



Debates

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Wednesday, 2 May 2012

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Wednesday, 2 May 2012

MR SPEAKER (Mr Rattenbury) took the chair at 10 am and asked members to stand in silence and pray or reflect on their responsibilities to the people of the Australian Capital Territory.

**Planning, Public Works and Territory and Municipal Services—Standing Committee
Report 13**

MS PORTER (Ginninderra) (10.01): I present the following report:

Planning, Public Works and Territory and Municipal Services—Standing Committee—Report 13—*Inquiry into the Tidbinbilla Revised Draft Plan of Management 2011*, dated 4 April 2012, together with a copy of the extracts of the relevant minutes of proceedings.

I move:

That the report be noted.

Chapter 10 of the Planning and Development Act 2007 governs the management of territory public land, including the requirement for the preparation and update of plans of management. Mr Speaker, as you are aware, the committee's report on the Tidbinbilla revised draft management plan for 2011 was presented out of session on 4 April 2012. The public land covered by the revised draft includes Tidbinbilla nature reserve; the former pine plantation at Paddys River, now Jedbinbilla; and Birrigai.

Tidbinbilla, located approximately 40 kilometres from Canberra, covers an area of 6,107 hectares and comprises a core conservation zone, the naturally vegetated mountains, hills and slopes that form the boundary to the Tidbinbilla valley; a conservation and rehabilitation zone at Jedbinbilla, the former pine plantation, as I said; and the developed recreation and educational zone, which includes Birrigai, the visitors centre and the sanctuary.

As noted in the draft plan on page 22:

The identification of the values attached to a place is an essential first step in formulating management requirements and preparing a management plan.

Established in 1962 as a fauna reserve, Tidbinbilla has a long history of facilitating and participating in environmental research, including wildlife conservation and captive husbandry and breeding programs. It is valued for its rich natural and cultural heritage. For example, it is an important site in the study of the prehistory of Australia, with archaeological evidence dating Aboriginal occupation of the area to some 21,000 years ago. It is also the setting for a range of recreational, educational and nature-based tourism experiences, designed to enhance the community's understanding of the importance of environment protection and planning. I note that the annual Tidbinbilla Extravaganza was held on Sunday, 15 April and was attended by thousands of visitors.

The plan establishes two overarching goals for the management of Tidbinbilla—that the natural and cultural values of Tidbinbilla are conserved in perpetuity and that Tidbinbilla is highly valued by Canberra residents and visitors for its recreational, educational and research opportunities related to the natural and cultural values of the area. The plan provides a framework, organised by each value, which outlines the objectives and actions required to achieve the policy objectives for the management of Tidbinbilla.

The committee has made nine recommendations, including the following:

... that a consultative approach, which ensures early engagement with the community and other stakeholders, be adopted for the development of the Tidbinbilla precinct master plan.

... that once finalised, the Tidbinbilla Master Plan be made publicly available ...

... that the key indicators relating to the management of Tidbinbilla, not just customer-satisfaction, are introduced into the strategic and accountability indicators in the Budget Papers ...

... that (a) guidelines, which include communication protocols especially with the public, should be developed to determine how applications for tourism products will be assessed and monitored (b) a strategy for monitoring and managing cumulative impacts of tours also be developed (c) that the guidelines and strategy be made public.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the work that has gone into preparing the plan of management, including the input from those individuals, organisations and community groups involved in the consultation on the 2010 draft which preceded this one. I would like to thank Mr Griffiths and Ms Goonrey from the National Parks Association of the ACT, and the minister and his officials, for contributing their time and expertise to the committee's inquiry. My thanks also go to my fellow committee members, Ms Le Couteur and Mr Coe, and to the committee secretary, Ms Veronica Strkalj, and the committee office staff. I commend the report to the Assembly.

MR COE (Ginninderra) (10.06): I would like to very briefly extend some comments on the tabling of this report. Firstly I would like to thank the committee secretary, Veronica Strkalj, for her tireless work in putting this together, and of course thank my fellow committee members, Ms Mary Porter and Ms Le Couteur.

Tidbinbilla is a special place to many Canberrans, especially Canberrans that grew up in this city. I think everybody at some point goes on a school excursion or goes on some form of co-curricular activity to Tidbinbilla. It is a place which is well worth conserving and a place that does need to be managed properly.

There are some very good recommendations in this report, but in particular I would like to draw people's attention to recommendation 5:

The Committee recommends that the key indicators relating to the management of Tidbinbilla, not just customer-satisfaction, are introduced into the strategic and accountability indicators in the Budget Papers.

It is important that we have good tangible measures of the performance of Tidbinbilla and the management thereof. I think the budget papers and the annual report are the best places to do so.

More broadly, on the issue of nature reserves and national parks, I think it is important that we do open them up to the public. It is important that we encourage as many people as possible to enter national parks and reserves. The best way we can put a value on these facilities, on these resources, is for people to actually visit them and appreciate them. That is a philosophy that I know some people in this place do not necessarily support, but I think it is absolutely vital that we are serious about getting people into the parks and getting people able to enjoy them so that there is a greater impetus for this place and government in general to ensure that the place is managed properly.

I commend the report on the draft plan of management to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Education, Training and Youth Affairs—Standing Committee Report 8

MS BRESNAN (Brindabella) (10.08): I present the following report:

Education, Training and Youth Affairs—Standing Committee—Report 8—*Future Use of the Fitters' Workshop*, Kingston, dated 13 April 2012, including dissenting comments (*Ms Porter*), together with a copy of the extracts of the relevant minutes of proceedings.

I move:

That the report be noted.

First off, I would like to thank my fellow committee members, Mr Hanson and Ms Porter, and the committee secretary, Andrew Snedden. This was at times quite a difficult inquiry. There are obviously many people in the community who are very passionate about this issue. I also thank everyone, including Megalo and the choral societies—I will acknowledge Helen Moore, who is in the Assembly this morning—for putting in their submissions. We received a huge number of submissions. And I thank people for coming in and giving evidence and for their cooperation through that process.

Having been the committee chair, I think that we did try and work in a collaborative way. I think the committee did do that. It was disappointing that we had dissenting comments from Ms Porter on the report, because we did try and work collaboratively throughout the process.

I want to stress a couple of points which have been made in this report, and which I think all the committee made, particularly to Megalo. This was not at all, at any time, about impacting on Megalo's reputation. I strongly refute any claims which are made to that effect. As I said, that point is made in the report, and it was made by the committee particularly when we went out and visited Megalo. We also have recognised in the report their contribution to the ACT. As I said earlier, they were very passionate, as were a number of witnesses and as were a number of submissions to the inquiry. As I will go to a bit later, the report makes two specific recommendations on the future of Megalo.

I would also like to draw attention and point to the time line which was put forward on the proposed construction of the facility at the Fitters Workshop for Megalo, which the committee considered was a significant issue. The committee drew a key conclusion from that. Information was given to Megalo regarding the time frame, which the committee believed, quite clearly, given the evidence that we heard, was not accurate. We heard information at consultations and from the Land Development Agency that construction would take at least 18 months. It is worth pointing out that regardless of this inquiry, so regardless of whether this inquiry was undertaken or not, a temporary solution for Megalo was going to have to be found. That became quite obvious throughout the process—that a temporary solution would have to be found from the government—as it did appear, quite clearly, that if this development had gone ahead there would not have been a Fitters Workshop this year.

I would like to refer to the five recommendations that are in the report. I will read them out. Recommendation 1 is:

The Committee recommends that the Fitters' Workshop be used as a multi-use arts and performance venue.

Recommendation 2 is:

The Committee recommends that the Government suspend its decision to make the Fitters' Workshop, Kingston a print studio to allow the current master planning process underway for the Kingston Arts Precinct to be re-opened incorporating the Fitters' Workshop as a multi-use arts and performance venue.

Recommendation 3 is:

That the government respond to recommendation 1 within 30 days, giving a timetable and terms of reference for the consultation recommended by the Committee.

Recommendation 4 is:

The Committee recommends that the current decision to convert the Fitters' Workshop for Megalo Print Studio be re-considered and that immediate steps be taken to identify an alternative site for a purpose-built building at the Kingston Arts Precinct.

The final recommendation, recommendation 5, is:

The Committee recommends that the funding made available for the conversion of the Fitters' Workshop be retained for funding and construction of the purpose-built building for Megalo at the Kingston Arts Precinct be retained and applied for that purpose.

I also want to point to the fact that we heard from a number of people, including the National Trust, in relation to this being a multi-use space and a performance space, that it is not just about the performance itself but about the uniqueness that the building has in having this as a performance space. I would like to refer to comments from the Creative Director of the Centenary of Canberra around this particular point. They were included in the report and were obtained through an FOI request from Mrs Dunne. The first point states:

While Print might appear to be an excellent fit with glass, I personally feel there's a danger that the space will become quite audience passive. While the glass workshop itself is an exciting making-place, it is still mainly a spectator activity and a print workshop is even less dynamic—and exhibition spaces for both tend to be quite delicate and passive. I would love to imagine that there could be a combination of glass and print exhibitions in this space (perhaps on a rotating calendar) as well as leaving some gaps for performance and more active engagement with the space. I believe this kind of rotation/shared calendar would animate the beautiful old space more dynamically with a wider range of offerings for a wider demographic than would a single focus on prints ...

Moving towards 2013 there will be an increased need for flexible spaces, and this is one of the very few which makes sense in terms of the size of audience which might be accommodated.

It is worth pointing to those sorts of comments from the creative director of the centenary. And we heard other comments to that effect.

I note that the committee commissioned the acoustic reports. Both those reports came up with very similar findings. It is worth pointing to those, because there have been a number of comments made about those particular reports. They did find that it was a unique space. There have been comments made about the limited types of performances that could be in there. Yes, it is a particular type of performance, but there are a number of different music forms and art forms that can be accommodated within the criteria. That point is worth making in terms of comments that have been made that it is restrictive and there would not be many sorts of performances that could be in there.

I will restrict my comments to that. I appreciate the involvement of everyone who made submissions and gave evidence. As I said, people were very passionate about it. That became very clear throughout the whole process. I do hope, as I have said, that people take the report on its face value. There was a lot of work put into this. A lot of consideration went in from the committee. Again I want to point out the fact that this in no way was about impacting on Megalo's reputation. I know I have already said it, but I refute any claims that have been made to that effect.

Again, I thank my fellow committee members and I commend the report to the Assembly.

MR HANSON (Molonglo) (10.17): I would also like to thank my fellow committee members and thank Ms Bresnan in this case for the difficult job that she had as chairperson of this committee. I acknowledge the fact that this was a complex and often politically charged and emotionally charged committee inquiry. At various stages it did get heated and I think that the committee, but in particular Ms Bresnan, bore the brunt of that. I would just like to acknowledge that that was a difficult job for her and in this case I think she actually did it pretty well. Obviously, I would like to thank the secretariat for the support that we got on this committee.

On 7 April, the *Canberra Times* published an article by Diana Streak titled, “The fight goes on for the Fitters Workshop.” At the end of that article, Ms Streak observed:

... the issue is not simply a bitch fight between musicians and print artists. It’s a complex story that if handled with vision and courage could transform the Kingston Foreshore into a world-class arts precinct.

A little earlier in the article Ms Streak commented:

The lacklustre performance of arts minister Joy Burch has done little to inspire confidence of an unambiguous outcome.

Mr Speaker, I think that those two quotes sum up the fundamental reasons that we had this inquiry. We have a government that has made decisions without due process. We have a government that has sought to develop the Kingston arts precinct piecemeal and without a holistic master plan. We have a government that has failed to engage in any sort of proper community consultation and we have a government that has deliberately locked segments of the community out of any consultation process. Even the Old Bus Depot Markets, a key and longstanding stakeholder in the future of the Kingston arts precinct, has been ignored.

We have a government that has dismissed the considerable heritage values of the Fitters Workshop. We have a government that has ignored important and relevant factors in its decision-making process, including advice from its own officials. We have a government that has ignored important new information, that of the acoustic qualities of the Fitters Workshop, discovered almost by accident. Although I think it is true that those acoustic qualities were discovered almost by accident, it does not make them any less valid.

We have a government that has led Megalo Print Studio + Gallery up a garden path that leads to nothing more than a black hole. And we have a government that has said Megalo could be in the Fitters Workshop in August of this year when that was never going to be the case. Indeed, Mr Speaker, I suggest to you that this government perhaps knew it was never going to be the case.

We have a government that is too proud to admit that it has been wrong. On top of that, we have had successive arts ministers that have, at best, been lacklustre in their

handling of this matter, and at worst, operated in a shop that has been open only to a select few. In short, this government has failed the arts community, has failed the general community and, worst of all, has failed Megalo Print Studio + Gallery. I would contend that as a result of their mishandling of this entire process they have caused angst, disruption and bitterness in the whole arts community that is likely to endure for some years to come.

The future use of the Fitters Workshop has been a subject of media and public interest for quite a long time now but unfortunately the government refused to listen. As long ago as July 2009, the *Canberra Times* published a story titled “Fight Looms over Fitters Workshop”. In that article, Don Aitkin spoke of:

... a multi-purpose cultural facility which could be used for all sorts of things ...
a good place for doing almost anything where you needed to come in, do it, and
go away again.

In October 2009, the May & Russell report noted that accommodating Megalo in their own building would avoid the impact on the heritage values of the Fitters Workshop and would allow its more flexible use by various groups. Mr Speaker, over the past 10 years land has been set aside within the Kingston arts precinct for a new 1,000 square metre floor space building. This would more than adequately provide for a purpose-built facility for Megalo.

But this government has ignored all of that. It has made a decision in relation to the future use of the Fitters Workshop premised almost entirely on a hand-written note. That note was made by the former Chief Minister and arts minister Jon Stanhope at the top of a letter to him dated 22 August 2008 from the Megalo Print Studio.

Appealing perhaps to Mr Stanhope’s vanity and his sometimes perceived obsession with the visual arts, this letter asked him to make an executive decision to move Megalo to the Fitters Workshop. Mr Stanhope’s note said, “This is a persuasive and very tempting proposition. Advice and response please?” Mr Speaker, therein was the government’s decision, a decision made without proper process, a decision that has split the community.

The committee’s inquiry sought to fill the gaps left by the government. It engaged with the community. It sought expert advice. It considered the overall concept of the Kingston arts precinct. It looked at all the options and it has developed some recommendations that provide a win-win solution. Critical to that solution is the recommendation that calls on the government to take immediate steps to identify an alternative site for a purpose-built Megalo facility at the Kingston arts precinct.

In doing so, the Canberra Liberals, besides being on the committee, reckon the government should ensure that the \$3.8 million already standing in the budget for capital works should be directed to building that purpose-built facility. It makes sense, Mr Speaker. The government needs to give Megalo certainty and those immediate steps and that redirection of funding will provide that certainty.

As well, this government needs to go back to the drawing board in relation to the master plan for the Kingston arts precinct. So far that plan has been little more than bubble thoughts made in isolation about what could be. There has not been a proper process for the development of a precinct that belongs to the community as a whole and the arts community in particular.

Ms Streak in her article in the *Canberra Times* I referred to earlier is right. The Kingston arts precinct does have the potential to be world-class. Achieving that outcome will require vision and courage and something more than we have seen from this government.

The committee has done the work. It provides a comprehensive set of recommendations that in my view are the key to unlocking the full potential of the Kingston arts precinct because what we have considered goes beyond just the Fitters Workshop. But the decision made about the Fitters Workshop will have enduring implications for what can possibly happen in the future for potentially generations to come when it comes to that arts precinct.

I came to this committee process with a very open view and I think all of the committee members at the start of the committee did so. We engaged in a process whereby we listened to the arguments. We tried to separate the politics, and I do not mean the Labor Party, Greens party and Liberal Party politics. I mean the internal politics within the arts community. We tried to separate that from what was going to be the best outcome.

Up until the 11th hour, we had the unanimous view of what the best result was. The best result was going to be freeing up the Fitters Workshop so that it could unlock its potential as a multi-use facility and recognise its unique acoustic qualities but still provide for what Megalo needs, which is a purpose-built facility in that Kingston precinct.

That decision, that recommendation, provides the best outcome for generations to come for the arts precinct and that was what we recognised. I think it is worth noting that until the 11th hour that was the unanimous view of the committee. We had drafted a unanimous committee report to that effect and gone through it. At the 11th hour, one of the committee members changed their mind; did a complete 180.

It is disappointing to me that someone would engage in a committee process, in this case Ms Porter, to the point where they have essentially agreed with the thrust of what the committee is saying, then at the 11th hour reverse their position. The question has to be asked: why? My understanding is that the day Ms Porter changed her mind, Mr Stanhope visited the building. Ms Porter might like to confirm whether there were any discussions between her and Mr Stanhope on that day that led to her changing her view or whether she had any conversations with government members.

It was an extraordinary situation that occurred, that after so many committee hearings, so many internal discussions, that is what eventuated within the committee. My view is that the committee report that has been presented by the majority of the committee

is a very good report, that it is probably likely that it is a shared view of Ms Porter, but Ms Porter has, for whatever reasons, felt it necessary to demonstrate some independence, probably to fly the government flag.

However, I think that as the Greens and Liberal members see this as the appropriate course forward, I really call on the government to take note of the committee's recommendations, to step aside from their pride, from any political baggage that they have on this. If decisions were made, have the bravery, have the courage to accept that sometimes mistakes are made and look forward in this matter so that the best decision can be made for the community rather than try to protect decisions that were made by members who, in some cases, are not even in this place any longer to protect egos and potentially to protect people who made decisions without all the information before them.

I commend this report to the Assembly and I certainly urge the government to act on its recommendations.

MRS DUNNE (Ginninderra) (10.30): I welcome the report of the standing committee on the Fitters Workshop. I think that the committee has brought down a much welcomed report for the people of the ACT and for the whole arts community of the ACT. Mr Hanson has spoken at length about the important issues and I would only speak briefly to highlight the level of commitment in the community by a large number of people who are encouraging the government to seriously address the recommendations raised by the standing committee and to implement the recommendations of the standing committee report for the benefit of the entire arts community.

I note that Ms Bresnan made the point, and Mr Hanson also raised the point, that the government have, in a very 11th hour way, been determined to make provision for accommodation for Megalo. They have made it worse for Megalo. They have misled Megalo about when they might be able to occupy a new facility in the Kingston foreshore precinct. The minister has had a quite schizophrenic approach.

She was saying during the estimates hearings last year that it would be well over a year before anything could happen. But when we got to October and November last year and debating whether there should be an inquiry, she said:, "No, no, you cannot do that. It will put everything on hold and we promised Megalo that they would be in by August this year." That was a promise that this minister could never keep. That was revealed during the hearings when the planning officials talked about the building time line. It was clearly 18 months plus, depending on how much time would be involved. There was an unknown amount of time that would be involved in rehabilitation of tanks on the site.

There are many persuasive arguments why the government's decision was not in the best interests of Megalo and not in the best interests of the arts precinct. I have received, and I am sure other members have received, many letters from members of the public about why the government should support the recommendations of the inquiry into the future use of the Fitters Workshop.

I received one only yesterday from a member of the public who has talked about their long association with the arts community in Canberra. The really interesting thing about this, and the thing that you see as you go through the arts community, is the number of people who are involved in multiple aspects of arts in the ACT. That really increases the richness of our arts experience in the ACT and our arts practice.

This person who has written to me is a photographer and a practising artist, has done some work with Megalo and has, in addition to receiving instruction at Megalo, exhibited there as well as being involved in concerts and live music. So this person is well experienced and able to sort of look at both sides of this. She says:

Certainly the concept of an Arts Precinct at Kingston is commendable, and yes, Megalo should be an important part of this. The point at issue is surely whether or not the Fitters' Workshop is the best location for that presence.

She goes on to say that she thinks these are the issues that need to be considered and I think that these were the issues that were considered by the committee when they looked into this. She says:

The Fitters' Workshop is too small for Megalo's requirements so an extra annex will need to be built.

This is something that needs to be said quite explicitly. When we talk about Megalo and moving into the Fitters Workshop, they are not. They are not moving into the Fitters Workshop. They are moving into the Fitters Workshop and some.

The considerable amount of money that has been put on the table for Megalo is to build an annexe to the Fitters Workshop so that they can actually fit most of their heavy equipment and their dirtier equipment in an annexe which has appropriate sewerage and plumbing. This annexe, my correspondent goes on, "will disadvantage other existing members of the complex like the Old Bus Depot Markets". This is something that the committee heard about. She goes on to say:

The interior of the Fitters' Workshop will need far more modification to accommodate Megalo than would be required to render it suitable for a multipurpose concert hall.

The Megalo modifications would permanently destroy the acoustical qualities of the building.

And my correspondent goes on:

There is, apparently money, land and development plans for a new building in which Megalo could be accommodated.

I think the outcome of this inquiry has made it perfectly clear that the members of the committee believe that the money that is on the table for Megalo should be spent on Megalo. It should be spent on accommodation for Megalo at the Kingston arts precinct, but outside the Fitters Workshop. The Fitters Workshop, it is the general

view of the committee, which reflects the views of the community, has a bright future as a multipurpose space. Ms Bresnan touched on that, with her elaboration of the views of Robyn Archer about the possible use of the Fitters Workshop.

I also have received a range of other correspondence. One of the recommendations that I received in correspondence this morning is that the government should act quickly to ensure that the Fitters Workshop becomes an integral part of the artistic exposition during the centenary next year. There should be moves afoot quite quickly to ensure that the Fitters Workshop is seen as a central feature of artistic endeavour, be it music, exhibition, dance or, as it has been put to me, multimedia, digital and music productions. What can be done in this space is only limited by the imagination of those who would seek to engage in this place and ensure that we have a bright future there.

I commend the committee for their inquiry. I thank the committee for their generosity to me, as a member of the Legislative Assembly, in allowing me to attend and to participate in the inquiry as a visiting member. I thank the members for their courtesy in that. I think it is disappointing that we did not finally see a unanimous report. I get the impression that members were hopeful of a unanimous report. I think it is disappointing that apparently at the 11th hour we were deprived of that, but that is water under the bridge.

I think that the committee report presents a great way forward for the Fitters Workshop as a facility that will become the pride of the ACT arts community and, through that, the broader community. I commend the report. I hope that the minister will not, as many of my correspondents have indicated, continue to demonstrate a closed mind to the potential of the Fitters Workshop.

MS LE COUTEUR (Molonglo) (10.38): I will speak only very briefly on this because most of the points I seek to make have already been made. This inquiry has been very well done and the conclusions and recommendations of the inquiry vindicate the Assembly's decision to actually have an inquiry into this matter. There has been quite a detailed commentary as to what has happened with the Fitters Workshop and how this sorry saga has unfolded. One thing all sides of politics should be able to agree on is that it has been a sorry saga. It is very unfortunate that we have had so much angst about one building, one part of our arts infrastructure. It is an indictment, I guess, of the sorry state of arts funding and arts infrastructure in the ACT.

