true. If it were true, they would be going ahead with this project. If any of this analysis stood up to rigour, they would go ahead with it. So this becomes an issue of the government's credibility. They are going to be going out with all sorts of promises during this election year. During this election year they are going to be saying: "Trust us. We are going to be spending \$20 million here or \$10 million there and we will build this project."

Firstly, you cannot trust them to deliver these projects, because they never deliver them on time or on budget. Secondly, you cannot believe anything they say about their projects, because they have been so dishonest on this one. If they were prepared to deliberately deceive and mislead the community and the Assembly on an issue such as this, then how can they be trusted on any of their other promises? This is a government that has form and a Chief Minister in particular that has form about not telling the truth.

Let us look at that record. Before the 2004 election she said that there would be no school closures. She said there would be no school closures and turned around weeks after the election and started closing schools. Before the 2008 election she claimed that all of the health plans were on the table. All the while she had a secret plan to buy Calvary hospital. She was secretly negotiating the flawed plan to buy Calvary hospital. We know why she wanted to keep that secret. The moment it was brought to light, it started to unravel.

It would have been all fine if they could have kept the negotiations secret. Before the election and after the election they were trying to keep it secret. It was only when it was leaked and it was made public that it started to unravel. Lo and behold, taxpayers were actually saved a lot of money through the work of the opposition in forcing a change of policy on this.

This goes to credibility and honesty. The government says before the 2004 election, the Chief Minister Katy Gallagher says as a minister before the 2004 election, that on a fundamental promise in education they are going to do one thing and she does exactly the opposite. In 2008 in health she says she is doing one thing, that she is putting all the plans on the table. She is, in fact, not. She is doing exactly the opposite.

Now with the biggest project this territory was ever going to undertake, this government made up the figures. It made them up. We could see it at the time. It did not take into account things like depreciation. It did not take into account a number of the opportunity costs. It did not take into account virtually anything. It just took into account savings. There were just savings. There were no costs apparently to this building. They wanted to give themselves lavish offices.

They have walked away from it now. Remember the debates about this in this Assembly. This is not Jon Stanhope's project. He may have started it but Katy Gallagher was the Treasurer who went into estimates and defended it, put out false and misleading figures, put out this claimed \$34 million in savings and stood by it.

We have had votes in this Assembly after Jon Stanhope left where this government and these ministers have reaffirmed their commitment to it. They have reaffirmed that the numbers and the analysis were right. They were not right, Madam Deputy Speaker. If it were the case, why would they now be walking away from it? They cannot have it both ways. They cannot defend and say: "Yes, when we said there were \$34 million in savings, that that was true. If we actually go ahead with this building, there will be

\$34 million a year in savings for the government.” If that was true then, they are now saying to the community: “We do not want to find \$34 million in savings. We are walking away from this project.”

We think they should walk away from this project, but not because there is \$34 million in savings. It is precisely because there is not \$34 million in savings. It is a poor use of capital and they should walk away from it. They have wasted millions of dollars of taxpayers’ money pursuing this project. How many consultants have been engaged to pursue this project?

We heard the Deputy Chief Minister on radio saying: “All of that work would have been done anyway. We would have done all of the analysis about owning this building. We would have done all this design work about our ministerial wing. We would not have given that over to, say, the private sector and then rented it from them.” No, they were going to do all this anyway. Millions upon millions of dollars have been wasted by Katy Gallagher and Andrew Barr in pursuing a flawed project.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the reason they should be censured is the two aspects to this. It is good that they have walked away from this project. They never should have gone there in the first place. But the reason for the censure is that by pursuing something which blind Freddy could see was a bad idea, they wasted millions of dollars. That is millions of dollars that could have been spent on core local services and they chose to waste it on a vanity project.

Secondly, they did not tell the truth. In order to justify the indefensible, they went out and they made up figures. They concocted numbers. There are ways that we know that for sure. Apart from the fact that we were able to look at this A4 piece of paper and say, “This is shoddy; this does not stack up.” Then there were all sorts of statements: “We will produce this document. We have got some different savings over here. By the way, we did not take this into account.” It did not stack up. It smelt. We knew it. They walked away the day after Australia Day, the day before the weekend in the middle of, effectively, a long weekend, in order to bury this because they are embarrassed.

What are they embarrassed about? Are they embarrassed about the backflip and the fact that what they said was the most important project for the territory can now just be shelved? Or are they embarrassed about the misleading information that they gave to the community? There is no doubt that it is misleading. If Mr Barr or Ms Gallagher want to get up and defend this, they will have to say that they are walking away from a project that would apparently save taxpayers \$34 million a year, that they would look after public servants and that they would be able to invest all of that extra \$34 million a year into other projects. They cannot have it both ways. Either they were not telling the truth in the first place or, if they were telling the truth, they are now choosing to go down a more expensive path.

I suspect the first is true. I think all of the evidence shows that the first is true. We could see it as we did the analysis. As we asked questions, it started to unravel. It started, Mr Speaker, with a lie—a bad project backed up by lies. They said they would—

MR SPEAKER: Mr Seselja, try and stay away from the term “lies”.

MR SESELJA: make savings and they could not back it up. It just was not true, Mr Speaker. They deserve to be censured for this because they have wasted millions of dollars of taxpayers’ money and they have eroded their credibility for every future project that they promise or that they claim they will be able to deliver.

When the government comes in with the budget this year and they give us their assumptions, even more than usually we will now have to look at them all extraordinarily sceptically. We will have to say: “On what are you basing those assumptions? Is it something you have put together to try and justify your case or are these real and genuine assumptions?” They have put public servants in a difficult position because they have pushed them out peddling false information. I do not know who is responsible for that but in the end the ministers are responsible.

We do not know which way it was going. But they went out there and they put that information out there. They must have known it not to be true. If they did not, they lack competence. If they thought it to be true, they certainly would not be walking away from it now. The way that they have backflipped on this and the way that they have walked away from this project simply confirm the fact that they were not telling the truth. It confirms what we suspected, that they were making it up as they were going along and in doing so they wasted millions of dollars of taxpayers’ money.

Mr Speaker, for this they should be censured. For this, the people of Canberra should look very sceptically at every promise that is made by this government and by the Labor Party moving forward.

MR BARR (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism, Sport and Recreation) (12.04): It goes without saying that the government will not be supporting this censure motion. It is part of a fairly common pattern of behaviour by the Leader of the Opposition to be moving a censure motion, a baseless censure motion, essentially in every sitting period. One would not need to have too much imagination to envisage that in every sitting fortnight in the remainder of this Assembly, we will see some sort of concocted rubbish from the Leader of the Opposition seeking to censure the government.

That it happens today, on a day when the Leader of the Opposition is embarrassed by his failure to be able to administer the only thing that he has any responsibility for administering, and that is his own staff—his abject failure over a number of years to be able to do even that most basic of tasks—puts paid to any credibility the Leader of the Opposition might have on any issue of public policy in this territory.

Mr Smyth: Point of order, Mr Speaker. Is the minister going to debate the motion?

MR SPEAKER: There is no point of order at this stage, Mr Barr, but do come to the motion.

MR BARR: Thank you, Mr Speaker. The Leader of the Opposition raised the subject of credibility in his presentation. He is seeking to censure the Chief Minister and me, perhaps the second-highest sanction that is possible in this place. Throughout his contribution, in which he could not even keep on the subject of the censure motion, he felt the need to range widely over a number of areas that have been debated ad nauseam in this place. I think it is only fair and just to mention the substantive issue of Mr Seselja's incompetence and inability to manage the only thing that he has responsibility for. This is the man who wishes to manage the territory but who cannot even manage his own office, in spite of repeated advice on where he was going wrong.

That is the fundamental flaw in the heart of every argument from the Leader of the Opposition this year: if you cannot govern yourself, how can you govern this territory? That is the question that will be asked of Mr Seselja repeatedly, and all the evidence is there on the table that he has manifestly failed.

I am not the only person who has drawn that conclusion. Every media outlet in the last week has raised that exact question.

Mr Hanson: Mr Speaker, a point of order on relevance.

MR SPEAKER: Yes.

Mr Hanson: Mr Smyth has already pointed out that Mr Barr is yet to refer to the substance of the motion before the Assembly. I ask that you instruct the minister to be directly relevant.

MR SPEAKER: Minister, I think it would be good if we came to the motion, thank you.

MR BARR: Thank you, Mr Speaker. In relation to the censure motion, the Leader of the Opposition has made a number of baseless allegations in his speech. It is not the first time he has raised those baseless allegations; members would be aware that we have debated this issue on a number of occasions in the Assembly. I have been very clear in relation to the government's response on each of those occasions.

I need to remind members that on 13 August last year I indicated that the government would market test new office accommodation in Gungahlin and Civic. I said in August last year that the government's immediate priority would be the delivery of the Gungahlin project and that we would shortly invite organisations to register their interest. I note that the Leader of the Opposition is so interested in his censure motion that he has now left the chamber.

I indicated that the government's immediate priority was the delivery of the Gungahlin project and that we would invite organisations to register their interest in designing and building the office block proposed for Gungahlin, as well as the one proposed for the city, to the specifications established by our consulting team. This is important, because the idea that the government would go to the marketplace without specifications, as the Leader of the Opposition has suggested in his contribution this

morning—that we would go out to the marketplace seeking expressions of interest but not provide the private sector with an indication of what we would require—is a farcical approach to procurement.

If the Leader of the Opposition is suggesting that the government as a client would just say, “We are just thinking about this; would you go away on spec and do all this work for us,” and suggesting that as a client we would not give the property sector some indication of our requirements before going to an expressions of interest process—that would be an interesting way to conduct procurement.

As I indicated in August last year, after exploring a range of financing and ownership options for new accommodation, our consultants made a series of recommendations. I said:

... I want this advice tested in the marketplace.

We heard strong representations from the ACT Property Council that their members could meet the government’s accommodation needs in Gungahlin and Civic in a cost-effective manner by building and owning properties which the ACT government would rent over an extended period. I said at that time that I wanted to give the property industry the opportunity to deliver. I said that in August last year. And I said that we would make our final decision “based on the best overall value to the ACT taxpayer, including build cost, environmental performance, occupational health and safety issues for staff, running costs, efficiencies to be gained by having key public servants in the same location”—as well as our commitment to apprentices, trainees and Indigenous Canberrans in the construction of the project.

That was on 13 August last year. On 24 August the Assembly debated a motion requiring the government’s office accommodation strategy and future office buildings in Gungahlin and Civic to ensure that the feasibility studies and market testing for that accommodation included an examination of the adaptive reuse of existing office buildings and consideration of the options for an ACT government office precinct as opposed to a single building model and to ensure that the whole-of-life-cycle analysis of the environmental impact is considered before finalising the government’s office accommodation strategy.

I repeat it again: in that debate in August last year, the government’s immediate priority was the delivery of the Gungahlin office accommodation. There would appear to be a burst of consensus across the Assembly in relation to the need to fast-track that Gungahlin project, and the Chief Minister and I were pleased to be able to announce last month that there were nine expressions of interest from the private sector to deliver the government’s accommodation requirements in the Gungahlin town sector. Those expressions of interest have been through a process, and I will shortly announce the short list and the continued development of that Gungahlin project.

I indicated, and I have done so on a number of occasions, that once the Gungahlin process was well underway we would look at options for our accommodation needs in the city. The Chief Minister and I made an announcement again last month in relation

to the process for that—that given the success of the Gungahlin process and the significant number of expressions of interest, we would adopt the same process for our CBD accommodation needs.

In relation to that announcement last month, I note media reports and statements issued by political parties and comments made even by Mrs Dunne—at the time she may have been acting spokesperson for the Canberra Liberals—that she endorsed that approach as it related to Gungahlin and called on us to adopt the same process for the Civic project.

Mrs Dunne interjecting—

MR BARR: I heard you on WIN news or ABC news saying that you hoped the government would adopt the same process for Civic—welcoming the Gungahlin decision, in January this year.

I note that Ms Le Couteur on behalf of the ACT Greens has issued statements welcoming the fact that the government has indeed met its commitments in relation to the August motion that was passed in the Assembly and that we would continue that process. And that is exactly what we are doing.

I have made some other decisions in relation to government office accommodation across the city. Firstly, in relation to Gungahlin, I have just outlined that matter to the Assembly. Secondly, I have made decisions in relation to office accommodation for some staff within the Education and Training Directorate and the desire to locate more staff within the precinct at Stirling that accommodates the Hedley Beare Centre for Teaching and Learning. In the last budget we commissioned some feasibility work into the relocation of the CCCares program from the Stirling campus of Canberra college to the Phillip campus of Canberra college, which will free up space within the Centre for Teaching and Learning precinct to enable more education staff who service schools to be located in that precinct rather than having a function serving the Assembly or the government. And of course, through the announcements that we have made this year, we have identified a way forward for accommodation in the CBD.

The main accusation from the Leader of the Opposition was that somehow we have abandoned the project. The projects will continue. We will be looking for new office accommodation for our staff within the CBD. The issues are very clear for everyone who has participated in this debate over the last 12 months. I am yet to hear anyone argue that there is not a need for an upgrade of ACT government office accommodation. There are a variety of options as to how the government may procure that.

I have indicated, in this speech and repeatedly since I have had portfolio responsibility for this project, the process that I would follow, and I have done exactly as I said I would. Firstly, I have said that the government would pursue the Gungahlin project as the number one priority. That has been the case. Secondly, the announcement last month was that we would utilise the same process that has successfully—

Members interjecting—

MR BARR: The same process that has successfully been adopted in relation to Gungahlin will now be adopted in relation to the CBD procurement, giving the opportunity for the Property Council and its members to, if you like, put their money where their mouth is in relation to their capacity to deliver the project at better value for taxpayers. That has been the claim that has been tested. We received advice from an element of the Property Council. Some of the members of the Property Council who were engaged to consult on this project presented—

Members interjecting—

MR SPEAKER: Members, this is not a conversation.

MR BARR: an assessment of the variety of different procurement models. Back in August last year I indicated that I wanted that tested in the marketplace, and that is exactly what the government is doing. In the end, for all of the flailing about from those opposite, trying to cover up for the Leader of the Opposition's inability to manage the only thing that he is responsible for in this territory—his own office, the only thing that he is accountable for—

Mr Seselja interjecting—

MR BARR: He continues to throw across the chamber these assertions that he knows are untrue. He knows that the government, in going to the marketplace, needs to provide the private sector with the scope of our expectations—what we require. The private sector, in order to give and to register their interest in providing such accommodation, needs from the government the scope of that work. That is what we have provided. The process is the right one.

I notice that neither the Leader of the Opposition nor the shadow treasurer—or any other Liberal Party spokesperson—has disagreed with the process that the government is adopting. There is no criticism now of that—(*Time expired.*)

MS LE COUTEUR (Molonglo) (12.19): The Greens will not be supporting this censure motion today. It is a very silly censure motion. What it effectively says is that if the government look at new information and come to a different conclusion they cannot change their mind. That is what it says. The government office building is something which, as members will know, the Greens and I in particular have had concerns about for a number of years. We have been pursuing this through annual reports hearings and at estimates over a number of years. I admit that this is partly due to my personal background. When I was a director of Australian Ethical Investment, we refurbished an existing building into what is Canberra's first six green star rated office building. That was very successful. So based on my experience, I always felt that the government should be looking a lot more at the options apart from new build.

I am very pleased that the government finally started looking at options apart from new build. I am very pleased that the government actually followed what the Assembly asked it to do on 24 August last year. The Assembly will remember that we

passed a motion on the government office building. It was a motion that was originally proposed by Mr Seselja, although I admit that after it was amended the Liberal Party did not vote for it.

What the government has done is basically to look at the motion that the Assembly put forward. It asked the government to look at feasibility studies and market testings and to see what was the best option; to look at an examination of adaptive reuse of existing office buildings and consideration of options for an ACT government office precinct as opposed to just a single building model; to look at the life cycle analysis of the environmental impact of the building; and finalise the government office accommodation strategy—and, unfortunately, the government has not yet done that.

I think it is a pity that Mr Seselja in his censure motion did not look at some of the real issues where the government needs to lift its game. As far as office accommodation goes, the fundamental thing of getting a strategy first and then implementing it would have been an excellent thing for Mr Seselja to think about on this issue. I am very surprised that Mr Smyth did not in fact think of this, as he, through PAC, has been a strong supporter of the idea that the government should get its accommodation strategy done first.

Mr Seselja's motion is, as I said, just silly. The government have spent some money on this project. Yes, it would have been better if the government had spent less money on this project, but I think it is reasonable to believe that the government can spend money on feasibility studies before they make large capital investments.

In looking at it, that is what the government did here. I think that the government should have instructed their consultants differently. I think the government should have worked out earlier that there were other options. I do not think they followed the best options. But to say that they deserve censuring for doing feasibility studies and then deciding on a different course of action is just straight out and out silly. This is what a government are meant to do. They are meant to get evidence together and then choose the best course of action. They are not meant to say, four years ago—

Mr Smyth: But they made the decision. They were going to do it and they're being held to account.

MS LE COUTEUR: What do the opposition want the government to do? Do the opposition want the government to govern on the basis that four years ago they said something, therefore nothing can ever change? That is patently ridiculous. I cannot see how the opposition could for one moment think that this was a reasonable censure motion. The Greens will not be supporting this censure motion.

MRS DUNNE (Ginninderra) (12.24): I am surprised at Ms Le Couteur, but this of course is the standard approach from the Greens and the Labor Party here—that there is nothing to see. Mr Seselja's motion is quite clear: in putting forward the proposal to build the house of hubris across the way here for \$432 million and in putting forward the reasons for doing this—that this would save the ACT taxpayers in excess of \$30 million—Mr Barr and Ms Gallagher have consistently and persistently over time misled this place and the people of the ACT.

When we say that they have misled them, what we are saying, in Assembly terms, is that they did not tell the truth. What they said was deceptive. What they said was wrong, and they knew it to be wrong. Members here today—you, Mr Speaker, and Ms Porter—have taken exception to the word “lies”. So we will not use the word “lies”, but they have been deceptive. They have wilfully misled people in this Assembly through debates in this place—these are the terms of the motion—and in the estimates hearings and, through them, the people of the ACT, in their statements about this. This is a blatant mislead.

Ms Le Couteur can say as much as she likes that this is a silly motion. Every time a member of this place misleads the Assembly and does not fix the record, the forms of this place require that they should be censured because we have to maintain the highest standards of truth inside this place. And this is not a silly motion.

These ministers—Ms Gallagher, originally as Treasurer and now as Chief Minister, and Mr Barr as the Treasurer—have persistently told the Assembly and told the estimates committee that if they go out and build the house of hubris, the palais de Stanhope, across the way here, for a mere bagatelle, \$432 million—if you say it quickly it does not sound much—we could year in, year out, in current dollar terms, save the ACT taxpayer \$32 million. That is why we did it.

We had the spectacle in the estimates hearings of consultant after consultant coming forward and trying to answer the questions of the estimates committee and the other members of the Assembly who came and took the time to ask questions in that hearing. We also had the spectacle, when questions were asked about this at other times in the estimates hearings, of the estimates committee being told, “You shouldn’t ask us that question; you should ask this directorate that question,” or “Another directorate would be able to answer that specific question.” We found that, in fact, those other directorates could not.

What we were shown was a cobbled together, A4 piece of paper that got us to \$32 million worth of savings. When we tried to drill down into that, time and time again there was no information forthcoming. There were spreadsheets. The process by which you got to \$32 million towards the bottom of the page could not be explained. Mr Seselja makes the point that, if that \$32 million was a real, true figure, why are Mr Barr and Ms Gallagher walking away from those savings now? They are walking away from those savings now because that \$32 million figure was a confection. It was a mislead. It was wrong and they did not correct the record.

At no stage, when Mr Stanhope made those claims, did Ms Gallagher as the Treasurer come along and say: “Gee, Jon, you need to be careful about that. Do those figures really stack up?” She took over the job and she carried the baton for the house of hubris. And as we saw a couple of weeks ago, the government, in the middle of an extra-long weekend, walked away from it. It is called putting out the trash. When you hope that no-one is listening, you announce the things that you do not want anyone to hear. In putting out the trash, Ms Gallagher and Mr Barr together admitted to the lie of the figures. They put a lie to the figures on the day that they announced that because they walked away. They could not substantiate the savings.

Mr Barr is now saying: “We’re looking at other ways of doing it. We went out and tested the market.” Who in their right mind, when they want to build something, goes out to test the market and says, “Come and give me a quote for my house, my garage, my deck, my house of hubris, and I want to spend X number of dollars on it”? Who in their right mind tests the market by telling them how much you have got in the bank to spend on it?

That is the problem here today. The government made it up. They made it up out of whole cloth because Jon Stanhope wanted to build another palace to his memory. Katy Gallagher played along and then, when there was a change of the guard, they did not drop it. They did not say, “Gee, we’ve got ourselves into strife here and now Jon’s moved on, we’ll drop this.” Of course they could not drop that because we know that every time they do something that he does not like he gets on talkback radio and disses them, and they cannot stand that either. So they persisted with the wilful misleading of the Assembly, of the estimates committee and of the people of the ACT.

This is not a silly motion, Ms Le Couteur. This is about the standards that we require of debate in this place. It is about standards that we require in giving evidence to estimates committees. Those figures were repeated again and again—that we were going to save \$32 million year on year in 2011 dollars terms and those savings were savings that were worth making. It is clear that those savings were ephemeral. They did not exist. They were not worth making. In making that statement over and over again, Katy Gallagher and Andrew Barr misled the Assembly, misled the estimates committee and misled the ACT community. They need to be censured to maintain the standards of this place. That is why we take it seriously. It is not silly. They told lies to the community. They did not resile from them over and over again.

MR SPEAKER: Order! Stop the clocks, thank you. Mrs Dunne, I tried to ascertain—I heard your earlier remarks but I think it is the form of the house that “lies” in most contexts is generally considered to be unparliamentary. I would ask you to withdraw, please.

MRS DUNNE: I really do need you to consider this. This is a substantive motion about misleading, and misleading is using facts in a way to deceive.

MR SPEAKER: I hear where you are coming from, Mrs Dunne. I do not dispute anything you just said. It is just that it very much seems to be the form of the house in my time here that “lies” in almost any context is considered unparliamentary. That is all I am trying to hold a consistent standard to.

MRS DUNNE: And in making these statements, Mr Speaker, I will conclude, Mr Barr and—

MR SPEAKER: I will take that as a withdrawal, thank you.

MRS DUNNE: Sorry, you wanted me to withdraw? Okay, I withdraw.

MR SPEAKER: Thank you.

MRS DUNNE: In making their statements, Ms Gallagher and Mr Barr used information which was designed to mislead. They did it wilfully; they did it repeatedly. They did it here, they did it in the estimates committee and they did it out in the public square. And those misleads, those wilful acts, cannot go unpunished.

Debate interrupted in accordance with standing order 74 and the resumption of the debate made an order of the day for a later hour.

Sitting suspended from 12.33 to 2 pm.

Questions without notice

Political parties—donations

MR SESELJA: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, in the Assembly on 29 June 2011, you said that Mr Smyth “has been forced to ... introduce legislation”—the Electoral (Donation Limit) Amendment Bill—and that this bill is being legislated “on rumour and innuendo”. In the annual report of the Canberra Labor Club for 2010-11, there are a number of references to the transfer of a property from the club to the ACT branch of the Australian Labor Party after the end of the financial year. The report states:

A bill has been submitted to the ACT Legislative Assembly, which would limit donations to political parties in excess of \$50000 with effect from 1 July 2011. It is proposed that amounts donated in excess of this amount would attract penalties. Accordingly, if the proposed legislation is passed unamended, the Company would be subject to penalties. The possible penalties are yet to be quantified.

Chief Minister, when did you become aware of the decision to transfer this property to the ACT branch of the Australian Labor Party?

MS GALLAGHER: I became aware of the facts of the matter in the *Canberra Times* when they were reported.

MR SPEAKER: Mr Seselja, a supplementary.

MR SESELJA: What role did you have in the consideration of this transaction?

MS GALLAGHER: None.

MR SMYTH: A supplementary.

MR SPEAKER: Yes, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Chief Minister, are you concerned that the Labor Club and the ALP are taking action in the full knowledge that, as the report says, it may incur penalties?

MS GALLAGHER: I am not responsible for the board of directors of the Canberra Labor Club. That is a question that you will need to put to them. I understand a complaint has been made. It will be looked at by the Electoral Commissioner, which is the appropriate place for it.

MR SMYTH: A supplementary, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: Yes, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Chief Minister, what advice did you seek before you became involved in the consideration of this transaction?

MS GALLAGHER: I was not involved in this transaction.

Children and young people—care and protection

MS HUNTER: My question is to the Minister for Community Services and relates to expenditure on child protection as reported in the recent ROGS data. Minister, can you advise why the total expenditure per notification in the ACT was the lowest recorded in Australia at \$871 compared to other jurisdictions that ranged from \$1,834 to \$13,634 per notification?