The inquiry's responses are very balanced. They very much see the need to properly accommodate Megalo. They have a way forward for accommodating Megalo. From Megalo's point of view, this should be seen as a very positive recommendation. I think it also should be seen as a very positive recommendation in terms of looking at the best way forward for the Fitters Workshop in terms of the many people who have seen that there are some incredible heritage and acoustic features in the workshop and have had the long-held belief of the possibility of a win-win where the wonderful Fitters Workshop can be used by a wide range of the arts community. I imagine Megalo will be part of that. If the committee's recommendations are followed,

Megalo will be part of the arts community that uses the Fitters Workshop in the future. I am very pleased this inquiry took place, and I wholeheartedly support its recommendations.

Debate (on motion by **Ms Burch**) adjourned to the next sitting.

Official Visitor Bill 2012 (No 2)

Ms Bresnan, pursuant to notice, presented the bill and its explanatory statement.

Title read by Clerk.

MS BRESNAN (Brindabella) (10.42): I move:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

I will not be making a speech in regard to this bill. As members would know, there was an issue with the tabling statement when it was made, and I thank members for their consideration when that occurred. I apologise again to the Assembly for that. The speech I made in the previous sitting in regard to this bill obviously still stands; it is still on the record. I thank members again for their understanding in terms of what occurred with the last tabling of this, and I commend the bill to the Assembly.

Debate (on motion by **Ms Burch**) adjourned to the next sitting.

Financial Management (Cost of Living) Amendment Bill 2012 **Detail stage**

Clause 1.

Debate resumed from 28 March 2012.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Remainder of bill as a whole, by leave, taken together.

MR BARR (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism, Sport and Recreation) (10.43): I move amendment No 1 circulated in my name and table a supplementary explanatory statement [*see schedule 1 at page 1896*].

During the last sitting of the Assembly the government provided in-principle support for the Financial Management (Cost of Living) Amendment Bill 2012 and foreshadowed its intention to move amendments. The government is committed to transparency and will continue to provide meaningful and useful information on the cost of living impacts of the budget. Members would be aware that the budget papers already report on the impact of increases in taxes and fees. However the government will continue to drive improvements in its budgeting processes, including a statement as proposed in the government amendment I am moving today, which builds on our

efforts in this area. The government has always recognised the importance of providing the community with relevant and meaningful information on impacts of its policies.

In Canberra we enjoy a high standard of living—in fact, the highest standard of living in Australia—something confirmed by the National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling today. We have high incomes, low unemployment and high quality services. Nevertheless, the government is committed to supporting households and families who find it difficult to meet cost of living pressures. We provide real and practical support for households. Our concessions program is regularly adjusted to provide more appropriate support to reflect increased costs. The government’s targeted assistance strategy will help meet the needs of households experiencing financial hardship.

We will continue to provide open and transparent information on policies and revenue setting through the budget. The government’s view is that this bill today can be improved by focusing on the ACT government taxes and fees that relate directly to households and, importantly, taking into account the impact of concessions.

In presenting the bill, the shadow treasurer stated that the manner in which “the ACT budget is currently prepared does not provide any insight into the consequences of the many decisions it contains for Canberra families”. This is not the case. The government provides transparent information on rates, exemption thresholds and increases to taxes and charges in budget paper No 3. This information is regularly updated on the ACT Revenue Office and other relevant websites. The budget paper also includes a comparison of major taxes in the ACT and New South Wales.

I note that the explanatory memorandum to the private member’s bill indicates:

The analysis of the cost of living effect will be an estimate of the average effect on the average household for the following financial year.

This assessment would include changes to general rates, land and payroll taxes, conveyance duty, motor vehicle registration and driving licences, the utilities network facilities tax and the fire and emergency services levy.

The shadow treasurer has claimed that the cost of living statement “will enable the people of the ACT to have a much better understanding of what is in the annual budget, how it affects them directly and how any taxing measures in the budget will affect their cost of living in the year ahead”.

In presenting the private member’s bill, the shadow treasurer acknowledged that the opposition has “no prescription about the form” of the cost of living statement. Instead, it is left to the government of the day to determine what shall be included in the analysis and how it shall be structured, although I note that the explanatory memorandum is much more prescriptive.

The bill in its current form would not meet the opposition’s stated objectives. Reporting government taxes in isolation will not comprehensively assess overall cost

of living impacts. Any assessment of cost of living should be made in the context of incomes, expenses and a range of indicators of financial stress. It should relate to everyday experiences and costs faced by households. The statement as proposed in the unamended bill will not take all of these factors into account.

The shadow treasurer's proposed statement would include taxes that do not legally apply to households, such as payroll tax. Whilst it is understood that the incidence of taxation can vary significantly depending on factors such as market conditions, the legal and economic incidence of a tax can also be different. For example, a purchaser of a property is legally liable for conveyance duty. However, its economic incidence may fall on the seller or the buyer or a combination, depending on the state of the housing market. Estimating the amount incurred by a household for a tax that does not apply directly to it, such as payroll tax, conveyance duty and land tax, is almost certain to misrepresent its impact. Reporting on taxes that impact directly on a household will provide a more representative figure.

In addition, increases in living costs may be offset by concessions or driven by changes in consumption patterns. The statement proposed in Mr Smyth's bill does not take these into account and does not provide a complete picture of government assistance. The ACT and commonwealth governments have a range of programs and concessions in place to assist with cost of living pressures. These include ACT public housing rental rebates, utilities concessions, and, of course, the entire raft of commonwealth welfare programs and family tax benefits. While it is straightforward to assess the impact of the ACT concessions, tracking that wide range of commonwealth programs is obviously a more difficult task. These programs, though, provide concrete assistance to eligible families and households.

To address these issues in the statement as proposed, I have moved the amendment circulated to the Financial Management (Cost of Living) Amendment Bill. The amendment requires that the budget papers include a statement about the effect on an ACT household for the financial year of territory taxes and fees that have a direct effect on the household and, importantly, territory concessions that offset these charges.

The statement proposed under the government amendment includes information on general rates, the fire and emergency services levy, utility fees, motor vehicle registration and driving licences, and public transport costs. These all impact directly on households.

I am sure members would agree that public transport is an important service with fares impacting on the household budget. This is particularly the case if there are children and young people attending school or tertiary education within the household. The shadow treasurer has indicated the statement will evolve over time, and the government does, indeed, agree with this. A less prescriptive approach would provide the flexibility to adjust the statement to include any further taxes and fees that impact directly on a household at some point in the future.

The amendment will build on existing financial reporting arrangements and provide verifiable information to the community. It is certainly evident from the amendment

I have moved today that the government is not shying away from reporting on the cost of and changes to taxes in the territory. Ironically, the opposition has recognised the need to present reasonable information on the concessions and assistance available to households. However, its bill actually does not reflect this view.

In developing its amendment, the government has been guided by models used in other jurisdictions, as I have indicated in my earlier comments on the bill. The approach proposed through the government's amendment is, indeed, in keeping with the approach adopted in Western Australia. This makes sense, as it draws on the experience of a jurisdiction that has been preparing such a statement for some time. The government's statement will provide transparent information on the characteristics of the household used in the model and, indeed, its consumption patterns.

I commend the government amendment to the Assembly. It is a worthwhile improvement on the private member's bill.

MS HUNTER (Ginninderra—Parliamentary Leader, ACT Greens) (10.52): The Greens will be supporting the government amendment because we believe it will provide an increased level of useful information and accuracy in the new statement to be included in the budget papers. Simply listing the various changes in taxes and charges will do little to illustrate the real impact on Canberrans. We agree that we should be focused on the direct impacts and recognise that assessing indirect impacts is very difficult and will not provide a particularly effective way of helping us to develop a targeted response to address cost of living pressures for those in our community who are doing it tough.

I make the observation that the cost of living issue is easily distorted, and just being able to reel off a list of costs does little to illustrate the impact they are having or effective ways we can target concessions to ensure that those who benefit from the concessions are those who most need them. Providing a contextualised picture of the impact of government charges is the more meaningful approach, and that is why the Greens will be supporting the proposed amendment. It is important that, as representatives of the ACT community, we are accurate in statements we make in regard to cost of living issues.

There are many households who are doing it tough out there—about one in 10 people in the community—and the Greens recognise that there are many that need targeted assistance to assist them with their household costs, to keep shelter over their heads, to keep food on the table. The targeted assistance strategy panel, which was put together to look at the sorts of assistance and concessions needed by many in our community, recently released its targeted assistance strategy. It included a number of very useful recommendations. The panel's remit was to focus on those who sit just above the range or those people who receive a range of government concessions but who are not in receipt of direct government assistance.

For a long time now the Greens have focused on this group as well as the needs of those who receive the often inadequate government pensions and benefits. We have proposed over time a range of initiatives to improve things like household energy

efficiency in order to lower the utilities bills that people receive as well as providing flexible payment options for fines. This was something recommended by the panel; it was one of the recommendations in the strategy released within the last week or fortnight. We have followed this through. We already have legislation on the table about flexible payment options for fines. That is Ms Bresnan's bill, and we will be debating that bill next week.

One observation I make about the government amendment is that it refers to an ACT household. We think this provides a more holistic picture of the impacts of taxes and charges. Our view is that a range of scenarios and different household types should be included in the new statement. Certainly the Legislation Act allows for the multiple interpretation, and I expect this is what we will see in the budget papers. I also say that we should be focused on the direct impacts rather than incidental impacts. This is something quite new, as Mr Barr also pointed out. So if we start with those direct impacts, over time, we can evolve the statement to be an even more fulsome picture of what is happening and the impact of taxes and charges.

I note that the supplementary explanatory statement and Mr Smyth's own comments recognise that the inclusion in the budget papers of the impacts of taxes and charges will be an evolving task. The Greens certainly agree with this and look forward to being able to use the extra information to inform initiatives and measures that will provide direct assistance to those who are struggling in our community and to really look at the impact of any changes to the way taxes and charges are levied and, therefore, what we can do to ensure that we support those households who need our assistance.

MR SESELJA (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (10.57): The opposition will not be supporting this amendment. I think that what we are going to get out of this bill today will be an improvement on what we have at the moment. But as usual, the Labor Party and the Greens are resisting giving the full story and are resisting genuinely committing to trying to make people's cost of living in the ACT better, to lower the cost of living for the people of the ACT. So this amendment, which has been circulated by Mr Barr and moved by Mr Barr, is really about trying to limit this statement. As I say, whilst what we will get through will be better than what we have at the moment, which is where the government has been silent on the cost of living, I would make the point again that the government did not need a piece of legislation to do this. The reason we have had to introduce a piece of legislation was that the government thought it was a bad idea to have a cost of living statement.

The Labor Party in the ACT has shown their disdain for families and their cost of living pressures time and again. I think that their limiting of the scope of this legislation is another way in which they are going to do that. They do not want to talk about all of the issues, all of the ways that the budget and government policy affects Canberrans' cost of living. And the reason they do not want to talk about that is that no-one has placed more burdens on Canberra families than ACT Labor and their Green partners. Whether it is through the massive increase in rates, whether it is in the massive increase in electricity as a result of some of their schemes, whether it is in relation to the massive increase in the cost of water, whether it is the massive increase in taxes on property, whether it is how we have seen rents go through the roof, in

large part through government policies in relation to planning, in relation to taxation and in relation to infrastructure, if there is one defining legacy of the Labor Party in Canberra and of the Labor-Greens alliance, it is that they have made it harder for families to pay their bills.

That is the thing that they will be most remembered for, and we see it playing out now at a national level and at a local level. The reality is that as bad as this federal Labor government is, and they are a bad government, and as much as they have placed additional cost burdens on families right across the nation, there is no-one who has done it more than this ACT Labor government. They have been the ones who have pushed the tax per capita up well above inflation, well above wage inflation. So Canberra families are being forced to pay more and more for government services, they are being forced to pay more and more for utilities, for property, for rents, as a result of government policies. And it is to their eternal shame that they do not seem to care about it.

Instead of the government hearing a good idea, which is that you should be open and transparent about cost of living, that you should actually put it at the forefront of your budget and just do it, we have now had to come back with legislation to direct the government to do it. Let us face it, they are not supporting it because they care about Canberra families. We have seen Mr Barr's views when it comes to things like housing. He is happy with the two-class Canberra that he has created and that Simon Corbell and Katy Gallagher have created. They have created a two-class Canberra when it comes to housing.

We hear from Mr Barr when there are debates in this place, "Wages have gone up." Yes, they have, but wages have not gone up anywhere near as much as the cost of utilities, the cost of rent, the cost of all of the things that people need. He tries to say: "Your wages have gone up. So you should be able to suck up the 130 per cent increase in your rates since Labor came to office." Not many people in Canberra would have seen their wages go up by 130 per cent in that time. It would be the exception. There may be some, there will be some, but that is not going to be most families. Most families will have seen their wages go up by maybe 30 or 40 per cent over that decade, and that is what the wage price index has told us, whereas the things that they really need—water, electricity, a home, a roof over their head, their school fees, rates which they have to pay and other government taxes which they have to pay—have gone up much higher than that.

The Canberra Liberals are pleased that we are going to get some progress but it is frustrating and it is indicative of this government and the Labor Party and the Greens' approach to cost of living that they are doing all they can to thwart it from being as effective as it should be. They are narrowing it as much as possible. I think what we have here today are small steps. And well done to Mr Smyth for pushing this issue forward when the government would not, when the government refused.

As I say, I think the only reason they have even supported it in principle is the politics. They realise that their heartless attitude to Canberrans, their "tax them until they bleed" attitude, is hurting them in the community, as it should. Unlike the Labor Party, we do not think that Canberrans are mugs. Unlike the Labor Party, we believe that

Canberrans understand their household bills and that Jon Stanhope or Katy Gallagher or Andrew Barr telling them that they are doing well, telling them that they have never had it so good, telling them that Canberra is really an affordable place for them to be, does not make it so.

When they see their household budgets getting tighter, when they see the prices of everything that they need going up well above their ability to pay—and they see this government doing it through their policies, directly through their taxes and charges; the people of the ACT are not stupid—they see through a government that tries to tell them that they should just be grateful for what they are getting from their government. They see through the spin from Labor which says, “No, you are actually doing really well.” Talk to the families in the suburbs about whether or not they are doing better than they were five years ago or 10 years ago. And if you look at their costs, and the statistics bear this out, when it comes to the things they need they are paying much more, and they have gone up much higher than their ability to pay.

In closing, I commend Mr Smyth again. This is something that the Canberra Liberals are genuinely committed to, not just in election years, not just when the polls say that cost of living is something you should be talking about. But we will keep pushing. We have made some steps here. I think it is disappointing that the Labor Party and the Greens are doing their very best to limit the effectiveness of it.

We believe that it will have some merit, not nearly as much merit as it would have if there had been some good faith in terms of this issue, if there had been a genuine desire to look after families, a genuine desire to say to the community: “We cannot fix everything when it comes to your cost of living but we will do whatever we can. We will manage the government. We will put forward laws and regulations and taxes, charges and policies which always are seeking to give you that little bit more, to give you a little of your own money back, to take a little of the pressure off your household budget.” That is what a good government would do. That is what a government that was connected to its community would do. We see no sign of it from this government and, in fact, this amendment is a reflection that they will do the absolute minimum when it comes to cost of living, even to the extent of the absolute minimum when it comes to making a statement in the budget. But I again commend Mr Smyth for his efforts in getting this important legislation through.

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (11.06): It is interesting that we are now having a debate about direct or indirect taxes or, as Ms Hunter said, direct and incidental taxes. One of the taxes that Mr Barr seeks not to include in this list is the utilities tax. Yet if you go to your Telstra bill or some of the other utilities bills, what is listed there? The utilities tax. They hand it directly on to the household.

As a treasurer and as a minister in a government that has allowed the cost of living to come under such pressure in the ACT, I would want to seek to limit the taxation that is covered by this amendment. I would want to seek that because I would not want to be part of a government which has got such a bad reputation and record as the Gallagher government because of the pressure they have put on costs of living. I would seek to minimise it as much as I could.

For the Greens, it is a different case. I would have thought the Greens wanted transparency, openness and understanding, but apparently not. And the shame of it is that obviously nobody in the Greens or the Labor Party has read the *Canberra Times* article yesterday headed “Gallagher concedes tax hurting”. It is talking about housing taxes, property taxes, land taxes. The first paragraph says:

Chief Minister Katy Gallagher has conceded that territory’s tax regime could be hurting housing affordability in Canberra.

One of the biggest costs to households is the cost of the roof over their head, whether they are paying it off or whether they are renting it. And to exclude all those taxes and say they do not have any effect or a direct effect on you is to not understand what people in the ACT are going through. If the Greens and the Labor Party are that out of touch, then I think people come to understand that they stand for nothing but themselves. The article goes on, and it has the Chief Minister saying:

The other issue is tax and how we can look at our tax system and how there can be incentives to either provide low-cost rentals or low-cost housing.

I think some of the issues at the moment with our land tax and our stamp duty works against that kind of result.

There is an admission from the Chief Minister that their tax regime makes it harder for people in the ACT, that it does affect the cost of living. But of course, the Treasurer wants to exclude those taxes from this statement, and that is a shame. But it does go to the nature of the minister and it does go to the nature of the government.

Mr Barr criticised me for apparently having more detail in the explanatory statement than in the tax. That is always the case. That is why it is an explanatory statement. You do not put the speech into the black-letter law. You put the law there and if you need an interpretation of the law you come back to the member’s speech and to the explanatory statement to find out what was meant to be included and what was not.

I thought I was actually making it easy for the Treasurer by leaving it as a broad statement. He obviously does not understand. He thinks it is too hard. If he listened to the speech yesterday on the effects of the carbon tax, the biggest energy producer in WA are going to cop the carbon tax. But they are not paying it. They are just passing it straight on to the consumer. The head of Verve said, “This is a tax that will go on the bills.” So not to take into account where the tax is clearly passed on is to be in cloud-cuckoo-land in regard to what effect your tax regime has on ordinary people.

Of course, neither the Greens nor the Labor Party wanted this. Mr Hanson and I tried to get it into last year’s estimates report but the Greens and the Labor Party did not want it in the report. So it is in some of the dissenting comments that we made. We had a motion last year and the government agreed to vote against it. But Mr Seselja is right when he says the only reason they are doing this is that they know that the cost of living is a real issue for people in the ACT and they are now late to the game. The Canberra Liberals and Mr Seselja have been talking about the cost of living for the last 2½ to three years, but the government has been in denial that whole time, aided and abetted by the Greens.

We have an amendment, which has been circulated, which simply takes out the word “direct”. Given the powers of the Clerk to correct the grammar and spelling as required, it would then read “Territory taxes and fees that have an effect on the household”. I would ask the Greens to consider this amendment. I think it is quite clear, when you get your utilities bill, “ACT government utilities tax” is listed there. The taxpayer is paying that. Under Mr Barr’s definition, that will not be caught. We know why it will not be caught, because it makes their position worse.

The largest single cost to households in the ACT, on average, is housing. I think it is appropriate that housing taxes are included in this statement and it is ridiculous to say, “We cannot work it out because it is an indirect tax.” People pay those taxes. Somebody is paying those taxes and it must be possible to calculate it if you actually have a commitment to making a fair dinkum statement about the cost of living. But I suspect this Treasurer and this government are not fair dinkum about this because they have opposed it, kicking and screaming, until such time—and I suspect Mr Seselja is right—as they got some polling that said people are worried about cost of living. When you see the latest CommSec report, it says that the disparity between wage growth and CPI growth, the cost of living growth, is largest in the ACT and South Australia. In real terms, people are going backwards under this government.

I can see where Mr Barr is coming from. I am sure he would love to hide it, but the reality is that he cannot. People out there know. We know that all the fees and charges have gone up, whether it be electricity, whether it be water, whether it be rates, whether it be the federal taxes that have come onboard or are coming onboard. People are finding it tough out there. People find it difficult to pay their bills. If you are one of the less well-off members of the community, in many cases you are even finding it hard to get a roof over the head of you and your family, particularly your kids. But apparently that is not to be included because it exposes the government too much for the way that they have behaved over the last 11 years.

This bill is a genuine attempt to enable people to understand what the effect of the government’s budget is. Mr Barr says the details are already in the budget. You would have to read the pages and pages of analysis of taxes in budget paper 3, which most people could not find let alone read. What this bill provides is that there is a single statement where people can go and say, “Yes, we understand that it has got to be averaged out but for an average household in the ACT—

Mr Coe: Why don’t they prepare budget fact sheets that are easy to read?

MR SMTYH: That is a point. Why not prepare budget fact sheets? There used to be budget fact sheets years ago but they went by the by as well because you do not want to explain what you are doing to people. It would be relatively easy to include these taxes so that people get a true understanding of what it is that their government, in their budget, is doing to them. And if you are proud of your budget, if you believe in your budget and you believe that the budget is a fair thing, then of course you would take that step. But we know that they know they are in trouble. We all know that 11 years of Labor government has put enormous pressure on Canberra households. We know that they are the highest taxing government in the history of the territory. We

know the minister has been sitting on a tax review for four months. Apparently it will come out next week, contradicting what the Chief Minister said at the Property Institute, that it would come out and be included in the budget. So they are flip-flopping again on every issue.

But the problem for ordinary taxpayers is that at the end of the day they pay these taxes. These taxes come out of their wallets. The more tax they pay, the less discretionary income they have to spend on themselves and their families, in some cases to buy the small niceties of life, which for some families might be Foxtel—given that we have got two classes now, those that can afford Foxtel and those that should not have it, according to the Chief Minister.

But this amendment today should be tempered by the removal of the word “direct”. I have left it broad. I could have been more definitive in what I put in the black-letter law. As I said in my speech, this will evolve, and it should evolve. But we should not start from a position that locks out some of the most devastating taxes on some households. They should be included. They can be included. It would be relatively easy to include them but if the minister and the Greens do not want to include them in this budget, the Canberra Liberals will do it in the next budget after the election.

So it is important that the word “direct” comes out. It is important that all taxes that can be attributed to households are included and it is important that my amendment to Mr Barr’s amendment does get up today.

I move amendment No 1 circulated in my name [*see schedule 2 at page 1896*].

MR BARR (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism, Sport and Recreation) (11.16): The government will not be supporting the amendment.

MR SESELJA (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (11.16): I think we had it there again from Mr Barr—the disdain that they show for the real cost of living pressures on Canberra families. He will not even say why he will not support this amendment which would simply ensure that both the direct and indirect taxes and charges are included. What is it that this government has to hide? I think we are seeing, again, the character of this government and the care and concern this government has for Canberra families and their cost of living pressures. Why not just support this amendment? If you are not going to support it, why don’t you get up and say why not? Why don’t you explain yourself and actually debate the issue?

Mr Barr has sought to limit this. First we had a motion which said, “Do it,” and the Labor Party and the Greens did not support it. That would have been the simplest way to do it. With goodwill we would already have it. It would have been there in last year’s budget and it certainly would be there in this year’s budget. But what we see again from the government, the Labor Party in this place, is that they are saying: “We’re going to limit it. We’re not going to tell you the full facts. We’re not going to tell you the bits we don’t want you to know about. We’re not going to tell you about all those other ways.”

In fact many of the indirect taxes are the most important. The real relevance of a statement like this is that it goes to all of the cost pressures that are caused by the government and indirect taxes are going to be a very important part of that. So by voting against this amendment the Labor Party is saying: "We don't care about indirect taxes. You don't need to know. We don't need to be open about this. You will just have to dig through and find out, and when you see it on your bills, there you go. You will have it and you can add it up yourself."