MS BURCH: I thank Ms Hunter for her question. If you look at the ROGS report on care and protection and also look at the annual report broadly across out-of-home care services you will see that indeed our expenditure across care and protection and out-of-home care has increased over this year. I think there is close on a six per cent increase in the 12 months. That is held in the annual report.

Yes, the ROGS is showing some set of data. But if you look at it in parallel with the annual report you will clearly see that this government is committed to expenditure into and support of the care and protection and out-of-home care system.

MR SPEAKER: Ms Hunter, a supplementary.

MS HUNTER: Minister, why is it that the ACT has the highest rates of unsubstantiated reports that are later substantiated—that is, 24.2 per cent? Is this because the initial investigation is inadequate?

MS BURCH: I have a high regard for the care and protection workers that work in the Community Services Directorate. I, for one, would not say that any of their work is inadequate. I think that, as people go out to investigate reports, there are a range of options open to them. Certainly, early intervention and diversion away from putting a child in out-of-home care would be at the forefront of their minds. So whilst it is the highest, I would also draw to your attention that it has reduced significantly over the last 12 months.

MRS DUNNE: A supplementary question, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: Yes, Mrs Dunne.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, why is there such low expenditure on intensive family support programs, at basically \$20 per head, if you say that you are so interested in early intervention?

MS BURCH: I do ask those opposite to look to the annual report about expenditure in care and protection and out-of-home care services and across our early intervention. It is quite clear—

Mrs Dunne interjecting—

MS BURCH: If you look at the ROGS report you will see, across a number of the tables, a number of states do not even provide any data, Mrs Dunne. But that, I am sure, escapes your attention. Our expenditure across this is increasing over time. I invite those opposite to come to one of our hallmark and grand aspects of our early intervention—the West Belconnen child and family centre, which I think is in the electorate of Ginninderra.

MS LE COUTEUR: A supplementary, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: Yes, Ms Le Couteur.

MS LE COUTEUR: Minister, can you advise why the total expenditure per investigation in the ACT was the second lowest recorded in Australia at \$6,105 compared with other jurisdictions which range from \$7,758 to \$13,634 per investigation?

MS BURCH: You would appreciate that I do not have the components of each and every one of those financial markets, but suffice to say that I think I have said here over the last couple of minutes that expenditure within our annual report for care and protection and out-of-home care services has moved from just over \$42 million to over \$45 million. Now that in any way, shape or form shows that this government is investing in those vulnerable children.

Political parties—donations

MR SMYTH: My question is to the Attorney General. Attorney-General, in the Assembly on 29 June 2011, you said in relation to the Electoral (Donation Limit) Amendment Bill that this bill is “to block an unidentified event that may or may not occur and which has no substance in fact”. In the annual report of the Canberra Labor Club for 2010-11, there are a number of references to the transfer of property from the club to the ACT branch of the Australian Labor Party after the end of the financial year. The report states:

A bill has been submitted to the ACT Legislative Assembly which would limit donations to political parties in excess of \$50000 with effect from 1 July 2011. It is proposed that amounts donated in excess of this amount would attract penalties. Accordingly, if the proposed legislation is passed unamended, the Company would be subject to penalties. The possible penalties are yet to be quantified.

Attorney-General, when did you become aware of the decision to transfer this property to the ACT branch of the Australian Labor Party?

MR CORBELL: When it was reported in the media, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: Mr Smyth, a supplementary.

MR SMYTH: Minister, as the ministerial code of conduct says that ministers should take reasonable steps to ensure that the factual content of statements they make in the Assembly are soundly based, on what basis did you make the claim “to block an unidentified event that may or may not occur and which has no substance in fact”? Have you misled the Assembly?

MR CORBELL: On the basis of my knowledge at the time. And the answer to the second question is no.

MRS DUNNE: Supplementary question, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: Yes, Mrs Dunne.

MRS DUNNE: Attorney, what advice did you seek before you made statements in the Assembly?

MR CORBELL: I work on the basis of my knowledge at that time.

MR SPEAKER: A supplementary, Mrs Dunne.

MRS DUNNE: Attorney, are you concerned that the Labor Club and the Labor Party have taken action that they admit will be in breach of the law if it is passed?

MR CORBELL: The law has not been passed, Mr Speaker.

Australia Day—protest

MR HANSON: Mr Speaker, my question is to the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs. I refer to an article published by Ms Kim Sattler of UnionsACT in the *Canberra Times* about the events that occurred on Australia Day outside the Lobby Restaurant. In the article, Ms Sattler states:

Following the events of January 26 I called the office of the ACT Indigenous Affairs Minister, Chris Bourke, and the AFP to discuss the issues.

Minister, what conversations did you or your office have with Ms Sattler about the protest on Australia Day?

Mr Hargreaves: Point of order, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: Yes, Mr Hargreaves.

Mr Hargreaves: My understanding is that questions can be asked of ministers where they pertain to responsibilities within portfolios they have. The generality of the title—this minister has no responsibility at all for any events in the parliamentary triangle so the question might be ruled out of order.

MR SPEAKER: On the point of order, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Obviously phone calls made to the minister's office and reported in the media are directly the responsibility of the minister. And I would go further. This is an incident that involved Indigenous people within the ACT; it is an issue of significant publicity; and the ACT Indigenous affairs minister should have the responsibility to answer that question.

MR SPEAKER: There is no point of order at this stage. Dr Bourke, you can answer the question now.

DR BOURKE: I thank the member for his question. On the morning of Australia Day, along with a thousand other people, I marched from the ANU to the Aboriginal tent embassy to mark its 40th anniversary. I left well before the incident involving the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition at the Lobby Restaurant. After I had left, my office was contacted by Mr Hodges and was asked about providing a media comment on Mr Abbott's statement on the tent embassy. My office said that I was not available and referred him to Ms Sattler as an alternative media contact.

Mr Hanson: Mr Speaker, on a point of order, my question was relating to the article from Ms Sattler that says that following the events of 26 January, she called the office of the ACT Indigenous affairs minister, Chris Bourke. My question was: what conversation did your office have with Ms Sattler about the protest? This is not about what he did on Australia Day or who he spoke to. It is about the fact that Ms Sattler has said that she had conversations with his office—

MR SPEAKER: Dr Bourke, do you wish to add anything further?

DR BOURKE: As I said, my office was contacted on the day, I was unavailable and Mr Hodges was referred to Ms Sattler as an alternative media contact.

Mr Hanson: This is following the events.

DR BOURKE: Sorry; I will need your question again, Mr Hanson.

Mr Hanson: I will read it again, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: Just the last part.

Mr Hanson: Ms Sattler said:

Following the events of January 26 I called the office of the ACT Indigenous Affairs Minister, Chris Bourke, and the AFP to discuss the issues.

My question is: what conversation did you or your office have with Ms Sattler about the protest on Australia Day?

DR BOURKE: I thank Mr Hanson for his question and his clarification. UnionsACT contacted my office on 27 January. I understand that they wanted a contact in federal parliament to deliver a declaration of sovereignty from the tent embassy. My office was unable to help them and that was the end of the conversation.

MR SPEAKER: Thank you. We will move on to a supplementary question now. Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Minister, what conversations have you or your office had with the Prime Minister's office or other people from the federal government about the events on Australia Day?

DR BOURKE: As I said, my office was contacted on the day by Mr Hodges from the Prime Minister's office seeking a media comment on Mr Abbott's statement regarding the tent embassy. My office said that I was not available and referred to him to Ms Sattler as an alternative media contact.

Mr Hanson: Mr Speaker, I raise a point of order. The question, quite clearly, is about the events following Australia Day. Ms Sattler said that following those events she contacted Dr Bourke. My supplementary question is about what conversations he has had following the events of Australia Day, not the events of Australia Day. I would ask Dr Bourke to address what occurred in conversation between him and the federal government and the Prime Minister's office after the events of Australia Day.

MR SPEAKER: Dr Bourke, do you wish to add anything in your remaining time?

DR BOURKE: Mr Speaker, I thank the member for his question. I had no conversations at all with the Prime Minister's office.

MR COE: A supplementary, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: Yes, Mr Coe.

MR COE: What conversations have you or your office had with the Australian Federal Police about the events that occurred on Australia Day?

DR BOURKE: I have had no discussions with the Australian Federal Police regarding the events of Australia Day. I understand that my office, in the inquiry as to whether there should be an inquiry, has provided information to the Federal Police, as they should.

MR COE: A supplementary, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: Yes, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Has anyone from your office had any conversation with the Prime Minister's office or with anybody else in the federal parliamentary offices about the event which occurred on Australia Day, since the event?

DR BOURKE: I refer to my previous answers.

Supermarkets—competition policy

MS LE COUTEUR: My question is to the Minister for Economic Development and is in regard to supermarket space in Canberra. We have heard over the last year about the continuing dive in retail figures in the ACT, and I understand that sales figures are down for all supermarkets in the ACT, the large chains and independents alike, and that sales are at their lowest level since 1984 in real per capita terms. Minister, given this, what economic impact assessment is the government undertaking to ensure that there is sufficient demand for the number of new supermarkets which are being planned for group centres in Canberra?

MR BARR: As the member would be aware, there has been an ongoing policy debate in the territory in relation to supermarket competition policy. I am advised that the formula to assess demand for new supermarket floor space within the Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate is 0.4 of a square metre per capita. Existing floor space within the north Canberra area, where I have recently made an announcement for two new supermarkets—and this area in north Canberra includes Civic and all local centres—amounts to 14,187 square metres. On the basis of population projections, there will be 55,000 residents in north Canberra by 2021. Using the ESDD formula, demand for supermarket floor space is estimated to grow to 22,000 square metres within the next nine years, an increase on the current level of about 8,000 square metres. The proposal that has been announced by the government is for an additional 4,900 square metres in anticipation of this future demand for 8,000 square metres.

MR SPEAKER: Ms Le Couteur, a supplementary question.

MS LE COUTEUR: First, minister, could I please ask you to table what looks like a document with a lot of useful figures in it. Secondly, my question is: what economic impact assessment was undertaken for the proposal, as you mentioned, for the two new supermarkets in Dickson and what comparison was done with the impact of only one additional supermarket and the impacts on the Watson and Hackett local centres?

Mr Hargreaves: On a point of order, Mr Speaker, I just want a little bit of guidance. I noticed that we are having a select committee inquiry into supermarkets and policy competition. I am a little confused as to whether we are getting a little bit close to that particular consideration, and we should not stay there if it is getting close.

MR SPEAKER: Thank you for reminding me of the committee, Mr Hargreaves. I will keep it in mind. I think Ms Le Couteur's question is in order at this point, given the recent announcements, but your point I will keep an eye on.

MR BARR: I am happy to provide this information to members. It is all publicly available, so there is no issue there. I can advise members that the current provision within north Canberra is only two full-line supermarkets—Supabarn in Civic, 3,700 square metres, and Woolworths at Dickson, 3,055 square metres. A useful comparison for members is Belconnen. With an estimated current population of 91,000 people, it boasts seven full-line supermarkets.

The existing shortfall in supermarkets based in Dickson is clearly evidenced by Woolworths's very high turnover. In fact, it is reputed to be if not the highest then one of the highest in the country. The government's analysis in relation to the decision on Dickson referred, of course, to the work undertaken by the late John Martin, who argued in his report that the collocation of an ALDI with an additional full-line operator would optimise consumer choice and energise price competition in the Dickson centre. It was the recommendation of the Martin review that this approach be followed.

I would also refer members to a report prepared for Coles in 2009 by consultants Deep End Services, who projected turnover levels for Coles under four separate scenarios. It showed that even if four supermarkets were located in the Dickson group centre, Coles's turnover would be sustained above the generally accepted industry standard of \$10,000 to \$12,000 per square metre of supermarket space.

MS BRESNAN: Supplementary.

MR SPEAKER: Yes, Ms Bresnan.

MS BRESNAN: Minister, what government processes are followed in relation to determining market demand before your directorate announces that it will release new supermarket sites?

MR BARR: I indicated that ESDD have an established policy and an established formula for assessing that need. The government has indicated for some time that this would be our approach in relation to releasing new land for supermarkets. We undertook an extensive consultation process in relation to the Dickson proposal and in fact had an unprecedented level of community interest in terms of responding to the survey that was undertaken of 10,000 inner north households—a return rate of nearly 20 per cent on that survey and an overwhelming community demand for new supermarkets in Dickson.

Anyone who has spent time waiting in line at Dickson would know of the desperate need for new facilities in that group centre, and I commend the decision to move ahead with this. It was a commitment of mine in the 2008 election—one I am pleased to deliver on and one I am very pleased to face re-election on in 2012. If there is anyone in this place who disagrees with the need for more supermarkets in Dickson, come and stand with me and my constituents in Dickson, in line, at that Woolworths, one weekend—any weekend—and tell those people that they do not deserve another supermarket, more competition, lower prices and greater choice for consumers. That is what this government is about and that is what we are delivering in Dickson.

MR SPEAKER: Ms Hunter, a supplementary question.

MS HUNTER: Minister, what assessment has been done of the impact on Watson and Hackett of opening up the new supermarkets and are you able to provide information on the assessment to the Assembly?

MR BARR: The Martin review is available for members to peruse.

Hospitals—women’s and children’s

MS PORTER: My question is to the Chief Minister as the Minister for Health. Chief Minister, can you please outline the progress of the construction of the women’s and children’s hospital?

Opposition members interjecting—

MR SPEAKER: Thank you, members!

MS GALLAGHER: Thank you, Mr Speaker, and I welcome the beginning of the interjections from the opposition. I am sure I will get a few more of them as I work through the question. It is really great to update the Assembly on the women’s and children’s hospital, which is currently under construction at the Canberra Hospital. Stage 1 of the project is progressing very well and by the second half of this year, women, children and babies from the Canberra and broader region will be benefiting from state-of-the-art facilities in a state-of-the-art hospital.

All the services we provide to women and children will be available and operational when stage 1 opens. Patients will be admitted. Babies will be delivered and sick babies will be cared for. This is a very exciting project that will see the co-location of services, including paediatrics, maternity services, the new neonatal intensive care unit for the sickest babies, gynaecology, foetal medicine and specialised outpatient services, in a three-storey facility.

The new hospital will ensure that Canberra’s women and children have access to a single facility for women’s and children’s hospital services. It is one of the nation’s most progressive health projects which will set the benchmark, I believe, for women, paediatric and new born care within Australia.

It will use the latest technology and will position our hospital at the start of its redevelopment as an Australian leader. Significant work has gone into ensuring that we have the best design for this new facility and changes have been made along the way to ensure that we adapt to changes in demand, new technologies and emerging ideas about the way to provide health care.

This is how a good project should be managed. It needs to be flexible and adaptable with a capacity to refocus and change scope along the way to ensure that we provide the most appropriate and most contemporary facilities.

There have been a number of improvements and enhancements since the initial plans were unveiled. In 2008 we committed \$90 million to the project. However, the design has evolved, as members would know. The scope and budget have both increased accordingly—first to \$97.3 million and then to \$111 million. These additional features will ensure that we will deliver a far superior hospital which includes 80 per cent single bed rooms—which I am sure will be welcomed by patients and everybody in this place—better environmental design, enhanced infection control measures, wider corridors to enable the inclusion of new technologies and better logistics, and new services such as a paediatric burns bath.

Stage 1 of the construction, involving the existing maternity building, is progressing well and it is expected to be completed and operational mid-year. The external facade to the building is currently being applied while the interior fit-out continues. Stage 2 will involve further refurbishment of the existing maternity building and is expected to be completed early next year.

MS PORTER: A supplementary.

MR SPEAKER: Yes, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Chief Minister, what services will be included in the new women's and children's hospital when stage 1 opens later this year?

MS GALLAGHER: I thank Ms Porter for the question. The hospital redevelopment, as a whole project, involves a complex decanting process and does require relocating services while we rebuild the hospital. The new women's and children's hospital forms part of that process. Some services will move temporarily into the new building while the current maternity building is refurbished, while other services will be permanently located in the new facility. Importantly, all the services for women and children will be available during this process—the NICU, birthing and delivery suites and paediatrics. All the services that we provide to women and children will be operational when stage 1 opens.

Some of the services to move into stage 1 include the neonatal intensive care unit, which will increase in space, so that it will be possible to increase the bed numbers in future. There will be two patients per room, allowing tailored manipulation of light, noise and temperature, as well as improving parent access and care. This is a significant change and improvement on the current NICU and will make a big difference for families with very sick babies. There will also be rooming-in facilities for parents, which are not able to be provided now, to enable better education of parents before taking their babies home.

The birth centre will be relocated to the new building, with an increase in birthing rooms from three to five, allowing more women in the ACT to use this very popular service.

Maternity in-patient wards will also move to the new building. And in order to accommodate families of patients, Ronald McDonald family accommodation will be

part of the new hospital, offering families a home away from home. Families will have the chance to meet others facing similar situations, share their experience and give each other support. I note that there will be some fundraising efforts to support the Ronald McDonald House completion over the next few months across the ACT.

MR HARGREAVES: Supplementary, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: Yes, Mr Hargreaves.

MR HARGREAVES: Chief Minister, what is the purpose of having a stage 1 and a stage 2 in constructing a hospital, and what is included in stage 2?

MS GALLAGHER: I thank Mr Hargreaves for his question. To ensure minimal disruption to existing services, the development has been scheduled in two stages: the significant extension adjacent to the existing maternity building and then the refurbishment of that building as stage 2. When stage 1 is completed, some parts of paediatrics currently located in the main tower block will move into the new building. Additionally, all of the existing services in the current maternity building will be relocated into the new building.

This then frees up space in the current maternity building to allow it to be completely refurbished, which forms stage 2 of the construction. The existing maternity building will undergo a major revamp, including the removal of all internal fitouts and stripping the building back to a concrete frame, as well as removal and replacement of the facade. The existing building is to be completely refitted, while stage 2 works will also include new landscape and civil works leading to the forecourt of the pathology building and the new facility. At the completion of stage 2 the remainder of paediatrics will be relocated to the refurbished maternity building while some areas that have previously moved in stage 1 will have the opportunity to expand into stage 2, allowing for growth.

It has been exceptionally disappointing to hear the Liberals constantly talking down this project. I know it is one that will be welcomed by a lot of families in the ACT and in surrounding New South Wales. It is a very positive project—one that would not have been dreamed of by the Liberal Party, the party that blew up the hospital and removed a hundred beds from the system. This is about building new facilities, state of the art, for women, babies and children, to get the best care possible at the Canberra Hospital. It is a difficult project in the sense that it is a brownfields redevelopment, and we must keep our services going. But the team out there, including Leighton, who are building it, are doing a great job.

MR HANSON: A supplementary, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: Yes, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Minister, after the debacle of the AMC opening, why should people trust you this time that your election eve opening is not just another sham, and is there any major health project that is both on time and on budget?

MS GALLAGHER: I thank Mr Hanson for his question. Services will be provided from the women's and children's hospital from the date of opening. That is expected in the first half of this year, May-June this year, depending on how the weather goes and the final stages of this project—well ahead of the election date.

In relation to the projects that have been delivered, as Mr Hanson knows, because I have provided him with all of that information, the vast majority of the projects that are completed have been completed on time and on budget.

Mr Hanson: Rubbish!

MS GALLAGHER: No, it is true.

Australia Day—protest

MR COE: My question is for the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs. Minister, I refer to a media report published in the *Australian* online on 28 January about the Aboriginal tent embassy protest and conversations that Tony Hodges, of the Prime Minister's office, had before the protest. The report says:

The Prime Minister said Mr Hodges first contacted ACT Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs Chris Bourke.

When Dr Bourke was unavailable he was referred to ACT Unions secretary Kim Sattler.

Minister, who did Mr Hodges contact in your office, what was said in that conversation and did you direct the answer which was given?

DR BOURKE: I refer the member to my previous answer to this question. As I have previously said, my office was contacted by Mr Hodges on the day and we were asked about providing a media comment. I was unavailable, and he was referred on to Ms Sattler as an alternative media contact. Mr Speaker, I am not going to be naming people in my office.

MR SPEAKER: Mr Coe, a supplementary.

MR COE: Minister, did your office suggest that Mr Hodges contact Ms Sattler and, if so, why?

Members interjecting—

MR SPEAKER: Dr Bourke has the floor; thank you, members. He will decide what he is going to answer.

DR BOURKE: I thank the member for his question. Mr Hodges contacted my office seeking a media comment. I was unavailable and he was referred to Ms Sattler, as an alternative media contact at the tent embassy.

MR HANSON: Supplementary, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: Yes, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Minister, were you or your office aware that Mr Hodges was going to advise Ms Sattler that Tony Abbott was at the Lobby Restaurant? If not, what was the purpose of the phone call?

DR BOURKE: The purpose of the phone call—I refer to my previous answer—was to get a media contact. I was unavailable; he was referred to Ms Sattler.

MR HARGREAVES: Supplementary.

MR SPEAKER: Yes, Mr Hargreaves.

MR HARGREAVES: My question to Dr Bourke is: did you engage in any of the arrangements at all around the tent embassy fiasco?

DR BOURKE: I refer to my previous answers to the question—

Opposition members interjecting—

MR SPEAKER: Order, members!

DR BOURKE: I knew nothing about it until I got home and watched the news.

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr Hargreaves: I am not deaf, Mr Speaker. I am happy with that.

Mental health—services

MS BRESNAN: My question is to the Minister for Health and concerns patients with dual diagnosis being treated at the psychiatric services unit. Minister, there was a recent article in the media about a man with a mental illness and alcohol-related problems who was not admitted to the PSU and was sent back to court and was also unable to stay in a men's shelter. Effectively, because he had dual diagnosis, he was not accepted at the PSU and the only place he could go was into custody. Minister, is the PSU required to acknowledge dual diagnosis and accept and admit patients who are experiencing a mental illness as the first issue requiring treatment?

MS GALLAGHER: I thank Ms Bresnan for the question. I have discussed this matter with the Health Directorate. The decisions about who is admitted to the psychiatric unit are clinical decisions made by the admitting officer. Not wanting to go into individuals necessarily, that is where it is appropriate for those decisions to be taken. At times people will not be happy with the psychiatric assessment, but there are often, and in my briefings around this matter, some good reasons why the psychiatric

unit is not seen as an appropriate place for a particular individual. And individuals tend to be known in the ACT as well, so all of the factors relating to their wellness or unwellness would be taken into consideration before a clinical decision is made.

MR SPEAKER: Ms Bresnan, a supplementary.

MS BRESNAN: Minister, given the mental health and drug and alcohol policy units are now in one unit, are you confident that this policy directive has translated into service delivery?

MS GALLAGHER: I have no reason to believe it has not, but that is not to say that challenges around appropriate supports for people will magically disappear because of these collaborations within the directorate. There will be, and is, as you would know, Ms Bresnan, support for some very challenging individuals. I have no reason to believe that the Health Directorate staff do not consider the whole person when they are making decisions about where the appropriate places or supports for that person are. That may mean that we have to look at other ways, ways outside of perhaps the traditional service delivery—again, as you know, with particular individuals in the ACT—to look at the best way that we can provide supports to them as individuals. We are doing that work as well.

MR HANSON: Supplementary.

MR SPEAKER: Yes, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Minister, does your broken promise to build a secure mental health facility—because the cost blew out from \$11 million to \$30 million and it was meant to be opened last year—does that have any bearing on this issue?

MS GALLAGHER: Mr Hanson is just showing his clear lack of knowledge about anything to do with the mental health service sector if he feels that those two issues are interrelated. I would just point out the hypocrisy of the Liberals' position: if a project changes scope, is increased in scope, and the budget increases, then it is your fault; if you stop a project because it is heading over budget, to reassess, it is also your fault. I draw that to your attention, Mr Hanson; you cannot have it both ways.

Members interjecting—

MR SPEAKER: Thank you, members! Mr Hanson!

MS GALLAGHER: If you think that this matter is related to the forensic or secure unit, you are sadly wrong.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MR SPEAKER: Mr Hanson!

MS GALLAGHER: And after years in the shadow role you should be very ashamed of yourself that you are even asking the question.

Members interjecting—

MR SPEAKER: Order! Ms Gallagher, one moment, please.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MR SPEAKER: Order, members! Order, Mr Hanson!

Mr Hargreaves: Mr Speaker, you have constantly asked Mr Hanson to stop interjecting. One of the interjections he did after you asked him that was that the Chief Minister had broken a promise. I believe that to be unparliamentary. It should be withdrawn.

MR SPEAKER: There is no point of order. Let us just move on.

Members interjecting—

MR SPEAKER: Mr Hargreaves! Mr Hanson! Ms Hunter, you have the floor for a supplementary question.

MS HUNTER: Minister, is it potentially a breach of someone's human rights if they are experiencing a mental illness and do not receive the required treatment or if they are released from the PSU but remanded in custody?

MS GALLAGHER: Decisions about whether someone suffering from a mental illness is suitable for admission to the psychiatric unit are decisions taken by clinicians. They are taken by treating psychiatrists. At times people can be unwell and still be deemed not to be suffering from a psychiatric illness that requires admission and withholding of liberty into the psychiatric unit. These areas are complex. There is no easy answer to these individual situations when they arise, particularly when you are dealing with people with a very challenging set of circumstances.

I have no reason to believe, again, that the Health Directorate has done anything but act in accordance with the processes that it has in place and also with the laws around detaining people for the purpose of psychiatric treatment if a psychiatrist does not believe they are psychiatrically unwell. So that does present a challenge, because we are talking about withholding of liberty. This is often complex, particularly when individuals do not agree with that action and family members may believe that it is the best way forward. You are not always going to get the outcome that pleases everybody. The challenge for us, in a small system like this, is to look at what other supports we can provide to that individual to make sure that they are taken care of and supported in the most optimum of circumstances.

Prisons—costs

MRS DUNNE: My question is to the Minister for Corrections. I refer to chapter 8 of the Productivity Commission report on government services 2012 and ask: why did the ACT have the highest total cost per prisoner per day for 2010-11?

DR BOURKE: I thank the member for her question. There is a range of reasons why the report on government services indicates a higher cost per day for the ACT. The primary reason is that the capital amortisation of our prison is included in that figure. Because we have a new prison, compared to other jurisdictions, the capital amortisation bumps up the cost per day.

MRS DUNNE: A supplementary question, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: Yes, Mrs Dunne.

MRS DUNNE: Why does the ACT have the highest real operating expenditure per day per prisoner for 2010-11?

DR BOURKE: We do have the highest operating cost per day. We also have the highest prisoner education enrolment per day—90 per cent compared with a national average of 35 per cent. We have a human rights compliant prison. We have a prison where prisoners experience on average 13.3 hours a day out of their cells—20 per cent more than other jurisdictions. These are the reasons why our prison costs more.

MR SPEAKER: Supplementary, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: My supplementary to the minister is: to what extent has the ongoing issue with prisoner capacity at the AMC impacted on the high operating costs?

DR BOURKE: It is a simple fact of economics that, if you have a range of fixed costs and you put more prisoners in, the cost actually goes down.

MR SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, a supplementary.

MR HANSON: To what extent does the high cost of the AMC reflect on the poor management of your predecessor, Mr Corbell?

DR BOURKE: Mr Speaker, that asks for a reflection on Mr Corbell, and on a point of order—

Members interjecting—

MR SPEAKER: That was the answer.

Members interjecting—

MR SPEAKER: We will move on to the next question. Are there any further questions? Mr Doszpot.

Health—general practitioners

MR DOSZPOT: My question is to the Minister for Health. The recent Productivity Commission report on government services showed that the ACT recorded the lowest

number of GPs per capita in Australia and that GPs per capita is declining further. Bulk-billing rates have also declined in the ACT and are well behind elsewhere in Australia. As a result, the ACT has the highest number of people who have deferred visiting a GP. Why does the ACT continue to have the worst statistics for access to GPs in the country?

MS GALLAGHER: I welcome this question from Mr Doszpot, who I think chaired the committee looking into the GP shortage in 2009 or whenever that was. It is true that the ACT has a GP shortage. As a direct result of some of the initiatives that this government has put in place, including the \$12 million GP infrastructure funds and a range of other initiatives, I think the worst of the GP shortage is over. We are starting to see, Mr Doszpot, GPs advertising for patients in the paper, which is something that we have not seen for some time.

The bulk-billing rate in the ACT, again, is a bit of a challenge with a GP shortage. But it is important to note that one in two consultations is bulk-billed and those are targeted to people on concessions and children, who often have additional costs allocated to them.

The government has put in place a range of measures, including the very popular walk-in centre, to make sure that people can get access to primary health care out of hours free of charge. I think the latest data I saw was about 25,000 visits to the walk-in centre. So within the capacity of the ACT government to address gaps in primary health care, we are meeting that with our service response. But we are also working with the division of general practice around assistance to them to make sure that not only—

Mr Hanson: It is Medicare local now, minister. Remember? You changed the name.

MS GALLAGHER: Thank you, Mr Hanson. I can see that your extensive break over the summer period has not improved your behaviour in this chamber at all.

Opposition members interjecting—

MR SPEAKER: Order, members!

MS GALLAGHER: It is just straight back to the way you behaved all of last year—constant interjections. We are working with the division, or as Mr Hanson points out, the Medicare local, which is the same organisation, to look at other ways to support general practice in the ACT and we will continue that dialogue with them. In addition, I continue to lobby the commonwealth around initiatives that might come to the ACT to support GPs. Indeed, I imagine that an announcement will be made soon about the GP super-clinic, which is something that I went up to the hill and fought for and did not get any support for from you guys opposite.

MR SPEAKER: Mr Doszpot, a supplementary question.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Minister, what impact does the continuing problems with access to GP services have on the ACT having the worst wait times for the emergency department in the country?

MS GALLAGHER: It is clear from the ROGS data that in terms of GP-type presentations to the emergency department we are higher than the national average. This is no surprise. I do not know if you people over there have just woken up, and it is an election year, and all of a sudden you have to get interested in this. That data has been the same in terms of presentations to the emergency department—

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MS GALLAGHER: Which is exactly why we started off initiatives like the walk-in centre to deal with that type of patient who does not necessarily need to be seen at the emergency department but can be seen at another setting. And it is exactly why, if we are elected later this year, you will see us expand our role in primary health care out into community-based settings. We do not want people to come to hospital if they do not need to be at hospital. If they need access to out-of-hours free primary health care, we believe this can be provided safely and conveniently in community settings.

MR HANSON: Supplementary, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: Yes, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Minister, why has the number of GPs per capita in the ACT been declining when in other parts of Australia it is increasing?

MS GALLAGHER: As I said, my views on this, in talking with staff in the Medicare local—and other GPs you will notice are starting to advertise for patients—I believe we are seeing an increase in GP numbers. We know that there are a number of clinics that will be opening over the next year or so and I think, based on where it was about three years ago, I hope that the worst of the GP shortage is over. But it does—

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MS GALLAGHER: Mr Hanson, the feedback I am getting back from GPs—I do not know whether you talk to GPs as part of your job—when I am talking to GPs is that there is some easing in the pressure that they have been experiencing over the last three years, and that is supported by GPs actually advertising for patients, which has not been seen for some time. So I think, based on information I am getting from people who are at the coalface and from some of the signs that we are seeing, the worst of the GP shortage is over. We need to keep building on those initiatives that this government has put in place, through GP training places and some of the infrastructure grants that we have been putting in place to support the work of GPs in the community, which are bearing fruit. That is not necessarily good for anyone other than the Canberra community in terms of accessing a family doctor.

MR HARGREAVES: A supplementary, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: Yes, Mr Hargreaves.

MR HARGREAVES: Chief Minister and Minister for Health, is the provision of provider numbers an influence on the number of GPs in a given area, and which government actually issues provider numbers?

Mrs Dunne: Could I seek your clarification, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: Yes.

Mrs Dunne: On the issue of provider numbers, my understanding is that it is a federal responsibility. I am not sure that—

Members interjecting—

MR SPEAKER: Order, members!

Mrs Dunne: The question seemed to be about the provision of provider numbers, which is a federal responsibility. I am just wondering whether it is in order.

Mr Hargreaves: Mr Speaker—

MR SPEAKER: On the point of order, Mr Hargreaves.

Mr Hargreaves: Mr Speaker, I asked the Minister for Health whether the provision of provider numbers impacted on the number of GPs in a given area and which government was actually the government responsible for issuing those provider numbers.

MR SPEAKER: I think the question is in order.

MS GALLAGHER: Thank you, Mrs Dunne, for your dorothy dixer. It has been most helpful. As Mrs Dunne has just shown, the issue around provider numbers, which actually allows GPs to practise and claim against Medicare, is a commonwealth responsibility. So she has just crossed the campaign that has been run by Mr Hanson and Mr Doszpot for the last three years, arguing that it is all the ACT government's fault. Well, here we have it—a split in the Liberal Party. Mrs Dunne knows that GPs are the responsibility of the commonwealth government. We have got it. We look forward to seeing it in Mr Hanson's press release around GPs when he next issues one.

ACT Policing—Belconnen police station

MR HARGREAVES: My question is to the Attorney-General, Minister Corbell, the minister responsible for police operations. My question relates to the Belconnen police station. Minister, could you update the Assembly, please, on the progress of the government to deliver a state-of-the-art Belconnen police station to the local community, and what environmental credentials does that building boast?

MR CORBELL: I thank Mr Hargreaves for the question. I am pleased to advise the Assembly that in December last year I handed over the keys for the new \$23.5 million

Belconnen police station to the Chief Police Officer, Mr Quaedvlieg. ACT Policing have successfully completed the transition from the old Belconnen police station to the new station. That occurred on 31 January this year. The new Belconnen police station is now fully operational.

The new police station provides the Belconnen community and ACT Policing with a state-of-the-art facility, one that will serve the territory and the community well into the future. It is a 2,800 square metre facility, housing more than 100 police officers and other staff, and it features facilities such as a public access foyer and counter, five holding cells, incident rooms, welfare counselling rooms, an area for victims of crime, a muster room and a breath analysis area. The construction of this facility honours the government's commitment to establish an energy efficient building for the future as well as a state-of-the-art police station for our hardworking police officers.

In keeping with the government's commitment to reduce energy use in government facilities, a number of new and innovative features have been placed into the new station. These include a chilled beam system which controls heating and cooling, responding to the 24/7 operations of the facility and achieving good value for money when it comes to the operational costs of the building. The chilled beam system operates on moving air around the entire building, thereby creating a more controllable and pleasant environment.

Natural light is utilised through the building and sunshades are visible to the east and south elevations of the new station. Harvested rainwater is piped into underground tanks situated under the new car park area and can hold approximately 100,000 litres, providing water for facility hydraulics, landscape watering and carwash activities. Solar hot water panels—six of them—are situated on the outbuilding of the complex, providing backup solar hot water.

This is a very pleasing development, both in terms of delivering a building which meets the operational needs of ACT Policing into the future, providing the community with a new, modern facility in which to interact with their police should they need to report a matter and, finally, a building that delivers a great environmental outcome.

In fact, it would be remiss of me not to mention that the building is also contributing to the local biodiversity in the Belconnen area. Members would be aware that a number of blue-tongue lizards that previously lived at the old Belconnen police station and had become favoured mascots of the Belconnen team have been relocated across to the new courtyard of the new building where they are also enjoying the new facilities on offer.

MR SPEAKER: Mr Hargreaves, a supplementary question.

MR HARGREAVES: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. Apart from the need to relocate blue-tongue lizards and provide a source of amusement for Mr Coe, why was it important to invest this money in a new police station in Belconnen in the first place?

MR CORBELL: I thank Mr Hargreaves for the question. The previous Belconnen police station had very much reached the end of its operational life—a facility which had become a rabbit warren of demountable buildings in the area immediately adjacent to the first Belconnen police station, which was built as part of the old Belconnen Remand Centre. Members would be aware that the old Belconnen Remand Centre has now been decommissioned, and so now has the old Belconnen police station. That building was first constructed in 1976. I am very pleased that it has been a Labor government that has made the investment to provide new and modern accommodation for our police services for well into the future.

MR HANSON: A supplementary, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: Yes, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Minister, how late was the facility and how much over budget?

MR CORBELL: I thank Mr Hanson for the question. Practical completion of the project was achieved on 28 November this year. A number of delays did occur, due to a number of issues, including a number of latent site conditions, including an underground stream that had not previously been identified, an overheated construction market and the extended period of adverse weather, including a large amount of rain, as well as requirements for a number of redesign elements to capture the security requirements of the Australian Federal Police. So there has been delay with the project for those reasons.

MR SPEAKER: Ms Porter, a supplementary question.

Mr Hanson: Mr Speaker—

MR SPEAKER: Order! Ms Porter has a supplementary.

MS PORTER: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MR SPEAKER: Order!

Mr Hargreaves: On a point of order, Mr Speaker—

MR SPEAKER: Let us go to Ms Porter's question.

Mr Hargreaves: It is a point of order on an interjection. Mr Hanson just accused the Attorney-General of being a coward. I would ask you to get him to withdraw it.

MR SPEAKER: Yes. Mr Hanson, I invite you to withdraw that comment.

Mr Hanson: I withdraw, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: Thank you. Let us go to Ms Porter's supplementary question.

MS PORTER: Minister, how is crime trending in this area and how will a new station assist police to continue the excellent work they do at Belconnen, with which I have personal experience?

MR CORBELL: I thank Ms Porter for the question. I am very pleased to report that we have seen a significant decrease in most offence types in Belconnen over the last 12 months. Over the last six months some of the figures are worth highlighting in particular. For example, in the last six months there has been an 8.7 per cent decrease in the total number of reported offences in the Belconnen area. There has been an 18½ per cent decrease in the number of stolen motor vehicles. There has been an 11.8 per cent decrease in the number of burglaries and there has been a 41.9 per cent decrease in the number of robberies. These are outstanding results on the part of our police. They indicate that the government is giving the police the resources they need to focus on reducing these volume crime types in particular. The establishment of the new Belconnen police station will ensure that police continue to have a central and prominent location in the Belconnen town centre, which is obviously an important community presence as well as being accessible and able to be used by a wide number of people in the Belconnen area.

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

Rostered ministers question time

Minister for Industrial Relations

ACT public sector—Hawke review

MS HUNTER: Minister, following the recommendations in the Hawke review and the commencement of new public sector management standards, is it now the case that all ACT public service awards, collective agreements and enterprise agreements are compatible with the public sector management standards?

DR BOURKE: Today's rostered question time is for the Minister for Industrial Relations. In this case, the member's question relates to the public service administration. I would like to advise Ms Hunter that the minister responsible for the public service is in fact the Chief Minister. However, I am in a position to respond to the question on the Chief Minister's behalf. I am advised that the provisions of all ACT public service awards, collective agreements and enterprise agreements are compatible.

Security industry—proposed long service leave scheme

MR HARGREAVES: Can the minister advise of recent developments in relation to the proposed security industry long service leave scheme?

DR BOURKE: Following the success of the ACT's new portable long service leave scheme for the community sector industry, the government announced its intention to

extend the regime to workers in the ACT's security industry so they are provided with similar benefits. In addition to the community sector industry, the ACT has portable long service leave schemes for the building and construction industry and the contract cleaning industry, all managed by the ACT Long Service Leave Authority.

The government is currently working towards the development of a portable long service leave entitlement to employees undertaking relevant work across the security industry. Stakeholder consultation is currently underway, with the release of an exposure draft and discussion paper late last year. Comments and submissions on the proposed attributes of the scheme are due by 29 February this year, with a view to commencing the scheme on 1 July.

Fitters Workshop

MRS DUNNE: My question is in relation to the Fitters Workshop. In the public hearings in relation to the inquiry of the Standing Committee on Education, Training and Youth Affairs into the future of the Fitters Workshop, there were several accusations of bullying, intimidation and other attempts by government officials and ministerial staff to influence behaviour of community individuals—

Mr Hargreaves: Point of order, Mr Speaker.

MRS DUNNE: and arts organisations—

MR SPEAKER: Order! One moment.

Mr Hargreaves: I think this is the first time it has happened in this system and I just wanted an understanding and a refreshment. What we are seeing here is a preamble to the rostered question. I was under the impression that preambles were not going to be applicable in this particular segment of question time. If that is so, could I ask that you rule those out of order after this and then ask Mrs Dunne to get to the question?

MR SPEAKER: Yes, thank you, Mr Hargreaves. I do not think there is any clarity on that. Perhaps that is something we will take up in the administration and procedure committee this Friday when we meet. Mrs Dunne, proceed with your question, thank you.

MRS DUNNE: I will just go back a little, if I could, to get the flow going. There were several accusations of bullying, intimidation and other attempts by government officials and ministerial staff to influence the behaviour of community individuals and arts organisations as to what should or should not be done in relation to the future of the Fitters Workshop.

Minister, what are you doing to investigate these claims of bullying and intimidation and what action have you taken as the Minister for Industrial Relations to instruct officials and staffers in this place to maintain a neutral line in what they say on this subject to individuals and arts organisations in the community?

DR BOURKE: Today's rostered question time is for the Minister for Industrial Relations. In this case, the member's question relates to the arts. I would like to advise Mrs Dunne that the minister responsible for the arts is in fact Ms Burch. However, I am in a position to respond to the question on Ms Burch's behalf.

The government takes all bullying allegations very seriously. Bullying and intimidation are behaviours inconsistent with the duties and obligations of public servants and will not be tolerated. Claims were made by Ms Helen Moore during the hearing into the Fitters Workshop that members of the music community had been pressured by government officials on public comments that they might make. Unfortunately, the allegations made by Ms Moore were very general; no names, no dates and no details were provided. Even Ms Moore described it as "second hand" and "hearsay".

I understand that the Minister for the Arts obtained absolute assurances from officials in her directorate and from her office that no such pressure took place. Without further and more specific information, there is little more that can be done.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, as the Minister for Industrial Relations, and the person responsible for bullying in this context, do you condone the bullying comments of the former Chief Minister, reported in the media, when he accused musicians of acting like wild dogs, going around Canberra sniffing out buildings that could be reserved for musicians?

DR BOURKE: These were the comments of a private citizen.

ACT public service—workplace bullying

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, have you taken regular briefings on the progress of the current ACT public service culture and behaviour consultation? If no, why? If yes, what is emerging in relation to workplace bullying in the ACT public service?

DR BOURKE: The questions posed to me today as Minister for Industrial Relations demonstrate a lack of understanding among members of the split of ministerial responsibility. Once again in this case the question relates to the public service administration. I would like to advise Mr Doszpot that the minister responsible for the public service is in fact the Chief Minister. However, I am in a position to respond to the question on the Chief Minister's behalf.

I am advised that the current ACT public service culture and behaviour consultations are continuing. The work is being undertaken by the head of service and ACT public service commissioner as I speak. While I am advised that the level of participation is excellent and the process to date is considered very productive and worth while, I have not been briefed on the outcomes because the process has not yet concluded.

MR DOSZPOT: I am not quite sure whether we are not wasting the time of the Assembly with all of these questions, quite frankly. Minister, have you reviewed, or are you reviewing, the government's policy on workplace bullying in the ACT public

service, as Minister for Industrial Relations? If no, why? If yes, what changes have you made and what are you doing to develop a new culture throughout the service to eliminate workplace bullying, which is someone's responsibility?

DR BOURKE: I do refer to my previous answer. In relation to workplace bullying in general, as members are aware, all territory workplaces are required to comply with the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 and the code of practice for preventing and responding to bullying at work. Workplace bullying will not be tolerated. The ACT public service aims to create a positive work environment for staff that is free from discrimination, harassment and bullying. Formal mechanisms to prevent and respond to workplace bullying are included in the ACT public service respect, equity and diversity framework. This framework, commonly known amongst public servants as the RED, provides policy guidance, procedures and training to reinforce the public service code of conduct and sets standards of leadership to promote equity, diversity and respect in the workplace. The framework also includes the establishment and training of key personnel as contact officers to act as a first point of contact for staff and to provide support and guidance to supervisors and managers in their efforts to eradicate bullying and harassment in the workplace.

Work safety

MS LE COUTEUR: I refer to the recent reported comments by a safety and risk assessment consultant that the ACT's approach to work safety is not focused enough on cultural change or on developing a work safety culture. What is the government's response to this and how will it ensure that work safety culture issues are sufficiently prioritised?

DR BOURKE: Modern work health and safety laws include the model Work Health and Safety Act 2011, which is a duty-based legislation that does in fact focus on cultural change and creating a work safety culture. This is evident through a number of provisions, including the principal safety duties, the obligations to consult all workers on health and safety issues, the positive duty of care on senior officers and the tripartite approach to work health and safety through including workers, persons in control of workplaces and worker representatives.

I would object to any comment that suggested that the legislative framework for work health and safety does not encourage cultural change and development of a real culture of safety. As members are aware, WorkSafe ACT is responsible for enforcing the Work Health and Safety Act. While the Attorney-General is the minister responsible for WorkSafe ACT, the Work Safety Commissioner has advised me that in his opinion the report to which Ms Le Couteur refers is not correct. The commissioner has advised that work safety inspectors do stress the importance of a safety culture in their regular dealings with workplaces.

MS LE COUTEUR: Minister, do WorkSafe ACT and the office of IR have sufficient resources to be able to address work safety culture issues, as well as to respond to incidents, noting that the Hawke review raised resourcing as an issue in IR?

DR BOURKE: The commissioner has advised me that work safety inspectors have a range of contacts with business owners and workers, and in these everyday dealings they often stress that the way to achieve and improve worker safety is through cultural change and encouraging and developing a culture of safety within the workplace.

Answers to questions on notice

Question No 1934

MRS DUNNE: Mr Speaker, I seek an explanation under standing order 118A as to the reason for the lateness of question 1934 to the Minister for Community Services, which was due on 6 January.

MS BURCH: Mr Speaker, I signed off some questions on notice this morning. So they should be on their way to your office.

MRS DUNNE (Ginninderra) (3.14): In accordance with standing order 118A(c), I move:

That the Assembly takes note that the Minister for Community Services has failed to answer question on notice No 1934 in the time provided by the standing order.

Standing orders are quite clear. Ministers have 30 days to answer. Questions can be redirected that may cause that time to blow out. But the minister and her department have had since 6 January—it is now 14 February—to come to me and explain why this question has not been answered.

There is a standard practice in this place. Ministers get a rush of questions to be signed off, which are really very late, at the beginning of every sitting period. We get this “Oh, well, I have just signed off on it”.

The answer to this question was due six weeks ago. The minister had 30 days before that. It is not satisfactory. We have not seen a satisfactory answer. All the standing orders allow us to do is to note that there has not been a satisfactory explanation.

Perhaps if we do this from time to time, ministers will be more diligent in doing their job and ensuring that the administration of their offices is done correctly, that the administration of their departments is done correctly and that they comply with the standing orders.

MS BURCH (Brindabella—Minister for Community Services, Minister for the Arts, Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Minister for Ageing, Minister for Women and Minister for Gaming and Racing) (3.16): I refer to the question on notice. It is right that it was due on the 6th. But I had time off over Christmas, as did a number of staff, and the question covers 11 components. So I do apologise, but I think some leeway over the holiday period should be expected. I do apologise. The explanation is that there are 11 parts to that question. It covered public art, funding for the CSO and just about everything in between, Mr Speaker.

MS BRESNAN (Brindabella) (3.16): The Greens will agree with this motion from Mrs Dunne. I do take Ms Burch's point about the Christmas break, but I do also agree with Mrs Dunne that the standing order is clear about what is required with the questions. This is something that has happened on a number of occasions. I think that by agreeing with this, Mrs Dunne is simply noting that we have not received an adequate explanation. It is a proper response to this in this instance. I hope that it will have an impact on questions coming through in a more timely way.

MR HARGREAVES (Brindabella) (3.17): In relation to this particular matter, I have just checked, and I can assure the chamber that the question was indeed signed off by the minister. It was a multifaceted question. It was as a result of annual report questions put on notice. It was a complicated exercise, as was the case with quite a number of them. Those ministers who have received the quantity of questions on notice from the annual reports hearings would know that they come in multi facets, multi parts, and quite often quite a number of them are around the same subject.

The motion essentially says, "Why didn't you do it?" The response, Mr Speaker, was, "I have just done it." That is the reason. So the part of the standing order that requires an explanation as to why it has not been received has been satisfied. The connotation in this motion from Mrs Dunne is that it has not been satisfied. It actually has, in reality, been satisfied by the advice that that thing has been signed off and has been sent.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Papers

Mr Speaker presented the following papers, which were circulated to members when the Assembly was not sitting:

Standing order 191—Amendments to—

Electricity Feed-In (Large-Scale Renewable Energy Generation) Bill 2011, dated 12 December 2011.

Planning and Building Legislation Amendment Bill 2011 (No 2), dated 9 December 2011.

Auditor-General Act—Auditor-General's Reports—

No 5/2011—2010-11 Financial Audits, dated 21 December 2011.

No 6/2011—Management of Food Safety in the Australian Capital Territory, dated 21 December 2011.

Ms Gallagher presented the following paper:

Administrative arrangements—Administrative Arrangements Amendment 2012 (No 1)—Notifiable Instrument NI2012-53 (Special Gazette No S2, Thursday, 9 February 2012).

Legislation program—2012

Paper and statement by minister

MS GALLAGHER (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Minister for Health and Minister for Territory and Municipal Services): For the information of members, I present the following paper:

Legislation Program 2012.

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

Leave granted.