The opposition in this place will continue to put out our own statement which looks at the real cost impact on Canberra families. And it does not make for good reading because this government have hit the people of Canberra with massive increases in their rates and massive increases in water. They have upped electricity prices far more than they otherwise would have because of their policies. They have pushed up rents through their policies. They have added massive tax burdens on property, including with their lease variation charge, which will be over \$50,000 per unit very soon. I guess the question will be: is that going to be considered a direct or an indirect tax? When they tax units, are they going to say that is not a tax on a household?

It will make it, it seems, what the government wants to make it—a less relevant document than it would be. It will have some merit. We will see some improvement. But the government and the Greens are doing all they can to limit that. They are doing all they can to hide the true state of affairs and the true impact on family budgets as a result of the government's budgets and as a result of the government's policies.

Remember what the other purpose behind such a statement is. The other purpose behind the statement is to force a government to put cost of living front and centre when they are developing their budget. When they are developing their budget they should be looking at what are the core services that need to be delivered and how to keep the costs down for Canberra families. They should be the two main questions a government ask themselves in framing a budget. We know they have not been asking themselves that because they have allowed costs to get out of control. They have pushed taxes up and up. So this is about saying to a government, "You will put it front and centre because there is an accountability measure in your budget."

This amendment would improve Mr Barr's own amendment. Mr Barr's amendment is all about limiting the information flow. It is all about less information going to the community about their cost of living. So the amendment Mr Smyth has moved should be supported. It would make a bad amendment from Mr Barr better. It would mean that it would not be as restrictive and it would give Canberrans some honesty. It would give Canberrans the truth rather than what the government plans to give them, which is a sanitised version of the truth, and which is part of the truth when it comes to cost of living.

Again, I would just make the point that it shows their attitude to families in Canberra who are doing it tough. When they go out there and trumpet this or that, they should actually be held to account. As I said earlier, Canberrans are smarter than this government. They are much smarter than this government gives them credit for. They can see through the spin and they know that the Labor Party and their Greens alliance

partners have made it harder for families to pay the bills. They have made it harder for families to get by. I think it is particularly disappointing that they are doing all they can to limit the effectiveness of this bill. That is why Mr Smyth's amendment should be supported.

MS HUNTER (Ginninderra—Parliamentary Leader, ACT Greens) (11.22): As I said in my speech, we think that we should be starting with those direct taxes and see how it can evolve over time. This is what Mr Smyth did have in his explanatory statement. We need to start with those impacts that are known impacts. When you start to talk about those indirect taxes and charges it can be quite difficult. For example we cannot tell what proportion of land tax is passed on to renters. With the lease variation charge what we saw was that when it was charged at a flat rate on the multidevelopments we did not see a drop in the prices of what those units sold for. We did not see a drop in the cost of rent for renters who were living in those properties.

This is a complicated thing. It is not just a simple, straightforward exercise. It is a complicated thing. We do need to be looking at it over time. We are open to including this in the future but let us start with something that is solid and then look at the methodology and how you would put that into the statement.

As I said in my speech earlier, it is nonsense that the Greens are not concerned about those who are doing it tough. We are. We have been the ones talking about those on pensions and benefits. We have been the ones who have recognised there is a group who sit just above that concessions threshold who really are doing it tough in so many ways. So what have we done? We have come in here and put on the table legislation to make it more flexible to pay off fines. That will be of real benefit to many of those individuals and families.

We have come into this place, we have lobbied and pushed and we have got greater energy concessions. It was falling behind; it was not indexed. It is now indexed and it is assisting in a real, direct way. It is assisting those who are finding it hard to pay their utility bills. We have been in this place and we have pushed and we have got greater energy efficiency in our public housing stock. That will now be extended to private housing as well. That is a real, direct benefit that will be realised by many individuals and families out there. So we have been in here doing the real work, putting in place those things that need to happen.

Let us be very clear. Just because at this point in time the indirect stuff is not included in the statement it does not mean that you do not stop debating the merits. It does not mean that you stop looking at and analysing whether what is being proposed in a budget is a good thing, a fair thing or a detrimental thing to many people. Of course we are still going to do that. The statement is not going to change that. I would expect that all of us will be in here raising those issues during estimates and also during the debate on the budget.

As I said, we will be supporting what is before us with the direct impacts. We do expect, as I said in my speech, that this will be something that evolves over time. But it is not just a simple exercise. It does require a level of analysis and we are going to have to make sure we get that right. We do not want to put out inaccurate statements

on cost of living. We need to get it right because we need to see, where things do impact on certain parts of our community, how we can ameliorate those impacts, whether it be through concessions, whether it be through greater provision or enhancement of particular programs. That is what we should be focused on. Let us do this, let us get it right and then let us look at how we might move forward with it.

MRS DUNNE (Ginninderra) (11.27): I think we should start where Ms Hunter left off: let us get it right. And we could get it right here today by the simple deletion of the word “direct”. Mr Assistant Speaker, when you look at the explanatory material that Mr Barr has provided here today but could not defend in the face of Mr Smyth’s amendment, you see that there are a large number of taxes and that the government has essentially created a list of what it considers to be direct taxes that have a direct impact on families. Now we have a situation where he has said that if this passes and this explanatory material obtains the force of extrinsic material we can only look at these things because Ms Hunter and he are uncomfortable about the implications that actually account for the impact of conveyancing duty.

In what sense is conveyancing duty not a direct tax upon families? Every time a family buys and sells a house, they pay a tax which is called conveyancing duty. There are other people who pay that tax as well and every time—

Mr Barr interjecting—

MRS DUNNE: That is really funny. Conveyancing duty is funny to Mr Barr. Every time someone pays a conveyancing duty, some of that is directly impacted by families. It is a duty that is directly on families when they buy and sell the family house. And when a business buys and sells, the same thing happens. If they impose it, they incur a cost and that cost is passed on or absorbed by them. Either way it is direct or indirect; in this case it is both a direct and an indirect tax on families.

Mr Barr could not even take the time or have the courtesy, or he does not have a substantive reason for opposing Mr Smyth’s amendment. He does not have a substantive reason. He just stood up and said, “We’re not going to support it.” He could not give the families of the ACT, the mothers and fathers of the ACT, a reason why he thinks that a conveyancing tax is an indirect tax and therefore not necessary to be accounted for in this way.

Land tax impacts directly on families through rents. In a whole way it does impact. But Mr Barr could not do the people of the ACT the courtesy of telling them why he thinks these should not be subjected to the same rigours as their selected list of direct taxes.

We then get to the change of lease charges and the impact that will have on things like childcare centres. If you charge \$10,000 per place for a lease variation charge for a childcare centre, that directly impacts on the cost of providing childcare and it will be passed on to every family who has children in childcare in that centre. That is a tax which directly impacts on the cost of living of Canberra families.

But Andrew Barr could not do this community the courtesy of explaining his opposition to Mr Smyth's amendment. When we talk about opposition for opposition's sake we saw it there, because all he could do was say no.

Mr Barr interjecting—

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Hargreaves): Minister, she does not need any help.

MRS DUNNE: All Mr Barr can do is sit there and chortle and be derisive about the impacts that his policies have on mums and dads in Canberra. He does not get it and he does not care. He does not even have the courtesy to explain to families why he will not support Mr Smyth's amendment.

Question put:

That **Mr Smyth's** amendment to **Mr Barr's** amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 5		Noes 10	
Mr Coe	Mr Smyth	Mr Barr	Mr Hargreaves
Mrs Dunne		Dr Bourke	Ms Hunter
Mr Hanson		Ms Bresnan	Ms Le Couteur
Mr Seselja		Ms Burch	Ms Porter
		Mr Corbell	Mr Rattenbury

Question so resolved in the negative.

Question put:

That **Mr Barr's** amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 10		Noes 5	
Mr Barr	Mr Hargreaves	Mr Coe	Mr Smyth
Dr Bourke	Ms Hunter	Mrs Dunne	
Ms Bresnan	Ms Le Couteur	Mr Hanson	
Ms Burch	Ms Porter	Mr Seselja	
Mr Corbell	Mr Rattenbury		

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Remainder of bill as a whole, as amended, agreed to.

Bill, as amended, agreed to.

Business—development

MS PORTER (Ginninderra) (11.37): I move:

That this Assembly notes:

- (1) the Government released the Business Development Strategy (BDS) on 30 April 2012 following extensive consultation with the business community;
- (2) this strategy is focussed on ensuring jobs growth, economic growth and diversification of the Canberra economy;
- (3) the BDS has three strategic imperatives—creating the right business environment; supporting business investment and accelerating business innovation;
- (4) that under each of these themes, key actions the Government commits to take include:
 - (a) establishing a red tape reduction panel;
 - (b) payroll tax reform;
 - (c) better government compliance support;
 - (d) advice and business mentoring;
 - (e) acknowledging local small to medium sized enterprises in procurement decisions;
 - (f) reinvigorating the branding of Canberra;
 - (g) establishing an investment facilitation function within government;
 - (h) support for indigenous enterprise development;
 - (i) expanding grants programs;
 - (j) specific supports for clean tech development;
 - (k) investing in National Information Communication Technology Australia;
and
 - (l) establishing the My Digital City Innovation Prize;
- (5) this strategy is important to address some of the short-term and medium-term challenges that our economy will face; and
- (6) this strategy represents a fundamentally positive view of the ACT economy and business community, and seeks to promote its strengths rather than denigrate its performance and thereby damage confidence.

Mr Assistant Speaker, I think you would agree this motion is of the utmost importance for the ACT. An economy that is performing strongly is essential to the wellbeing—financially, socially and environmentally—of our community. There is no doubt that the economic fundamentals of the ACT are sound. We have the country's lowest unemployment rate, healthy business formation rates, solid export growth, an AAA credit rating and strong population growth. We have a vibrant and well-educated community and a dynamic and well-connected private sector. And although the federal government is contracting spending somewhat, the commonwealth remains a significant driver of the ACT economy and, indeed, a significant purchaser of the products and services of our private sector economy.

The ACT government is a strong and active supporter of the private sector. Across three terms of government we have worked collaboratively with the private sector and its peak organisations to support business development and build the capabilities for future growth. We are seeing a wealth of evidence that this approach is working in the stories of achievement of Canberra businesses—companies like Aspen Medical, Winlab Systems, the centre for customs and excise, QuintessenceLabs, Stratsec, Australian Scientific Instruments, Sentinel, CEA Technologies, Kord Defence, Smartward, ePASA, Automap, Intelledox, and so the list goes on.

Unlike those opposite, who will take any and every chance to talk down Canberra and denigrate this great city, Labor will continue to support our burgeoning businesses. Each time those opposite talk down Canberra for nothing more than to score cheap political points, they harm confidence and they harm our economy. This harm to our economy is choking off the willingness and confidence of firms and households to spend, invest and hire.

Talk is, of course, cheap. What counts more is action. What is conspicuous is the lack of action from those opposite on anything resembling a policy to support our business community. Labor, on the other hand, is actually getting on with the job, which is why my colleague Mr Barr issued the business development strategy earlier this week.

The Labor government believes in working closely with the private sector to chart new directions and explore new opportunities. Programs like Canberra BusinessPoint, the Lighthouse innovation and commercialisation centre, ANU Connect Adventures, the Canberra Business Development Fund, ScreenACT, InnovationConnect and TradeConnect are all based on a partnership model of support and development. We are open to embracing new ideas. We believe in market-based initiatives and supporting our innovators and entrepreneurs who create the firms and technology of tomorrow.

This strategy covers a range of linked initiatives that will support the growth of our private sector, grow our economy and create jobs. The strategy lays these initiatives out under three policy themes: creating the right business environment, supporting business investment and accelerating business innovation. Running a business is not easy. Anyone that has been involved will tell you that. I have had family experience in this, and this government recognises that fact. So to make doing business easier, we will lower taxes, cut red tape, make it simpler and quicker to deal with government and regulations and provide advice and mentoring for businesses who need it.

In particular, the budget this government will announce will cut payroll tax. This will give the ACT one of Australia's most competitive payroll tax regimes and put money back in the pockets of local businesses. The government will also create a red tape reduction task force to get rid of regulations that do not work or do not make sense, introduce new evaluation criteria for all goods and services tenders that put a weighting against whether the tenderer is a local small or medium sized enterprise and/or their involvement with local businesses, establish a government navigator program to make it easy for small and medium sized enterprises to connect with expertise inside government, and progress our commitments with the commonwealth under the business online service—known as BOS—to establish a single entry point for business interactions with government to make dealing with governments simpler and easier.

It is not just locally where we need to help out. We are reaching out beyond our borders to encourage investment here in the territory. We are going to rethink the Canberra brand. While “See yourself in Canberra” has served us well, we need to explore a more inclusive brand that represents all of what Canberra stands for. Not only are we a great tourist destination; we are also a great regional inland city, a great place to do business, a great place to study and a great place in which to invest.

Beyond the message and the outreach we will provide professional investment facilitation support by creating a dedicated function within the Economic Development Directorate to pursue investment opportunities. Innovation is the foundation of economic growth and competitiveness. The ACT government has been working hard for a number of years to position Canberra as a focal point for business innovation. We will continue to build on this effort to support those who take risks and, in doing so, create the firms and the jobs of tomorrow.

To outline just a few of our initiatives, we will expand the highly successful innovation connect program to further support early stage business innovation and assist entrepreneurs to commercialise and create value from innovations. We are providing new funds for clean technology and sustainability oriented companies and new funding for major proposals on new innovation infrastructure.

We will create the global connect program to act as a single portal for the various trade development activities supported by government. As the Chief Minister announced in February, the government will provide up to \$12 million over four years for the Canberra Research Laboratory of NICTA, Australia's information and communication technology centre of excellence. We will create the my digital city innovation prize to encourage tertiary students and all interested Canberrans in the development of new digital government services.

This Labor government also has a deep interest in social enterprise and accordingly we will provide new support initiatives in conjunction with the elected body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to start and grow their own businesses. This will build on the highly successful women and micro credit program delivered through the Lighthouse innovation and commercialisation centre.

The government has worked closely with leaders and key stakeholders of the Canberra business community in putting this strategy together. During the consultation process, which took place over a number of months, recommendations were made to government in multiple submissions and the government has listened. The strategy has been warmly welcomed by the Canberra business community. The CEO of the Canberra Business Council, Ms Chris Faulks, was reported in the *Canberra Times* early this week as saying that the ACT government's latest business strategy shows leadership. Ms Faulks was also reported by the ABC as saying that the council is very supportive of the initiatives announced and, by the *CityNews*, that the overall thrust of this strategy is welcomed by the council.

The Canberra Business Council is not the only industry represented body that has supported the strategy. Dr Chris Peters, the Chief Executive of the ACT and Region Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the 2012 Canberra citizen of the year, told the ABC that the strategy will make a big difference for small and medium sized businesses in the ACT.

Canberra has a strong foundation upon which to build and this government has played an important and active role in establishing that foundation. The business development strategy creates an important pathway to building this work and the basis for collaborative effort with the ACT private sector. It is a strategy that responds to both issues and emerging opportunities. The message I hope it leaves with the private sector is one of partnership, of collaborative effort, and one of shared confidence in our future. It is about optimism and confidence—so at odds with the negatives and point scoring we hear daily from those opposite. As this motion indicates, it represents a fundamentally positive view of the ACT economy and business community—something I believe all in this Assembly should embrace.

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (11.47): This is a bet come true. When this announcement was made on Monday, I said to colleagues and staff, "Gee, I bet Mary Porter will move a motion on Wednesday saying how good the government is."

But no motion in this place will make up for 11 years of neglect. No motion in this place will make up for 11 years of lost opportunities or delayed opportunities and no motion in this place or a strategy dropped six months before the election will change a great deal, because this is a government that has neglected business for the last 11 years.

Ms Porter quotes Ms Faulks but she forgot to read out the important quote from Ms Faulks. Canberra Business Council CEO Chris Faulks said she was "looking forward to seeing more detail". It is like so much that this government does: a glossy document, good printing, a nice launch, but no detail. There is nothing particularly new in this document. It is a rebadge. It is a rename. It is a recycle of policies that have come before and, in many cases, were abandoned by this government when they came to office—because they have no real commitment to business in the ACT and they have no real commitment to diversifying the ACT economy. If they had, we would not have seen the decline in the numbers of people employed in the private sector that we have seen in the last decade.

When this government came to office, 60 per cent of people in the ACT were employed in the private sector. It is now fifty-fifty. The private sector has not grown under this lot because they are not committed to the private sector. Being committed to the private sector does not have to be to the detriment of the public sector: you can be committed to both. But that is something that those opposite find impossible to do. You have only got to go back through the records and the quotes of Mr Stanhope and Ms Gallagher. She said, "We will always be a government town." That is not the case. Government may be the biggest employer, but it does not have to be the only thing that happens in this city.

Ms Porter read out a list of companies that have grown in the ACT—started here and gone on to do great things. But the majority of the people she read out on that list got grants from a former Liberal government, to set up, start up, develop product or get overseas—because we were committed. So Ms Porter should check her facts before she claims credit. It is quite interesting the number of firms that we assisted. Indeed the Follett government before us had programs as well; programs that came to an end in 2006 when the poisonous Costello review, which is still yet to be released, said to the government, "You don't need business programs"—something the current minister voted for and, in cabinet solidarity, still supports because he will not release the Costello report.

Let us find out what the Costello report said. The Costello review found that the territory's small size and narrow economic base limited the government's capacity to seriously influence and assist business activity and economic opportunities: "Don't bother." And what did the government do? They took that to heart and they gutted business assistance and business policy in the ACT and the industry section in the department. They slashed resources from in the order of \$22 million in 2005-06 to \$17.7 million in 2006-07 and to \$12 million in 2008-09—a reduction of \$10 million from a base of \$22 million or just under a reduction of 50 per cent in resources for industry development. That is the history of the Labor government, that is the history of the Greens-Labor alliance and that is the proof of the decade of neglect that this government, aided and abetted by the Greens, supported and foisted on this community, denying them the opportunities that were there.

Much is made of this promise apparently that they will make some changes to payroll tax. Isn't that interesting? What was the first action of the incoming Labor government in 2002? It was to stop the increase in the payroll tax threshold, trap more businesses, condemn more businesses, to the burden of a tax that of course they pass on to the community, contributing to the cost of living. That is the record of the Labor government, Ms Porter—something that you ignore, something that all those opposite constantly forget. Indeed the Carnell Liberal government had announced that it would increase the payroll tax threshold by stages. And just before the 2002-03 budget was announced, where the threshold would have gone to \$1.5 million, what did the government do? It said no.

We all know Mr Barr's record on that. He sees anything that goes to business as business welfare: "You can't do that; it's business welfare. You can't have this; it's business welfare. Business should do this on their own; otherwise it is business

welfare.” We note the softening in the tone, and I think the business community genuinely welcome the softening of the tone, because they have had so little to welcome in the last 11 years. There has been nothing to celebrate really in terms of business support from this government over the past decade. The record is dreadful and it is exacerbated by the Greens.

I want to use one example. Before the 2008 election a firm called Spark Solo came to all of the parties and said, “We want to be part of this new clean, green economy that you talk about.” The government would give them no assistance because it had gutted the business program so badly in 2006 that there was not a program it could use to offer them any assistance at all to start up. The Greens in their negotiations with us in 2008 said, “Would you support Spark Solo?” We said yes we would. I assume they made the same request of the government. And what has happened in the last four years? Nothing in that regard.

I note Ms Le Couteur is going to move an amendment and I will speak to that amendment in some detail later on. The opportunities have been there, but in the last three years and six months nothing has happened. So we get the pat motion from Ms Porter. We understand how this is played: blame those opposite for everything that is wrong; take the credit for anything that you can grab. But nobody is fooled. Nobody is fooled by this document.

Suddenly we have got a government that wants to talk about growth diversification and jobs. Diversification: the word that Mr Barr uses only to ridicule me—because I talk about it at every opportunity I have, because there is so much potential in this place. We saw the private sector grow from 1995 to 2001 as we sought opportunities to move forward and make up for the deficiencies of various federal governments, whether they were Liberal or Labor, that had taken jobs out of the ACT. We grew the private sector. What we have seen is a decline under this crowd as a percentage make-up of jobs in the ACT, and that is a shame. That is an absolute shame. In 2001-02 there were 103,000 private sector jobs in the ACT. In 2002-03 it dropped to 100,000 jobs. It has gone up and down and you can see some of the effect in 2006-07 and 2007-08 where it had climbed up to 106,000. In 2007-08 it went to 105,000. In 2008-09 it dropped to 101,000, in 2009-10 it got up to 104,000 and in 2010-11 it dropped to 99,700.

So what is Andrew Barr’s government’s record of achievement in fostering private sector growth in the ACT? It went backwards, both as a percentage and in real terms. This is all collated from ABS data. In 2001-02 103,000 people worked in the private sector in the ACT. In 2010-11 it was down to 99,700. With a decade of population growth included there, this government managed to go backwards. They have shrunk the private sector.

That is the legacy of Andrew Barr and his colleagues, and no amount of glossy documents and no amount of motions in the Assembly will undo their record. This is the government that got a report in 2008 on how to have a clean, green economy. I forget what it was called; I think it was the sustainable economy or green economy or clean economy. It has had so many names now. But what it has not had is the action that it required and the support of the government. And support is not necessarily financial support; it is moral support, it is leadership, it is commitment.

What is the sterling effort in Mr Barr's document? "We are going to have a committee to review the legislation that we put in place that nobbled business over the last 10 years. We are going to review the legislation we put in that slowed the ACT." The funny thing is that there was such a committee in 2001. What did the government do? It got rid of that as well. We are reminded of the words of the great Spanish philosopher Santayana who said in volume 1 of *The Life of Reason* in 1905:

Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.

Mr Barr either does not want to remember the past, did not know about the past or does not care about the past. He has not cared about economic development, nor have his government, over the last 11 years because we know they trashed it. They got rid of staff. They cut the programs and they did not even follow up on the opportunities that had been developed by the previous government. Just take them, rebadge them, rename them—do something with them—but do not throw them away.

The previous government had gone to India looking for opportunities. I think it took Chief Minister Jon Stanhope seven years to find India on the map: "Oh my God, look, there's India! I have discovered India. I am going to take a trade delegation there and we will do business with the Indians." But we had been there in 2001; we had interest from the Indian business community. But it languished for seven years.

As for opportunities in South Africa, delegations from this territory went in 1999, 2000 and 2001. Businesses, some of whom Ms Porter mentioned in her speech, actually did business with the South Africans. The Pretoria government, the Tshwane government, were quite interested in closer ties with the ACT. But of course that was abandoned by the Labor government as well. I think Mr Wood went to Cape Town in 2003 as the environment minister, 10 years after Rio, but could not be bothered looking up a single business contact or looking for opportunities for some of the wonderful firms that we have in the ACT with technology, services or an interest in sustainability and the climate, to give them an opportunity to do business in South Africa. He could not be bothered—total disdain for the business community.

With this government we have got a summary document, we have got a press release—we have got documents all over the place—but what we do not have is commitment. What we do not have is passion. What we do not have is leadership. And what we do not have is a government that will make this happen. It is interesting to read the last page of the major document. It is headed: "How we will know we have succeeded" and it has a list:

a sustained lift in the rate of business formation ...