MS GALLAGHER: I am pleased to present the government's 2012 legislation program. As this parliamentary year will be shortened by the election in October there will be one government legislation program covering both the autumn and spring sittings.

The 2012 program will continue to implement a number of the government's priorities, with a focus on openness, accountability, delivering a more liveable and sustainable city, helping those most in need, and improving the safety of all Canberrans.

The government has a record of supporting and welcoming greater openness and accountability measures for government. Indeed, since becoming Chief Minister, just a couple of the initiatives that have commenced include the open government website and Twitter cabinet. The government will continue its pursuit of measures to improve how we provide information to the community and measures to enhance our accountability as governments adapt to the changing nature of public administration into the 21st century.

Additionally, the government will introduce a bill to implement the government's agreed recommendations from the public accounts committee inquiry into the Auditor-General Act 1996. These agreed recommendations include designation of the Auditor-General as an officer of the parliament. They also provide for the audit of non-government organisations in certain circumstances so that the Auditor-General can audit funded activities of government.

The government will introduce improvements to the public interest disclosure process through a rewrite of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1994. The Public Interest Disclosure Bill 2012 will implement recommendations from the whistling while they work project, introduce improvements at every stage of the public interest disclosure process, and extend the reach of the legislation to cover members of the Legislative Assembly.

To clarify the law for duties, the government will introduce the Duties Amendment Bill 2012 to amend the Duties Act 1999 to clarify the appropriate value associated with the transfer of a land rent lease for the purpose of assessing duty. This will

support the intention of the legislation and will put the value of a land rent lease beyond doubt. Additionally, the Duties Amendment Bill (No 2) will amend the Duties Act 1999 by removing the duty liability on the transfer of short-term commercial subleases, reducing red tape and providing efficiencies to business by removing a small but time-consuming tax.

Through the introduction of the Rates Amendment Bill 2012 the government will seek to correct an anomaly of the Rates Act 2004, which charges commercial rates and land tax on all such leases regardless of their purpose.

The 2012 program will also focus on the government's commitment to making Canberra the most sustainable city in Australia. In line with our commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the ACT, the government will introduce the Energy Efficiency Improvement Bill 2012 to create an ACT supplier-obligation energy efficiency scheme to stimulate broad-scale energy efficiency improvements of home and small business, with a particular focus on assisting low income earners.

Additionally, the Electricity Feed-in (Renewable Energy Premium) Amendment Bill 2012 will be introduced to address the likely scenario of a capacity overrun in the now-closed micro and medium-scale feed-in tariff scheme.

To protect and conserve our heritage places through a more simplified, open and transparent process, the government will introduce the Heritage Amendment Bill 2012. The bill will make amendments in response to the review by Duncan Marshall into the operations of the Heritage Act 2004.

The Assembly may also like to note that the government will bring forward an exposure draft bill of changes to the Nature Conservation Act as a result of the comprehensive review and community response to the discussion paper released in November 2010.

The program will also include a number of bills to clarify the interpretation of protection for those most vulnerable in our community. The government will introduce amendments to the Children and Young People Act to clarify aspects of the act and provide additional protection to children and young people in territory care. The amendments will authorise the withdrawal of a general parental authority to entities who no longer provide care, clarify provisions of the act and ensure that children on care orders in the ACT continue to be protected when residing in other jurisdictions. In addition, minor amendments are required arising from the human rights review of the ACT youth justice system into the use of force and "good order" of a detention place. Clarity is also required on the implementation of the Children and Young People Death Review Committee.

Additionally, the government will introduce the Disability Services Amendment Bill 2012 to ensure that the Minister for Community Services is able to make a disability service standard and enable the government to ensure that all disability service providers comply with service standards.

Minor amendments to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body Act 2008 will also be introduced in 2012. These amendments were recommended by the ACT Electoral Commission, to be enacted ahead of the next elections for the elected body, due in 2014.

Following the outstanding success of the ACT's new portable long service leave scheme for the community sector, the government will introduce the Long Service Leave (Contract Security Industry) Bill 2012 to extend the regime to workers in the ACT's security industry so they are provided with similar benefits. An exposure draft of this bill is currently out for industry consultation.

Additionally, following the detection of a number of illegal boarding houses in July 2010, and drawing on community feedback, the government will introduce the Public Health (Boarding House) Bill 2012. This is designed to uphold community standards and protect the rights of boarders, whilst not adversely affecting opportunities for legitimate boarding-style accommodation or shared accommodation arrangements.

The government will also introduce a number of bills to ensure that the rights of all Canberrans continue to be protected. The government will present a bill to amend the Human Rights Act, to implement changes stemming from the five-year review of the act. The bill will also implement amendments flowing from the review of the extension of the act to economic, social and cultural rights. The proposed amendments will have a positive effect on human rights and strengthen the human rights culture of the territory.

My speech for the spring 2011 legislation program foreshadowed the introduction of the Crimes (Child Sex Offenders) Amendment Bill in late 2011. Due to the technical nature of these amendments and stakeholder engagement, the bill has taken longer than expected. The bill will be introduced in early 2012.

Additionally, the Crimes (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2012 will make a number of minor and more complex amendments to a range of ACT criminal law legislation, including amendments concerning certain property offences and sexual offences and the offence of affray; victim impact statements; the giving of evidence in sexual and violent offence cases; the hearing of matters involving children and adults charged jointly; referral of offenders to the Court Alcohol and Drug Assessment Service; and firearms legislation. Many of these amendments flow from issues drawn to the government's attention by the Director of Public Prosecutions. Other issues to be addressed in this bill were raised by ACT Policing and the courts.

The government will also be moving two important pieces of legislation to improve and refine the existing arrangements for the management and coordination of emergency response in the ACT. Through the Emergencies (Commissioner's Directions) Bill 2012, the government will strengthen the territory's statutory arrangements to ensure that they are at the forefront of emergency management for high-level control and coordination, by providing the Emergency Services Commissioner with the necessary authority to give directions to the chief officers of

the emergency services. Additionally, the Emergencies Amendment Bill 2012 will clarify inconsistencies and ambiguities in emergency arrangements in certain circumstances.

The government will also introduce the Road Transport (General) Amendment Bill 2012 to amend provisions relating to infringement notices for offences under road transport legislation and clarify the Road Transport Authority's power to deal with statutory declarations that contain incomplete, false or misleading information. It also clarifies the legal liability of the registered operator of a vehicle in relation to offences involving that vehicle, and explains the circumstances in which that liability is discharged. The amendments will improve the operation of the infringement notice scheme and will ensure that the demerit points associated with certain traffic offences are effectively allocated, by discouraging the use of false or misleading statutory declarations to avoid liability. The amendments support the road safety strategy released late in 2011 by ensuring that penalties for offences such as speeding are imposed on the individual who committed the offence.

In addition, the government will table an exposure draft to provide for the use of alcohol ignition interlocks to address recidivist drink-driving behaviour in the ACT. This builds on the reforms to address drink-driving behaviour introduced by the government in 2010.

Legislation will also be introduced that will bring the ACT's regulation of combat sports in line with other jurisdictions. The existing act has now become outdated and does not reflect the state of the industry in the territory. The Combat Sports Control Bill 2012 will provide an appropriate level of safety for full contact combat sport participants, including those sports that have emerged in the last decade.

The government will introduce the Workers Compensation (Terrorism) Amendment Bill, which proposes amendments to remove any time-based limitation on the operation of chapter 15 of the Workers Compensation Act 1951. The amendments will create an ongoing power for government to establish a temporary reinsurance fund to respond to acts of terrorism arising after 1 April 2012. This ensures that prompt and timely action can be taken to ensure the effective operation of the workers compensation scheme in the event that ACT workers are injured by an act of terrorism in the course of their employment.

The government will also be moving amendments to the Dangerous Substances Act 2004 to align provisions with the model Work Health and Safety Act. Regulations will also be made to update and harmonise provisions on hazardous chemicals and asbestos. As the Assembly is aware, during the harmonisation of work health and safety legislation, the government decided not to adopt the model provisions as they applied to hazardous chemicals, asbestos and major hazard facilities. This is because of concerns that the model regulations would reduce the requirements presently in place in the territory. The government now intends to adopt the model regulations with appropriate adjustments to maintain our safety standards and to address the territory's unique geographic and environmental requirements.

The Corrections and Sentencing Legislation Amendment Bill will introduce amendments to further improve delivery of corrective services in the ACT. As part of a rolling program of review and improvement in practices and procedures, the courts and ACT Corrective Services, including the Sentence Administration Board, have recognised a number of issues relating to the functions of the Crimes (Sentencing) Act 2005, the Crimes (Sentence Administration) Act 2005 and the Corrections Management Act 2007. Issues to be addressed in this bill relate primarily to periodic detention and parole.

The government will also continue to pursue reforms in our courts. Last year the government funded a short-term blitz of criminal and civil cases in the Supreme Court, to clear as many cases as possible before the Supreme Court introduces a new docket case management system. Through the Court Procedures Administration Bill 2012, the government will seek to enhance the court's new case management approach.

As part of the 2012 legislation program, the government will also be introducing a number of bills which fulfil the ACT's commitment to a number of national reforms, perhaps the largest of these reforms being the establishment of the national health funding pool as agreed to by the Council of Australian Governments in August 2011. The national health funding pool and administration bill 2012 will establish the national health funding pool, the administrator of that pool and a territory-managed fund or account for the purposes of receiving funding for block grants. The bill will also establish a department under the Financial Management Act 1996 to sit within the ACT Health Directorate to ensure appropriate accountability and transparency of funds received by the local hospital network from the territory-managed fund and from the national health funding pool.

Another of these national reforms is under the national affordable housing agreement, in which the government will introduce the Housing Assistance (National Regulatory Framework) Amendment Bill 2012 to adopt the community housing providers national law, giving effect to the national regulatory system for community housing organisations.

The National Energy Retail Law (ACT) Bill 2012, with consequential changes through the Utilities and Related Energy Legislation Amendment Bill, will bring into effect national energy market legislation.

The Classifications (Publications, Films and Computer Games) (Enforcement) Amendment Bill will give effect to the commonwealth government's introduction of an R18+ classification category for computer games in Australia. The introduction of an R18+ category will ensure that computer games are appropriately classified and that children and young people do not have access to cut-down versions of otherwise inappropriate games. The bill represents an extension to computer games of this government's policy on the sale and distribution of adult material and reflects a long-awaited agreement between states and territories to introduce this classification across jurisdictions.

Other bills which will adopt laws as agreed at a national level include the Electronic Transactions Amendment Bill 2012, which will clarify the traditional rules on contract formation to address the needs of electronic commerce and modernise the territory's laws to reflect internationally recognised standards and enhance cross-border online commerce.

The Fair Trading (Gift Cards) Bill 2012 will address consumer affairs issues associated with unclaimed gift cards to ensure that consumers get a fair deal from gift cards.

Notwithstanding this extensive program, the government will also introduce a number of routine bills such as the Statute Law Amendment Bill and the planning and building and environment legislation amendment bills.

In addition, central to the government's legislative and financial agenda for the upcoming financial year, there will be the 2012-13 appropriation bill. This bill provides appropriation to administrative units for the 2012-13 financial year. It will be presented in June together with the supporting budget papers.

I commend the 2012 legislation program to the Assembly.

Executive contracts

Papers and statement by minister

MS GALLAGHER (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Minister for Health and Minister for Territory and Municipal Services): For the information of members, I present the following papers:

Public Sector Management Act, pursuant to sections 31A and 79—Copies of executive contracts or instruments—

Long-term contracts:

Alison Playford, dated 20 September 2011.

Andrew Baker, dated 10 January 2012.

David Foot, dated 13 January 2012.

Julie Field, dated 2 December 2011.

Mark Crosweller, dated 14 December 2011.

Short-term contracts:

Adrian Scott, dated 18 November 2011.

Alison Playford, dated 10 and 11 January 2012.

Barbara Reid, dated 14 November 2011.

Brett Swale, dated 21 December 2011.

Christopher Norman, dated 5 December 2011.

Colm Mooney, dated 26 October 2011.

Daniel Stewart (2), dated 12 and 18 January 2012.
David Matthews, dated 22 December 2011 and 11 January 2012.
David Power, dated 21 October 2011.
Diana Hill, dated 6 December 2011.
Glenn Lacey, dated 13 December 2011.
Helen Pappas, dated 4 and 8 November 2011.
Ian Thompson, dated 10 and 12 January 2012.
Judith Talevich, dated 11 January 2012.
Kate Starick, dated 6 January 2012.
Kenneth Douglas, dated 28 November 2011.
Kenneth Marshall, dated 5 January 2012.
Kim Salisbury, dated 17 January 2012.
Liesl Centenera, dated 15 December 2012.
Lois Ford, dated 23 December 2011.
Melanie Saballa, dated 3 January 2012.
Natalie Howson, dated 19 December 2011 and 9 January 2012.
Norman Fraser, dated 6 January 2012.
Pam Davoren (2), dated 28 November, 16 and 19 December 2011.
Penny Farnsworth, dated 28 November and 2 December 2011.
Peter Brayshaw, dated 11 November 2011.
Sara Lynch, dated 31 October 2011.
Sean Moysey, dated 23 December 2011.
Sushila Sharma, dated 3 and 17 November 2011.
Yu-Lan Chan, dated 21 November 2011.

Contract variations:

Alan Traves (2), dated 3 November 2011, 11 and 13 January 2012.
Andrew Kefford (2), dated 31 October and 9 December 2011.
Ben Ponton, dated 11 and 12 January 2012.
Brian Wilson, dated 21 December 2011.
Brook Dixon, dated 6 December 2011.
Chris Reynolds, dated 26 October 2011.
Christopher Murray (2), dated 3 November 2011, 11 and 12 January 2012.
Colm Mooney, dated 8 December 2011.
Daniel Walters, dated 11 and 12 January 2012.
David Grey.
David Metcalf.
David Peel, dated 20 January 2012.

David Pepper, dated 6 December 2011.
Geoffrey Rutledge, dated 20 and 23 January 2012.
Graeme Dowell, dated 1 and 2 December 2011.
Hamish McNulty, dated 30 September 2011.
Ian Cox, dated 16 and 20 December 2011.
James Corrigan, dated 24 and 26 October 2011.
Jennifer Dodd, dated 23 November 2011.
Jenny Priest, dated 16 and 20 December 2011.
Phillip Ghirardello, dated 8 December 2011.
Simonne Shepherd, dated 21 and 22 December 2011.
Stephen Alegria, dated 21 November 2011.

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

Leave granted.

MS GALLAGHER: I present another set of executive contracts. These documents are tabled in accordance with sections 31A and 79 of the Public Sector Management Act, which require the tabling of all director-general and executive contracts and contract variations. Contracts were previously tabled on 6 December 2011. Today I present five long-term contracts, 32 short-term contracts and 26 contract variations. The details of these contracts will be circulated to members.

Public Accounts—Standing Committee Report 17—government response

MS GALLAGHER (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Minister for Health and Minister for Territory and Municipal Services) (3.36): For the information of members, I present the following paper:

Public Accounts—Standing Committee—Report 17—*Review of Auditor-General's Report No 7 of 2010: Management of Feedback and Complaints*—Government response.

I move:

That the Assembly takes note of the paper.

I am pleased to table the government's response to report 17 of the Legislative Assembly Standing Committee on Public Accounts of August 2011, *Review of Auditor-General's report No 7 of 2010: Management of feedback and complaints*. The Auditor-General's performance report assessed the mechanisms Territory and Municipal Services had in place with regard to receiving and dealing with complaints. The audit also measured how well Canberra Connect performed in the role of dealing with feedback and used the Ombudsman's better practice guide to complaint handling as a reference point.

Canberra Connect is a central point of contact between the government and the community, and avenues for contact include the shopfronts, a telephone contact centre, and an online presence. The Auditor-General found that TAMS had sound frameworks in place, including a good information management system that had the potential to expand to deal with feedback and complaints at a whole-of-government level. The Auditor-General found there was room for improvement in a few areas, including the availability of policies, procedures and guidelines to staff and the community, ensuring that approaches to handling feedback were consistent across the service regardless of who received the complaint and how feedback was monitored and analysed over the longer term.

Overall the Auditor-General's inquiry indicated that there was capacity for the government to further utilise the information provided via feedback and complaints mechanisms to improve business practices and service delivery. The public accounts committee made four recommendations in its review of the Auditor-General's report. I note that Mr Corbell, who was the minister responsible at that time, tabled a response to one of those points on 25 October last year, and this was a progress report on implementation within TAMS. The full response I tabled today agrees with each of the other recommendations of the committee.

The government has agreed that a whole-of-government policy on the management of feedback and complaints is to be developed. Indeed, the head of service tells me that one has been drafted and after a period of consultation will be finalised shortly. The policy augments existing systems with high level principles pulled from the Ombudsman's better practice guide as a way to provide a stronger foundation from which procedures can be advanced.

The government has also provided a full response to the ACT Ombudsman's 10-point plan to improve ACT government service delivery as requested, and the response supports or notes all of the Ombudsman's recommendations.

Additionally, with regard to whole-of-government approaches to complaint handling at the practical level, I am happy to report that the strategic board recently looked at the possibility of consolidating the whole-of-government feedback process, and it was agreed that a one-service approach was needed.

To this end, Canberra Connect has established a triage system to receive, prioritise and direct complaints on behalf of the service. It is still in implementation phase, but I am told that at this early stage we have had a positive response and procedures appear to be working well.

Apart from the procedural issues though, the government recognises the broader cultural issues that were alluded to by the Auditor-General and the Ombudsman. To be agile and well placed at handling emerging issues, the public service must be attuned to feedback, recognising it as an opportunity for improvement rather than becoming defensive. While there are pockets in the service that demonstrate best practice with regard to complaint handling and other pockets have well-developed and

effective feedback mechanisms in place, the government will bring these exemplars together and build on their expertise as a way to spread a consistent model covering practice and attitudes across the service.

I thank both the Auditor-General and the committee for their input on this issue.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Papers

Ms Gallagher presented the following papers:

Annual Reports (Government Agencies) Act, pursuant to section 13—Annual Report 2010-2011—Commissioner for Public Administration—Addendum.

Gene Technology Act, pursuant to subsection 136A(3)—Operations of the Gene Technology Regulator—Quarterly reports—

1 April to 30 June 2011, dated 30 September 2011.

1 July to 30 September 2011, dated 21 November 2011.

Financial Management Act 1996

Paper and statement by minister

MR BARR (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism, Sport and Recreation) (3.41): For the information of members, I present the following paper:

Financial Management Act, pursuant to section 26—Consolidated Financial Report—Financial quarter ending 31 December 2011.

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

Leave granted.

MR BARR: I present to the Assembly the December quarter 2011 consolidated financial report for the territory. This report is required under section 26 of the Financial Management Act. The December quarter headline net operating balance for the general government sector was a deficit of \$59.9 million. This result was \$12.1 million lower than the year to date budgeted deficit of \$47.8 million. This lower result is mainly due to the net impact of lower than forecast taxation revenue and underperformance of superannuation-related equity investments, partially offset by better than expected interest returns. Total expenses were broadly in line with the year-to-date budget.

On an AAS basis, the general government sector recorded a deficit of \$174.3 million, compared to a year-to-date budgeted deficit of \$17.8 million. This deficit is due to a net loss on financial assets resulting from falls in global equity markets.

These results have been reflected in our revised budget estimates presented in the 2011-12 budget review that I will table shortly. The budget review provides a separate update of the territory's economic and financial forecast. These results are broadly in line with what we expect the 2011-12 final outcome to be following the budget review.

The territory continues to maintain a strong balance sheet as reflected in a number of key indicators, such as net worth, net financial liabilities and net debt.

I commend the December quarterly report to the Assembly. I move:

That the Assembly takes note of the paper.

Debate (on motion by **Mr Smyth**) adjourned to a later date.

2011-2012 budget review Paper and statement by minister

MR BARR (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism, Sport and Recreation) (3.43): For the information of members, I present the following paper:

Budget 2011-2012—Budget review.

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

Leave granted.

MR BARR: I present to the Assembly the 2011-12 budget review, prepared in accordance with the Financial Management Act 1996. Despite economic uncertainty right around the world and from which the ACT is not immune, I report to the Assembly that the territory economy is performing well. The ACT's balance sheet remains very strong. We have low debt and a strong asset base. The fundamentals of the ACT economy and the government's fiscal position remain strong. We are well placed to weather the economic turbulence affecting all levels of government worldwide. The forecast general government sector headline net operating balance for 2011-12 is a deficit of \$181.3 million. The budget is on track to return to balance in 2013-14, and surplus in 2014-15. The balance sheet remains strong. The deficit is temporary, not structural.

It is important to note that the ACT is not unique. Other Australian jurisdictions have adjusted revenues downward and revised their budget positions since the release of the commonwealth midyear outlook, given revised GST projections as well as generally depressed economic sentiment—although not necessarily depressed activity. This has resulted from weaker property market conditions and the volatility in international financial markets weighing on consumer and business confidence. It is worth noting that this includes the resource-rich states of Western Australia and Queensland, both of which have revised down revenue in their midyear updates.

It is important to note that these are short-term issues. The target of returning the budget to balance in 2013-14 remains. The ACT continues to enjoy robust economic growth and, compared to other jurisdictions, we are indeed performing well. State final demand is growing at 3.3 per cent year-on-year to the September 2011 quarter. The ACT continues to enjoy low unemployment, well below the national average at 3.8 per cent, and continues to have a high participation rate at 72.1 per cent.

Further, our average weekly ordinary time earnings are more than 15 per cent higher than the national average. We have the second highest net worth to revenue ratio, only slightly lower than the resource-rich Western Australia. We also have the best net debt position in the country and our economy is forecast to grow, albeit at a slower rate than in recent years. We also have a stable and solid base of public sector employment, which provides a strong element of stability to economic activity in the territory.

I reiterate again that the fundamentals of the ACT economy are sound. However, there remains a significant threat to the economy over the horizon, which has the potential to cause real pain to Canberra households. I refer here to the stated objective of the federal Liberal leader, Tony Abbott, to slash at least 12,000 jobs from the federal public service. This, it would appear, Mr Assistant Speaker, is just the starting point. Many Canberrans will remember the significant job losses and economic downturn that was caused when the Howard government slashed thousands of jobs in our city in 1996 and 1997. If Mr Abbott is elected, Canberra will be returned to these dark days. Now of course, Mr Abbott may not be elected, but the prospect of his taking office does affect sentiment in the territory.

In August last year I updated the Assembly about the outlook for the territory economy. I warned that there were significant risks facing our economy and, in turn, the territory budgetary position. Those global economic conditions have not changed. Global financial uncertainty and instability continue. We still see weakness in consumer spending and confidence, both in Australia and globally, and the risk of slower GST pool growth remains.

The influence that national and global economic trends have on the ACT cannot be underestimated. The much publicised turmoil in Europe and in the US, notably through its recent credit rating downgrade, has fed into domestic markets, mostly through sentiment questions, and we have continued to see lower consumer and business sentiment. This has somewhat depressed consumer spending and caused households in particular to focus on their balance sheets through saving or paying down debt. The international turmoil has also increased our superannuation expenses and lowered our investment returns.

In my economic statement to the Assembly last August, I observed that the territory economy would continue to perform strongly, but possibly without a commensurate positive impact on the ACT's fiscal position, and households would focus on their balance sheets through saving or paying down debt. This has indeed come to pass. Furthermore, there is the additional issue posed by retractions in spending by the

commonwealth. It is important to note that the federal government has committed to constraining federal spending without a job slashing frenzy. On the other hand, the federal Liberal Party has stated many times that it will slash 12,000 jobs from the federal public service.

Mr Smyth interjecting—

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Hargreaves): Order, Mr Smyth.

MR BARR: What is more, Mr Assistant Speaker, on ABC television just last Monday night on the *Q&A* show the shadow treasurer, Joe Hockey, indicated, in fact, that 12,000 jobs was just the starting point for an Abbott-Hockey government.

I would like to outline, in detail, the main fiscal changes in the territory since the budget. Around \$100 million of the \$145 million change in the net operating balance relates to revenues, with the remainder due to changes in expenses. The variations to the budget estimates are predominantly technically driven, with the exception of the policy decision of government in relation to funding the additional costs associated with enterprise bargaining outcomes.

The changes since the budget are as follows. Our GST revenue estimates have been revised downwards as a result of the decrease in the national GST pool, equating to a \$62 million loss in GST revenue grants to the territory across the budget and forward estimates, including \$12 million in this fiscal year. Superannuation expenses are up more than \$22 million, due to the increased value of the liability following a change in bond rate assumptions of six per cent and a bond rate at 30 June 2011 of 5.28 per cent. Reduced earnings on investments from depressed global financial markets also affects investment balances across the forward estimates.

Overall, revenues associated with property market activity are forecast to decline, due to lower activity in the first half of the financial year, which is likely to be a consequence of continuing consumer caution and uncertainty about the global economic outlook. In particular, land release revenues are down more than \$39 million due to restricted land supply in a number of areas. However, it is expected that the anticipated returns will be maintained over the four-year budget cycle. And conveyancing revenue is down more than \$20 million due to lower than average prices in the residential sector and reduced activity in commercial sectors.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Order, Mr Hanson. You will join Mr Smyth if this keeps up.

MR BARR: A \$33 million reduction in dividends and income tax equivalent returns from Actew has been forecast, mainly due to reduced water usage. Actual water consumption in the first half of 2011-12 was the second lowest level recorded in the last five years. The expectation is for water consumption in the second half of the year to be similar to previous levels due to a cool and wet spring and early summer.

The budget review also incorporates the additional impact of recent enterprise bargaining outcomes. These pay rises across the ACT public service have been essential for us to maintain the quality of the public service—a public service that is competitive with the commonwealth and with other jurisdictions. Without these pay increases, we would continue to lag behind other jurisdictions and lose quality staff needed to provide essential services to the community.

The territory's investments have declined, due predominantly to the volatility in financial markets associated with the ongoing concerns relating to the European sovereign debt crisis and the lower outlook for global growth. We have, however, had better than expected investment distributions in the 2011-12 financial year, largely due to the higher Australian dollar.

I would like to outline the government's plan to return to a balanced budget. The government will continue to act responsibly and prudently. Our plan has been to adopt a measured approach in returning the budget to balance, to not make sharp downward adjustments in expenditure, to maintain flexibility in responding to changing circumstances and to support confidence in the territory economy at a time of considerable economic uncertainty.

As I have said, we will not abrogate our service delivery responsibilities to the community, nor our responsibility to maintain jobs. We are not responding with major cuts to services or staff. The government has successfully steered the ACT through difficult economic conditions in recent years and we have maintained the strength of the local economy. We have been able to do this without resorting to slash and burn budgeting.

There is little doubt that the opposition, like their counterparts nationally and overseas, would like us to slash services and jobs. The Canberra community does not deserve such treatment and we in the Labor government will not let that happen. The government is maintaining its fiscal policy settings. The budget review forecasts remain consistent with the objectives of our budget plan, in particular with the commitment to return the budget to balance by 2013-14. Expenditure growth is at around 4½ per cent per annum, again in line with the budget plan.

The government has a range of measures in place to consolidate the ACT budget position. We have a strong record in delivering capital works to the territory, as represented by the strength of our infrastructure assets on our balance sheet. Our program continues to provide the essential infrastructure solutions for Canberrans necessary to support the continuing delivery of high quality services to the community.

As part of the 2011-12 budget review, we have undertaken a rigorous assessment of our capital works program in light of the first six months of project activity. We have assessed what the market has the capacity to deliver and have also aligned project expenditure with the requisite approval and consultation processes, particularly those involving federal environmental assessments, and the weather conditions to date.

As a result, a net \$246 million of capital expenditure in the 2011-12 year has been identified in the capital works program for re-profiling to later years. The re-profiling maintains a steady level of activity for the industry and provides certainty and confidence to plan and maintain jobs. The re-profiling will result in an almost \$8 million improvement to the territory's 2011-12 bottom line, as operational costs for the re-profiled projects will be shifted to later years where they will support economic activity when it is most needed.

The ACT Labor government will continue to protect jobs, and we are committed to maintaining the current level of employment within the ACT public service. The service will remain at approximately 18,000 staff. This is of vital importance at a time when the federal government is constraining spending, and we are faced with the loss of thousands and thousands of jobs if a Liberal government is elected federally.

The government will release 18½ thousand blocks over the next four years for new housing, and we will continue to look for new infill opportunities. Not only will this continue to add to the stock of affordable housing in the territory, it will boost revenue from land sales and conveyancing.

The government will continue to make use of our economy's comparative advantages in the government services, education, including research and development, and tourism sectors to ensure that we have a strong economy. We will ensure well-targeted services expenditure through reprioritisations and innovation, ensuring quality service provision while also driving administrative efficiencies. We will take the opportunity to make the ACT's tax settings more progressive, further improving economic efficiency and fairness.

In addition, the government has made, and will continue to make, responsible savings. The 2011-12 budget papers highlight annual savings of more than \$100 million. Savings initiatives for the current year alone amount to \$33 million.

There will continue to be risks facing the ACT economy. We will keep a close watch on conditions locally, nationally and internationally. It is important to remember that the ACT is part of a wider national and international economy. We do, of course, benefit from the opportunities and growth that this provides, but we must also be alert to the risks.

The underlying fundamentals of the ACT's budget position are sound. We will not be engaging in any knee-jerk reactions such as slashing jobs or slashing services, as has been seen elsewhere, particularly—and I emphasise this point—at a time when the commonwealth is contracting spending.

The ACT government has a clear and effective path to return the budget to balance. We will be responsible, we will be prudent and, above all, we are committed to fostering and contributing to maintaining jobs, maintaining growth and maintaining fiscal responsibility. The strategy we have adopted in responding to the global financial crisis has served the territory well. The principles of our budget plan remain relevant. In returning to a balanced budget, our primary objectives will remain

sustaining quality services to the Canberra community and supporting confidence in the ACT economy. Doing otherwise would cause harm to the economy and to the community's wellbeing. I commend the 2011-12 budget review to the Assembly. I move:

That the Assembly takes note of the paper.

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (4.00): We have just sat through a very long-winded speech from the Treasurer. It is a speech that has very little detail in it. It is a speech that offers very little that would give people confidence this government actually has a handle on how to return this budget to surplus. The sad fact is that the 2011-12 budget said there would be a \$36 million deficit. According to the 2011-12 budget review, the budget is now \$181 million in deficit. And guess what? None of it is Andrew Barr's fault. It is everybody else's fault. It is external conditions. It is the federal government. It is Tony Abbott. He is not even there, but it is all his fault. This is a speech from a Treasurer who has nothing to offer.

This is a speech from a Treasurer who does not have a fundamental plan to return the budget to surplus and to secure us against downturns into the future because, like all Labor treasurers in this place, this is a Treasurer who is almost entirely reliant on federal government expenditure and the housing market, the property market, to deliver him his surpluses.

We have warned against that dependence for a long, long time. Yet again, our warnings have gone unheeded. The result of failure to take those warnings is quite clear in the budget review document today—a deficit of \$181 million. It does not get better. Next year the deficit for the 2012-13 year was to be \$23 million. It is now \$154 million. Then the Treasurer would have us believe that in the 2013-14 financial year, miraculously we are going to have a \$180 million turnaround in a short year and it will be a \$28 million surplus.

No-one in their right mind believes that. The problem is that this government got addicted to GST. This government got addicted to property tax. The problem is that when you have a single addiction of any kind, it will turn and bite you and it has turned and bitten this government.

It is not going to get any better, Madam Assistant Speaker, because we have had a Treasurer and a former Treasurer who will not do the job. Do you remember that we asked the Chief Minister whether she had visited the Grants Commission, stuck up for the ACT and made the case? Her answer in this place on 13 October 2009 was, "No, I have not." We asked in the public accounts committee whether the Treasurer had gone and visited Messrs Brumby and Greiner who were conducting the GST review. The exchange was as follows:

MR SMYTH: ... What about yourself? Will you meet Brumby and Greiner?

Mr Barr: Yes, I would certainly be happy to do that.

MR SMYTH: You will be happy to do it, but are you going to do it?

Mr Barr: Yes, I will do that, Mr Smyth.

The question is: has he done it? Has he gone and made a case on behalf of the ACT on perhaps the single most important source of funding that we have? I suspect the answer is no, he still has not done it. The problem is that when you look at the GST relativities in the 2011-12 year—remember that the 2011-12 year has just gone to a \$181 million deficit—we get 1.15 times of what we contribute to the pool. But in 2011-12, when the deficit goes to \$154 million, that drops to a factor of 1.11. But the following year when they expect us to believe we will be in surplus, it drops to 1.1. Then the year after that, 2013-14, it is 1.05, and so on it goes.

What we have is a declining return on our GST because this government does not do the work. What we have are surpluses that are illusionary in the outyears. They are just numbers in this document. But what we have is the cold, hard fact that yet again this government has blown the budget because the much-vaunted plan that has apparently served us well has now guaranteed another couple of record deficits.

That is a plan that I do not think anybody will be proud of. The problem for the people of the ACT is that there was no indication from the Treasurer in that speech that anything is going to change except, “Cross your fingers and hope that there is some sort of turn.” The minister said the plan has served us well. I think this is a minister and a Treasurer who is just being driven by the wind. He goes whatever direction the wind takes him because there is no plan here.

If your plan is to rely on property taxes and GST, this territory is in dreadful straits. You only need to look at the quarterly consolidated financials to see that general rates payments have gone down. They were meant to be \$209 million. They are down to \$207 million. Conveyancing has dropped \$15 million. It was meant to be \$127 million and it has dropped to \$111 million. Conveyancing is declining and there are other taxes there that were meant to reap enormous dividends for this territory and they have failed. In fact, they may have cooked the goose. They may have killed the goose by stopping development because this government has made the cost of land in the territory unaffordable. In doing so, they are driving young Canberra families out of the market.

The party of inclusion has excluded an enormous number of people from the opportunity to own their own home. If you are looking at these numbers and you are looking for hope, you will not find it. This government has been negligent under this Treasurer and the former Treasurer throughout the course of this Assembly in the way that they have treated this budget—“We will simply continue to spend as we always do; we will cross our fingers.” What were they—guesstimates? They are just guesswork. Yes, that is what happens when you get guesswork. I suspect that in the outyears it is simply guesswork that we will return to surplus at all.

Madam Assistant Speaker, the budget is a very important guide to the health of the territory. Despite the pat words of the Treasurer, if you look at some of the items that truly affect the cost of living, you can see that people are suffering under this government and people’s cost of living, which rises constantly under this government, is not being addressed by this government. It is well and good to stand here and say it is the Greeks, it is Europe, it is the federal parliament, it is Tony Abbott—it is everybody but this government. You would wonder what this government is here for.

What this government does is deliver deficits and deficits and deficits and it budgets for deficits and deficits and deficits. That is the problem. When you are budgeting for deficits all the time, that is what you actually get. Unless you start actively budgeting for surpluses, you are not going to achieve that surplus. It is ironic that we have got a government that is willing to blame everybody else. Let us look at it. In the 2009-10 budget, it budgeted for a deficit of \$173 million. In 2010-11, the same amount. In 2011-12, if you look at this, we were meant to have a budget of \$36 million in the GGS but we are not going to get that. It is \$181 million. Next year, 2012-13, it is meant to be \$23 million but it is \$154 million.

You can well imagine now that people out in the world would be thinking, "Gee, they cancelled their promise to build the great big office building and they have not given us a real good case." It might be that they just cannot afford it. It may be that they are now just running short of funds. I will look at this in detail. I have only just received this document. But you do have to question the financial ability of a government that cannot bring in a surplus. We hear the promise: "We have got a plan. In 2013-14 we will have a surplus." They sound more and more like Wayne Swan and Julia Gillard all the time.

I do not think any credible economics commentator believes that we will have a credible surplus when the budget is announced later this year. I do not think any credible commentator, looking at the outyears, believes that a Gillard-Barr government has the ability or the wherewithal to deliver a budget that will deliver strong surpluses so that we can build a strong future, so that we can include all those who want, for instance, to own their own home, because this is the government that has destroyed land affordability.

Let us look at housing affordability. In a way in respect of housing affordability, it is sort of a pat thing to say, "We blame the builders." But the underlying root cause of housing affordability is the ability to access land. We have a government on one hand that has constrained land supply for so long. Now we have statements from the minister earlier—"Builders, get used to it; I will flood the market if I have to so that I can put some more money in the books to make me look better"—without any consideration for the long-term effect of flooding the housing market.

You only have to look at conveyancing and at the lease variation charge to understand that the economic management of the land portfolio from this government is destroying land affordability in this territory. That is the problem. That is the problem.

Mr Corbell: Not enough land, too much land.

MR SMYTH: No, Mr Corbell interjects, which I think is pretty brave for Mr Corbell. This is the man that got fired for his land policy. His own Chief Minister fired him because he could not handle the land release program and had constrained land release to such a degree that it became unaffordable. That is the problem.

Mr Corbell: Do not mislead the Assembly, Brendan. Do not mislead the Assembly.

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mrs Dunne): Order, Mr Corbell!

MR SMYTH: Mr Corbell, you move the motion. Mr Corbell said, “Do not mislead the Assembly.” Mr Corbell is the only member that I know of that was found by this place to be guilty of persistently and wilfully misleading the Assembly.

Mr Corbell interjecting—

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Order, Mr Corbell!

MR SMYTH: There may be more for you later on misleading the Assembly, Mr Corbell. You should review all the statements that you have made because we are quite happy to have those debates any day you want.

I will go away and read the document fully. I will go away and look at the numbers. I would urge anyone with a view to the future of the ACT to have a look at these documents. Simply go to page 5. You probably do not have to go much beyond page 5 when you see that the budget deteriorates so badly and so quickly under the management of this Treasurer, based on the record of the former Treasurer who is now Chief Minister, that one cannot have any confidence, given the speech of the Treasurer, that they have any plan at all to deliver a surplus into the future.

I will finish with the numbers. We had a projected deficit of \$36 million in the budget. We find from the review that it is now a deficit of \$181 million. I think the numbers speak for themselves. But I think what was even more noteworthy was the lack of anything in the Treasurer’s speech except, “Trust me; I am the Treasurer.” That is all he said: “Trust me. We are not going to panic. We are not going to do anything.”

In fact that is the problem. They have not done anything to diversify the ACT economy. They have not done anything to move away from their almost total dependence on property-based taxes. They have not done anything to address the decline in our GST relativities and the funding that is coming from GST. We know that they have not spoken to the Grants Commission because the Chief Minister told us so.

You do have to question what they are doing on that side of the chamber when it comes to the economic management of the ACT. The answer is simply nothing, because after 11 years they have no idea, they have no plan, and they have no way of returning, I believe, in the year 2013-14 this territory to a surplus.

MR HANSON (Molonglo) (4.14): It was not my intention to speak until I heard Mr Barr throughout his speech basically trying to make excuses, as Mr Smyth has alluded to. The most ridiculous line that he has come up with is this fear campaign that he is trying to run about what might happen some time in the future if a federal coalition is elected.

This is not about that. This is about the budget review as it stands today, and Mr Barr has to take responsibility for what has been delivered today, not what might happen

potentially, possibly, some time in two years time. I found it remarkable that the Treasurer of the ACT, on delivering a budget blow-out of about \$150 million, instead of explaining in detail what he was going to do in response, spent his time trying to instigate some sort of concocted fear campaign.

As Mr Smyth has quite rightly alluded to, we are seeing Barr and Gallagher looking more and more like Gillard and Swan. We have seen a deputy, who people thought looked good as the deputy, elevated to the top job and now struggling in the top job and with a credibility problem. And we have seen Andrew Barr set himself up as an economics expert, always talking about his economic credentials. But when it came to delivering his first economic statement of any consequence he has blown the books by about \$150 million and, instead of having any sort of response, any sort of vision, any sort of argument, about how this government is going to address this problem, he spent his time trying to instigate a fear campaign. No doubt that is what he will be doing in the media.

I urge people who hear Andrew Barr speaking about these matters to make sure that they hold him to account; that they remind Andrew Barr and Katy Gallagher that the budget position of the ACT is a consequence of 11 years of ACT Labor and that the excuses, the spin, the blaming of people, and in particular blaming a government that does not even exist yet, are probably wearing a bit thin.

The similarity we see between the ACT and the federal sphere is in Labor genetics. It is in their DNA. It is in their DNA to deliver greater debt, it is in their DNA to deliver greater deficit and it is in their DNA to blame it on everyone but themselves.

MS HUNTER (Ginninderra—Parliamentary Leader, ACT Greens) (4.17): For any Treasurer or Chief Minister getting up with these figures today it would not be the best news story that they would want to share with the rest of the people of the ACT. But we do need to have a look at what is going to be happening over time here.

We know that there have been ongoing issues that have flowed on from the global financial crisis. We know that markets around the world are still uncertain.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MS HUNTER: It is not hard to see, Mr Hanson, that it has been raining a long time and that therefore that is going to impact on the dividend that the territory receives from Actew, for instance. But there are some areas that I think do need closer attention and one of them is around the land release program. It is quite clear that land release revenues, as the Treasurer said, are down more than \$39 million due to restricted land supply in a number of areas, and this is something that we do need to work on. We need to get it right.

There are the issues of supply and demand. We know the demand is not being met and we know the impact it has on affordability. We have heard recently the Treasurer raise the issue of the EPBC, the commonwealth legislation, and the impact it is having on getting land out there. The Greens' response to that is that there have been occasions where a more prompt response, a more active response, from the government would have meant that we would not have had such lags in getting it out.

I also think that there does need to be greater attention paid to the processes that go on in getting that land ready. There seems to be a little bit of tripping over various different areas of directorates and so forth—the previous LDA with ACTPLA and so on. We do need to get those processes right. We need to streamline them so that we do not double up or, as happens in many cases, those processes are done in the wrong order, which again takes time. So that area of land release certainly does need to be looked at because it is not just about the land and the houses; it is obviously about the impact on the ACT budget.

When we knew that the territory was going into very difficult economic times and that things were going to be tight, the then Treasurer put out a budget plan. That budget plan put the territory's budget back into balance in 2013-14 and we are still tracking along. Of course this is concerning; I am sure that many of us would have preferred to have seen very different numbers coming out today. But, as I said, things are interconnected. We know that we are getting less GST revenue, and we are heavily reliant on it. People are spending less across Australia; they are getting rid of household debt. Less money spent out there means less money collected, which means less money to divide between the states and territories.

We are going to have to tackle this, because it is not something that is a one-off; this is going to be an ongoing challenge that the ACT is going to face, and that is why we need to get on with the results of the tax review. This was undertaken by Ted Quinlan. My understanding is that it has been finished and it has been delivered, but we have yet to see the results of that work. It is important that we see that and we start having the debates we need to have.

I was surprised that Mr Smyth went for so long in his speech before he got to diversifying the economy, which was right at the end. For a moment there I thought we were going to get away with a speech from Mr Smyth without him mentioning those words. But, no, he did. I would love to hear Mr Smyth's thoughts on diversifying the economy. We do have to look into the future around how we are going to deal with the fact that we cannot just rely so heavily on the commonwealth and at what the options are. That is why the tax review is going to be so important to that debate.

Of course the other thing is to be looking at other industries, other sectors, that we might be engaging with, supporting to grow, that will put us ahead when we are facing the sorts of challenges we know are coming in the future—the challenges around climate change, the challenges around peak oil. A clean economy strategy is something that the Greens are very keen on. We have pushed the government on it and they have responded by doing work. We hope to see something significant result from that in April of this year. I think that is around the timing that we are expecting. These things will be part of an important conversation about how we are going to tackle these sorts of issues into the future.

It is not a great day. These are not the sorts of numbers that you really want to be going out and sharing with the Canberra public. But we do need to be taking a calm approach to all of this, a longer term approach to all of this. The other way is just to

go in and start slashing and burning, and I do not think that is the approach we should be taking to the ACT budget. There are vital services that need to be delivered tomorrow and next week and next month. There is an expectation in the Canberra community of the type of services that will be available to them. There are pressures in many sectors and many areas that need to be addressed as well. So it needs a calm and measured approach taken to it.

The budget plan, as I said, did set out a return to balance in 2013-14, with a small surplus the following year. We should be continuing to work to that plan. But, as I said, there are important conversations that need to be had along the way and there are important decisions that need to be had along the way. It does concern me that Mr Smyth may have been saying that what we needed to do was start slashing and burning services tomorrow or very shortly. I do not think that is the way to go. We need to be considered about it. We need these important pieces of work to be part of the discussion and the conversation we take forward, and we also need to have that conversation with the broader ACT community as to how we are going to secure our budget into the future.

I also will be taking time to look at this document in further detail, because obviously it has just been tabled by the Treasurer. I look forward to having conversations in this place on the tax review and on other ideas about how we can extend and diversify our local economy. I very much see that central to that will be a clean economy strategy.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee Paper

MR CORBELL (Molonglo—Attorney-General, Minister for Police and Emergency Services and Minister for the Environment and Sustainable Development): I present the following paper:

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee—Report 8—ACT Electoral Commission Report on the ACT Legislative Assembly Election 2008 and Electoral Act amendment bills 2011—Government response.

I move:

That the Assembly takes note of the paper.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Papers

Mr Corbell presented the following papers:

Coroners Act, pursuant to subsection 102(8)—Chief Coroner—Annual Report—1 July 2010 to 30 June 2011.

Murray-Darling Basin Authority—Proposed Basin Plan—ACT Government Six Month Report on Progress with the ACT's Basin Plan Negotiations, dated February 2012, pursuant to the resolution of the Assembly of 27 October 2010.

Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act, pursuant to subsection 15(3)—Minister's Annual Report 2010-11, dated February 2012.

Planning and Development Act, pursuant to subsection 242(2)—Schedule—Leases granted for the period 1 October to 31 December 2011.

Ms Burch presented the following papers:

Education, Training and Youth Affairs—Standing Committee—Report 7—Human Rights Commission Report into the ACT Youth Justice System—Implementation of Report recommendations 4.3, 4.15, 4.16 and 15.1—

Government response.

Tabling statement.

Cultural Facilities Corporation Act, pursuant to subsection 15(2)—Cultural Facilities Corporation—Quarterly report 2011-2012—First quarter (1 July to 30 September 2011).

Mr Corbell presented the following papers:

Performance reports

Financial Management Act, pursuant to section 30E—Half-yearly directorate performance reports—December 2011, for the following directorates:

Chief Minister and Cabinet Directorate (including Industrial Relations), dated January 2012.

Community Services Directorate, dated January 2012.

Corrective Services (within Justice and Community Safety Directorate).

Corrective Services (within Justice and Community Safety Directorate)—Amended.

Economic Development Directorate.

Education and Training Directorate, dated January 2012.

Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate.

Health Directorate.

Housing Services (within Community Services Directorate), dated January 2012.

Justice and Community Safety Directorate.

Territory and Municipal Services Directorate.

Treasury Directorate, dated January 2012.

Subordinate legislation (including explanatory statements unless otherwise stated)

Legislation Act, pursuant to section 64—

Auditor-General Act and Legislation Act—Auditor-General Standing Acting Appointment 2011 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2011-309 (LR, 12 December 2011).

Board of Senior Secondary Studies Act—

Board of Senior Secondary Studies Appointment 2011 (No 3)—Disallowable Instrument DI2011-327 (LR, 31 December 2011).

Board of Senior Secondary Studies Appointment 2011 (No 4)—Disallowable Instrument DI2011-328 (LR, 31 December 2011).

Court Procedures Act—Court Procedures Amendment Rules 2011 (No 4)—Subordinate Law SL2011-34 (LR, 15 December 2011).

Crimes (Sentence Administration) Act—

Crimes (Sentence Administration) (Sentence Administration Board) Appointment 2011 (No 6)—Disallowable Instrument DI2011-322 (LR, 19 December 2011).

Crimes (Sentence Administration) (Sentence Administration Board) Appointment 2011 (No 7)—Disallowable Instrument DI2011-323 (LR, 19 December 2011).

Crimes (Sentence Administration) (Sentence Administration Board) Appointment 2011 (No 8)—Disallowable Instrument DI2011-324 (LR, 19 December 2011).

Cultural Facilities Corporation Act and Financial Management Act—Cultural Facilities Corporation (Governing Board) Appointment 2011 (No 3)—Disallowable Instrument DI2011-305 (LR, 8 December 2011).

Exhibition Park Corporation Act and Financial Management Act—

Exhibition Park Corporation (Governing Board) Appointment 2011 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2011-306 (LR, 8 December 2011).

Exhibition Park Corporation (Governing Board) Appointment Revocation 2011 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2011-331 (LR, 21 December 2011).

Health Act—Health (Fees) Determination 2011 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2011-325 (LR, 22 December 2011).

Health Records (Privacy and Access) Act—Health Records (Privacy and Access) (Fees) Determination 2011 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2011-308 (LR, 12 December 2011).

Legislative Assembly (Members' Staff) Act—

Legislative Assembly (Members' Staff) Members' Salary Cap Determination 2011 (No 3)—Disallowable Instrument DI2011-333 (LR, 23 December 2011).

Legislative Assembly (Members' Staff) Speaker's Salary Cap Determination 2011 (No 3)—Disallowable Instrument DI2011-334 (LR, 23 December 2011).

Magistrates Court Act—Magistrates Court (Work Health and Safety Infringement Notices) Regulation 2011—Subordinate Law SL2011-38 (LR, 22 December 2011).

Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act—Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods (Fees) Determination 2011 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2011-326 (LR, 22 December 2011).