We will look at that. It also says:

an increase in the nominal contribution of private sector employment in our economy and, over the medium term, an increase in the proportionate share of private sector employment;

That is after a decade of letting it slide. I am not sure if Mr Barr has seen any of these figures, but there is irony in saying that as an objective they want to increase the

nominal contribution of private sector employment in our economy and over the mid-term an increase in the proportionate share of private sector employment. You have already lost 4,000 jobs over the last decade against the population growth that has occurred in that period. But now you have suddenly discovered the private sector: “Goodness me, there are jobs in the private sector.” We will see. It also says:

an increase in the rate of contact and engagement of local businesses and entrepreneurs to the ACT Government’s innovation, trade and investment program environment;

Get out and talk to them! If you actually paid attention, listened to them and talked to them you would not need that as some sort of indicator. You should be talking to them all the time.

The problem here is it is just another document from the government, from a government that has produced so many documents. We only need to go back to Mr Quinlan’s “statement of the bleeding obvious”, the economic white paper. It had nine strategic sectors. We have killed off four of the strategic sectors. We have gone down to five. Mr Quinlan had something like 47 recommendations. There is not a great deal of recommendations here. There is nothing that is particularly new.

What is not new is the lack of commitment. What is not new is the way that this government behaves towards business. Yes, business welcomes this and it is great that at last the government has used the word “diversification” in a positive sense. That is about the biggest outcome in this. But the proof of the pudding will be in the detail. As Chris Faulks says, she is looking forward to seeing the detail. The business community is looking forward to the action. And I think the population of the ACT is looking to the dividend that will come from the benefits of the private sector growing in the ACT instead of being nobbled as it has been over the last 11 years by this Labor government.

MS LE COUTEUR (Molonglo) (12.02): I am very pleased Ms Porter brought forward this motion today because business, as both the Liberal and Labor Party have said, is an important part of the Canberra economy. If nothing else it would be an incredibly boring city if everyone worked in the public service. But there are other reasons as well for having a private sector, such as its resilience. It enables us to grow, it enables us to have jobs which are appropriate for people and that are not just all public service jobs, it enables us to function as a real city.

I have to agree with Mr Smyth’s comments that what we need in a business strategy is a lot more detail and some idea of what the funding actually is. I imagine what is happening is that we are waiting for the budget, so we will actually have two announcements of the same program. I guess that has some PR advantages but it is a bit frustrating to see a document which may have a lot more in it—or may have a lot less in it—than is clear from what is written in it.

Going through Ms Porter’s motion, clearly the strategy was released and it is focusing on jobs growth, economic growth and diversification of the Canberra economy. These days we need to look at more than just jobs growth and economic growth. We need to

look at growing prosperity for the ACT. I think next week the report of the carrying capacity inquiry will finally be released and that will talk about how we can do growth in a way that works for Canberra, that works within where we are.

That is something that we really need to think about throughout our deliberations. We do not want growth for growth's sake. We want growth that works for the people of Canberra. We want growth that works for the environment and economy that we are in. We want jobs growth that works for us rather than relying on growth in wages from, for instance, the commonwealth government. We are all aware—and I was surprised that this was not mentioned—that the Gershon report stated that for the commonwealth, from an ICT point of view, every government department had to have plans to have IT developments outside Canberra.

The federal government, who is, of course, our biggest employer, is doing that partly just as risk avoidance but also partly because we have got a very tight labour situation in the ACT. There was recently an article about it in the *Canberra Times*. Markus Mannheim's APS6 article talked about the same thing. We need to look at jobs growth that works for us, and not just at the numbers.

I do not have a problem with the BDS's strategic imperatives except for the fact that they have left out a huge amount of things that are actually important. I think we have universal agreement that Canberra's competitive edge is its people; it is going to be knowledge-based industries. We are never going to be big winners in the mining stakes or anything like that.

Given that we are going to be a people-based, knowledge-based economy, what do we need to make that work? I am disappointed that there was not at least a passing mention of the issue, first off, of affordable housing. What point is there in having jobs for people if they cannot afford to live here?

Recently Anglicare brought out its report on the lack of affordable rentals. This is a business issue as well as a social justice issue; it is both. If we are to have a diverse economy in the ACT, affordable housing is something that we have to address. We do not want a situation where you cannot afford to live in Canberra unless you are in the upper ranks of the public service. That is not a diverse economy. I think we are all agreed—even the government agrees—that diversification is a good idea.

The next one I am thinking of in terms of a business environment is transportation, and partly transport to Canberra. If we can get the high speed rail linking Canberra to Sydney and Melbourne, that will be an incredible step forward from a business point of view. It is not just about that; it is also about transport within Canberra. It used to be that everyone would say that Canberra had no transport hassles. You could always get there quickly, wherever it was. That is not the case anymore. If we are to keep our competitive edge from a people point of view, we have to make transport in Canberra work.

Training and skills is another big area. I mentioned before that the federal government has an active policy of moving ICT jobs outside Canberra. That is because there are not enough competent ICT people in Canberra, unfortunately. There are lots of other

areas; we all know that trying to get tradesmen is very hard. This is an area where the government needs to do more work. Right now that does not seem to be working incredibly well.

Another area that our government should be looking at is the federal government business framework. With the businesses that I am most connected with, I admit that their major government business issues relate to the commonwealth government, not the ACT government. I admit that I do not have very close connections with the hospitality industry and the construction industry, which would have more of those.

There are a lot of business issues with the federal government. One of the ACT government's roles should be to advocate with their parliamentary colleagues in the house on the hill and say: "These are the things that are making it harder, especially for small business. You always know when BAS is due. Does it have to be as hard as that? They don't just want the money; they want all the paperwork as well. Can we do something to make it easier?" The other thing to mention is integration with the area surrounding the ACT. The ACT is an island and we need to make all of these things work in that regard.

Moving along, the motion refers to a red tape reduction panel. We would absolutely agree with that. I think everyone would agree with that. One of the obvious examples of that was the government's draft outdoor cafe policy, which was hastily retracted because it specified things like the design of the outdoor furniture. It was utterly crazy. It went far beyond what the government should have done. Focusing on that sort of thing means we do not focus on the useful regulations, and I do believe the government has a role in useful regulations. In the same example, useful regulations ensure that cafes do not encroach on walkways, particularly so that disabled and visually impaired people are still able to get around.

With payroll tax reform, again, we need to see the details. We have no idea what the government is proposing on this. But it is worth noting the Henry tax review recommendation that payroll tax reform should be based on the value-add of labour whereas the current levy is on the value of labour. The Greens, and I am sure the Liberal Party also, very much look forward to seeing the Quinlan tax analysis. I hope that will have something in it about payroll tax reform. I hope we do not have to wait until the budget but we probably will.

The next point in Ms Porter's motion is about better government compliance support. If what that means is that some of the millions of regulations which are useful are actually enforced rather than just passed, that is probably a good idea. One thing I am particularly aware of, of course, is the trolley legislation. It was my motion; it was passed with the support of the Labor Party. I cannot remember the Liberal Party's views at the time. It has not been enforced. There is no point in just having regulations. We have to enforce them.

With respect to advice and business mentoring, I am pleased that the government will be continuing its successful programs. The combination of BusinessPoint and Lighthouse seem to be working very well. The next point in the motion acknowledges local small to medium sized enterprises in procurement decisions. Why are we

acknowledging them? Why aren't we supporting them? I am really unclear as to what the government is actually planning to do. It is very light on detail. I would like to see something that actually makes a difference. It does not just mean that when you are filling in a government tender you have another page to fill in regarding all the local people that you employ, maybe with pictures of them or whatever. We actually need something that makes a difference.

With respect to reinvigorating the branding of Canberra, it was good to hear about that but Ms Porter's speech left out the federal government. While I am in favour of diversification we also need to remember that the federal government are our major employer and right now they are actively trying to move employment outside Canberra. We need to talk to them as well as to the rest of the private industry.

Obviously I am in favour of an investment facilitation function. I think Mr Smyth spoke a little bit about how that used to be. It is probably good to see that being reinvented. With respect to Indigenous enterprise development, again, it is a great idea.

With respect to expanding grants programs, we do not have enough detail to make any comment about that. With respect to specific supports for clean tech development, I will talk about that a bit more when I move my amendment. With respect to investing in NICTA, I think that everyone would agree that NICTA has been one of the success stories of innovation in the ACT. It is good to see that the ACT government intends to give it more money and intends to work more closely with it. I am very hopeful that some really positive innovation will come out of that.

The my digital city innovation prize seems to be a good idea. I have with me my copy of the digital city proposal from the Canberra Business Council. I would really like to know—maybe Ms Porter can answer this in her summing up—how much of this program is actually planned to be implemented by the government.

I now move the amendment that has been circulated in my name:

Insert, before paragraph (1):

“(1A) the importance of moving the ACT economy towards a clean economy and fostering the growth of green business;”.

This is something that the Greens have been banging on about ever since we have been in the Assembly. My predecessors have done it, and it was part of our agreement with the Labor Party that a detailed business strategy with appropriate incentives to support the ongoing growth of the green economy be developed. We did agree with the Labor Party to roll this in with the more general business strategy because we recognise that there are a lot of similarities between all the parts of business. So we do not disagree with that.

However we think there has not been enough emphasis on the clean, green part of the economy as part of this strategy. It needed more than one line. It needs to look at the fact that we support the clean, green economy to a large extent by walking the walk, not just talking the talk as in this strategy. Walking the walk: energy efficient

buildings, retro-fitting for energy efficiency, the feed-in tariff of which we have had the small scale—and I acknowledge that the ACT government, the Labor Party, has supported that over the years—and then there is the large scale. We are all very much looking forward to seeing the results of the large-scale solar feed-in auction. I very much hope that this will be structured in a way that supports local business and that it supports developing the local clean, green economy. I hope that this will be an instance when Mr Barr's words about acknowledging and supporting local industry come into being.

Talking about supporting local industry, the waste area is one where we have had a lot of talk and not a lot of action. One of the things that we talked about a lot in last year's estimates was a company called Renewable Processes, which does some very good recycling of e-waste. This is something which had been verbally supported by the ACT government but when push came to shove it did not actually happen. We know that the ACT has many businesses that start here, they often grow and then they leave Canberra, partly because we do not have the right environment, opportunities, employees, apprentices or appropriate land to keep them. Hopefully this strategy will make a difference.

We know that we have the right things in place at the bottom level. We have the research institutions, the universities and the federal government departments. We are a place of innovation in building renewable energy technologies. We have a commitment to a 40 per cent greenhouse gas reduction. This is where we should be going. While I am on this subject, why did we get rid of Canberra arts marketing? One part of a clean, green economy is supporting cultural and creative industries. We have a lot of them in Canberra but all we seem to support publicly in terms of the Canberra brand is the things that happen in the parliamentary triangle—the really big events. We have a lot of home grown, really good indigenous arts that we could be supporting. That is part of the clean, green economy.

I commend my amendment to the Assembly and I am pleased the government is in fact doing something about business now.

MR BARR (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism, Sport and Recreation) (12.17): I thank Ms Porter for moving this motion today. Same old Brendan; same old Caroline in response, but it is what it is, Mr Speaker. However, I digress.

As the territory enters its second century it is important that we recognise and take pride in the continuing strength of our economy. That might be a statement that even those opposite would agree with. Indeed, we need to look at new ways to continue the territory's economic growth. The territory economy has been the envy of many around Australia and the world in the past decade. We have the highest average incomes in the country. We have the most skilled and educated workforce. Our unemployment rate has been below four per cent for a decade. We are experiencing robust population growth. Just last week CommSec's state of the state reports showed the ACT ranked behind only the mining boom economy of Western Australia. However, we cannot take our current economic situation for granted.

There is no doubt that business, governments and economies that do not adapt risk stagnation, and we cannot allow ourselves to be constrained by outdated ideas such as the ones put forward by the shadow treasurer. On the eve of our centenary is the time to embrace some new ideas to boost growth, innovation and investment.

The government is committed to creating an environment in which the private sector can thrive. We are committed to market-based policies and actions to broaden employment, business activity, growth and investment. The strategy I launched earlier this week has three straightforward goals: jobs, economic growth and diversification. We achieve these goals by creating the right business environment, by boosting business innovation and by supporting business investment.

In developing a new strategy for our second century, it is important to recognise the success of existing policy and programs. The foundations that are in place are solid. It is also important to link business development with the government's vision for sustainable growth and to provide leadership and support for clean technologies. This is a point I will return to later. Importantly, though, the heart of this strategy is around support for small and medium sized enterprises to allow them to grow and innovate.

As Ms Porter indicated in her opening remarks, the government understands that running a business is not easy. That is why the core of this strategy is a desire to make it easier to do business in Canberra. In simple terms, that means simplifying our tax system, lowering taxes, cutting red tape and, importantly, making it simpler and quicker to deal with government.

As I have announced, the June budget will include a cut to payroll tax that will give the ACT the most competitive payroll tax regime for small and medium sized enterprises in the country. During the consultation process in the development of the strategy, businesses expressed concern about regulation. This is a legitimate concern, and the government is happy to work with business in the context of national, state and municipal level regulation reform that is occurring through COAG and is appropriately occurring within the territory.

We know that at times working with government can be complex, and to address this we will establish a single entry point for business interactions with government. We are committed to the implementation of the Australian business licensing system, and will create a single account to complete and submit returns and reports to all ACT government agencies. We will also establish a government-navigated program to make it easier for small and medium enterprises to connect with relevant expertise inside government. And we will support Canberra's new and growing generation of entrepreneurs through mentoring advice and, where appropriate, seed funding.

Canberra is a great place to do business. It is important that the ACT government promotes and encourages investment here in the territory. With this in mind, it is time to refine and broaden our message through the creation of a new Canberra brand. But unlike previous failed attempts—we have all felt the power of those—this brand needs to be an authentic representation of what Canberra stands for: its values, its reputation, its culture, particularly in relation to our support for a knowledge economy.

One aspect of the brand needs to be making our city an even more attractive place for new business investment. That is a way of telling outsiders that the city is open for business and a key to this is making it easier for business to move quickly through the process to set up or expand their operations in the city. That is why we have created a dedicated investment unit to support new entrants and to help existing businesses leverage business opportunities beyond the border.

The government recognises that innovation is the foundation of economic growth and competitiveness. The government is committed to positioning Canberra as an innovation hub. We are creating a climate that supports those who take risks and who, in doing so, create the firms and technologies of tomorrow. A key part of this is ensuring strong partnerships between government, business and educational institutions, and we are ensuring that there are institutional arrangements in place to allow these institutions to work together.

I will outline just a few of the initiatives contained within the strategy: the expansion of the InnovationConnect program to further support early stage business innovation and to assist entrepreneurs to commercial and create value from innovations. We are providing new funding for clean technology and sustainability-oriented companies and new funding for major proposals on new innovation infrastructure. We are funding a feasibility study into the creation of the best practice business incubator. As Ms Porter has indicated, one I am particularly pleased to support is the creation of the my digital city innovation prize, a prize to encourage interested Canberrans in the development of new digital government services. We will create the global connect program as a single portal for various trade development activities supported by government and, importantly, provide an additional \$500,000 investment in the Canberra business development fund.

There is no doubt that the emerging clean economy which is driven by both national and local policies around climate change offers major opportunities for enterprise development and economic diversification. Canberra's knowledge economy, which is underpinned by a strong research sector, innovation, investment and entrepreneurialism, is well placed to realise these opportunities. In concert with our broader sustainability agenda and business development program environment, we will provide new business opportunities to grow the clean economy. This is particularly going to be implemented by providing a new funding system for clean technology or sustainability companies under the InnovationConnect program. We will place a new emphasis on private sector investment facilitation which will help ACT capability in clean technology, particularly to connect with financial flows and global capability. We will provide additional funding under the InnovationConnect strategic opportunities to leverage new innovation infrastructure including in clean technology. Ultimately, our aim is to harness knowledge to drive innovation and business growth and to ensure that our business community is highly collaborative, connected, sustainable and able to make Canberra a preferred location for clean businesses to operate.

The business development strategy is about fostering growth, further diversification of the territory economy and the creation of jobs. It is pleasing to note that the most

recent ABS data shows a record number of Canberrans in employment—206,400 of them. That is a fantastic achievement for this economy. It is the largest number of people in employment in the history of the territory. We have very sound building blocks for the future. The ACT can and will through this strategy be positioned as a forward looking, innovative and creative city, something I would hope all members of this chamber would support, and that they will get behind this strategy as we move into our second century as a city.

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (12.27): It is hard not to support the amendment. With some of the words such as “green businesses”, you only need to go back to 1997 and the creating our future ACT industry development plan of the then Liberal government to see that there was a whole area on environmental industries and exporting sustainability. The Liberal Party has been interested in and worked towards this for a very long time. If you go to some of the documents from no waste by 2010—a wonderful program totally abandoned by the current Labor government, ably supported by the Greens, because they certainly did not go into bat to keep no waste by 2010 as a target—they quite specifically say you will get to a point where there are items in the waste stream that currently have no way of being recycled or reused and that this will spawn new industries to take care of those, because if we have the problem in the ACT then it is a problem that exists in other jurisdictions. Of course, that all went by the by. Look, they are nice words. They have been in documents from the Liberal Party for nigh on 17-odd years. So it is good to see everybody is catching up in that regard.

It is interesting that Mr Barr talks about our second century. One of the things he forgot to mention, of course, was the August 2008 document from his government called *Capital development: towards our second century*. It is funny when you cast back into these documents. This one states:

The economic component of this policy framework is Capital Development, which supersedes the Economic White Paper.

Capital Development is a strategic plan. It sets out the broad objectives, priorities and themes to guide our economic policies into the future.

It says there are a number of plans that will underpin this, and fundamental to it is a business and industry action plan which will further develop strategies and actions to encourage a stronger, more innovative and globally competitive business sector.

Three years it took the government to come up with their business and industry action plan. Three years of neglect; three years of lost opportunity; three years of waste; three years in which they could have been building up all the things that Mr Barr so glibly talks about now. Chris Faulks got it quite right when she said, “We want the detail.” I agree with you, Ms Le Couteur; we want the detail, but the problem for this government is that it is a sham government. It puts out documents that are never honoured or never completed.

Indeed, I was reminded of a comment when Mr Barr was speaking when he said, “We want to make it easier for business.” If you cast your mind back to a couple of

estimates ago, Chris Faulks, the CEO of the Canberra Business Council, said it was easier to work with the US Department of Defence than it was to work with the ACT government on business. That is a pretty damning indictment. She spoke of the perfect storm for business in the ACT. The US Department of Defence is not renowned around the world for the ease with which you can work with it.

The proof of the pudding will be in the eating. We have waited three years for this strategy—three years of neglect and three years of lost opportunities—and we still have to wait a little bit longer. We have to wait for the budget to see whether or not the government's initiatives will actually match what was proposed back in 2001. If it does, we would welcome that. But it will be interesting to see if they have got the nerve to do it.

We wait to see the Quinlan tax review, because some of the biggest impediments on business are the taxes they pay. I was keeping the example, but Ms Le Couteur got there first, in regard to red tape. When you have got red tape that says that a business must give you a document that shows what sort of chairs you have in your outdoor cafe, you have lost the plot. This government have lost the plot on red tape. They have made it impossible for business because it is now so onerous. We have even got the folk festival saying they thought the compliance burden with the government's new regulations cost them something like \$200,000.

This is a not-for-profit group that fosters Australian culture in what is a particularly quiet time in the ACT. It brings thousands of people to the ACT and provides enormous entertainment value to the people of Canberra, but it is being burdened by something like \$200,000 worth of compliance because of ACT government regulations. That is the most succinct summary when you talk about what this government has done. They take a not-for-profit event—a great event that has been here for 25 years, maybe it is 25 next year—which is now feeling the economic pinch so badly that it claims this enormous burden has been put on it by the government.

The amendment is easy to support. We all want a clean economy, green business—we call them environmental businesses—and exporting sustainability. What we need is the detail, but I suspect you will never get detail of that sort from this minister or this government.

Ms Le Couteur's amendment agreed to.

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

Canberra Hospital—emergency department data

MR SESELJA: My question is to the Minister for Health. The Auditor-General's report on waiting lists for elective surgery and medical treatment 2011 states:

... unusual movements of patients' priority changes occurred; for example, reclassifications (usually a downgrade) of a number of patients' classification in one day and several changes of a patient's clinical urgency category within a short period of time ...

In question time yesterday you stated that the discrepancies in the emergency department statistics were picked up by the external AIHW validation process. Minister, why are such serious problems with your directorate's administration only identified by external sources such as the Auditor-General and AIHW?

MS GALLAGHER: In this instance they both have. The issue with the elective surgery was one around documentation. I do not think there was any allegation of any wrongdoing performed by staff to actually change that data. Whilst there were downgrades, there were also upgrades, including a number of upgrades where the documentation was not provided as well. I have provided numerous reports to the Assembly about the implementation of those recommendations in the Auditor-General's report.

My understanding in terms of why it was picked up initially by the AIHW is that it is the format in which that data was put in order to report over a specific period of time that identified a problem. The AIHW did not identify how it was being done and what was being done. That was through Health's own processes that were implemented.

I would also say that the internal processes in Health do pick up data anomalies from time to time.

Mr Hanson: So there is more?

MS GALLAGHER: Mr Hanson, as you would know, in the last sitting I tabled some data corrections around unplanned returns to theatre. A statement was provided around that. So there are situations, if there are issues. There have been no issues identified with staff deliberately manipulating data before this one was picked up. Whilst the issue was picked up by the AIHW, they raised a question. Health went back and actually identified the problem themselves.

MR SPEAKER: A supplementary, Mr Seselja.

MR SESELJA: Minister, given it was identified that there were not robust processes in place in January 2011 to identify problems with elective surgery administration and given the seriousness of the problems identified then, why was there no review of processes in other areas like the emergency department?

MS GALLAGHER: Again, I think the issue is that Health do have internal processes, and, where problems are identified, those can be responded to. The issue in relation to this one in particular is that an individual, as it is alleged at this point in time, went outside and deliberately went around those safeguards and those processes in order to deliver a particular outcome. As I said yesterday, I think you can have a range of safeguards in place, you can have all your internal and external checks in place, but, if

somebody is deliberately going around those in order to deliver a different outcome in relation to data, I doubt that you are able to create the perfect system to avoid that occurring again.

I have had numerous discussions with the Health Directorate around their data collection, their processes, and, indeed, the message from me to them around the importance of ensuring that data that is reported is correct and that they have suitable processes in place. I have been assured by the Health Directorate that that is the case. In this instance that has arisen in the last week or so, we have a situation where an individual has gone around the safeguards that have been put in place. This is an isolated occurrence. I am not aware of others.

When audit go in and have a look, I am sure that they will have recommendations. That is what audits do. I am not aware of an audit that has not come out with recommendations about how to tighten up your processes. That is why you have them. I am sure that will come.

But when you have someone who is deliberately going around those safeguard processes, I think it does get very difficult to have a 100 per cent system that is going to avoid deliberate manipulation.

MR HANSON: Supplementary, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: Yes, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Minister, has your failure to use the opportunity arising from January 2011 to review all processes contributed to the emergency department data problems?