Mental Health (Treatment and Care) Act—

Mental Health (Treatment and Care) (Official Visitors) Appointment 2011 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2011-329 (LR, 22 December 2011).

Mental Health (Treatment and Care) (Official Visitors) Appointment 2011 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2011-330 (LR, 22 December 2011).

Planning and Development Act—

Planning and Development (Remission of Lease Variation Charges for Community Purpose—Childcare Services) Determination 2011 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2011-319 (LR, 15 December 2011).

Planning and Development (Remission of Lease Variation Charges for Community Purpose—Health Services) Determination 2011 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2011-320 (LR, 15 December 2011).

Planning and Development (Remission of Lease Variation Charges for Community Purpose—Housing Assistance) Determination 2011 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2011-318 (LR, 15 December 2011).

Planning and Development Amendment Regulation 2011 (No 2)—Subordinate Law SL2011-37 (LR, 16 December 2011).

Public Place Names Act—

Public Place Names (City) Determination 2011 (No 3)—Disallowable Instrument DI2011-321 (LR, 19 December 2011).

Public Place Names (Crace) Determination 2011 (No 3)—Disallowable Instrument DI2011-310 (LR, 15 December 2011).

Race and Sports Bookmaking Act—Race and Sports Bookmaking (Sports Bookmaking Venues) Determination 2011 (No 4)—Disallowable Instrument DI2011-311 (LR, 15 December 2011).

Road Transport (General) Act—

Road Transport (General) (Pay Parking Area Fees) Determination 2011 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2011-307 (LR, 8 December 2011).

Road Transport (General) Application of Road Transport Legislation Declaration 2011 (No 9)—Disallowable Instrument DI2011-304 (LR, 1 December 2011).

Road Transport (General) Exclusion of Road Transport Legislation (Summernats) Declaration 2011—Disallowable Instrument DI2011-317 (LR, 15 December 2011).

Road Transport (Safety and Traffic Management) Act—Road Transport (Safety and Traffic Management) Amendment Regulation 2011 (No 1)—Subordinate Law SL2011-35 (LR, 19 December 2011).

Taxation Administration Act—

Taxation Administration (Ambulance Levy) Determination 2011 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2011-314 (LR, 20 December 2011).

Taxation Administration (Amounts Payable—Eligibility—Home Buyer Concession Scheme) Determination 2011 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2011-316 (LR, 20 December 2011).

Taxation Administration (Amounts Payable—Eligibility—Pensioner Duty Concession Scheme) Determination 2011 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2011-312 (LR, 20 December 2011).

Taxation Administration (Amounts Payable—Thresholds—Home Buyer Concession Scheme) Determination 2011 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2011-315 (LR, 20 December 2011).

Taxation Administration (Amounts Payable—Thresholds—Pensioner Duty Concession Scheme) Determination 2011 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2011-313 (LR, 20 December 2011).

Work Health and Safety Act—

Attorney General (Fees) Amendment Determination 2011 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2011-332 (without explanatory statement) (LR, 22 December 2011).

Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011—Subordinate Law SL2011-36 (LR, 19 December 2011).

Housing—affordability

Discussion of matter of public importance

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mrs Dunne): Mr Speaker has received letters from Ms Bresnan, Mr Coe, Mr Doszpot, Mrs Dunne, Mr Hanson, Mr Hargreaves, Ms Hunter, Ms Le Couteur, Ms Porter, Mr Seselja and Mr Smyth proposing that matters of public importance be submitted to the Assembly. In accordance with standing order 79, Mr Speaker has determined that the matter proposed by Mr Doszpot be submitted to the Assembly, namely:

Affordable housing in the ACT.

MR DOSZPOT (Brindabella) (4.30): I welcome this opportunity to raise a matter of significant importance to every Canberran—the affordability of housing in the ACT. Whether you are a single person starting a new career and a new life in Canberra, a student coming to Canberra to undertake tertiary studies, a transferring bureaucrat or a teacher, newly married, a family or a retiree, the one uniting issue and major conversation starter is the cost and availability of housing in Canberra.

In a country that boasts major international centres such as Sydney and Melbourne, it is staggering to realise that Canberra's cheapest housing is \$100,000 more expensive than the cheapest homes in any other state or territory in Australia. Data provided by the real estate industry has shown the ever increasing cost of housing in our city. It is almost unbelievable that the average first home buyer or builder in Canberra now faces a bill of over \$400,000. Over the past 11 years, house prices and land availability have been choked by a lack of planning, a hopeless inability to deliver infrastructure, high stamp duty costs and a government simply not capable of focusing on delivery.

In fact, the government are better known for their rhetoric than for their project management abilities. They are better known for the “build up” than the “building”. Labor's failures are as broad as they are deep when it comes to managing the ACT

economy. Whether they are building roads, prisons or dams, they have a consistent record of over cost and under delivery—the GDE, 10 years and two attempts in the making, and cost blow-outs from \$53 million to somewhere around \$194 million; the AMC declared open before it got its security system working—a feature, I would have thought, that was critical to effective management of a prison. Yet another is the Cotter Dam. What a typical Canberra headline the ABC led with when it ran this story last December:

The \$363 million Cotter Dam expansion is unlikely to finish on time or within budget.

Not on time; not on budget—a real Canberra Labor Party slogan if ever there was one. And what of other services? We have a public transport system that is used less and costs more. We have hospitals with the longest waiting times in Australia. So when it comes to affordable housing in Canberra we should not be surprised that this Labor government has no more ability to deliver affordable housing than it has to deliver a road, a dam or a prison either on time or within budget.

How have successive Labor governments, in their 11 years of supposed management of the territory, addressed this issue? In their usual way. They write papers and form committees. They issue press releases and they form steering groups. I know that for some years that has been the approach in education matters. The government publishes a glossy brochure, forms a steering group, a project group, a consultative committee and publishes a report. End of effort; end of story. And so it has been in housing.

Former Chief Minister Jon Stanhope issued an affordable housing action plan in 2007, the work piece of an affordable housing steering group he formed a year earlier. Mr Stanhope chaired the group and its members came from various government departments. In the foreword Mr Stanhope said:

Access to affordable and appropriate housing is a basic right and the ACT Government has made upholding that right one of its highest priorities ... Taking our relatively high incomes into account, our housing is usually rated as affordable, by national standards.

The committee received 19 submissions from various groups and individuals. Its key findings were that house prices and rents in Canberra are among the most affordable in the country. It went on to suggest the government's strategy for the future should be, *inter alia*, to allow the housing market to operate as efficiently as possible through ensuring sufficient supply of land and stabilise house prices in a period of growth, and to maintain a planning and land release system that supports the delivery of an adequate supply of land and is responsive to changing demand.

So some time in the past five years a suggestion came to government that maybe there might be a housing affordability issue. But other than to do the usual—forming a committee and publishing a report—what have they done? A recent paper suggested that nearly 80 per cent of the plan's recommendations have been delivered. If that is the case, perhaps it was a wasted effort. What has changed? Well, nothing for the

better. We have a change of Chief Minister, but the mismanagement goes on. “The ACT is no stranger to waste,” said an article in the *Australian* newspaper a few months ago. Reviewing the legacy of 10 years of Stanhope government, the article says:

What a growing number of residents find irksome is that while Canberrans pay the highest rates and taxes of any jurisdiction in Australia, the Labor-Greens coalition’s concentration on its ideological agenda has been at the expense of ordinary services such as transport and water.

That was last year. Last week we had the Treasurer admitting that they had failed on the housing affordability front. As the *Canberra Times* reported on 8 February this year:

The ACT government says the capital’s housing affordability crisis has divided the city into “two Canberras”, split between winners and losers in the property market.

And Economic Development Minister Andrew Barr has flagged moves to impose even higher levels of affordable housing on the building sector in a renewed bid to tackle the city’s great divide.

The minister may have set himself on a collision course with the region’s house builders by flagging that he would prefer a slight oversupply of housing blocks in the face of hints from industry that the government should take its “foot off the accelerator,” on land releases.

Canberra’s leading affordable housing entrepreneur says he disagrees with the government’s two pillars affordable housing strategy—supply and distribution.

Mr Barr has told an Assembly committee that the city’s housing market had created a divide between the double-income professional families who inhabited the top 50 per cent of the market and everyone else.

“Clearly, where there has been an undersupply in the marketplace has been at the affordable end of the housing market,” Mr Barr told the multi-party committee.

As the opposition leader, Zed Seselja, and the Canberra Liberals have said repeatedly, Canberra’s affordable housing crisis has come about due to restricted land supply, a broken planning system, poor infrastructure, higher taxes and a lack of competition. So much for the affordable housing action plan of 2007 and its dozens of recommendations.

We come to last week and the admission, or realisation, from this Treasurer that “Canberra: we have a problem.” His solution? To blame someone else and put the onus for a solution on the building industry. At the Assembly committee hearing the economic directorate director-general conceded that none of the six development fronts underway around the capital were currently construction ready.

Bob Winnel of the Village construction company, the ACT's biggest affordable housing supplier, says the government's strategy of mandating segments of lower cost stock in new estates was costing the government money—taxpayers' money, I would point out. "A blanket 20 per cent requirement of affordable housing in those new estates means a decline in revenue for the sites sold," Mr Winnel was quoted as saying.

So who else do we blame, Minister Barr? Yesterday the Treasurer suggested it was federal red tape that was holding up the release of more land for housing. The ACT government has had plans for land release in Molonglo and Gungahlin going back years, but according to our Treasurer it is the federal department of the environment that is dragging the chain.

I do not know when the ACT government submitted applications for environmental protection assessments—I am sure it was on time, Mr Barr—to the commonwealth department for house blocks, but I do know how tardy they were in respect of the new Catholic high school in Throsby. While former education minister Barr was quite willing to publicly support the new Catholic high school, the fact remains that his government did not submit the appropriate referral papers until September last year. When they did that, it was incomplete. Last year we had building delays in Kingston because, not surprisingly, asbestos was found there, and now we have a lack of due process and an inability to complete the paperwork in a timely manner for a new Catholic high school.

How does Canberra address its housing crisis? Get those who are pushing these failed policies and mismanaging the ACT economy off the government benches. Only the ACT Liberals have a workable, affordable vision for addressing Canberra's appalling housing prices. Only then will Canberra families have any hope of the great Australian dream—homeownership. Homeownership is being increasingly denied to Canberra families because of 11 long years of Labor mismanagement in every aspect of our economy.

I cannot finish without highlighting the significant role that the other part of government in this chamber has played. I refer to the Greens, who pontificate on much and prevaricate on much but deliver little of substance, and certainly no scrutiny of this government at any time. Labor has been aided and abetted by a party with a costly and flawed ideology that has allowed waste to flourish and prevented the blowtorch of scrutiny on so many pieces of this government's legislation and on so many acts of this government's mismanagement.

The Greens cannot suggest for a minute they are not co-authors of this mangled economy. They need to be accountable and they need to also take responsibility for the expensive place that Canberra is today. I have welcomed this opportunity to raise this matter of significant importance to every Canberran—the affordability of housing in the ACT.

MR BARR (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism, Sport and Recreation) (4.42): I am delighted

to rise this afternoon, and I thank Mr Doszpot for raising this very important matter of public importance—affordable housing. He and I are in agreement that it is a very important issue for the Canberra community, and it is a very important issue for the government.

It would seem as we approach the election at the end of the year that today presents an ideal opportunity for the Canberra Liberals, having raised this matter of public importance, to use the forum of the territory parliament to table an affordable housing policy. Wouldn't that be a turn-up for the books?

Ms Burch: He didn't do it?

MR BARR: No, we had a long dissertation from Mr Doszpot that, if he went back and reflected on what he has just read out—I will give Mr Doszpot the benefit of the doubt that he did not write that speech because this is not his area of shadow policy expertise—it would be clear that there would appear to be a view in the Liberal Party that the government's policy goals in land release should be to maximise the return to budget rather than to focus on affordable housing measures.

He quoted Mr Winnel's comments from the paper the other day where he made the correct observation that, yes, if we have a higher affordability target then, yes, we are sacrificing revenue. That is true. But that is a social policy outcome that you would seek to achieve by having such an affordable housing target. You cannot do both. You can either pursue a policy that is entirely about maximising the return on land sales or you can have an approach that recognises that there is a market failure. That is what I was alluding to in my appearance before the committee the week before last in relation to what has emerged in the Australian housing market.

The *Canberra Times* editorial of the other day picked up on the point that those who were in the housing market when the boom started have done very well. Those who did not happen to be in the elevator when the market went up have found themselves in a difficult position. Where there is clearly a market failure in the ACT housing market at this point is that supply has been geared towards the needs of double-income professional households and that what is needed is further intervention in relation to the supply side at the affordable end of the market. Hence the government's affordable housing strategies that Mr Doszpot outlined somewhat disparagingly in his contribution. I will give him credit; he at least alluded to them, so it is good to see that there is some recognition of the policy effort that has occurred.

You can seek no greater assurance that your policy work is broadly accepted as being good public policy than when it is picked up by other jurisdictions of the opposing political flavour. When we see our housing affordability policies, particularly our initiatives in relation to land rent and some of the other affordable housing strategies, being looked at by Western Australia, South Australia and other governments around the country and those policy initiatives being recognised as being nation leading, that is a pretty encouraging sign that the policy work that was undertaken is on the right track.

Through phases 1 and 2 of the affordable housing action plan we have made a difference. You need only ask those families who have been assisted into that dream of homeownership through a variety of ACT government interventions to assure yourselves of the value of those interventions.

I note that throughout the course of this debate we have had to achieve these public policy outcomes without the support of the Canberra Liberals. I would like to put on the public record and acknowledge the support of the ACT Greens for a number of these innovative measures. That is credit to the Greens party for their recognition of innovative public policy.

The ACT housing market is one of the most robust in Australia. Over the last four years more than 17,000 new dwelling sites have been delivered in the territory, and much of this is as the result of the government's accelerated land release program. However, despite this increase, demand for residential properties remains strong, with 6,042 approvals for new residential dwelling commencements as at last year.

Data from the Real Estate Institute of Australia shows that the ACT accounted for two per cent of all new home loans, excluding refinancing, across Australia in September 2011, June 2011 and September 2010. This is comparatively high, given that our population accounts for only 1.6 per cent of the nation. The level of property investment in the ACT has also increased significantly from \$1.1 billion to \$1.6 billion between February 2009 and September 2011.

What this data points to is a market that has seen historically high levels of activity over recent years, reflecting the attractiveness of the ACT as—as we all know—a great place to live, to work and to study. Whilst we are seeing house prices stabilising after a long period of growth, the government knows more work is needed.

The high level of demand for housing is also reflected in our rental market, with demand for rental accommodation in the ACT very strong. Rental vacancy rates have been below 2.5 per cent since September 2005, and the moving annual vacancy rates have remained under two per cent since 2009. Low vacancy rates are not only a contributing factor to rising rents but, in the longer term, they can also restrict churn in the rental market, which impacts on the ability of renters to transition to more appropriate accommodation in response to changes in market conditions.

Industry advice indicates that the demand for housing in recent years has been driven predominantly by interstate and international migration, and the government projects that the territory population will continue to grow by about 1.8 per cent per annum in the medium term.

Other demand factors in recent years have included general trends towards smaller household compositions, growth in the tertiary education centre and sustained high levels of construction activity resulting in additional workers being brought to Canberra for projects such as the Cotter Dam expansion and the numerous federal stimulus works projects.

Obviously we are all pleased that so many individuals, couples and families are making the decision to call Canberra home. As I have stated, the territory is a great place to live, work and study. The government will continue to encourage this growth in our city. However, the continued strength in both the purchase and rental markets has meant that housing affordability remains a key issue for many Canberrans, particularly those in lower income quintiles. Accordingly, this remains a key issue for the Labor government.

The first two phases of the affordable housing action plan have been successful in delivering properties as a part of residential development in greenfield areas. Yet, despite the influx of affordable properties and the significant increase in supply of residential properties over the past few years, this work is not yet finished. We recognise that the majority of households in lower income brackets are struggling to purchase residential property in the territory. Our analysis indicates that only households at the top of the second lowest income quintile can afford to purchase a property within the current affordable housing threshold of \$337,000. However, if land rent is able to be applied, then households in the mean and upper second lower quintile can also afford to purchase.

This is the very land rent scheme that the Canberra Liberals, and the Leader of the Opposition in particular, have opposed every step of the way. It is another example of their negative stance on everything that the government is doing in this area and their preference to stand on the sidelines and complain without coming up with any policy alternatives of their own. The challenge remains this afternoon, having raised this matter of public importance, for the Leader of the Opposition to come down to the chamber and give us a bit of policy. It would be a first. I know he is busy filling out time sheets and making sure his 10 staff are under control, but if he could just turn his attention a little from the one administrative task and the one responsibility he has that he cannot even manage and come down here and deliver some policy, that would be a welcome change.

Whilst we are more than happy to acknowledge the significant effort the commonwealth government makes in addressing housing affordability across a range of policies and programs—for example, commonwealth rent assistance and the national rental assistance subsidy scheme—there remain a number of areas where we would like to see the commonwealth make a greater effort to assist.

The Howard government's Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act's—EPBC—environmental clearance process is complex and time consuming. This is especially the case for new, large-scale urban development fronts such as Molonglo, which involves several suburbs over a broad swathe of undeveloped land to house an eventual population of around 55,000 people. The evaluation of all environmental issues in so broad an area of land is far more labour intensive and demanding than a more straightforward evaluation of one specific development project such as a new building.

That said, I am pleased to report that both the ACT and the commonwealth have cooperated in preparing environmental documentation to support the release of land in

Molonglo. In both Molonglo and Gungahlin the ACT government had undertaken a massive amount of work prior to even considering the release of land for urban development. This work has been recognised by the commonwealth as robust and accurate, and the commonwealth has relied on it to a great extent. It provides a sound basis for preparing the additional material needed by the commonwealth in order to obtain environmental clearances under the EPBC act.

Further to this, the ACT and the commonwealth recognise the need to enter into a bilateral agreement about the way to handle future environmental clearances in the ACT, and we are operating under this agreement in relation to clearances in Gungahlin. It is in Gungahlin that the ACT has been particularly affected by the complexity of the commonwealth's environmental clearance processes.

The ACT prepared an urban development plan for Gungahlin after extensive research into the environmental issues. This research led to a very large area of land being excised from the development zone and set aside as hills, ridges, buffers or as nature reserves or simply as non-urban land. The ACT has a clear time line and process for proceeding with Gungahlin's development in line with the urban development plan as set out in the territory plan, which passed through all stages of the Legislative Assembly's committee and deliberative systems.

However, the commonwealth's EPBC act was passed by the federal government in the intervening period, and the ACT has ended up having to revisit many of the environmental matters we believed had already been resolved. This has caused delays to proposed land releases in Moncrieff, where the commonwealth government made the decision that Moncrieff would be subject to a bilateral assessment, whereas the ACT thought this would not be necessary given the extensive work already undertaken. The LDA is currently preparing the required documentation for submission for assessment.

In Lawson the LDA first lodged documentation with the commonwealth in June 2011. After commonwealth requests for further information, it is now anticipated the public notification will commence in February this year. This eight-month process has not helped the ACT government's efforts to get land out to market. The ACT's EPBC referral for Lawson is now with the commonwealth for consideration.

In Ngunnawal 2C, in accordance with the commonwealth's EPBC decision, the ACT submitted a draft plan of management for management of the offset on 30 September, but, to date, it has not been advised by the commonwealth that that plan of management has been accepted.

In Throsby, despite extensive environmental research and clearance by past ACT and commonwealth governments of the ACT's plans for urban development in east Gungahlin, the commonwealth has insisted that the Throsby school site be referred yet again. Once the further studies were completed the ACT government referred the matter back to the commonwealth in September last year. This reflected, I think, a fear from the commonwealth that the school site would not somehow be a beachhead for future development. We are, of course, in ongoing negotiation with the commonwealth, and I am meeting with the federal minister to discuss this in the very near future. *(Time expired.)*

MS LE COUTEUR (Molonglo) (4.58): I thank Mr Doszpot for bringing forward this matter of public importance today, because I think everyone in this chamber would agree that it is a matter of public importance.

Housing—secure, safe, affordable housing—is the foundation of a safe, equitable, harmonious community. People need somewhere to live, and we need to find somewhere for people to live which is affordable. Affordable housing is a big issue. It requires a whole-of-government approach. That is why it is particularly great that we are talking about it today—everybody here in the Assembly. Housing affordability, of course, has to be done in a way which is environmentally sustainable. And affordable housing has to take its place in the community as a whole. It needs to be somewhere where there is community interaction.

My colleague Ms Bresnan may talk more about those issues. There is also public housing, which is a major part of the affordable housing issue. I am now down to only 8½ minutes, so I will talk a bit more about some of the other issues. Firstly, I go to the issue of land supply, which has been touched upon by both the previous speakers. We have to recognise that the ACT is landlocked. We have a finite amount of land, and it is important that we use it as best we can.

In that context, it is very important that we preserve endangered ecosystems. Mr Barr mentioned the EPBC referrals. Obviously the Greens believe that there should be full environmental assessments of all land that is going to be developed but, particularly in the case of Gungahlin, we think these referrals should have been done much earlier, probably years earlier. But in recognition of the fact the ACT does have a very limited amount of land, we need to be very careful that what development we do is high quality and meets the needs of the people of Canberra.

I was struck by a quote in the *Canberra Times* on Monday from Viv Straw, the ACT president of the Australian institute of planning. He said that during housing shortages developers of new houses basically wanted to avoid making costly mistakes, so they “usually built homes that had been profitable in the past, whether or not they suited people’s accommodation needs”. He said:

It can mean you are repeating the mistakes of the past ...

I thought that was a very interesting statement; it is something that we all need to try and take account of. We have a limited amount of land. We do not want to repeat the mistakes of the past. We need to ensure that, as much as possible, we use the existing infill sites and use them well. I am pleased to see that that is one of the issues in the planning strategy, but I think the planning strategy was fairly uncreative. When I say “the planning strategy” I mean the draft ACT planning strategy. It was very uncreative as far as affordable housing goes.

The government strategy for affordable housing has a target of a 25 per cent increase in the number and percentage of dwellings that are not detached houses in each district or town. Why? Housing types in Canberra other than detached housing do not appear to be a lot cheaper than detached housing. This is just not an affordable housing strategy.

There are, however, some things which the government can do which will address affordable housing. One of them—talking about the draft territory plan, variation 306—does not appear to be going anywhere at this stage, but it has a couple of good ideas as far as affordable housing goes. One of them is the idea of secondary dwellings. They used to be habitable suites under the old codes. Unlike habitable suites, you will be able to keep them indefinitely. They will be smaller, secondary dwellings. So where we have large blocks of land, we will be able to make better use of them instead of locking large areas away.

In considering affordability, we would like to see an emphasis not just on initial price, although that is important, but also on the costs of running houses, particularly energy efficiency and transport. Energy efficiency and general building standards were areas that Mr Doszpot thought the Greens were being a little unrealistic about. However, I would like to quote from a study by the RMIT's lifetime affordable housing project. They found seven-star homes to be significantly more affordable than less efficient five-star homes once lifetime household running costs were included. The study modelled the extra costs of a range of options from 5.5 to 7.4-star standard, along with the energy bill savings; they found the best outcome to be a 7.2-star standard rather than the six-star standard which we now have in the ACT. The 7.2-star standard provided a simple payback of seven years with an internal rate of return of about 18 per cent. That is even without taking into account the extra advantages of living in an energy efficient house. Basically, it is more comfortable to live in.

Another thing that is really important in terms of housing affordability is location. If you are located somewhere where your transport options are very poor, you will end up spending a lot of money on transport. If there is no decent public transport, if there are not cycling facilities and if there are not footpaths, most families will be forced to have two cars, and that is a much more expensive option. Housing affordability has to take into account housing location.

As I mentioned before in relation to energy efficiency, one of the concrete things that the Greens are trying to do to address housing affordability is through my colleague Mr Rattenbury's rental bill. That is looking at trying to increase the energy efficiency of rental houses to two stars. This can be done very cheaply. Mr Rattenbury will talk about it more tomorrow, but this can be done very cheaply in almost all houses by putting in some wall and ceiling insulation. This will lead to a huge increase in the comfort of the house and a huge decrease in the energy bills of the house. This is the sort of bill that anyone who is interested in housing affordability should be supporting. I trust, given the debate today, that the Liberals and the Labor Party will be supporting Mr Rattenbury's bill tomorrow.

Another issue I would like to canvass briefly in the time I have is the need for more innovative design. A while ago in Canberra we built Wybalena Grove and Urambi developments. They were both very innovative in their time and they are still innovative. They are large areas with an integrated design inside them. They are areas which have reduced expenditure on roads and expenditure on carports and garages. They are more affordable. They are areas where there are community facilities.