MS GALLAGHER: At that time the Health Directorate did look at their data systems more broadly, particularly in relation to the audit that identified documentation. Essentially the elective surgery audit was around paperwork and data systems recording information in the surgical bookings area. Where that paperwork and processes could be applied to other areas in Health, that was looked at.

In terms of the steps from here, I think the issue with the emergency department presents us with the opportunity, and indeed the Health Directorate will see that this work is done—even if the Auditor-General does not decide to inquire into it, and I have not heard whether or not that is the case—to have a look more broadly at data integrity across the health system. If anything needs to change from that, the government will implement those changes.

MR HANSON: Supplementary, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Minister, why are there not sufficient processes operating in your directorate to identify serious problems like manipulating elective surgery waiting lists and emergency department waiting times?

MS GALLAGHER: As I said, I think the systems are robust. They are in line with other jurisdictions. I explained this yesterday. The information that I have been presented with is that, after a validation process was implemented and signed off, in the window between that data leaving the hospital and entering the Health Directorate's information area, data was changed.

Health have already, as I understand it, implemented changes around that period of time. My understanding is that there was a period of time after validation where this opportunity has arisen, where data could be changed. That has been closed off. There were reasons why there was an opportunity there. That was largely around—

Mr Hanson: Was it changed in the process?

MS GALLAGHER: You had this explained this to you, as I understand it, in the briefing, that there was an opportunity after that data had been validated and that opportunity was where this data manipulation appears to have occurred.

There is an investigation underway. We need to let that happen. My advice is that there were reasons around that. They related to weekend and public holidays. But obviously there needs to be further tightening up on that and that work has already been done. Any recommendations that come out of that will be pursued further as well.

Education—vocational

MS HUNTER: My question is to the Minister for Education and Training and relates to the recent Council of Australian Governments meeting. Minister, the national partnership agreement on skills reform outlines significant changes to the vocational education and training system that include national training entitlement and income contingent loans for diploma and advanced diploma study. Minister, what will the ACT government do to ensure the continued success of the Canberra Institute of Technology in an increasingly commercially competitive environment?

DR BOURKE: I thank the member for her question. This COAG announcement of \$28 million for VET reform in the ACT is certainly very welcome news. I am glad that we are positioning the CIT to be able to take its part in the delivery of this extra vocational education and training in the ACT. I note that one of the key objectives is to increase the number of Canberrans with post-secondary qualifications, which 20 per cent of Canberrans do not have. This will be one of the targets.

Another target will be to increase the access for people with disabilities. A third target is to increase the participation of Indigenous Australians in vocational education. The fourth target, as I understand it, will be to focus on skill shortages, particularly in the traditional trades and apprenticeships where we have particular skill shortages. These are areas of strength for the CIT so I expect CIT will be working hard in delivering as part of this—

Ms Hunter: Mr Speaker, on a point of order.

MR SPEAKER: Yes, Ms Hunter.

Ms Hunter: I just wanted to bring the minister to relevance. I was asking what the ACT government is going to do to ensure the continued success of CIT in this competitive environment.

MR SPEAKER: Minister Bourke.

DR BOURKE: As I said, we are positioning the CIT. The CIT is well placed to take advantage of these initiatives, and I look forward to its success in the future.

MR SPEAKER: Ms Hunter, a supplementary.

MS HUNTER: Minister, are you aware of the significant concerns held by stakeholders such as the Australian Education Union regarding the proposed reforms and the potential negative impacts on the public TAFE system?

DR BOURKE: No, I am not aware of those concerns. What I am aware of is the support for these reforms from so many people in the vocational education and training space.

MR SPEAKER: Ms Le Couteur, a supplementary.

MS LE COUTEUR: Minister, will the government hold public consultations to inform the ACT's implementation plan?

DR BOURKE: We are in the process of negotiating with the commonwealth under the COAG agreement our targets for achievement under this vocational education and training plan.

MS BRESNAN: A supplementary.

MR SPEAKER: Yes, Ms Bresnan.

MS BRESNAN: Minister, how will the recommendations of the Bradley report and recent announcements regarding the University of Canberra and the Canberra Institute of Technology be incorporated into the ACT's implementation plan?

DR BOURKE: The Bradley review offered a number of alternatives for proceeding for the government. But since that review there have been a series of announcements which are game changing in VET reform from the commonwealth. These have included the Prime Minister's announcement of a target of 375,000 extra Australians to have post-secondary qualifications within five years and an extra \$1.7 billion to be spent on VET reform in Australia. The result of that for the ACT will be more vocational education and training, as I have previously described.

Canberra Hospital—emergency department data

MR HANSON: My question is to the Minister for Health. The Auditor-General's report *Waiting lists for elective surgery and medical treatment 2011* states the following in regard to elective surgery waiting lists:

In particular, downgrades of patients' urgency category, often without documented clinical reasons ...

The Health Director-General's statement regarding discrepancies in emergency department data states:

It appears that waiting and treatment times have been altered on some records without authority ...

Minister, why have there been two serious incidents of altered records without authority in your directorate discovered in under 18 months?

MS GALLAGHER: Again the Liberal Party seeks to conflate the two issues. One was around data processes and really recording processes that involved surgeons and administrative staff at the Canberra Hospital and how they organised the elective surgery waiting list. There were no allegations at all that data had been deliberately manipulated to deliver a particular outcome. Yes, we have had to crack down on the doctors and the surgical booking area to ensure that all of those i's are dotted and t's are crossed. But it was procedural. Those are not requirements. The consent forms and the requests for admission forms are all for administrative purposes to run a surgical stream.

The issue in the emergency department is very different—very different indeed. What happened there is that it appears that an individual has changed data without authority after that data has been validated. The processes are there. They are the right processes. But somebody, for an unknown reason, has gone around the safeguards that exist to change that data.

They are completely separate. Yes, I would prefer that neither of them had happened. I think all of us do. We do have processes across the Health Directorate to ensure the integrity of data. Yes, we need to have a good, hard look at that and make sure that if there are improvements they are made. But I do not accept that the two issues are the same. We have responded strongly with the elective surgery one in recommendations from the Auditor-General. And indeed all of the surgeons and the staff have worked hard to implement those recommendations to ensure that the processes there, particularly the administrative processes, are robust and everyone can understand the reasons why someone's category number might be changed. That has been done. There is another process underway in the emergency department but the two issues are not linked.

MR SPEAKER: A supplementary, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Minister, how can the community be confident there are not other incidents of records which have been altered without authority that they have not been made aware of?

MS GALLAGHER: The community can have confidence in the sense that where problems are identified we are being up-front about those problems.

Mr Hanson: No, you're not.

MS GALLAGHER: Yes, we are being up-front about them, Mr Hanson. Part of ensuring that the community retains confidence in health data is the fact that when problems are identified you are up-front about them, you respond to them and you also implement processes to make sure that the integrity of other data is checked as well. There is no evidence before anyone that there are any other problems with the data that is collected for health performance reporting. But I accept that we need to go and have a look at all of those data sets to ensure their integrity and retain the community's confidence in that data.

I know staff at the hospital are working very hard on that. Not only are they seeing the patients every day and providing them with clinical treatment but they understand the importance of maintaining community confidence in the health system in the ACT. As health minister, I will work alongside them to do just that, particularly at a time when the opposition, who should be supporting the staff in the Health Directorate, seek to tear it down.

MR HARGREAVES: A supplementary, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: Yes, Mr Hargreaves.

MR HARGREAVES: Minister, have you been repeatedly advised over the last 22 months that such a problem existed and how long did it take you to act once you were informed?

MS GALLAGHER: As members would know, I meet with the Health Directorate frequently—weekly, if not more often when necessary. We have discussed data and data integrity a number of times, certainly from my point of view as minister, seeking assurances from the directorate that their processes are robust and that the data that is presented to me, and through me to the Assembly, is correct. I have been given assurances around that.

However, we accept that the health system, like any system which relies on humans to administer it and provide the service, is not perfect and there will be problems from time to time. The key issue then for the minister responsible is: how do you deal with that information? What do you do? How do you act? What do you do to make sure it never happens again? That is exactly what I have done. I provided the information to the community at the first available time that I was able to. We have provided all the information that we can.

Mr Smyth interjecting—

MS GALLAGHER: No, Mr Smyth; that is not correct. If you have any evidence about that, stand up and move a substantive motion. Go on, have another go; lose another motion. Go on, have another go; provide no evidence and lose another motion.

Members interjecting—

MR SPEAKER: Members, order! Stop the clocks, thank you. The Chief Minister still has the floor.

MS GALLAGHER: I have finished, thank you.

MR SPEAKER: Mr Seselja, you have a supplementary question.

MR SESELJA: Minister, given that the person who has admitted to manipulating emergency department data had access to other hospital data, how can the community be confident that there are not other incidents of altered records without authority?

MS GALLAGHER: That data is being checked as we speak, as I understand it, and any corrections that need to be made will be made and will be made public. That is how you ensure community confidence. The community understands that problems will arise and mistakes will be made, errors will be made. The community understands that. The test really is how you deal with it, what information you provide, how you fix it and how you make sure it never, ever happens again. That is exactly what we are doing.

Opposition members interjecting—

MR SPEAKER: Chief Minister, have you finished?

MS GALLAGHER: Yes, thank you.

Canberra Hospital—emergency department data

MR COE: My question is to the Minister for Health. Chief Minister, on 23 February 2011 you and the Attorney-General wrote to MLAs stating that you had misled the Assembly in regard to the number of drug tests conducted at the Alexander Maconochie Centre jointly by Corrective Services and the Health Directorate. Minister, the emergency department manipulation is the third time in an 18-month period that you have had to admit to relying on incorrect information. How can the community be confident that any data you present to them is correct?

MS GALLAGHER: I recall that. I think it related to comments that the former Chief Minister had made, and when those were drawn to my attention as the Chief Minister I corrected the record. That is exactly what needs to happen, Mr Coe. In a sense, your question—

Mr Hanson interjecting—

Mr Coe interjecting—

MR SPEAKER: Thank you, members.

MS GALLAGHER: I have had a number of briefs this week that I have had to look at—not necessarily from Health but across government—where you question some of

the information that is provided to you. You test that information. You do the best you can. Sometimes, despite everyone's best efforts, there will be mistakes made with data and sometimes with answers that are provided.

The measure of a minister is what they do when that is drawn to their attention, how they handle it and how they provide that information. That is exactly what I have done in all of the situations where it has been drawn to my attention that incorrect data has been provided for whatever reason—for different reasons; all of them different reasons in the ones we have talked about today—and how you make sure that that problem is fixed and that it does not happen again.

But, in human systems, mistakes will be made. That is not necessarily accepting that they should be made or that you are happy they do occur. The real question for ministers to answer in this place is what you do when that comes to your attention, how you fix it, how you respond and how you make sure that it does not happen again.

MR SPEAKER: Mr Coe, a supplementary question.

MR COE: Chief Minister, given that you were forced to apologise to the community for grossly under-reporting the number of drug tests conducted based on advice from your directorate, did you take any action after your apology to reassure yourself that advice from your directorate was accurate?

MS GALLAGHER: I am not sure that Mr Coe's question is entirely accurate as to what actually occurred, but there we go. We are used to that, so we will put that aside. The substantive question—

Mrs Dunne: Which bit's wrong?

MS GALLAGHER: Because I did not actually say it, Mrs Dunne. That is what is wrong, and he is alleging that I did. Yes, I apologised, but the actual error was not made by me. So that is the first thing.

The second thing, the substantive issue, is: "What did you do to assure yourself?" As I have said a number of times in this place, I have sought repeated assurances from the Health Directorate that the data that is provided to me is correct and that the systems that they have in place make sure that the data is correct. For 99 per cent of the time it is. And, yes, there is a very small percentage where it is drawn to my attention that that information is not correct.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MR SPEAKER: Now is the time to ask the supplementary, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: Not the three times before that. You have the floor.

MR HANSON: Minister, what factors have led to this pattern of incorrect information being provided by the Health Directorate?

MS GALLAGHER: I think in all of the questions they have raised today, Mr Speaker, there are different reasons for the data being incorrect. None of them are linked.

MR SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, a supplementary.

MR HANSON: Minister, in what other areas under your responsibility is incorrect data being provided to the community?

MS GALLAGHER: I think I have written to you, Mr Hanson, in the last week, saying that the Property Group advised me that there were no retired service organisations on the allocation list for property and I have written to you saying that that was not correct. I have an issue at the moment that I am checking—a question from Mr Alistair Coe—around dead running for ACTION buses, and I think that may involve correction of data as well.

Childcare—places

MR HARGREAVES: My question is to the Minister for Community Services about childcare. Minister, can you update the Assembly on the progress that is being made towards improving the access to childcare services for Canberra families, please?

MS BURCH: I thank Mr Hargreaves for his interest in children's services. We are fortunate here in the ACT to have the highest standard of childcare in the country, and ACT Labor government is committed to ensuring it remains so, particularly as we transition to the national quality framework which all states and territories have signed up to.

In the ACT there are currently around 120 approved long day care centres providing more than 8,000 places on any given day. Since 2002 there has been a steady increase in the numbers of licensed day care services available in the ACT. In the past year alone more than 500 new childcare places have been made available in 26 centres across Canberra, and this is partly attributable to our investment in childcare and children's services. This increase is the result of new services opening and existing services increasing their capacity.

Between December 2010 and March 2012 new long day care centres commenced operation in McKellar, Flynn, Charnwood and Harrison. Three preschools operated by the Catholic Education Office also opened to provide full-day options to support parents and workforce participation. Services are demonstrating their commitment to increase places for children in response to the growing demand, and they are to be commended for their achievements.

The education and care sector in the ACT is unique in its blend of community and privately owned services. Community organisations manage 72 per cent of the ACT

education and care services, and a further eight per cent are operated by non-government schools, with 18 per cent privately owned and operated. The ACT and the Northern Territory are the only jurisdictions to have such a high proportion of community managed to private operators.

The ACT government is committed to supporting both community and privately run services to increase their available places, with 32 community managed education and care services operating from facilities which are owned and supported by the Community Services Directorate.

The government's capital upgrades program and community grants have also assisted a number of centres to offer more places. This growth will continue with our investment of \$9 million for capital upgrades funded in last year's budget, which will see an increase of around 170-plus places across community operated centres. I am pleased to inform the Assembly that a number of those centre works have commenced.

Land release for childcare centres is also an important plank for supporting the local childcare sector and allows the government to target growth in areas of demand. A site in Giralang was sold in May 2011 for education and care purposes, and further sites in Macarthur, Holt and Gungahlin will be for sale this year.

The government is committed to ensuring that, when parents drop off their children at an education and care service, they know their children are happy and will be looked after. The government is committed to supporting women's participation in the workforce particularly, and this why it is important that, when a parent drops off their child at a centre in the morning, they can be confident their child is in a safe learning environment.

The ACT Labor government believes in supporting women to return to the workforce because this is an important thing to do. This contrasts with the Canberra Liberals, who believe the workforce for women is indeed nothing but a luxury. For the reasons I have outlined, the ACT Labor government has been working closely with the childcare sector to ensure that, as a community, we continue to offer reliable, affordable and quality care in children's services.

Mr Coe interjecting—

MR SPEAKER: Mr Hargreaves, a supplementary.

MR HARGREAVES: Mr Speaker, you might like to advise Mr Coe that additional volume does not indicate additional quality.

MR SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr Hargreaves; your supplementary question.

MR HARGREAVES: My supplementary to the minister is: what programs has the government implemented to support the availability and standard of childcare for Canberra families, particularly with respect to meeting the requirements of the national quality framework that you mentioned earlier?

MS BURCH: The ACT government signed up to the national quality framework back in 2009, as did all other states and territories, in recognition of the value of having nationally consistent standards. Despite the challenges that the standards may present to the sector, we know that our education and care services are on board with the national quality framework.

We know that the ACT childcare sector is well placed to transition to the new reforms and, indeed, with respect to the new ratios, we have had a very smooth transition. More than half of the centres in the ACT have already met those new ratios for the under-2s last year at all centres. As we have stated here before, the over-2s were already meeting the new requirements.

From the work that has been done by Community Services in the past 12 months to ascertain the effect of these reforms on the cost of childcare, we also know that there has been minimal impact on Canberra families. While much of this can be attributed to the capacity of the ACT childcare sector, the government's investment and the willingness to listen to the sector should be recognised.

Last year, the Community Services Directorate offered \$250,000 worth of grants to community-based organisations for education and care services. The purpose of these grants was to support the services to upgrade their facilities to meet or exceed the requirements of the national quality framework. Twenty-five education and care services applied for grants of up to \$10,000, and all 25 services were successful in receiving those grants for projects such as bathroom and playroom refurbishments, shade sails and extensions to outdoor play areas. Through these grants, the successful services were able to maintain or increase their places.

We are also investing in the Franklin early childhood school which will incorporate 120 centre places and \$7.5 million has been put aside to commence work at Holder.

MS PORTER: A supplementary.

MR SPEAKER: Yes, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Minister, how will the ACT government continue to support the implementation of the national quality framework and, in particular, the growth of Canberra's childcare sector?

MS BURCH: I thank Ms Porter for her interest in childcare. The ACT Labor government recognises that there is work to be done. On top of the work we have already done, we will work hand in hand with the sector as we move through these changes.

We have supported the sector through the ACT Children's Services Forum to develop an education and care workforce strategy. This strategy, which will be released later this month, identifies four main goals: attract new educators to the sector; retain existing educators in the sector; develop and upskill the workforce, including through qualifications; and raise the profile of the sector in the ACT community.

The government will support the education and care sector to deliver initiatives which contribute towards these key objectives. One major initiative which the government is proud to support is the development of a media campaign to promote the education and care sector. The government has invested \$16½ thousand in this initiative because it understands that strengthening the workforce will open up opportunities, and that is needed in the sector.

By working together, we will promote this work in educating and caring for Canberra's youngest citizens—those that are in college and those that are looking to participate in the workforce. This campaign and other innovative strategies will serve to increase the capacity of the education and childcare workforce to meet the growing demand. Just yesterday we made an announcement of the recipients of a scholarship program to receive support for certificate III training.

MR SPEAKER: Yes, Mr Seselja.

MR SESELJA: Minister, could you give the Assembly an update on the Macarthur preschool site. Is it being demolished? If so, why? What is being done to avoid vandalism at the site and to avoid the site becoming an eyesore?

MS BURCH: As I understand it, that property is not owned by the Community Services Directorate, but I do understand that it is earmarked and has been identified for sale and that it will come on line within the next couple of months for sale.

Parking—Griffith shops

MS LE COUTEUR: My question is to the Minister for Territory and Municipal Services and is in relation to parking and traffic measures proposed as part of construction of a residential development opposite Griffith shops. Local residents told me they were not sent letters about the proposal and so nearly missed out on the opportunity of raising their concerns. It was only after my office raised the issue with the developer's consultant, and under pressure from residents and businesses—

MS GALLAGHER: Excuse me, Mr Speaker. I cannot hear the question.

Mr Smyth interjecting—

MR SPEAKER: Order!

MS GALLAGHER: I could hear part of it, but—

Opposition members interjecting—

MR SPEAKER: Order, members! Thank you, members.

Mr Smyth interjecting—

MS GALLAGHER: Mr Smyth, your interjections meant that I could not hear all of it.

Opposition members interjecting—

MR SPEAKER: Order! Enough! Ms Le Couteur, could you start your question again, thank you.

MS LE COUTEUR: Certainly. My question is to the Minister for Territory and Municipal Services and is in relation to parking and traffic measures proposed as part of construction of a residential development opposite Griffith shops. Local residents told me that they were not sent letters about the proposal and so nearly missed out on raising their concerns. It was only after my office raised the issue with the developer's consultant, and under pressure from residents and businesses, that the consultant extended the notification period and sent out a new letter to the broader area. Minister, how will the government learn from this episode to ensure that local communities are properly informed about parking and traffic measures that will affect them and that they can have their say?

MR CORBELL: I will take the question because I believe, although it was a bit unclear, that Ms Le Couteur was actually asking about notification requirements in relation to development approval. That would appear to be what she was asking.

Ms Le Couteur: No.

MR CORBELL: She is saying no. It is a little bit unclear as to exactly what she is asking in that event. But what I would simply say is that the government is currently, as Ms Le Couteur would know, in engagement with other parties in this place around where improvements can be made in terms of certain types of development approval notifications and development application notifications and that process is ongoing. I am sorry that I cannot help Ms Le Couteur further.

MR SPEAKER: Ms Le Couteur, a supplementary.

MS LE COUTEUR: I am not asking about the development application. That was approved. I am asking about the traffic and parking things which came afterwards—the construction. That is what I am asking about—not the DA. My question now—Mr Corbell might regard it as his—is: what will the developers contribute for the use of parking and other public spaces during this development, and how will the local community benefit?

MR CORBELL: I thank Ms Le Couteur for the question. I will take some advice in relation to the particular circumstances of the proposal she is referring to at the Griffith shops. I will provide further advice to the member.

In relation to the issue of improvements in notification of outcomes and notification of how development will occur, it is a normal part of the development approval process that conditions are put in place when it comes to matters such as the temporary disruption to traffic or parking as a result of a development. Again, I would need to review what the conditions were in relation to the development approval for the proposal that Ms Le Couteur refers to. I will seek further advice on that matter and provide a clearer and more detailed answer to the member.

MR COE: Supplementary, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: Yes, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Minister, given that temporary traffic management plans are required and are submitted to TAMS and listed on the TAMS website, surely that information should be available and should be published on the website so that all concerned constituents can see them. Why is that not the case?

MR CORBELL: I think Mr Coe just indicated that they were published on the TAMS website.

Mr Coe: No, the forms are available.

MR CORBELL: I will need to take some advice in relation to that matter, but again this comes back to what requirements were imposed on the developer as a condition of the approval in terms of the communications with other affected parties, other affected leaseholders and so on. I refer Mr Coe to my previous answer: I will seek further advice in relation to what conditions were imposed in this case and whether there are further steps that could potentially be taken.

MS BRESNAN: Supplementary, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: Yes, Ms Bresnan.

MS BRESNAN: To the relevant minister: how will the government ensure that any parking on the oval behind the Griffith shops, as a developer has proposed, does not damage or block access to the oval?

MR CORBELL: Any temporary parking arrangements that would be made on public land would require the approval and consent of the territory down to the particular arrangements that were proposed. So those are the types of factors that would normally be taken into account in dealing with that type of proposal.

Canberra Hospital—emergency department data

MR SMYTH: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, on 30 March 2011, following a quarterly health report in which you stated that access to health care had increased, despite increasing emergency department waiting times and elective surgery waiting lists, the Assembly called for you to, and I quote from the motion, “provide a more accurate and honest summation of public health services”. Minister, how can you possibly say that your publication of manipulated emergency department data is a “more accurate and honest summation of public health services”?

MS GALLAGHER: There is the classic Liberal twist. As I recall that issue, it related to a media release where the Greens and the Liberals decided that they wanted to direct me about what I was to put in media releases accompanying the issuing of that performance report—

Mr Hanson: The foreword to the quarterly report.

MS GALLAGHER: And the foreword, yes, which was built on the media release. As you know, I think from that time on, certainly in the last couple of quarters, I have not released a media release with that. It caused so much upset to the Liberals that the performance reports have just been placed online.

The audit will look at all these issues. As we know, audits do find problems, as Mr Seselja may well know, with the \$130,000 audit that he just had into his office. The one thing—

Mr Coe: Let's talk about that audit. Let's talk about that.

MS GALLAGHER: Yes, let's talk about that, all right. Let's find the problems that that audit found. What was it? Systemic and serious failure—

Members interjecting—

MR SPEAKER: Order, members!

MS GALLAGHER: A systemic and serious failure of the only thing that Mr Seselja actually manages.

Members interjecting—

MR SPEAKER: Order! Ms Gallagher, sit down. Thank you, one moment. Members, this is unacceptable. I cannot hear what is going on in here. The Chief Minister has the floor.

Mr Seselja: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: The Chief Minister still has the floor.

Mr Seselja: Yes I know, Mr Speaker. I have a point of order. If you are going to call us to order, you might ask the Chief Minister to be relevant to the question.

MR SPEAKER: Mr Seselja, you will notice that I did not pinpoint anybody because it was quite obvious that both sides of the chamber were making a lot of noise. I asked it of the whole chamber. Chief Minister, you have the floor, and let us stick to the question, thank you.

MS GALLAGHER: Thank you, Mr Speaker, and I am sticking to the question. The question was about how can anyone have trust in audits and the work that is underway to correct the data.

Mr Seselja: No.

MS GALLAGHER: Well, that is the last bit that I heard.

Mr Smyth interjecting—

MS GALLAGHER: Maybe I am wrong, Mr Smyth. Maybe it is because of all the interjections that I cannot actually hear the question that is being asked. But the issue that Mr Smyth raises is not the same. It is not the same issue as the issue that has been raised about the emergency department. They are entirely different. The Assembly had a view about what should go into a foreword. I did not agree, but I have resisted the temptation to put a release out since that time.

MR SMYTH: Supplementary, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Minister, will you apologise to the Assembly and to the community for breaching the motion calling for you to be more honest in the reporting of public health services?

MS GALLAGHER: I have always been honest with the information that has been provided to me and I will be honest about any corrections that need to be made.

MR HANSON: A supplementary, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: Yes, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Minister, given that revised emergency department waiting times are now likely to be longer than was reported in March 2011, will you now be honest about access to health care in the ACT?

MS GALLAGHER: As we know from the report that the AHIW delivered earlier this week, access to health care is second only, I think, to the Northern Territory—that is, almost one-third of Canberrans visit the public hospital system here in the ACT. That is extraordinary. Compare that. It might actually explain some of the pressure the hospital is under—272 per 1,000, which is, I think, 20 more than the national average. When you look at overnight separations, again the ACT is second to the Northern Territory. If you want to talk access to public health care, which I think was your question, access to public health care is second to none in the territory. Yes, there will be occasions when we want that access to be faster, but what we can be assured of is that those who are most urgent, those who need care the most—

Members interjecting—

MR SPEAKER: Order!

Mr Hargreaves interjecting—

MR SPEAKER: Mr Hargreaves, thank you.

MS GALLAGHER: those who are the most serious in the emergency department, are treated extremely well. There will be pressure for those with less urgent conditions, but you have got to see it in the context of how much—

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

MR SPEAKER: Stop the clocks, thank you. Mr Hargreaves on a point of order.

Mr Hargreaves: Mr Hanson was just seen to make a gesture across the chamber which I believe impugned my character. I would ask you to ask him to rescind that.

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr Hargreaves: Stand up and do it again.

Opposition members interjecting—

MR SPEAKER: Mr Hargreaves! Order, members! Really.

Mr Seselja interjecting—

MR SPEAKER: Order! Mr Seselja, stop it.

Mr Hanson: On the point of order, Mr Hargreaves made hand gestures to me. I responded. I am not sure how I could withdraw a hand gesture.

Opposition members interjecting—

MR SPEAKER: Thank you, members. I had the good fortune to see neither of the gesticulations. I think we will just proceed with question time.

Members interjecting—

MR SPEAKER: Order, members! Mr Hargreaves, thank you. Chief Minister, you have time remaining. Do you wish to add anything further?

MS GALLAGHER: No, thank you, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, you have a supplementary question.

MR HANSON: Minister, is the mislead regarding incorrect information regarding the drug tests at the jail, the unauthorised reclassification of elective surgery waiting lists, the manipulated emergency department data, the wrong data from the Property Group that was provided by you to the community and the incorrect bus running data provided by you to Mr Coe evidence of systemic failure in information management in your directorates?

MS GALLAGHER: That old quality assurance process with your questions has not worked very well. I think the last two of those—certainly with the last one I have not provided any information to Mr Coe about bus running data.

Mrs Dunne: It is overdue.

MS GALLAGHER: It is overdue because I am actually going back and seeking further information around it.

Mr Smyth interjecting—

MR SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr Smyth.

Mr Coe interjecting—

MR SPEAKER: Mr Coe.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

Mr Seselja: Are you misleading?

MR SPEAKER: Members!

MS GALLAGHER: Nice try.

Mr Coe interjecting—

MR SPEAKER: One moment, Chief Minister. Stop the clocks. Members, there are too many interjections. I will start warning people shortly and then I will start naming them if it does not settle down in here.

Mr Hargreaves: On a point of order, please, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: Yes, Mr Hargreaves.

Mr Hargreaves: Mr Coe accused the Chief Minister of misleading. I ask you to get him to withdraw it. It was quite crystally clear—very clear to me.

Members interjecting—

MR SPEAKER: Order! I do not think so, Mr Hargreaves, from what I heard here. Mr Coe, do you want to clarify anything?

Mr Coe: I could interject, but I believe that she has submitted an answer. If I am incorrect, I will happily withdraw it. But likewise, if Ms Gallagher is incorrect, I trust that she will come down to the chamber later today and correct the record too.

Mr Hargreaves: Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: Yes, Mr Hargreaves. Then we are going to move on.

Mr Hargreaves: The rules are quite clear about this. You cannot say that a member has misled without a substantive motion.

MR SPEAKER: I do not believe that Mr Coe said “mislead”. I do not know what he said but I am pretty sure he did not use “mislead”.

Mr Hargreaves: Three times.

Mr Coe: I did not, John.

MR SPEAKER: Order, members! One moment, Mrs Dunne, please.

Members interjecting—

MR SPEAKER: Members, stop! Enough! I will check the Hansard tapes. I do not think that Mr Coe used the words, but I will check the tapes and if he did I will come back to the chamber and ask him to withdraw it. And if he did not, I am not coming back to the chamber; I am just going to go on with it. Chief Minister, you have the floor.

MS GALLAGHER: In all of those issues that Mr Hanson just raised, whilst I would very much prefer that they had not occurred, they are not linked to each other. There is no evidence of systemic failure. In fact, the only reading I have had of systemic failure really was reading the McLeod audit. The one thing you do manage, Mr Seselja—

Mr Seselja interjecting—

MR SPEAKER: Mr Seselja, you are now warned for interjecting.

MS GALLAGHER: Three years. Mr Seselja has three years of failure in that regard.

Mr Smyth: Point of order, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: One moment, Chief Minister.

Mr Smyth: You warned the Chief Minister to be relevant to the questions. She continues to ignore you. You either have to warn her or sit her down.

MR SPEAKER: Thank you for your advice, Mr Smyth. I was very specific about the interjections. Mr Seselja has directly interjected and I have asked for it to stop. Mr Seselja is on a warning.

Mr Seselja: On the point of order, Mr Speaker, Mr Hargreaves has been hurling abuse all question time. He has asked people to go outside. He has hurled abuse. He has hurled abuse at Mr Coe. And you have not once called him to order or warned him. I would just draw that to your attention.

MR SPEAKER: I have, actually. For your information, Mr Seselja—you were probably busy doing something else—I have spoken to Mr Hargreaves during this question time a couple of times. I had asked, recently, all members to stop interjecting. You were the first member to interject straight after I did that. I intend to follow through on my threat of warning people. That is why you are now warned. We will proceed with question time. Ms Gallagher, have you finished?

MS GALLAGHER: Yes, thank you, Mr Speaker.

Canberra Hospital—emergency department data

MRS DUNNE: My question is to the Minister for Health. In question time yesterday you stated in regard to manipulated emergency department data:

... the information to me at this point in time is that there is an individual who has gone around the safeguards that were in place to ensure data integrity ...

Given that you have stated that the problem exists because processes were not followed, why are you limiting your request for an inquiry into this incident to data management processes?

MS GALLAGHER: I have requested that the Auditor-General have a look at data integrity at the Canberra Hospital. It is up to the Auditor-General. I cannot set the terms of reference. I cannot direct the Auditor-General. It is up to the Auditor-General to determine the nature and scope of their inquiry. I am not limiting anything. I am more than happy, as I am here, to answer any question around any other matter that relates to this issue.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MRS DUNNE: Supplementary question, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: Yes, Mrs Dunne. Before you proceed, Mr Hanson I remind you of my earlier observation. Mrs Dunne, you have the floor for a supplementary.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, what factors exist in the Health Directorate that would lead someone to go around the safeguard and deliberately manipulate data?

MS GALLAGHER: I cannot answer that question. I do not think it is useful to speculate at this point when there are investigations underway.

MR HANSON: A supplementary, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: Yes, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Minister, if you are not clear on these factors as to what went wrong, why are you limiting your request for an inquiry simply to the data management processes?

MS GALLAGHER: I understand there is an investigation into the individual at the centre of the data manipulation and I presume—and I cannot speak about the specifics of it—that would look into a range of different matters. So I do not think it is fair to say that there is only an audit into data matters.

MR HARGREAVES: Supplementary.

MR SPEAKER: Yes, Mr Hargreaves.

MR HARGREAVES: Chief Minister and Minister for Health, does the Auditor-General have power under the Auditor-General Act to look into any and all matters concerned with the integrity of data systems?

MS GALLAGHER: Thank you, Mr Hargreaves. As I understand it, that is right: the Auditor-General can determine the nature and scope of any performance audit that she may consider undertaking. I cannot direct her. I cannot set the terms of reference. It is over to her to make some decisions in that regard.

Mental health—step-up, step-down services

MS BRESNAN: My question is to the Minister for Health and concerns the proposed older persons step-up, step-down mental health service, including the tender process. Minister, I understand that the tender process for the service closed on 30 March this year. How many applications were received for the tender to run the service?

MS GALLAGHER: I have not been briefed on where that tender process is up to. It would not normally come to a minister's attention whilst a tender process is underway. Usually, the first information a minister would get about a tender process is the outcome of that tender process. I can see whether there is any further information that I can provide but I am very conscious of not involving myself in tender processes at all.

MR SPEAKER: Ms Bresnan, a supplementary.

MS BRESNAN: Minister, if no applications were received for the tender, has there been any examination of why, and was any feedback received that funding to run the service was too low?

MS GALLAGHER: I have not had a discussion around that tender process, so I have not been advised if there were no applications for it. I can follow that up. Normally what would happen if there are no applications or tenders coming in is that they would relook at the tender based on the feedback they got from organisations that might normally tender for that work. I am sure if it was the case that the money was too low that they would have to look at that. There is only an available budget for that service, but they would perhaps look at what they were seeking for that budget and revise the tender accordingly. That would be normally how that is dealt with.

MR SPEAKER: A supplementary, Ms Hunter.

MS HUNTER: Minister, if no applications or no tenders are received for this particular service, how will you move on this? How will you ensure that this service continues to be delivered in the ACT?

MS GALLAGHER: These are for the new step-up, step-down facilities. We are looking at an additional two step-up, step-down facilities. So I will check that. The opportunity is available if there is no increase in funding supplementation. And sometimes we do increase that by finding some extra money—for example, through a budget process or through growth funds. You would revise what you were seeking from the organisation to fit within that budget, if those concerns around not enough funding were valid for the service that was being sought. So there is an opportunity, I think, to be flexible in that regard. But I will take some advice and write to Ms Bresnan about it.

MS LE COUTEUR: A supplementary.

MR SPEAKER: Yes, Ms Le Couteur.

MS LE COUTEUR: Minister, what consultation occurred with providers prior to going out to tender and did the government test the market on the number of providers and the likely cost of the service?

MS GALLAGHER: I will have to take that on notice in relation to this specific service. But I do know that pre-tender briefings do occur in some situations—I am not sure whether it occurred in relation to this project—where organisations that would normally apply or would be in the running to provide that service would be given the opportunity to discuss the nature of what was being put out and the money that was available. I will certainly take some further advice on that.

Canberra Hospital—emergency department data

MR DOSZPOT: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, can you explain to the Assembly on what basis you are refusing to disclose the identity of the individual who has manipulated emergency department data, given the apparent seniority of the individual and the serious manipulation?

MS GALLAGHER: I am basing that on legal advice.

MR SPEAKER: Mr Doszpot, a supplementary.

MR DOSZPOT: Without naming the individual, what information can you provide to the Assembly?

MS GALLAGHER: It was a senior administrative staff member at the Canberra Hospital.

MR HANSON: A supplementary.

MR SPEAKER: Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Minister, specifically which laws are being used to exclude naming a public servant who acted in the course of their duties from being identified, and will you table any legal advice that you have received?

MS GALLAGHER: No, it is not normal to table legal advice. My understanding is that it is laws such as the Privacy Act and in relation to some HR employment-related laws, given the nature of investigations that are underway.

MR SPEAKER: Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: By not naming the individual who manipulated the results, have you not cast a shadow of doubt over all staff at the Canberra Hospital, and can you explain specifically what investigation and who is conducting the investigation into the individual who has manipulated the data?

MS GALLAGHER: I do not believe I am casting a shadow over all staff. Indeed I think the only person in this place that is doing that is Mr Hanson.

Education—vocational

MS PORTER: My question is to the minister for education. Minister, what do the recent COAG announcements on the VET sector reform mean for the ACT?

DR BOURKE: I thank the member for her question. We all know that there is a need for ongoing VET sector reform to ensure that our workforce can cater to both current and future needs. We build this resilience by working together with the commonwealth to increase the skill levels of Canberra's labour force.

I believe that this new \$28.5 million national partnership with the commonwealth puts us well on the path to ensuring that the skills of Canberrans are developed and ready to be utilised in our strong local economy. This is a game changer when it comes to VET sector service provision.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MR SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, you are now warned for interjecting.

DR BOURKE: This new partnership will deliver funding that will give more government-funded training places for working-age Canberrans and provide for a better funded sector able to meet the evolving needs of the Canberra community. Increasing productivity in our local community requires government, service providers and business to work together to increase the skill levels of working-age Canberrans. But it also means coming together to ensure that individuals in our city are given the proper opportunity to gain the skills and experience for the jobs. It means making sure that members of our community have the skills and experience to adapt to change as our local economy grows.

Through this \$28.5 million agreement, and in partnership with the commonwealth, this government will work to deliver a productive and highly skilled workforce driving our future economy. Once we have consulted with relevant stakeholders and received further information on the national partnership from the commonwealth, I will be more than happy to make more details of the government's forward direction public.

MR SPEAKER: Ms Porter, a supplementary.

MS PORTER: Minister, how will extra funding improve equity and access for students?

DR BOURKE: I thank the member for her question. As the member may be aware, this government already provides \$40 million in funding to support vocational education and training outcomes in the ACT, with the CIT guaranteeing a training place to 15 to 24-year-olds, providing fee assistance to people—

Mr Smyth interjecting—

MR SPEAKER: Mr Smyth, you are now warned for interjecting.

DR BOURKE: on Centrelink benefits and people suffering economic hardship, and offering subsidised places to all Canberrans. As a result we are on track to delivering our target to halve the number of working-age Canberrans without certificate III-above qualifications.

The implementation of the national partnership will give working-age Canberrans even greater access to programs like those, with further subsidised places. The introduction of a national entitlement for training means that post-school to pension-age Canberrans who do not have a certificate III or higher qualification will be offered subsidised places to get such a qualification. These entitlement places will not just promote the career prospects of students by targeting areas of local skill shortage; they will also improve overall services in the community.

Another great improvement will be that the up-front costs for students undertaking higher level qualifications are set to be reduced, with the extension of HECS-style income contingent loans to AQF 5 and 6 level places. This means that more Canberrans will find it easier to enter into diploma and advanced diploma degree courses, with the extended VET FEE-HELP scheme set to cover courses worth up to \$5,000 from next year.

The ACT government wants to continue to ensure that Canberra is the learning capital. We want more people qualified and all of us to be more productive.

MR HARGREAVES: A supplementary.

MR SPEAKER: Yes, Mr Hargreaves.

MR HARGREAVES: Minister, what will be the impact on the training providers in the ACT?

DR BOURKE: In regard to private training providers, I believe that the commonwealth government's stated outcomes about transparency and efficiency will also have to be considered. I believe that these particular outcomes will have a big impact on the training sector but I think that ultimately they will help to ensure that training funding is going where it is needed.

I welcome reforms that provide for better measurement of total VET activity, like the introduction of a unique student identifier and better government-to-government information sharing. This is the type of reform around information sharing that helps drive rigorous policy development that helps properly target funding where it is needed and that will, hopefully, maximise our productivity and prosperity in the long term.

I am aware of concerns about the commonwealth's reform agenda and market-style corporate agenda effect. I am determined to see that we will never witness in the ACT a situation like that in Victoria, where VET sector reforms have stalled and run into deep problems.

Students, current and future, will also be happy to know that the slated transparency improvements look to be a big step forward, hopefully helping students make the informed choice about where they want to undertake their training.

Unlike those opposite, this government is committed to positioning Canberra's public training sector, including of course CIT, to thrive in this complex and changing training environment. As I have said previously, we must make sure that the CIT can continually deliver the best training to students. CIT must be able to meet the needs and expectations of both the local industry and the community. With the national partnership's focus on a national training entitlement, this gives a great opportunity for the CIT to build on the work that they are doing for equity groups in our community.

I really think this is a great opportunity to build on the care and support CIT provides for disadvantaged students, like the excellent alternative year 12 certificate pathways courses.

MR DOSZPOT: A supplementary, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: Yes, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, with reference to the vocational education sector, Mr Barr, your predecessor in the education portfolio, said that the option of retaining the status quo for the CIT was not an option, yet yesterday you chose that as exactly your option. How do you explain the backflip that has occurred as opposed to what Mr Barr was saying?

DR BOURKE: The government is keen to see further integration in tertiary education in the ACT. We have put on hold, as I explained yesterday, the UCIT proposal, and that will now be a matter for the next Assembly.

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

Business—development

Debate resumed.

MS PORTER (Ginninderra) (3.06): I thank members for their contributions to the debate. Of course Mr Smyth continued his negative harping, carping and whining that so typifies his behaviour and it is such a pity that he has such little grace. I realise that the opposition are still stuck in their negative groove that they cannot get out of and I understand—

Mr Seselja: On a point of order, Mr Speaker, I would like you to rule on whether or not Ms Porter's tirade against Mr Smyth is a personal reflection and therefore against the standing orders.

MR SPEAKER: This is an interesting question you put to me, Mr Seselja. If I go down this path, we are going to set a very different standard in this chamber to how it has been conducted for the last 3½ years. Ms Porter, I would ask you to focus on the matter of the motion and less on Mr Smyth.

MS PORTER: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I would just note, with your indulgence, that there was a lot of debate from the opposition that was stuck in the past. Negativity is always damaging to confidence in the ACT and damaging to our economy. I note that in the last debate, before the one that I am now closing, Mr Smyth said that after the election the Canberra Liberals will be in a position to introduce their budget. We should be very afraid of that if it should ever take place, which I should not think it would, because it is like putting the fox in charge of the chook house.

I have got some more comments about Mr Smyth's former employment under Peter Reith who was influential in the Howard years but I suppose, Madam Assistant Speaker, you will probably disallow that, given that previous ruling. So I just remind members that he used to work for Mr Reith and say that we should be very afraid should he ever become our Treasurer. The success of business programs and a positive economic environment across Canberra is aptly demonstrated—

Mr Hargreaves interjecting—

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Ms Le Couteur): Mr Hargreaves, please be quiet.

MS PORTER: Thank you. Successive business programs and the positive economic environment across Canberra are aptly demonstrated by the arboretum, which anyone can see on our skyline, contrasting with the desert of economic despair in heritage

from the Canberra Liberals. And let us not forget that this wonderful asset to the ACT is very good for our economy but additionally very good for our wellbeing and, of course, the environment. It is well loved and appreciated by all Canberrans and is especially supported by the Canberra business community. But still there is no support from the Canberra Liberals, I am afraid.

Before closing, I would like to thank all Canberra businesses and entrepreneurs who do so much to contribute towards our social capital in this city as well as the economy. If you go anywhere in this city you will see the evidence of corporate citizens. This contribution, of course, not only adds to our wellbeing but also to the economy. I know that those opposite do not appreciate public art. However, there are many examples of the private sector's contribution to art in this city. Of course, all of us that work in this city are aware of the ways that business assists in making Civic a more vibrant place to do business. Again, we have a direct economic effect. Under this minister, this government is setting a positive agenda for business to develop and grow in the ACT, in which we can all take pride, in contrast to what those opposite offer, which gives nobody any confidence.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Schools—Catholic

MR DOSZPOT (Brindabella) (3.10): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) Catholic Schools Week is being celebrated across all NSW and ACT Catholic schools from 29 April to 5 May with the theme Faith in Every Student;
- (b) Catholic schools educate 20 percent of students Australia wide and 29 percent of children in ACT schools in 23 primary schools and six high schools and colleges and this represents nearly one third of all school students in the ACT;
- (c) the ACT government has continued to deliver fewer resources to Catholic schools with the ACT having twice the resource gap between government and Catholic schools compared to the national average;
- (d) Commonwealth government funding is the lowest in the country to ACT Catholic schools and Territory funding is among the lowest; and
- (e) recent efforts by the ACT Catholic Education Office to provide additional facilities in the Gungahlin area with the construction of a new senior college at Throsby has been subject to Government tardiness and bureaucratic bungles that have delayed construction of the school; forced relocation to another site and increased costs in planning and construction; and

- (2) calls on the ACT government to:
- (a) acknowledge the significant contribution, in both financial investment and educational outcomes, that ACT schools make to the education of ACT children;
 - (b) apologise to ACT families for the unnecessary delays and additional costs that failure to progress the construction of John Paul College has caused;
 - (c) explain the variation between ACT public school funding which is higher than any jurisdiction in Australia and funding to ACT Catholic and independent schools which is among the lowest of all States; and
 - (d) provide assurances that no ACT school will be disadvantaged if the recommendations of the Gonski Review are implemented.

This week, Catholic schools around the ACT and New South Wales are celebrating Catholic Schools Week. As usual, there is a theme, and this year's theme is faith in every student. I was privileged to join the staff and the students at St Michael's, Kaleen, this morning, for breakfast to celebrate this important event in the Catholic schools calendar. I am happy to point out that my colleagues Mr Seselja and Mr Coe were also there, as was Ms Hunter and the minister for education, Dr Bourke. I think that faith in every student is a very apt sentiment and one that could easily be translated across the entire ACT education sector, because it is indeed important that the government has faith in every student and for the ACT students in every school to have faith that the education system in this territory delivers the very best education that it can for them.