Instead of everyone thinking, “I need to have an extra bedroom in the house because my Great Aunt Mary might come and stay sometime,” there are areas where, if your Great Aunt Mary comes to stay, you have got a reasonable chance of finding a bit of extra space for Great Aunt Mary. There are areas with communal tennis courts, and Urambi even has a communal swimming pool. They are along the co-housing model. In Denmark 10 per cent of all new housing is co-housing; this is a model which we could well look at in Australia in terms of keeping a high quality of housing but reducing the cost of housing.

Along those lines I would also point out that the ACT has the enviable title of having the largest new houses in the world. The US used to beat us, but due to the economic conditions there they unfortunately cannot do that now. This is a significant issue as far as housing affordability goes. We need to look at why we are building our houses as large as they are. There are a lot of reasons. A lot of them have to do with federal taxation and social security issues, I agree. But there are also issues that we in the ACT have direct control over. We build the houses. And if we are seriously interested in housing affordability, house size is one of the things we have to look at.

Briefly, I would like to bring everyone’s attention to a very innovative affordable housing project that is going on. Jigsaw building company has started building an eight-star house which they anticipate they will be able to build for about \$200,000. By anyone’s standards, that is going to be a very affordable house. Eight-star energy efficiency, \$200,000—it can be done; we need to do more of it. Housing affordability is something we can address and I look forward to the Assembly addressing it.

MR SESELJA (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (5.07): I thank Mr Doszpot for bringing this matter forward today because this is a critically important issue for the people of Canberra. Whether it is, as Mr Doszpot says, young people trying to get into a home, whether it is older Canberrans who are struggling in our rental market as they do not own their own home, whether it is families who see their kids staying at home much longer than they would otherwise, because of the high costs of renting or buying a home in Canberra—this is an issue that is important to tens of thousands of Canberrans. So it is really important that we put it on the agenda often and that we have solutions to deal with it.

This is a government that just has not dealt with this issue. Let us have a look at some of the comments that we have seen from Mr Barr in recent times. One of the most extraordinary admissions that we have heard in a long time was that ACT Labor, according to Mr Barr, have created a situation where there are two classes of Canberrans. And that is true. When ACT Labor came to office in 2001, ordinary average income earners could buy a home. Ordinary, average families could save hard, buy a home, have some expectation of paying off that mortgage within a reasonable time frame, and get ahead in that way.

Under ACT Labor we have seen, in Mr Barr’s own words, the creation of two classes of Canberrans, and it is a situation that this government seem very comfortable with. ACT Labor have abandoned these people. They have abandoned families in the suburbs who are struggling with the cost of living. They have abandoned the young

people who are looking to buy a home. They have abandoned older Canberrans who do not own their own home and who are struggling in a very difficult and tight rental market. All of those people are those second-class citizens that Labor have created, forgotten about and, frankly, do not care about. How do we know Labor do not care about them? It is because all of their policies suggest that they do not. Their policies keep these people from getting into the housing market. They keep Canberrans paying higher rents than they otherwise would have to.

We in the Canberra Liberals believe that this is not the way it should be. We actually believe that if you are sensible in the way you manage these things, if you plan properly, you can improve the situation.

This mess, this two-class Canberra, that Labor have created in the housing market will take some time to fix. But it is not going to be fixed by Andrew Barr saying, "Yes, we will go out and flood the market." In fact, Mr Barr has shown no evidence that he can even get a reasonable amount of land onto the market but he is now saying, "What we will do in response to that shortage is to flood the market." But what you should do is sensibly, over time, manage land release, manage infrastructure, review taxation, control spending, and adjust your planning system where necessary to ensure that there is housing choice and that housing becomes more affordable over time, particularly in the outer suburbs.

This is what we have seen in other cities such as Melbourne. Average land values across Melbourne are not that different from average land values across Canberra, so people who have bought over time have seen capital gains and that is a good thing. But in the outer suburbs of Melbourne families have been able to afford a three-bedroom home. The comparison with Canberra is stark. Canberrans are paying significantly more for properties in the outer suburbs.

A great failing of ACT Labor is this two-class territory that they have admitted that they have now created. We have seen—

Ms Burch: So they have tabled their policy, have they?

MR SESELJA: We have tabled policies. Here again is Ms Burch—

Mr Barr: What are they, Zed? What are they?

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Barr!

MR SESELJA: Obviously he was not listening. We have talked about our policies for reforming infrastructure. We are going to reform infrastructure so we do not see these kinds of bottlenecks. Mr Barr had the hide in the last couple of days to come out and say, "It's not our fault." Mr Barr says it is not Labor's fault; that it is federal Labor's fault.

If there is one thing that an ACT government has a significant degree of control over, it is land. Everyone knows that, and to pretend otherwise is offensive. It offends the intelligence of Canberrans when Andrew Barr says to them: "We have been here for

nearly 11 years and we have created a two-class Canberra. We have made it much harder for young families to buy a home, to rent. But that is not our fault; that is federal Labor's fault. That is the fault of the federal department for the environment." Rubbish! Let us—

Mr Barr: EPBC is a Howard government piece of legislation, Zed. Do you stand by that legislation?

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Barr!

MR SESELJA: Now we have Mr Barr saying that presumably federal Labor is going to repeal that. I would love to see some improvements to that legislation. But let us be clear on this: we have known about Molonglo for decades, we have known about the new suburbs in Gungahlin for decades; but what did the government do? They sat on their hands. And now they say, "It is the environmental assessments."

Environmental assessments are frustrating and they are slow and we could reform that system. But you knew that was the case and you did not do anything about it. You could have gone out there earlier and done the planning. The environmental assessments could have been done and we would have the land ready for people to buy and build a home on.

I find it highly ironic that we had the government, the Labor Party, joining with the Greens to call on federal intervention.

Mr Barr interjecting—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Barr!

MR SESELJA: They passed a motion in this place. He is sitting there lamenting—

Mr Barr: Point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

MR SESELJA: Can we stop the clock, Madam Deputy Speaker, if I am going to be frivolously interrupted?

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yes.

Mr Barr: The Leader of the Opposition knows very well that the statement he just made is not true and he should be asked to withdraw that.

MR SESELJA: That is a debating point.

Mr Barr: That is not. It is a reflection—

MR SESELJA: Can we stop the clock, Madam Deputy Speaker?

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: We have. Stop the clock, please.

Mr Barr: It is a reflection on a vote of this place. That is not what this place voted for. He is seeking to misstate and to reinterpret what the Assembly voted for, and he knows very well it is a legal requirement of the commonwealth—not something that this territory or that this government or the Greens can refer to the commonwealth; it is a legal requirement.

MR SESELJA: Is there a point of order here? He cannot give a speech, Madam Deputy Speaker.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Resume your seat, Mr Barr. Mr Seselja, I have not actually been able to understand what Mr Barr was saying in his point of order because you have been speaking over him the whole time, so I really do not know the point he was trying to make.

MR SESELJA: There was no point of order.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: You may make that point, but I was having trouble understanding what the point of order was because of your interjections.

MR SESELJA: I will make the point that there is no point of order. He has not actually pointed to a standing order or any practice in this place that would stop me from continuing my speech.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Barr, could you just briefly come to the point of order?

Mr Barr: Yes. I was referring to the Leader of the Opposition reflecting on a vote of the Assembly—

MR SESELJA: It was not a reflection on a vote.

Mr Barr: and indicating that it was something that it was not.

MR SESELJA: It is a debating point. He can seek leave to speak again.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Seselja, this is not a debate; it is a discussion, and I want you to remain relevant to the subject of the matter of public importance, please.

MR SESELJA: I do not think anyone is suggesting that I was not, Madam Deputy Speaker.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: I am, actually.

MR SESELJA: We are talking about housing affordability and so I will come back to that.

The situation Mr Barr is so sensitive about is that he was out there yesterday saying it is all the commonwealth's fault. Yet we know that he voted for a motion, with the Greens, that invited them, encouraged them, to come in. We are seeing delays in Throsby. We are seeing delays for the Catholic high school. We are seeing less housing, potentially, down in Throsby as a result of this. Any attempt to pretend otherwise is absurd. He complains about commonwealth intervention when it was his government that actually failed in their due diligence in Molonglo and, lo and behold, discovered there was an asbestos dump there that they did not know about, apparently.

I will criticise the commonwealth government and the commonwealth environment department as is their due. But I do not think it is their fault that the ACT government did not do their due diligence and suddenly discovered an asbestos dump that everyone knew had been there but had no idea about the extent of it.

Of course it comes back to planning. I remember asking questions of the current planning minister when he was previously planning minister, before Mr Barr was planning minister. I remember asking questions of Mr Corbell about Molonglo in 2005, and we were assured that the work was being done and that it was all happening. We have waited years and years and years, because this government did not get their act together. The hollowness of the defence is clear: they seem to blame everyone but themselves.

Let us conclude with the facts. The facts are that this government have been there for over a decade. The fact is that they control land release. The fact is that they can plan ahead, because we have known for decades that these suburbs would be developed. The fact is that they control the planning system, they control the regulation of housing and they control taxation in this area—and they have created a two-class Canberra. In Andrew Barr's words, they have created a bunch of second-class citizens who, in the Labor Party's view of the world, are not worthy of owning a home.

We disagree with them. We believe that all Canberrans should have the opportunity to aspire to own their own home, and there should be policies that help them get there. (*Time expired.*)

MS BURCH (Brindabella—Minister for Community Services, Minister for the Arts, Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Minister for Ageing, Minister for Women and Minister for Gaming and Racing) (5.19): I welcome the opportunity to discuss the importance of affordable housing here in the ACT. Housing affordability is a challenge faced by all Australian governments, and this government has given considerable attention to addressing the complex issues of housing affordability in the territory, beginning with the release of the first phase of the affordable housing action plan back in 2007.

This plan put forward no fewer than 63 separate initiatives aimed at a range of underlying factors impacting on housing affordability. It placed a strong emphasis on reforming the process of land release, but also recognises that affordable housing is a complex matter which extends beyond purely focusing on market forces.

As a result, the first action plan extended to other crucial areas such as diversity of housing products, increasing market access, providing tenant information, bolstering the capacity of the community and not-for-profit housing sectors, enabling the public housing sector to better meet changing community needs, and assisting older persons to continue living in their current communities as they age. Since the release of that major plan in 2007 our commitment to affordable housing has been unwavering.

In 2009 the second phase of the affordable housing action plan was released, adding a further 21 initiatives to the already significant bodies of work. The wide-ranging scope of the original action plan allowed this second phase to be considerably more targeted, focusing on improving the circumstances of Canberra's older persons and homeless. I am proud to report that of those 84 initiatives, 81 are either completed, ongoing, or expected to be completed this year.

Another notable step taken by this government to improve housing affordability has included the introduction of a requirement that part of all greenfield developments must be delivered within an affordable threshold. Currently 20 per cent of new dwellings in these estates must be made available at or below a price of \$337,000, significantly improving the prospects of Canberrans on lower incomes to enter the property market.

We have also introduced through the Land Development Agency the OwnPlace initiative, which partners the LDA with local builders to deliver quality affordable housing to people earning under \$120,000 per annum. Over 250 of those homes have now been completed and occupied to date, with another 200 either under construction or set to commence shortly.

In the same vein we have introduced the innovative land rent scheme, which is offered on blocks sold by the LDA regardless of size or cost. The scheme allows lessees to pay rent to the government of four per cent of the unimproved value of land. Last year the government announced that since the commencement of this in 2008, the land rent scheme has proved an attractive option for more than 1,000 low-income Canberra families wishing to achieve the dream of homeownership at a more affordable price.

More than 310 people have purchased housing using the land rent scheme, with a further 747 having exchanged contracts. That is over 1,000 Canberra families who have an affordable roof over their head as a result of this nation-leading scheme.

Comment has been made that Mr Seselja should really explain to the Canberra community what the Liberals' alternative policies are, because we know that he has not supported the land rent scheme. I would like him to make a commitment today that he would not scrap the ACT land rent scheme altogether if in government. That would deny more families affordable housing.

The government has worked with ACT institutions and the commonwealth to delivery thousands of new affordable dwellings in the community through the national rental affordability scheme. In the four years the NRAS has operated, ACT applicants have been allocated incentives to build over 2,600 new rental properties, many providing two, three or more bedrooms.

Furthermore, each dwelling built through NRAS attracts \$6,855 per annum through the commonwealth for 10 years. Over the life of the scheme the 2,695 dwellings awarded to the ACT will attract over \$150 million in commonwealth funding alone, providing benefits not only for the territory renters but also incentives for builders to set up shop in Canberra.

The ACT has been remarkably successful throughout this scheme, securing nearly seven per cent of all the incentives awarded nationally, showing that the ACT is punching well above its weight. With both the ACT universities building at least a thousand new dwellings through the NRAS scheme, the bulk of these benefits will flow directly to ACT students who almost invariably rent and who, with generally low incomes, are amongst those most in need of rental release. By providing additional housing for students we can ease the pressure in the private rental market.

Students will not be the only ones who benefit from NRAS in the ACT. CHC Affordable Housing, already a major provider of affordable housing in the territory, has also successfully applied to build approximately 600 new affordable rental dwellings. Under the ACT affordable housing action plan, the government has charged CHC Affordable Housing with a target of delivering 500 affordable rental homes and 1,000 for affordable sale by 2018.

To assist CHC in reaching this target, the government has provided \$70 million in a revolving finance facility to the company. In addition, properties to the value of \$40 million have also been transferred to CHC from Housing ACT. CHC is on track to meet its targets with 134 homes for affordable rental already being delivered and 138 homes completed for sale.

Public housing is a major provider of affordable housing in the ACT. As at January of this year, the public housing stock sits at 11,860 and provides homes to over 25,000 people. The public housing asset management strategy 2012-17 highlights the issues and challenges facing the public housing portfolio as it continues to meet the increasing demand for public housing.

The government is committed to improving housing affordability, and it is also committed to improving outcomes for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Under the nation building and job building economic stimulus package we have built an additional 421 social housing properties. Approximately one-third of these properties will be transferred to community housing providers to manage. These homes have significantly increased the supply of affordable housing in the ACT.

In January of this year I received a letter from the Hon Robert McClelland MP, the federal Minister for Housing, congratulating the ACT government on being the first jurisdiction to complete all of the projects under the national partnership agreement on social housing and the social housing initiative. I think that is an astounding achievement by this ACT Labor government. It has increased the supply of social housing. It has improved outcomes by homeless and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and has stimulated the building and construction industry here in the ACT.

The government's asset management strategy makes it clear that the progressive redevelopment of the public housing portfolio is essential to effectively manage our stock to better meet the needs of tenants and applicants. The shared equity scheme continues to be popular, with approximately 19 homes being sold under the scheme to date. Under the shared equity scheme, tenants purchase a minimum of 70 per cent of the value of the home that they are buying and the government holds the remaining equity, thereby enabling people to own their home while only needing to find 70 per cent of the value.

The success of this scheme is the number of tenants who could not otherwise have contemplated purchasing their property but who are now enjoying the benefits of homeownership. That success is further evidenced by the fact that two of the participants have already paid out the commissioner's share of the equity.

The government has also introduced a range of measures designed to increase affordable housing options for older people who are not public housing tenants and who are not eligible to apply for public housing. One scheme involves making homes available at a concession rental so that tenants pay no more than 75 per cent of the market rent. Seven people have so far occupied homes under this scheme. Another scheme allows older people to own their homes through a leasing arrangement. Arrangements for the scheme will be shortly finalised. This scheme, again, allows people to buy in at 75 per cent of the market value of the property.

These schemes are designed to ensure that people over the age of 65 who are facing housing affordability issues have the opportunity to move into housing that better suits their needs without providing concessions to those who can afford to purchase in the private market.

Public housing dwellings being constructed now are designed to be as affordable as possible. By making them as energy efficient as possible and fitting them with energy efficient appliances, the cost of running these buildings is also reduced, and that certainly has an impact on older Canberrans. (*Time expired.*)

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: The time for this matter of public importance has expired.

Electoral Legislation Amendment Bill 2011

The order of the day having been read for the resumption of the debate on the question that the bill be agreed to in principle—

Mr Smyth: Madam Deputy Speaker, on a point of order, we have the censure motion currently before the Assembly that did not finish at lunchtime. I am just wondering why we have gone to executive business when there are still matters before the Assembly.

Mr Corbell: Madam Deputy Speaker, I am advised that the normal run of business now occurs, the standing orders having effectively kicked back in, which means

question time, MPI and now executive business. Those opposite will need to seek leave if they wish to bring the censure back on, I am advised. The government's intention is to proceed with executive business.

Mr Smyth: I will seek leave to call back on the censure. The normal practice of this place and most parliaments—and Mr Corbell should be well aware of this as manager of government business—is that motions like censures are normally dealt with in their entirety and not stalled in this ridiculous way.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: I am advised that we need to suspend standing orders in order to be able to do that.

Standing and temporary orders—suspension

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (5.31) I move:

That so much of the standing and temporary orders be suspended as would prevent the order of the day relating to the proposed censure of the Chief Minister and Deputy Chief Minister being called on forthwith.

Madam Deputy Speaker, it is very important that, when a matter such as a censure is hanging over the head of a member, it be dealt with expeditiously. That has always been the tradition of this place and has been since the Assembly was set up. I find it quite extraordinary that we would just simply ignore the censure that is hanging over the heads of the Chief Minister and the Deputy Chief Minister for misleading the community in relation to the proposed government office building.

Normally there would not have been any hesitation in bringing this back on. I think it is very important that we deal with it now. I assume the Chief Minister wants to come down and defend herself. Mr Barr has had that opportunity, and the Chief Minister should be afforded that courtesy as well. I am actually quite surprised the Chief Minister is not here ready to rejoin the debate. I think it is very important. It should not be left hanging there, and we should bring the debate on forthwith.

Question resolved in the affirmative, with the concurrence of an absolute majority.

Chief Minister and Deputy Chief Minister Motion of censure

Debate resumed.

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (5.33): Mr Speaker, the proposal to build a government office building has been a farce since the start. It has been a farce since the start of this process initially under Mr Stanhope. I am sure that those opposite are quite happy to dispense with some of the baggage. They did not have the wherewithal to really stand up to Mr Stanhope when he was here as Chief Minister. They will discard the policies that they do not like now and they will certainly discard those policies that are electorally unfavourable for them in the lead-up to the election in about 36 weeks. I guess that throwing the biggest proposal—the great big government office building—out the window was, of course, a logical place to start.

I have certainly been consistent in my position on this. Indeed, Ms Le Couteur from the Greens has been consistent in her position on this, as have others. The government got this process wrong from the start. You only need to look at two reports that have looked at this, the first being, of course, the public accounts committee report that said the process here is poor. The public accounts committee actually took the interesting step of issuing an interim report when it came to the great big government office building.

We had a report, audit report No 6 of 2009 on government office accommodation, before the committee. That highlighted a number of fiascos in the delivery of government accommodation, particularly Mr Corbell's fiasco in the delivery of the new ESA headquarters. I think the airport has done a great job of delivering what they were asked to deliver. The unfortunate thing is that the minister got it wrong and the department got it so wrong that we did not get what we actually ordered.

I compliment the airport on what they have delivered, but what we have got is not what we should have received. It cost a great deal more than it should have and I do not believe it has the capacity in the future. Of course, we had a number of fiascos: the flooding of the centre, even though the government had been warned that it was on a flood plain. Indeed, they had to change the glass because they got the glass wrong.

The committee had a report in front of it, report No 6 of 2009 on the government office accommodation, from the Auditor-General. Recommendation 1 of the committee stated:

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government make no final decision with regard to the whole-of-government office building project until the Standing Committee on Public Accounts has received a copy of the business case, and the economic and environmental analysis, together with any other relevant considerations, and had time to consider the information and report to the ACT Legislative Assembly.

The public accounts committee never received any of that. It received none of that. Recommendation 2 stated:

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government provide the Standing Committee on Public Accounts with an assessment of the opportunity costs of a whole-of-government office building project against other significant infrastructure projects, such as Majura Parkway, a light rail network, a new convention centre, or a third major hospital.

But the government did not do that either. The third recommendation was:

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government whole-of-government office accommodation strategy should be finalised, and considered by the ACT Legislative Assembly, prior to any final decision, or awarding of any contract, with regard to the whole-of-government office building project.

The Assembly did not receive that either. Why? It was because the government were hell-bent on having their own way, as they are so often, and they got it wrong. We know they got it wrong because they rolled over. Under the cover of a riot at the Lobby Restaurant on the day between Australia Day and the weekend, they just casually dropped the fact they were going to stop spending on the \$420 million office project and move away from the train wreck that it was.

It is a train wreck because they did not do the planning right and they did not go out in a way to get the best return for the people of the ACT on the money that could have, would have or may have been spent on that project. You only need to look at the budget outcome today where the budget has deteriorated to such a large extent. It has gone from a deficit of \$36 million to a deficit of \$181 million. At the same time, the government has rolled over—sorry, not rolled over. It has “re-profiled into later years”.

Is that not a great turn of phrase—“re-profiled into later years”? You can see somebody getting their nose re-profiled or a landmark re-profiled but, no, we are going to re-profile the delivery of the capital works program. Here is a great paragraph: “The territory’s capital works program has been reviewed in light of the progress of planning, design outcomes, the receipt of necessary development and environmental approvals and consultation processes.” It almost seems reasonable, does it not? “This has resulted in \$246 million in net expenditure being re-profiled into later years.”

They could not deliver it. They cannot afford it and now they will not do it. It is because they got it so wrong from the start. We see that pattern. The public accounts committee tabled that report in 2011. It said, “Just hang off.” Of course, then the estimates committee did exactly the same thing. They said, “Please, have some due regard to what the public accounts committee said and, please, make sure those three recommendations are met before you go anywhere else.”

But again, the government, hell-bent on having their own way, said: “No, the money is in the budget. You pass the budget and you get the great big office building. Job done.” Indeed, the Treasurer, then Katy Gallagher, said constantly, “We will go ahead with this.” Mr Barr, when he became Treasurer, said, “We will go ahead with this”. We have this disastrous backflip now where \$5 million of government money has been spent and that work is now just gone. That is the budgeting outcome. The busway to Belconnen—there is another \$5 million gone. There are so many other examples of where this government has got things wrong because they have not planned properly.

We see the latest fiasco where we are going to have half a women’s hospital. It is now stage 1 of the women’s and children’s hospital. The budget is blown. We are not going to be able to meet the deadline. It is a year or so late. \$20 million or so later on, another fiasco brought to you courtesy of Gallagher and Barr. That is the problem.

The problem is that it is taxpayers’ money and the problem is that all of these fiascos in the delivery of capital works impact upon ordinary taxpayers, affect their costs of

living and ultimately come out of their pockets. Somebody must pay for this \$5 million that is now wasted. It is the taxpayer. It is not the government. It is not coming out of their pockets. They do not care.

The last 11 years are littered with a litany of capital works project debacles—from Mr Corbell’s handling of the Gungahlin Drive extension, to the false opening of the prison, to the debacle that is the Tharwa bridge, to the emergency services headquarters. Now add the great big government office building, brought to you courtesy of Gallagher and Barr.

It is unfortunate that we get to this stage, but it is worthy of censure that you are so callous in respect of taxpayers’ money that you just say, “We are not going to do it.” Ms Le Couteur said that it is not worthy of censure. The public accounts committee asked you not to do it. The estimates committee said: “Do not do it. Go and do the work. Go and do the strategy. Make sure you get it right. Make sure you get value for money.”

Now what are we doing? We have got the Treasurer, the man with all those great economic credentials that he is so proud of, saying: “We will now go out and market test this, but I will give you a hint. We are willing to pay up to \$420 million for it.” That is market testing! They know what you are willing to pay, because you made it quite clear what you were willing to pay. That is disrespectful of the people of the ACT. That is disrespectful of all those people who work hard and pay their taxes—pay more than their fair share of taxes for this government to squander on yet another example in their long litany of wasteful capital works debacles.

There should be respect for the taxpayers and the money that they put into the coffers of the ACT. It is their money. We are simply the custodians of it. We are obliged to spend it wisely and we are obliged to get a good return for the taxpayer. In this case, we have not and it builds on example after example of the Labor Party’s incompetence. We saw an Auditor-General’s report into the delivery of capital works that said they just cannot deliver capital works. This is another example.

That is why they should be censured. They should be brought to account and told that these years of wasteful spending must stop. Ultimately, it delivers a \$181 million deficit and next year a \$154 million deficit. This is because you cannot get the planning stage right. Is it any wonder that in the construction phase the costs always blow out under this crowd? Whether it be a car park at the hospital, a women’s and children’s hospital, the prison, road works, Tharwa bridge or any of the projects that these ministers have had their fingers in, they screw it up.

But somebody pays and that person who pays is the taxpayer. It is not the rich and the wealthy. It is the ordinary people in the suburbs who pay their taxes. They go to work, they live their lives and they trust their government to do the right thing by them. Every time you have a backflip of this nature, it is a betrayal of the ordinary man and woman in the street who works hard for their cash, but who have such limited amounts of it in a very tough time in a very tough market.

Their position is made tougher by a government who are indifferent to the money that they waste on their pet projects instead of being a good government that look after the people of the ACT. They are both worthy of censure. (*Time expired.*)

MR SESELJA (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (5.43): I am closing the debate. I thank Mr Smyth for his contribution. This is worthy of censure. I think that the standards of the Greens that in particular apply to the Labor Party are becoming lower and lower as the term goes on. We see it again this time. Let us just put this into some context.

This was proposed to be the largest infrastructure spend by the ACT government in its history. The Cotter Dam blew out from \$120 million to \$363 million. The Labor Party wanted to spend even more than that. Even when the Cotter Dam cost blew out threefold, this government wanted to spend more than that on this government office building. So it is deserving of our scrutiny and we have given it our scrutiny.

At every turn in seeking to scrutinise it, the government has been dishonest. They have not told the truth. Because they were dishonest and because they were pig-headed, not only can the community not believe anything they are told by this government; if you are going to make it up, if you are going to not tell the truth on projects as large as this, how can you be trusted on any of the projects you claim you want to deliver? As a result of that we have seen millions of dollars wasted.

We are talking about millions of dollars. We sort of become a bit immune to this government and its wasting money. But let us put these several million dollars into context. This several million dollars could fund a small school for a period of time. We could see capital works like significant upgrades to our local facilities, such as our local ovals, being delivered for this several million dollars.

We do not know exactly how much has been wasted. We can guess. It is probably upwards of \$5 million. The government will try to say it is less, but can we believe them? Can we actually believe them on this when they claimed with a straight face to the Assembly, “We have got to do this and it will save us \$34 million a year”? That was not true, Mr Speaker, and I do not think anyone who has spoken in this debate has claimed what they said was true.

By the Greens backing the government on this, they are endorsing the lies. They are endorsing the dishonest behaviour and they are endorsing what was a not insignificant mislead. It was not like it was a sort of a slip of the tongue. We had documents. We had public servants and ministers all going out there and saying: “No, no, no, this is the analysis. It will save us \$34 million a year.” They were not telling the truth. They were not honest.

They were being dishonest with Canberrans over a \$430 million proposed project. As a result of that, not only can they not be trusted, but they have wasted millions of dollars of taxpayers’ money—money that we have to now pay back because our deficit is larger than it otherwise would have been.

It is Canberra families who are going to pay more. They are going to continue to pay more for their rates. They are going to continue to pay more in other taxes and charges to the ACT government. They have already gone through the roof over the last decade. It is this kind of waste that means that the pensioners and the young families who are making their way in the world in the suburbs of Canberra are going to be saddled with personal debt to pay off this government's debt and this government's wasteful spending. We think that is disgraceful and we think that is more than worthy of censure. I commend the motion to the Assembly.

Question put:

That **Mr Seselja's** motion be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 6

Noes 11

Mr Coe
Mr Doszpot
Mrs Dunne
Mr Hanson
Mr Seselja

Mr Smyth

Mr Barr
Dr Bourke
Ms Bresnan
Ms Burch
Mr Corbell
Ms Gallagher

Mr Hargreaves
Ms Hunter
Ms Le Couteur
Ms Porter
Mr Rattenbury

Question so resolved in the negative.

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee Scrutiny report 47

MRS DUNNE (Ginninderra): I present the following report:

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee (performing the duties of a Scrutiny of Bills and Subordinate Legislation Committee)—Scrutiny Report 47, dated 6 February 2012, together with the relevant minutes of proceedings.

I seek leave to make a brief statement.

Leave granted.

MRS DUNNE: I thank members. Scrutiny report 47 contains the committee's comments on 11 bills, 24 pieces of subordinate legislation, five government responses and one regulatory impact statement. The statement was circulated to members when the Assembly was not sitting. I commend the report to the Assembly.

Adjournment

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

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

**Ricky Stuart Foundation
St Vincent de Paul Society—doorknock appeal**

MR SESELJA (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (5.51): Last night I had the great honour of attending the Ricky Stuart Foundation dinner at the Hotel Realm. And for those who do not know, the Ricky Stuart Foundation has been newly set up to raise money for kids with autism, particularly for supporting the parents and families of kids with autism. It is a wonderful cause. It is an area where I think there is a real gap in support. I want to take some time to commend Ricky Stuart for the work that he has done in setting up the foundation.

I think Ricky Stuart is a great Canberran, even though he does not live in Canberra anymore. He is one of our proudest products. He played for both the Wallabies and the Kangaroos and, of course, the Canberra Raiders, the New South Wales origin team, the Canterbury Bulldogs and, indeed, is now the New South Wales origin coach. He has had a distinguished career in Rugby League in particular, but I would like to commend him for the good work that he has done in setting up the foundation, the thoroughly decent human being he is. It has taken great courage, I think, to tell his story about his daughter with severe autism, and I commend him for it.

I would like to also pay tribute to a lot of the sponsors and celebrity guests who backed the Ricky Stuart Foundation dinner last night. They include PwC, who underwrote it, the Fordham company, Sony Music, Realm, Virgin Australia, Zoo, Urban Pantry, ActewAGL, Audi, Elite Sound & Lighting, Coca Cola, McGuigan Wines, Amalgamated Property Group, Colliers, Titleist, Veuve Cliquot, Kitchen Witchery Catering, VB, contentgroup, MilLan, Actew Corporation, Dataflex, the Canberra Raiders, Independent Property Group, Maxim Chartered Accountants, the ElvinGroup, Harvey Norman, Formula Interiors, Eastview, Construction Control, and Raine and Horne. So thank you to those sponsors, some of whom are local and some of whom are national.

Also there were a number of celebrities who helped make the night a great success. Some of those, of course, are locals, and we had a number of national celebrities. We had one of our favourite sons in Mal Meninga. We had George Gregan, of course, from Canberra, returning for it. There were a number of other sporting celebrities such as Allan Border, Brad Fittler, Mark Gasnier, Simon Woolford, Peter O'Malley, Stuart MacGill, Adam MacDougall and a range of others, including Glenn Lazarus, of course, an old Canberran as well. There were too many to mention. Deborah Hutton was there as well. They all helped to make it a fantastic evening.

The aim was to raise several hundred thousand dollars and I think that was probably achieved, by the look of the auction. So well done to all those who got behind it. Well done to Ricky Stuart who did such a sensational job and has done such a sensational job in setting up what is a very important foundation.

I also recently had the honour of launching the St Vincent de Paul Society's month-long doorknock appeal campaign. It was an excellent event, and I would like to take

the opportunity now to thank and acknowledge Bob Wilson and his team from Vinnies for the wonderful work that they do. As you may already know, the Vinnies doorknock appeal is held every February, with the aim of raising funds for people in need in Canberra and the region. This year in Canberra Vinnies hope to raise up to \$300,000.

This year's appeal campaign saw a record number of approximately 2,000 volunteers working together to raise money for a very worthwhile cause. This also goes to highlight the wonderful work Vinnies does for our local community, also the fact that we in Canberra live in a very generous community. I think that it is safe to say that many of us have been beneficiaries in some way or another of their worthwhile efforts to serve. I know that was the case with my family many years ago, and it has certainly been a great honour to be able to give something back to Vinnies over the years and have the honour of launching the doorknock. I certainly learnt a lot from having the opportunity to doorknock and support Vinnies over the years, and I see what a wonderful job they do in our community.

The society's services attract people from diverse backgrounds from within our community. I would like to take the opportunity in the time left to encourage people to volunteer. I think they still do need doorknockers. I encourage people to give generously to Vinnies as they come knocking. Consider giving a little extra this year. If you gave \$5 last year, consider giving \$10 if you can. Every little bit counts, because Vinnies does such a wonderful job in the community. They have highlighted in recent times some of the extra pressures that are on Vinnies at the moment.

So I commend the doorknock. I commend Vinnies and the wonderful work they do in Canberra and more broadly.

Victims of Crime Assistance League

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (5.57): I would like to speak tonight about the Victims of Crime Assistance League of the ACT, often referred to as VOCAL. I wanted to take the time tonight here in the Assembly to pause briefly and publicly acknowledge their tireless work over the last 24 years. One of the key driving motivations for VOCAL is to, and I quote:

... help and support individuals and their families who, through a criminal act against them, are victims of crime—to overcome their anguish and suffering, and assist them towards a state of understanding and acceptance of their adversity in order to resume a more stable mental and physical condition.

As I am sure members will agree, supporting victims of crime who are in need is a hugely important task and I extend my sincere thanks to the staff and volunteers of VOCAL for all their efforts over the last 2½ decades. Just one example of the services offered is the 24-hour telephone support service. This has been of immediate assistance and a direct and practical way of providing help to people in need.

As members may be aware, last year the government made the decision to go to open tender for the funding that VOCAL had previously received. In September last year

the government advertised for tenders to be submitted and earlier this year the announcement was made that Communities@Work would be the new recipient of the funding. I will be honest and say that at the time the announcement was made I was surprised and somewhat disappointed that no public acknowledgement was made by the government of VOCAL and its history of helping victims.

It is appropriate that the funding was put to open tender, and that is something the Greens did support last year. I thank the Victims of Crime Commissioner for a recent briefing on the tender process and the factors that were taken into account in the decision-making process. I am certainly satisfied in the process and that the decision was a thorough and carefully considered one.

However, the reason I did want to talk tonight was to publicly mark the work of VOCAL as I felt it was an appropriate thing to do and it was an oversight in the announcement of the new successful tenderer that that history of contribution was not acknowledged.

I understand that VOCAL will continue to provide the 24-hour telephone advice line and that the court support and counselling arms of their work will continue. I thank them tonight for their work over the last 24 years, and I encourage and support them with the services they will continue to offer to victims of crime in the ACT. Our community is strengthened through the selfless acts of organisations such as VOCAL, and I thank them for all that they do.

Mrs Rita Martiniello

MRS DUNNE (Ginninderra) (5.59): This evening in the adjournment debate I would like to pay tribute to Mrs Rita Martiniello. Mr Doszpot, Dr Bourke and I had the good fortune to attend on Sunday the launch of Mrs Martiniello's new resource for teaching the Italian language to young children, a publication—and she hopes to make a series of publications—called *The Bambino Book*.

Mrs Martiniello is a woman from a modest background who should be an inspiration to us all. She came to Australia in 1967. She has lived in Canberra since 1971 and has practised her trade as a hairdresser. Not to be daunted as a mother and a grandmother, she became the 2006 ACT adult learner of the year and she has spent a lot of time publishing and self-publishing books for her grandchildren about their Italian heritage.

The book that Dr Bourke launched the other day—Mr Doszpot and I attended—was the first publication that Mrs Martiniello has published professionally. It is a great resource. As I said at the time, as a mother who wanted to pass on the Italian language to my own children because of my Italian heritage, I was always looking for resources such as this. This will be a great resource for parents and young children as they begin the steps of learning Italian.

It was fitting that the launch, which took place at the Italian Cultural Centre, should have happened during the Multicultural Festival. I thought to myself, "What could be more multicultural than launching a bilingual book for beginning learners of Italian in the middle of the festival?"

The book comes in Italian and in a bilingual version and they are accompanied by DVDs. The books will soon be in the stores. Anyone who does contemplate the process of passing on the Italian language to their children should be encouraged to have a look at them. The splendid turnout for the launch on Sunday afternoon was a great testament to Mrs Martiniello and her family, which is clearly close-knit and a close-knit community group.

I take this opportunity to congratulate Mrs Martiniello and her friends on the launch of this book and to congratulate the people at the migrant resources centre who provided the original language training for Mrs Martiniello, which has borne fruit in this great little publication. It should be a testament to all those people who work in outreach teaching English to new arrivals that really great things can be achieved with the appropriate teaching of English. It is a great testament to Mrs Martiniello and her family that she has taken the love of language so far and has created this great resource for the wider community. I congratulate her and wish her well with her publication.

St Vincent de Paul Society—doorknock appeal
Mr Brendan Kennedy

MS BRESNAN (Brindabella) (6.03): I would also like to note that I was at the Vinnie's doorknock appeal launch breakfast, and I will be out door knocking for Vinnie's also. As Mr Seselja said, I hope that anyone who is approached by a doorknocker for Vinnie's will give generously, and give what they can.

On 3 January I, along with the Chief Minister, attended the funeral service for Brendan Kennedy, the passionate and tireless director of UnitingCare Canberra City. As was stated in the sad news about Brendan's death, he died peacefully in his sleep, surrounded by his family, on 28 December 2011. Brendan was one of the most dedicated advocates for vulnerable and homeless people in the ACT and was always honest and forthright, something I greatly admired and appreciated about him.

In running the early morning centre, Brendan drew attention to the particular issue of rough sleepers in the ACT. I particularly loved the term used to describe Brendan by a number of the people speaking at Brendan's funeral in that he was a rebel but always with a cause. Speakers at the funeral talked about Brendan's frequent run-ins with policymakers over the years through his support and advocacy for people, including those who were homeless and refugees. They also spoke of his ongoing support through his life for vulnerable and disadvantaged people.

Even though I only knew Brendan for a short time, compared to all the other people there, I will miss his advice and thoughts greatly. The ACT Greens' thoughts go to Brendan's wife, daughters, family and friends. Brendan's death is indeed a huge loss to the ACT community and he will be greatly missed by a huge number of people and organisations.

Mr Brendan Kennedy
St Vincent de Paul Society—doorknock appeal
National Multicultural Festival

MS BURCH (Brindabella—Minister for Community Services, Minister for the Arts, Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Minister for Ageing, Minister for Women and Minister for Gaming and Racing) (6.05): I want to share Ms Bresnan's comments about Brendan Kennedy. He certainly was a man who put his heart and soul into the work he did and he made a significant difference to many here in Canberra. My condolences go to his family, in recognition of his work.

I think a good lot of us will be out knocking for Vinnies, because I will also be out knocking for Vinnies over the weekend.

I want to speak very briefly and recognise the great success of the National Multicultural Festival this weekend. The information that is coming to me from the Australian Federal Police is that over 250,000 people came through. There were over 300 stalls on Saturday, and over 2,000 performers, of which Ms Bresnan was one. I did miss your performance, Amanda, but any time you want to come and share it with us here, please do.

It was a great success, with Canberrans certainly partying well into the night and beyond. I think one of the successes is that there were no arrests. When you have 250,000 people coming through, clearly enjoying themselves, and there is no serious incident, I think it tells us that we take our festival as a celebration of our community.

Wolf Blass, who was the face of the festival, was very impressed and thinks it is one of Australia's best-kept secrets. We also had the pleasure of showing the UN High Commissioner for Refugees around on Sunday and he was quite impressed by that.

I want to say thanks to all the stallholders and performers, and a very big thanks to the Office of Multicultural Affairs staff, the volunteers and all those involved in putting together a really fabulous weekend. I want to recognise that the staff of OMA always seem to go above and beyond, as do the other staff in CSD.

This is the beginning of the year and I just wanted to say thank you to all the CSD staff—the executive, the management, right through to the most junior member within the directorate. CSD provides a vital and important service to young and old alike here in Canberra—those that are often disadvantaged, those that are not fully engaged, but with the support of many of our programs they certainly can change their life around.

In this first adjournment debate I wanted to recognise the success of the festival but also I just wanted to say a big personal thank you to all the staff that work in CSD—the 1,100-plus team of CSD—for the work they do for our community here in Canberra.

**Queen Elizabeth II
Eagles Sports Association**

MR COE (Ginninderra) (6.08): I rise this evening in the adjournment debate, as I always do, to make remarks about what makes the Canberra community and our society the great place that it is. Later in this brief speech I will put on the record my admiration for a local sporting club aimed at engagement with the Sudanese community.

However, before I make mention of those local achievements, I will make some remarks about our country's highest institution. This month marks 60 years since the Queen of Australia, Queen Elizabeth II, ascended to the throne. The stability, wisdom and guidance she has offered Australia, and indeed all members of the commonwealth, has been extraordinary. I think we all take for granted just how stable our constitutional monarchy is and how dependable the Queen has been.

Her reign has seen massive changes and events in the world—15 summer Olympic games, the construction and tearing down of the Berlin Wall, multiple wars and conflicts, 12 Australian prime ministers, 12 US presidents, the landing on the moon and much, much more. She has lived through an extraordinary time and her leadership has been timeless.

Just last year, Canberra was honoured to host Her Majesty and His Royal Highness for several days. During that time the world saw Australia through the national capital and it was a wonderful advertisement for our city as we approach our 100th birthday.

Mr Speaker, as is well known, I am proudly a constitutional monarchist because I believe the special arrangement we have through the monarch, governors, parliaments and our constitution serves us very well. I am disappointed that as yet the ACT Legislative Assembly is yet to honour the jubilee, as other jurisdictions in the commonwealth have.

The Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, has written to all premiers and chief ministers requesting they collectively match the Australian government's contribution to the Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust. I look forward to hearing what Ms Gallagher's response will be to the Prime Minister's request and how the Assembly will acknowledge the jubilee.

I would like to take this opportunity to commend a local sporting group which is providing a valuable social connection for young refugees in Canberra. The Eagles Sports Association, founded by a remarkable young man, Garang Kuer Bul, is a basketball club that is helping unite young refugees in a very positive way. The basketball program Garang runs is for both boys and girls aged 13 and above. It has grown from just a couple of members to having more than 30 players competing in local competitions across Canberra.

While the teams are predominantly made up of Sudanese refugees, the club is open to anyone who wants to join. The group is also hoping to start a juniors program some

time later this year. Whilst Garang invited me to play a game or two, I am not sure I would be much of an asset on the basketball court. However, my colleague and Leader of the Opposition, Zed Seselja, I am sure, would be an asset to the team.

In December, the Eagles entered two teams in the South Sudanese Australian basketball tournament, where the girls team won the competition. Garang is relying on the continued support of the Canberra community to host the event later this year, if he is successful in his bid. I call upon all potential sponsors to get behind this wonderful event.

Along with Garang Kuer Bul, there are a number of people that assist in the management of the club. They include the vice-chair, Jok Nhial; the secretary, Yar Mading; the treasurer, Victor Bek; and the public officer, Anai Nhial. I know the club is very grateful for the ongoing assistance of the following organisations: Companion House, Basketball ACT, Multicultural Youth Services and the South Sudanese community-youth association.

Garang and his colleagues are proof that sport is a powerful unifying tool which can successfully bridge the gap between culture and community. I look forward to supporting this sporting club in any way that I can and wish them every success for the years ahead.

Cage eggs

MS LE COUTEUR (Molonglo) (6.12): I rise to briefly reflect on a few recent events in the battery cage egg debate. One of the interesting things, as reported in the *Canberra Times* on Tuesday, 7 February, is that apparently the hens of Australia will be producing a million eggs a day too many by July, which is an amazing concept really. Apparently there are already five million dozen eggs in storage in Australia, which is absolutely huge and really demonstrates there is absolutely no need to continue with the current cruelty that is the battery cage egg industry.

Other jurisdictions have realised this. The European Union directive which abolished battery cage systems for egg production came into force on 1 January this year and, as yet, I have seen no press reports which suggest in any way that the people of Europe no longer have enough eggs to eat or that the price of eggs has gone up unreasonably or anything like that. I think that what has happened in Europe has demonstrated that we can phase out this cruel practice and that what is happening in Australia with the huge oversupply of eggs has demonstrated that we can do this and probably in a way which would cause no more disruption over and above the current disruption to the egg industry. So I leave these thoughts with my fellow MLAs.

The other thought I would like to leave with them is that the federal Labor Party had a resolution at last year's ALP national conference that they would establish an independent office of animal welfare. But unfortunately, they have not done so as yet. They were asked about this in estimates by Senator Lee Rhiannon, who is the federal Greens' animal welfare spokesperson. I think the fact that they have not done this demonstrates to us how important it is that we do not allow cruelty to animals and that

we look after the animals in the ACT that are on our watch. It would be great if the federal government were putting more energy into this but, as they are not, the animals that are in the ACT are our responsibility.

National Service Day

MR HANSON (Molonglo) (6.15): I rise this evening to recognise a ceremony that I attended on Sunday evening with the National Service and Combined Forces Association of Australia, Canberra and districts branch. It was a memorial service to mark the sixth National Service Day for those who served.

The ceremony was conducted at the Tuggeranong town park, at the memorial there for that association. The ceremony was led by the branch president, Mr Wal Beckhouse; the service was very well conducted and well attended. The occasion address was provided by Lieutenant Wayne Carney and the service was led by Captain Nigel Roden. There were a number of prayers: for the nation by Tim O'Halloran, for the Defence Force by Kevin Benson and for peace by Brian Tink. There were a number of floral tributes laid. The lament which was played was done most beautifully by Michael Challon, and the last post was played equally well by Captain Mark Everett.

The cadets from Training Ship Canberra, the Navy cadets, and from 334 Squadron, Air Force cadets, combined for the catafalque party. I have now seen them at a number of parades and they performed extremely well. I pass on my thanks to them.

I would like to also recognise the attendance at the parade by General Adrian Clunies-Ross and Mrs Clunies-Ross. General Clunies-Ross is the national patron of the National Service and Combined Forces Association of Australia. I was very privileged to be welcomed as the branch army and political patron of the ACT branch of the association.

I would also like to recognise the role that John Hargreaves has played with the association over a number of years, although he was not present on Sunday.

The members of the association committee are the president, Wal Beckhouse; vice-president, Laz Csibi; vice-president, Brian Tink; secretary, Kevin Benson; treasurer, Neal Gist; and assistant secretary, Alan Williams; and Norm Barty, Brian Freeman, Rob Tompsett and Ted Fitzpatrick.

After the ceremony there was a barbecue, with some great food provided—a sausage sizzle with some tremendous salads. I got a chance to meet the members and their partners, and a most enjoyable time was had by all.

I again salute the members of the National Service and Combined Forces Association of Australia, ACT branch, for the great efforts that they have made and for the tremendous ceremony they conducted on Sunday.

Mrs Rita Martiniello
Canberra Greek Glendi
National Multicultural Festival
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints

MR DOSZPOT (Brindabella) (6.18): In my capacity as shadow minister for education and also multicultural affairs, last Sunday I had the pleasure of attending a number of very interesting and pleasurable functions. Mrs Dunne has already spoken at some length about one of the functions I attended, and that was the lunch of *The Bambino Book* by Mrs Rita Martiniello. Mrs Martiniello wrote this book, *The Bambino Book*, initially for her eight grandchildren to help them with learning to speak Italian, the basics of Italian, and to assist with their understanding of Italian culture.

Her wonderful initiative has grown into an opportunity for other members of the wider community to also learn the basics of Italian language and to learn about the culture through this wonderful book. I congratulate not only Rita Martiniello but also her husband, Pasquale, and their five wonderful children—and of course the eight grandchildren who were the catalyst for this project starting and their whole family on their commitment to this exercise that grew out of a very interesting idea at the CIT.

On that note I guess I should also offer my congratulations to Rita's mentor, Marilyn Politi, who was her teacher at the CIT—she gave Rita that first spark and enthusiasm to start on this project—and also Marilyn Politi's husband, Michael Politi, who added a further dimension to *The Bambino Book* by assisting with the production of a DVD that is also included with *The Bambino Book*. I must say it is a great initiative and I commend everyone—the rather large Martiniello family, as well as their friends and all the roughly 200 people who helped her to celebrate the launch of *The Bambino Book* last Sunday.

On that same day, Sunday, I also attended the Greek Glendi, which was part of the Multicultural Festival and took place within the celebrating throngs that gathered around the very large multicultural celebrations in Garema Place. The Greek Glendi is a celebration of Greek culture, food and music. We were treated to examples of all of those categories—food, Greek dancing, music and wonderful performances by a large number of youth groups that contributed to a very festive occasion last Sunday.

The Hellenic Club was, as usual, one of the sponsors of the event. Paul Levantis, the president of the Greek community, gave a wonderful speech outlining all of the initiatives that have occurred in the community and all of the people that contributed to the wonderful Glendi on Sunday.

A further event I attended was at the invitation of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints in Lyneham. I was the guest of state president John Larkin. We listened to the service that was carried out. It was their national meeting, with a lot of their various state organisations attending. The service featured talks on spirituality, family respect and family values. The keynote speaker was church elder Geoffrey Cummins, who spoke at length about the family values that they espouse.

It was also good to see the respect that was given by the group to one William Hopoate, who plays for Manly in the Sydney Rugby League. He has a very promising career ahead of him but he has decided to postpone making even more capital out of his Rugby League talents by taking time off to help with being a missionary in faraway places for the next 12 months.

All in all, it was a very busy weekend. Some very interesting aspects of our multicultural community were on display through the Multicultural Festival and various events that I attended last Sunday.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 6.23 pm.