According to the latest school census statistics, there are 13,378 students in Catholic systemic primary, high schools and colleges, and 4,170 students in independent, congregational, Catholic schools. Collectively, that means approximately 29 per cent, moving close to one-third, of all students in the ACT are educated at a Catholic school. And their numbers are growing. With a new primary school starting in Harrison and the eventual construction of John Paul college at Nicholls, together with strong growth in the schools at Amaroo, Aranda and west Belconnen and kindergarten enrolments the strongest they have been for several years, the proportion of total ACT students will continue to expand above the current 29 per cent. By comparison, the national average for Catholic school students is 20 per cent.

So it is fair to say that on any measure, the Catholic education sector is a significant contributor to the education of ACT students. It is also fair to say that there is a transparent lack of fairness in how successive Labor governments have treated ACT Catholic schools. ACT Catholic schools have twice the resource gap between government and Catholic schools compared to the national average. If you look at the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, ACARA, financial data from My School 3, it shows that ACT Catholic schools receive \$1,812 per capita funding from the ACT government. If you combine both federal and state funding, ACT Catholic schools receive a total of \$7,364 per capita funding, compared to \$12,479 per capita funding to ACT public schools. So we have 29 per cent of children

in ACT families enrolled in schools that operate on over \$5,000 per capita less funding. And even if you take into consideration parent contributions, the gap is still about 20 per cent less than government schools. Year on year, it adds up to considerably fewer resources available to students attending non-government schools.

If one looks at NAPLAN results, ACT Catholic schools are also performing well and performing well in a jurisdiction that is generally regarded as having among the best NAPLAN results in all year levels. So it is understandable that the Catholic Education Office repeatedly put budget submissions highlighting the inequities in the current funding model. Each year, they have been ignored. Having done so, then they got on with the job of making a significant contribution to the educational outcomes of ACT students.

I wonder then what their reaction might have been to the minister for education's comments in the *Canberra Times* recently when the February ACT school census results were published. As members may know, the ACT is unique in the percentage of students who attend non-government schools. Last year, non-government schools accounted for 51 per cent of all high school students attending ACT schools. In doing so, the ACT became the first jurisdiction in Australian history to record a majority of high school students attending non-government schools, suggesting parents were having a crisis of confidence in the public school system.

The headline in the *Canberra Times*, reporting on this year's results, was "Government schools claw back enrolments". The article was based around the theme that ACT government schools had addressed the drift to the non-government sector, with the February census results showing there had been an increase of 1,064 government school enrolments, compared to 328 non-government school enrolments. The article went on to say, incorrectly, that 51.8 per cent of students were now enrolled in government high schools, compared with 49.6 per cent last year. I might add it also noted, correctly, that the non-government sector increase of 1.2 per cent was all in Catholic systemic schools. Minister Bourke, in commenting on the results, said, "The results are a win for government schools," and heaped praise on former education minister Barr for "recognising the need to bolster community confidence in the government school sector".

He is wrong, on several counts. For a start, if I were a member of the Catholic Education Office or the Association of Independent Schools or a parent of a child at an ACT non-government school and I heard that comment from the ACT education minister, I would be worried and probably highly offended. As shadow minister for education, I am proud to support all schools in the ACT, both government and non-government. I would have thought, for a start, that the ACT education minister was also supposed to represent all schools in the ACT.

Education is not a sporting competition and there should not be winners and losers. Yet the minister clearly stated, "The results are a win for government schools." Exactly what did he mean by that comment? And had the results been different, would he have been moved to claim it as a win for non-government schools? No, I do not think he would have, because, in his thinking, he does not consider himself the education minister for non-government schools. And neither did his predecessor, who

was fond of quoting the term “blazer schools”, although he was modest enough to admit it was not an original line. But it summed up nicely his and possibly the Labor Party’s attitude. But I digress.

In the *Canberra Times* article, Dr Bourke went on to suggest that programs and initiatives that were announced last year, such as the government excellence and enterprise policy, were targeted at somehow beating the non-government schools. Surely a more appropriate statement might have been to reflect positively on the growth in the ACT education sector across all schools, public, Catholic and independent. Even the *Canberra Times* editorial a day later pulled him up, pointing out his interpretation of the numbers was, for a start, incorrect and, secondly, suggesting that Canberra’s position as Australia’s most affluent city was far more likely to influence the high level of non-government school enrolments than any government effort or lack thereof, as it went on to say.

Given the treatment that the ACT Catholic Education Office was given over development of the new Catholic college in Gungahlin, I can well believe the minister does not believe he has much, if any, responsibility to or for the Catholic or, indeed, the entire non-government education sector. Just as it was known that there needed to be a government secondary college in Gungahlin, it was also well known there was a shortage of places in Catholic secondary schools for families from the Gungahlin area. Catholic schools in the area on the north side already have high enrolments and the expansion of the suburbs in Gungahlin exacerbated this shortage.

For most of 2010 and 2011, the Catholic Education Office was in discussion with the ACT government to build a Catholic secondary college in the Gungahlin area. During those discussions, they were given firm indications that land would be set aside for a school in the area of Throsby. They were told they would receive a final decision by mid-2011. They did their due diligence and they tested community support. A community meeting in Gungahlin in November 2010 attracted over 300 people from the community. In fact, Mr Seselja, Mr Hanson and I also attended that meeting.

The Catholic Education Office was encouraged by Land and Property Services that the Throsby site would be made available to them by September 2011. Given that date, the Catholic Education Office advised parents that the new school would be able to receive students by 2013. Then parents no doubt made plans based on that knowledge. In fact, more than 500 intentions to enrol were submitted by parents at a second community gathering on 8 September 2011.

What was the government doing? Prevaricating is the polite description, and their explanations were plain obfuscation. Those two words, prevarication and obfuscation, are becoming synonymous with the modus operandi of this government. They did not submit the necessary applications for an environmental assessment in any timely manner. Because the proposed area included patches of yellow box and red gum, superb parrots, golden sun moth and striped legless lizard—all familiar thanks to environmental applications—the development required federal government approval. That requirement is well known.

So why the delay in applying for the necessary approvals? The government could hardly say they did not know that they needed to do that. They could hardly say that they did not know there were red gum and yellow box trees in the area. Such trees are hard to miss. They could hardly claim they did not think about the possibility of superb parrots, legless lizards and golden sun moths because they are frequent listings in any ACT development considerations. The fact is that, for reasons unknown, the application did not proceed when it should have. And indeed it was the ACT Greens who had to remind the government of the need to refer the school site for an environmental protection biodiversity and conservation assessment.

We know of course that in January this year residential development for Throsby was halved and with it went any chance of a school at Throsby. The school will now be built at Nicholls. I do not presume to know what expense the delays and relocations have caused the Catholic Education Office. I do not know what inconvenience this will cause parents in Gungahlin who had planned on a school located in Throsby. But I know it must have caused great angst to both the Catholic Education Office and parents, and clearly there are financial implications.

In summary then, my motion highlights a number of things. Nearly a third of ACT students are educated at Catholic schools. That means significant savings for the public sector. It means reduced pressure on government schools across Canberra. There is a wide variation of support for Catholic schools and government schools, and the gap is wider in the ACT than in any other jurisdiction. Why is that so? There is a blatant and systemic unfairness in how successive ACT Labor governments have treated Catholic schools, and there is no justification for it.

The Gonski review—does Dr Bourke remember that?—provides great opportunity to enhance educational outcomes across all sectors, government and non-government. But the minister needs to demonstrate that he acts for all students and their families in ACT education, irrespective of what school and at what level.

I am aware that the Greens will move an amendment to Dr Bourke's amendments to this motion, and I will reserve my comments on those for later. But we call on this government to acknowledge the significant contributions in both financial investment and educational outcomes that ACT schools make to the education of ACT children. We are calling on the government to apologise to ACT families for the unnecessary delays and additional costs that failure to progress the construction of John Paul college has caused.

We are calling on the government to explain the variation between ACT public school funding, which is higher than any jurisdiction in Australia, and funding to ACT Catholic and independent schools, which is amongst the lowest of all states. And we are calling on the government to provide assurances that no ACT schools will be disadvantaged if the recommendations of the Gonski review are to be implemented.

DR BOURKE (Ginninderra—Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Corrections) (3.25), by leave: I move:

- (1) Omit subparagraph (1)(c).
- (2) Omit subparagraph (1)(d).
- (3) In subparagraph (1)(e), omit all words after “Throsby has been subject to”, substitute “government delays in environmental approval with associated issues around relocation and implications for further planning and construction”.
- (4) Omit subparagraph (2)(b).
- (5) Omit subparagraph (2)(c), substitute:

“(c) continue to work with the Catholic Education Office to deliver new schools and services, including John Paul College;”.
- (6) Omit subparagraph (2)(d), substitute:

“(d) call on the Commonwealth Government to provide assurances that no ACT school will be disadvantaged if the recommendations of the Gonski Review are implemented.”.

This morning I too attended a community breakfast at St Michael’s primary school in Kaleen to celebrate the launch of Catholic Schools Week. I note Mr Doszpot’s acknowledgement of our Assembly colleagues and I would add Ms Porter to that list. Mr Doszpot spent some time this afternoon pointing out the inaccuracies of a recent article in the *Canberra Times*. What he did not point out was that I had been misrepresented in that article by the use of the word “win”. If Mr Doszpot wants to know more about things that are reported that I may have said he can always contact me at any time he chooses.

In my speech to the staff, students and parents I made the following commitments at St Michael’s: as we go into the tough negotiations around the Gonski review of funding, we fight for more funding for all Canberra students, from all sectors. I will ensure that all our education community is informed and has a say in that process. I will continue to work with Catholic schools and with their leadership team at the Catholic Education Office. I will continue to push for opportunities where the Catholic and public sectors can share funded support services, professional development for teachers, infrastructure and resources. I will continue to make sure that the Catholic sector gets a seat at the big table. I will ensure that forums like the Non-government Schools Education Council are bodies whose advice remains well considered.

The ACT government wants all young people in the ACT to be equipped with the education and skills required to lead fulfilling and productive lives. The best way to provide this is by ensuring a quality education is available, regardless of which school our young people attend and regardless of which education sector they attend. During this Catholic Schools Week it is an appropriate time to acknowledge and celebrate the importance of the Catholic education sector in the ACT.

I am looking forward to the commencement of the new secondary campus for the Good Shepherd primary school next year. It will be called John Paul college, named after the great Catholic leader of the 20th century who was instrumental in ecumenical dialogue. There have been delays in progressing the construction of the new campus due to commonwealth environmental assessments which have presented concerns related to threatened species.

The Catholic Education Office originally applied for a direct sale of land in 2004. After going through a considerable part of the process, in November 2005 the office advised the Land Development Agency that the school would not be constructed until 2010 and that it would not be opened until 2011. Under the Education Act 2004—section 83(4)—applications for approval for a school can only be made between two and four years before the proposed opening date. Accordingly, the application lapsed.

The office expressed renewed interest in this original site on 9 June 2010 and reapplied for the site in August 2010. In September 2010 the government canvassed other site options with the Catholic Education Office. However, at that time it indicated a strong preference for part of block 733 in Throsby. The Economic Development Directorate started processing the direct sale application for this site in October 2010. In spite of past environmental assessments, the commonwealth required the ACT to undertake another environmental assessment when approached by the ACT in late 2010 after it received the application for a direct sale.

Because of these environmental concerns and delays, meetings were held between the Director-General of EDD and the Catholic Education Office. The office made clear its new preference was for block 12, section 78 and block 20, section 73, Nicholls. In response to that request, the ACT government is investigating block 12, section 78, Nicholls and block 20, section 73, Nicholls as the potential John Paul college site. We will continue to work with the office to finalise this site.

I would like to commend the Catholic Education Office for their patience and perseverance in this regard. I understand that the Catholic Education Office will seek to register the year 7 cohort of John Paul college on the site of the Mother Teresa school. It will later apply to relocate the secondary campus when an appropriate site is ready. I noted in the *Canberra Times* yesterday that Catherine Rey, the principal of Merici college for the past 10 years, has been appointed foundation principal of John Paul college. I offer her warm congratulations on taking on this new challenge.

Except for those opposite, the ACT has long ago left behind the debate on private versus public schools. Each system provides value and should be appreciated for the rich choice it offers Canberrans. The relatively high numbers of non-government school students in the ACT makes collaboration between sectors even more important. The recognition of the importance and value of the different school sectors in the ACT is reflected in the ACT government's approach to ensure we fund all schools appropriately.

I totally reject the assertion on funding in Mr Doszpot's motion. In fact, this government has delivered record funding to Catholic and independent schools in the

ACT. Over the term of the Stanhope-Gallagher governments funding to our Catholic and independent schools has increased from \$30.7 million in 2001-02 to over \$51.3 million in 2011-12. This is an increase of over 67 per cent, well over CPI increases over this time. The ACT makes these funding decisions on a needs based, per capita assessment. This assessment indicates that Catholic systemic schools in the ACT need higher per capita funding than our independent schools. Therefore, we have provided funding where it is needed most, an approach reinforced by the outcomes of the recent commonwealth review of school funding.

The review of funding for schooling—the Gonski review—was made public on 20 February 2012. It is the first comprehensive review of school funding in nearly 40 years.

Mr Doszpot: So you do know what the Gonski review is?

DR BOURKE: Yes, I do. The review panel concluded that Australia must aspire to have a schooling system that is among the best and every child should have access to the best possible education, regardless of where they live, the income of their family or the school they attend. The ACT government consulted with both the independent and the Catholic sectors in developing ACT submissions to the review last year and continues to consult across the education sectors in the wake of the review's publication.

On 24 February 2012 I hosted a community roundtable of stakeholders, with government and non-government education councils, parents, unions, principals and teachers. Participants welcomed this opportunity and I committed to ongoing consultation. I have recently circulated invitations for a second roundtable to occur later this month. This will again include representatives of all sectors in the ACT.

Since the release of the Gonski review there has been much fear mongering about schools losing funding. The Prime Minister has stated time and time again that no school will be worse off under Gonski. Gonski has provided a platform for reform, responding to the need for changes to school funding that make sure our students do not continue to fall behind other parts of the world, and to reduce the gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students. The ACT looks forward to continuing to work with the Australian government and states and territories to continue the discussions on school funding reform and work to achieve the objective of an equitable, fair and transparent model of funding. In fact, the National Catholic Education Commission have responded to the Gonski report indicating that they too strongly support the calls for additional funding for all students, particularly disadvantaged students.

The ACT has a rich, collaborative culture between school sectors. The education sectors in the ACT work together and cooperate with each other through many avenues. Catholic and independent schools have been recipients of unprecedented levels of investment in schools in recent years, from both the ACT and Australian governments. As with all schools in the ACT, Catholic schools benefited greatly from the funding provided under building the education revolution, with the program delivering on improved learning outcomes for students and teachers.

National partnerships agreed between the ACT and Australian governments have also provided fantastic opportunities for collaboration across sectors to improve outcomes for our young people. The ACT is in the unique position of being able to develop and implement reform in collaboration with all three education sectors. There is a broad stakeholder engagement and commitment to improving educational outcomes in all schools in the ACT.

The ACT Teacher Quality Institute commenced operations last year. The institute brings the teaching community together under one umbrella. The ACT Teacher Quality Institute will ensure that all our teachers—public, Catholic and independent—meet the national teacher professional standards so we can continue to have confidence in the quality of teachers in all ACT schools. Under the literacy and numeracy national partnership a significant range of activity has been implemented in schools progressively based on whole school intervention and leadership training. These activities have been undertaken with the aim of improving evidence-based teaching, whole school engagement with literacy and numeracy and performance monitoring.

Key examples of innovative initiatives under this national partnership developed in local Catholic schools include the introduction of maths bags at St Thomas the Apostle at Kambah to lift the profile and attitude of mathematics within both the student and parent body, the success of the home reading program at St Michael's primary in Kaleen and the success of St Clare of Assisi in Conder's numeracy intervention program. Collaboration across sectors continues to be vital in the implementation of the Australian curriculum. The implementation of the Australian curriculum in the ACT, which commenced last year, is being led by the cross-sectoral Australian Curriculum Implementation Committee.

The ACT community is rightly proud of the quality of our public, Catholic and independent schools in the ACT. Anyone looking for evidence of this quality need look no further than our NAPLAN results. The results are excellent, and a testament to the quality teachers working in ACT schools and the continued focus on school improvement and teacher development across all school sectors. It is very clear that all school sectors in the ACT are strong performers—strong in student numbers, in student success and in working collaboratively to improve outcomes. This government will continue to be a strong supporter of all education sectors.

MS HUNTER (Ginninderra—Parliamentary Leader, ACT Greens) (3.38): I would like to start by adding my support to Catholic Schools Week in the ACT and New South Wales. I very much enjoyed visiting St Michael's primary school in Kaleen this morning. It was a lovely community breakfast with members of the school community and also with a number of fellow MLAs.

As the motion before the Assembly notes, schools in the Catholic education system are very much a part of the neighbourhoods and communities where they are located, with 30 schools and a significant number of students enrolled in them. Many Canberra parents choose to send their children to a variety of different education providers across the ACT at different times of their schooling and for different reasons.

I have frequent meetings and engagements with the Catholic education system, not only during this annual celebration but throughout the year. I always look forward to meeting people there, both as a member of the Assembly and as the ACT Greens spokesperson on education and training. The meetings have included meetings with the Catholic Education Office on a number of occasions. We have discussed the issue of the new college.

As this motion of Mr Doszpot's notes, this college, recently named John Paul college, was originally proposed to be built in Throsby, in the rapidly expanding suburbs of Gungahlin. The ACT Greens were keen to talk with the Catholic Education Office throughout this process, as we were aware of the possible environmental importance of the area and the impacts of development on the proposed site. In fact, it was a motion by my colleague Shane Rattenbury on Throsby and the environmental importance of large areas of Throsby that brought to light the fact that the ACT government had been tardy in pushing forward and getting those commonwealth environmental assessments done.

As we have since found out, the site was deemed unsuitable for development under that commonwealth EPBC legislation. A new site has subsequently been identified in the suburb of Nicholls. Unfortunately, while the decision to build or not build on that specific site was not under the control of the ACT government, as I have said, there were delays that did not help the situation.

The Greens shared the concerns of the Catholic Education Office and the community who have been working towards this school being built in Throsby since at least 2010. With lots of community support and parental expectations raised about future enrolments, the last thing the process needed was unnecessary delays that were not based on substantive environmental, planning and development concerns but were bureaucratic in nature.

Tardiness in referring the site to the commonwealth for environmental assessment certainly threw this whole planning process into disarray. This was a disappointment for all concerned. Many in the Catholic community were, understandably, very upset. They urged the government to acknowledge the hard work that had gone into the original development plan, and to work more closely with all stakeholders in the future to ensure these kinds of avoidable delays are not repeated.

I will continue to keep a close eye on this. A site in Nicholls has now been identified. There are two blocks. One block has been cleared. It has been investigated and there is clean fill on that block, so that is going to be fine to build on. It is the second block that is the concern. It is being tested at the moment. We are all hoping that again it is clean fill—old builders' rubble that is clean, that is not contaminated—that we will find there so that the school can go ahead and building work can commence. It is a very tight time frame. Having spoken to people there at the breakfast this morning, there is concern that it is a tight time frame. But we are all being optimistic that we will find clean fill in that other block and work will commence as soon as possible.

As always, these engagements with the Catholic Education Office and through visits to non-government schools are characterised by friendly and frank conversations regarding a range of issues. While funding is certainly part of those discussions, it is not the only subject. Education is a broad area. Frankly, I for one believe that issues of education, learning, curriculum and community are best served when they are not used as a political football.

We all know that the Gonski report is out and work is underway. We all know that all sectors, government and non-government, are working hard to find new models of funding that are based on fair and equitable access to education for all children and young people. Schools are about the people in them. I have full confidence that everyone is working in good faith to best represent the students, parents, teachers and schools. I hope that all members here could also exercise that same faith.

I would like to see all parties here acknowledge that we are, as a country and here in the territory, moving to a new way of funding education, and that many of the arguments present in this motion may well be null and void in the near future. The lack of clarity around the current funding system is one of the factors that drove the Gonski report and review—that and a perceived lack of equity.

The current funding system is complex, inconsistent, open to differing interpretations and very controversial. I ask that members here today recognise that these arguments are even more complex in a jurisdiction such as the ACT, where we do not have clear-cut lines of socioeconomic status boundaries, and where issues of cross-border population movements are keenly felt.

I do not shy away from the burning issue that the education system is crying out for new ways of funding and for an injection of funds. While we can all be rightly proud of our local schools, we know that more needs to be done to address the educational achievement gap in the ACT. This gap is caused by many factors, but chief amongst them are known factors of disadvantage and equitable access to key services and opportunities. I believe that the inclusion of new ways to address this through targeted funding is a positive and well overdue recommendation, and one that clearly cuts through the outdated “us and them” debates that we have seen in the past.

After the Gonski report was put out there publicly, was released, the Greens were the first party to call for the immediate injection of funds that Mr Gonski suggested was needed to bring Australian education back into competition with the rest of the developed world. And we were the first party to call for the implementation of his recommendations as soon as practically possible. We believe that all parties should think of education funding in new ways and start looking at the bigger picture facing both the territory and the country.

The big picture is this: despite league tables and lots of tests and so forth, the constant measuring contests between schools, the reduced class sizes and a number of issues out there that have caught media attention, we need to be looking at the fact that Australians are falling behind the rest of the OECD in some key areas of literacy and numeracy. We are falling behind in languages. We are struggling with later life career

decisions, especially in the areas of maths and science at the university level. We need to get much larger numbers of young people studying maths and science, particularly young women.

The investment we make in our children and our young people today is an investment in the true sense of the word, an investment in the future. We will see a net profit from this, and we will see that future net profit financially and socially.

I would ask all members to remember that Gonski called for at least \$5 billion to be put into the education system. That was not into part of the education system; it was not one sector against another: it was for the whole education system. The ACT Greens support now, and have always supported, high quality, fair and equitable education for all of our children and young people. We plan on working collaboratively with the other parties in this place to ensure that the proper investment is made in our local schools, an investment that also enriches our local communities.

The time for endless arguments about confusing and what will be old funding models is over. That is why I will not be supporting the full motion put by Mr Doszpot. I will be supporting a significant part of it, but I will be also supporting amendments that have been put forward by the government. We must put the focus of this debate onto the people in schools—the teachers, the students and the families. The arguments should be about educational outcomes, life skills, work preparedness and social inclusion—the whole gamut of things that schools do to enrich not only the children that attend them but also their families. Now it is time to look to the needs of every child and young person in our community and create a world-class education system across all sectors, one that we can be proud of, one that is inclusive of all, and one that delivers the best possible environment for learning.

At this point, I will move the revised amendment that has been circulated in my name. It is an amendment to Dr Bourke's amendment to Mr Doszpot's motion. I move:

In subparagraph (2)(d), after “implemented”, insert “and provide fair and equitable funding to all schools.”.

I have moved this amendment because it is very much in line with what I have just been talking about. We should be getting past those old sectorial types of debates. We need to be looking at, overall, a world-class education system regardless of whether you choose a religious school—a school with a particular Christian philosophy, for instance, or one with an Islamic philosophy—a community-based school such as Blue Gum, a Steiner school, a local government neighbourhood school or one of the many other types of schools that are on offer in the ACT.

We need to look at the whole system. We need to look at the fact that parents do make choices about where their children will be educated, for a whole range of reasons. What we need to ensure from here on in is that we do look at Gonski. It is complicated. It is going to be hard work. We need to make sure that we are going to get the right deal for all schools in the ACT regardless of the sector they sit in—whether it is the Catholic, government or independent sector. We need to make sure that schools do not go backwards in their funding. I know that there is concern in

some sectors where some early calculations have been done about how much may be lost in those sectors.

Dr Bourke mentioned that the Prime Minister had guaranteed that no school would lose any money. We need to make sure that that is the case. And we need to make sure that into the future we are providing funding in a way that recognises that some schools may have a higher proportion of young people and children from a lower socioeconomic background, and some may have higher numbers of children with a disability, and that needs to be acknowledged in the way the school is funded.

We also need to be looking at this issue of achievement gap. It is real. We have had an inquiry in this Assembly. It was not really a huge revelation. It showed us that children who come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds—children who come from Indigenous families, from refugee families—need our support. They need greater support to ensure that they are going to be able to reach a level of education that is going to open the doors of opportunity that most of our young people have access to.

We have a fantastic system here in the ACT. We should be very proud of it, whether it is in the Catholic, independent or government sector. It is a world-class system. But we know that we need to keep an eye on that funding, look at where the assistance needs to go, and make sure that our schools continue to be world class.

Thank you, Mr Doszpot, for bringing on the motion today. I look forward to attending more events this week during Catholic education week. Again, I thank the staff and students who were at St Michael's primary school this morning. There was some great singing, and thank you to all the wonderful staff who got up at 6 o'clock in the morning to go in and cook breakfast for all of us.

MRS DUNNE (Ginninderra) (3:54): I had intended to move an amendment of my own, but I note that Ms Hunter's amendment occupies pretty much the same sort of place. So at this stage I am not proposing to move my amendment. But if for some reason the alliance falls over and the amendments fall over as well, I will seek the indulgence of the Assembly to move that amendment later in the song.

Catholic Schools Week is important for the community and the ACT. I was away over the weekend—I was in Lismore—and I noticed in the parish bulletins the extolling of the importance of Catholic Schools Week. I pay tribute to the Catholic schools of Lismore run by the Presentation Sisters and the Marist Brothers, who provided education to me, my brother and thousands of people through the schools there. And I want to pay tribute to the Catholic schools here in the ACT, who have provided excellent education, over many years, to my family and to many other families across the ACT.

Catholic schools have a particularly important place in my family. I make no secret of the importance that I place on Catholic education for those people who choose it. In this day and age, it is not just Catholics who choose a Catholic education for their children. When I was doorknocking recently, the number of people I came across who had chosen to send their children to the local parochial school in the area where I was

doorknocking was quite marked. Many of those people were doing so not because of their traditional commitment to Catholic education but because they recognised the benefits of a Catholic education even if they themselves do not entirely sign up to all the tenets of what the Catholic Church believes and teaches.

It is a very important message in the ACT. As Mr Doszpot has said, 29 per cent of all children in the ACT are educated in Catholic schools. They make a significant contribution to the development of our young people.

I want to particularly emphasise the issue of fair funding for Catholic schools, which was the issue that I was going to move an amendment on. I note that Ms Hunter has an amendment that goes part of the way, but it does just seem to skate around the edges. She says “provide fair and equitable funding to all schools”. This is a motion about Catholic schools and the contribution that Catholic schools make to the ACT community. It is interesting that the Greens cannot quite bring themselves to come out and say, “Yes, we think that Catholic schools should receive fair funding.” That is essentially what my amendment would do.

We have to hark back to debates that we have had in this place in the past and ask the Greens whether they have resiled from the election policies of the 2010 federal election, when they spoke in very derisive terms of funding for non-government schools in general. We had an odd arrangement where Bob Brown, depending on which audience he was speaking to, would have a different message about what his views were on Catholic and non-government education and the extent to which it should be funded.

At the time many people in Catholic education circles raised concerns about Greens policies. They believed that Greens policies, if they were implemented, would force closures or at least cause substantial increases in fees and change the ability of Catholic schools to be genuinely Catholic and, in the words of the then head of the Catholic Education Office in Melbourne, greatly diminish the ability “to help the poor and the marginalised, to serve the neediest students”. He said that the cuts proposed by the Greens would “flow through to cuts to our current programs for recent arrivals and refugees in Catholic schools”. He said:

We estimate the Greens funding policy would cut \$427 million from Catholic schools including more than \$110 million taken from Victorian Catholic schools

...

These were the concerns at the 2010 federal election. It is encouraging to hear Ms Hunter say warm words about Catholic schools in the ACT, but the most important thing that we could see from the Greens is a complete turning of their backs on the published policies of the Greens at the time of the 2010 election when they proposed to take money from the non-government sector. I would like to hear Ms Hunter, and I am sure that my colleagues would be prepared to give her leave, stand and unequivocally dissociate herself from these policies and make a strong policy statement in favour of equitable funding for Catholic schools and independent schools—not just warm words, but a genuine commitment to that. At the moment, as things currently stand, the Greens have a strong record of being opposed to equitable

funding for non-government and Catholic schools. I would like to see a change in that policy clearly enunciated by the leader of the Greens in this debate here today.

The ACT Catholic school system is under considerable pressure. Mr Doszpot has touched on it most eloquently in his exposition of the complete shambles that we have seen over the development of a Catholic high school in Gungahlin and the on-again, off-again Throsby move to Nicholls. We do not really know what the implications of that will be for the cost of the building and the threat to enrolments, at least in the short term.

It is all very well for Dr Bourke to welcome the announcement of the new principal for John Paul college in Gungahlin, but there is very little succour for the Gungahlin parents in the words of Dr Bourke. I notice that by Dr Bourke's gutting of this amendment, he has taken out all of those important elements, including an explanation to the families of Gungahlin and an apology to the families of Gungahlin about the unnecessary delays and the costs of the failure to progress the construction of John Paul college on its original site.

Some of the other elements of Mr Doszpot's motion which Dr Bourke proposes to remove are also of considerable importance. The government does not want to explain the variation between ACT public school funding, which is higher than any other jurisdiction, and the funding of Catholic schools and independent schools, which is among the lowest in all states and territories.

It is worth noting—it is something that has been raised with me, and I have raised it in this place on a number of occasions—the problems that the Catholic Education Office for the Canberra and Goulburn diocese has had. Schools of similar sorts, if they are over the border in New South Wales, are much better funded than the ones in the ACT, simply because of the low ACT government funding.

The classic example is St Benedict's in Narrabundah compared to the Catholic schools across the border in Queanbeyan. They have a similar demographic and a similar socioeconomic background, but the schools in Queanbeyan are much better funded because they are funded through the New South Wales Department of Education at a much higher rate than the 17 per cent and declining rate that we see in the ACT. Dr Bourke has talked about the funding going from X million dollars to Y million dollars and said that we have never seen a bigger increase, but in real terms, as a proportion of the amount spent on Catholic education in the ACT, the amount of funding received from the ACT government is in decline. It has been in decline ever since the Stanhope government was elected in 2001, and no ACT Labor education minister has been prepared to address that decline.

That is why we should be providing fairer funding for Catholic and independent schools in the ACT. This is a matter that the Canberra Liberals will support most strongly.

MR SESELJA (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (4.04): Mr Speaker, I put on the record at the outset that the Canberra Liberals unequivocally support all sectors of education in the ACT. Today we express our support particularly for the Catholic

sector as part of Catholic Schools Week. I think that the Liberal Party in the ACT is the only party in the Assembly that actually supports the rights of Catholic and independent schools to exist, to thrive and to have fair funding. There is no doubt about it.

I will just briefly touch on the alternative views that are in this place. There is the view of this Chief Minister in relation to non-government schools in the ACT. This is what she voted for and this is what she believes. She believes that the growth of private education is facilitating a fragmentation of Australia's children along ethnic, cultural, and particularly religious lines. That is a disgraceful sentiment. It is a particularly hostile sentiment towards non-government schools.

In this Catholic Schools Week I think it is important that we are honest. We have Meredith Hunter and Chris Bourke going along to Catholic Schools Week functions and pretending that they support Catholic schools when they do not. Their funding policies do not support them. Their statements do not support them. The way that their parties have expressed their disdain for non-government and Catholic schools is clear. As I said, the Chief Minister supports that statement that "the growth of private education is facilitating the fragmentation of Australia's children along ethnic, cultural and religious lines".

Ms Gallagher: Point of order. I wonder whether Mr Seselja will table the document that he is reading from to assist this debate.

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Hargreaves): Mr Seselja, you have been invited to do that. It is your call. If that invitation is not accepted, it is up to the Chief Minister to—

MR SESELJA: I am happy to as long as I can hang on to the document, because I will be referring to it. So I am happy to table it, as long as I can get a copy immediately. Happy to table it. I will need leave—

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Hang on, Mr Seselja.

MR SESELJA: Can we stop the clock?

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: I have already stopped the clock. If it is acceptable to the Chief Minister, Mr Seselja could table it at the conclusion of his speech.

MR SESELJA: I am happy to do that.

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: But you did in fact—

Ms Gallagher: No, because I need to respond to it.

MR SESELJA: I need to hold on to the document, so I will table it when I am finished with it.

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: I am quite happy to leave the clock stopped while you get the copy back to you.

MR SESELJA: I am happy to table the document when I am finished with it. I will table it when I am finished with it. When I am finished referring to it, I will table it. I have not finished. As soon as I am done quoting from it—

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Okay.

MR SESELJA: I will then table it.

MR SESELJA: And there will still be some time in my speech to go.

MR SPEAKER: Mr Seselja, that will be fine.

MR SESELJA: Thank you.

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Thank you very much. Resume the clock.

MR SESELJA: Thank you, Mr Assistant Speaker. This is what the Chief Minister voted for at the Labor Party conference:

The growth of private education is facilitating the fragmentation of Australia's children along ethnic, cultural and particularly religious lines.

This was quoted in a press release from Mrs Dunne, but I am happy to table the press release because it is on public record. I seek leave to table it now.

MR SPEAKER: You do not need leave, Mr Seselja, I do not think. You have agreed already to table it, so thank you.

MR SESELJA: I table the following paper:

Non-government schools—Funding—Copy of press release by Mrs Dunne, dated 31 July 2006.

That is what the Labor Party thinks about non-government schools and about Catholic schools as part of that non-government sector. They believe they are divisive. We do not believe they are divisive. We believe that parents should be able to make those choices. They should be supported in those choices.

We heard the Greens' position during the last federal election. They are hostile, not only in terms of funding but in terms of control. The Greens have gone even further than the Labor left in saying that control should be taken away from non-government schools in actually running their schools as they see fit, which would completely undermine the Catholic sector and the independent sector.

Mr Speaker, we have a situation where the Labor Party and the Greens have staked out the agreement. I think it would be good if they were honest. I think it would be good if, when they go to these events, they were honest about their position. They do not support extra funding and that is why the Labor Party has given such a poor level

of support to non-government schools here in the ACT. That is why ACT non-government schools continue to get the lowest level of government support in the country, as Mr Doszpot has outlined.

Let us just be honest about it. If that is your position, then be honest about it. Do not hide from it. Do not pretend your position is something different. If your position has changed, recant your previous votes and statements, back it up and give fairer funding. But until you do that with actions, we can only assume that that continues to be this government's position, as expressed by the Chief Minister in her vote, and the Greens' position, as expressed in their policy documents that were put out before the last federal election.

I do want to say a few words about what a wonderful sector the Catholic sector is and the wonderful contribution it makes. It has educated tens of thousands—in fact, hundreds of thousands—of people over the years here in Canberra who are mostly not wealthy. They are people who just have chosen to send their children for a Catholic education. That is something that we believe in, that we believe they should have the right to do. We believe they should have the right to do that with real, genuine government support.

We know that there are many activities occurring for Catholic Schools Week. We know that Good Shepherd in Amaroo have celebrated with a cooking competition where students had to cook dishes using only two ingredients from the school's garden. We know there is Holy Spirit primary in Nicholls who use Catholic Schools Week as an occasion for their robotics team, the small particles, to show off their skills at the G-Gungahlin shopping centre. They participated at the international RoboCup competition in Turkey last July.

I would also like to acknowledge some of the recent activities of some of our Catholic schools. At St Mary MacKillop college, my old school, principal Michael Lee has been nominated by the college as secondary principal of the year in the inaugural Australian awards for outstanding teaching and school leadership. These events are conducted by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership. I think that Michael Lee has shown some outstanding leadership at MacKillop college.

We know that at MacKillop college Nelson Mendonca was the college dux who scored an outstanding ATAR of 99.85, one of the highest in the territory, and that 18 per cent of students received an ATAR above 90, with 45 per cent earning over 80. Well done to MacKillop college, which continues to do good things in the Tuggeranong Valley.

St Anthony's parish primary school in Wanniasa recently had a link up with Commander Dan Burbank at the international space station. Peter and Loretta Menham and Leah Malpas and her team of teachers all worked hard to coordinate this extraordinary event.

We have got St Thomas the Apostle Catholic primary school in Kambah, which is also my old primary school. It has a wonderful school community. We know that they will be holding their Mother's Day on 4 and 10 May. In their words, "Mother's Day is

so big at St Thomas the Apostle that one celebration is never enough.” Hear, hear! Well done to St Thomas the Apostle school in Kambah which continues to do a great job.

I turn to St Edmund’s college in Griffith. We know that a group of staff and students will be leaving soon for a Japanese cultural exchange. Leading the group to Japan will be Mrs Thuy Coombs. This tour will bring to a close Thuy’s teaching at St Edmund’s. The school has noted that Thuy has been a vital member of the languages staff for 10 years and she has made an outstanding contribution in the classroom and as a tutor throughout that time.

Merici college in Braddon is keeping alive a tradition that goes back to 1998. Sixteen Merici girls took part in this year’s Anzac Day service in a chilly but sunny Queanbeyan. The list goes on. St Peter and Paul primary school, where my children attended, celebrated ANZAC Day over the holidays. Stage 3 children attended the annual ANZAC Day ceremony at Eddison Park run by the Woden branch of the RSL. The children showed due reverence and respect for those who have fought and died for us. Part of the ANZAC ceremony is an essay competition run throughout the local primary schools. This year Daniel G from 5/6S came second, so congratulations to him.

St Francis of Assisi primary school in Calwell, which Mr Doszpot and I visited very recently, had a walkathon on 13 April to raise money towards the purchase of more laptops to be used by students at the school. For every \$5 raised, students had a chance to win lots of fabulous prizes, including an iPad, bike, books, games, gift vouchers and more. I would like to thank Dave Austin, the principal at St Francis, for the very warm welcome we received from him recently and from a number of the teachers and students who welcomed us to the school.

St Clare of Assisi primary school in Conder will be having their walkathon on 25 May to raise funds for worthwhile projects. Past fundraisers have been used to purchase senior play equipment, purchase iPods for student use, buy extra readers and books and buy new sports equipment. Principal Greg Walker, I think, does a great job at St Clare of Assisi primary school in Conder.

In the short time I have left I could go on and on about the various schools. They are part of the overall education system in Canberra. We have some wonderful government schools. We have some wonderful Catholic and independent schools. We believe that all of those sectors should be supported. We believe that the Catholic and independent sector has been let down. We do not just tolerate them like other parties. We embrace them. We think they make a major contribution to our education system, and may it long continue. (*Time expired.*)

DR BOURKE (Ginninderra—Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Corrections) (4.14): I would like to turn to the point of misrepresentation by Mr Doszpot. To be absolutely crystal clear about this, about the *Canberra Times* article of 16 April on school census figures, he claimed that I said the growth in student numbers in public schools was a win. Nowhere in the recorded interview I gave to the journalist did I refer to a win. It is not part of my language.

I was happy that there is a sign of confidence in this public system. However, I do not view the census as a matter of winners and losers. In the article the journalist used “win” as an interpretation wrongly attributed to me but not as a direct quote from me. However, the editorial the next day used “win” as though it was a direct quote from me, which it was not. My office raised this issue with the journalist on the same day, 17 April.

With regard to Mr Seselja’s assertions that the Liberals are the only party that supports Catholic schools in the Assembly, I find this baseless assertion highly offensive. I might as well say that, like so many of his claims in the Assembly, Mr Seselja’s statement that I only pay lip-service to the Catholic and independent schools has no substance. Since coming to government Labor has had a long history of providing additional funding to the non-government sector for new computers, capital infrastructure, disability services and teacher development.

As minister, I want that tradition to continue because, unlike these divisive, sectarian members on the other side—Mr Seselja and Mr Doszpot—I want the best outcome for all Canberra students, whatever school or whatever sector they come from. The tradition I do not want is Mr Seselja’s and the Liberal’s tradition of sectarianism, their tradition of smearing and their captivity to old ideas, a captivity of divisiveness.

MR DOSZPOT (Brindabella) (4.17): I find this part of the debate unbelievable. We are hearing both from Dr Bourke and from Ms Hunter the words “we support independent schools; we support Catholic education”. And yet, if that is the case, how is it that out of a very simple motion here today, which is in support of Catholic schools week, which is in support of all education in the ACT, you cannot bring yourself, Dr Bourke, to vote—

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Hargreaves): Through the chair, please, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Dr Bourke cannot bring himself, despite his eloquent comments about how supportive he and his party are of Catholic and independent education, and indeed all education in Canberra, to support this motion. We have moved this motion based on all schools in Canberra, be they government, independent or Catholic schools. We do concentrate slightly on the Catholic element because of Catholic schools week, but we have a motion that basically looks at showing support, and showing that support through this Assembly here this afternoon, for all schools.

In my motion I call on the Assembly to note five points. Yet the thought police have gone to work here and with three of them have said, “No, we are not accepting that, that or that.” Let us look at the points they would not accept. Point (c) states:

the ACT Government has continued to deliver fewer resources to Catholic schools with the ACT having twice the resource gap between government and Catholic schools compared to the national average ...

This is a fact, yet they will not accept the fact. They do not even want it noted that that is a reality. Point (d) should also be omitted, according to Dr Bourke, and it states:

Commonwealth government funding is the lowest in the country to ACT Catholic schools and territory funding is amongst the lowest ...

This is reality. Yet the thought police of the ACT Labor Party, or the left wing of the ACT Labor Party—I am not quite sure which part Dr Bourke belongs to—want to deny this. This is the reality that we are facing. The motion calls on the Assembly to “note” the above. It is not even something that we are calling on the government to do. They cannot even allow us to put forward what is a reality—a fact of life, Dr Bourke, despite your flowery discussions regarding this topic.

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Through the chair, please, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Then in the motion we have five points calling on the ACT government to do certain things, and four of those points are deemed unacceptable by Dr Bourke and the Labor Party. The only one they have agreed to is point (a):

acknowledge the significant contribution, in both financial investment and educational outcomes, that ACT schools make to the education of ACT children ...

We put that forward and they have agreed with that point. But point (b) they refuse to contemplate:

apologise to ACT families for the unnecessary delays and additional costs that failure to progress the construction of John Paul College has caused ...

That is also a fact of life. Things have happened due to a lack of will, if you like, on the part of this government. To be totally fair to Dr Bourke, perhaps it was not his doing. But his predecessor—maybe successor, I do not know—did not move heaven and earth, to coin a phrase, to ensure for the families in that area that the construction of John Paul College happened.

The government also want to delete point (c) of my motion:

explain the variation between ACT public school funding which is higher than any jurisdiction in Australia and funding to ACT Catholic and independent schools which is among the lowest of all States ...

Again, this is a reality. It is a fact of life. We are simply asking for an explanation, but it is obviously impossible for this government and this minister to explain. But it does not stand the test of what this government will vote for.

Our final point (d) is again something that I think all schools would want to know about. We are calling on the ACT government to:

provide assurances that no ACT school will be disadvantaged if the recommendations of the Gonski Review are implemented.

This is not even sectoral, Dr Bourke. This is not even what you are saying that we are divisive on. In fact, quite the opposite: what we are trying to do is to bring the needs of the government and non-government education sectors in the ACT very much into focus. We are asking for the ACT government to provide assurances that no ACT school will be disadvantaged if the recommendations of the Gonski review are implemented.

So here today Canberra families are obviously being given a clear choice about who supports education equity in Canberra. We see here a government that is walking away from Catholic schools, closely followed, if not pushed, by their coalition partners, the Greens—all very eloquent in their flowery words of support for the various education sectors in Canberra, but when it comes to the reality of putting this to a vote, all that wonderful flowery, motivational, aspirational talk just disappears. We get “No, no, we can’t vote for that.” That is what is coming through loud and clear.

Both the Greens and the government have refused to acknowledge that schools need fairer funding. I think Ms Hunter alluded to it, but when it comes down to black and white she refuses to accept that. She refuses to accept that what we currently have is unfair funding. Instead, Dr Bourke and Ms Hunter prefer to leave it all up to the federal government, for when and if the federal government decides to move to change things. Dr Bourke said before that he understands what the Gonski review is about. But I think his objection to this motion again highlights his lack of understanding of the Gonski report. In pushing all the onus onto the federal government, they fail to realise that funding for ACT schools is made up of both federal and territory funding, and any changes delivered as a consequence of the Gonski report will have to have the approval of and the buy in of the states and territories. You cannot just say, “We won’t support your motion because this is a federal issue.” It is a federal-started issue but one that will involve all of the states and territories.

I am not quite sure what else I can add to this. I am just dumbfounded that our colleagues here in this Assembly refuse to face the reality. As Mr Seselja has pointed out, the ACT Liberals stand for fairness and equity for all schools. We support freedom of choice and we support government, non-government, independent and Catholic schools. Today the ACT Legislative Assembly has given Canberra families a clear choice. Now they know which members of this Assembly and which parties of this Assembly support all education in Canberra.

We obviously will not be supporting the amendments. The amendments make a mockery of the motion that has been put before the Assembly today. I would strongly urge our counterparts to reconsider. We always debate things. Part of the beauty of the Assembly is that at times we have a sharing of ideas. But this is not a sharing of ideas; this is simply almost thought-police-like work: “That’s unacceptable, that’s unacceptable and that’s unacceptable.” This government is not listening to what the people out there want.

So today I guess the ACT Legislative Assembly will be giving Canberra families a clear choice between those who support and those who do not support all education in the ACT.

MS GALLAGHER (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Minister for Health and Minister for Territory and Municipal Services) (4.27): I will just speak briefly. I was not intending to speak on this motion but, in light of the accusations levelled at me by the Leader of the Opposition, it is important to put on the record my support for non-government education in the ACT.

I thought we had got to a position where we were trying to remove the us versus them line and the traditional lines of “Labor doesn’t support non-government schools and the Liberals do” and the—

Mr Doszpot interjecting—

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Hargreaves): Order, Mr Doszpot!

Mr Doszpot interjecting—

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Mr Doszpot, there is a list.

Mr Doszpot interjecting—

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Chief Minister, resume your seat. Mr Doszpot, I asked you twice and you did not comply with my request to you, twice. And the third time, the next time, you are going to join this list. Am I clear, please? Chief Minister, you have the floor.

MS GALLAGHER: Thank you. I must say that I think there must be a direction that every time I open my mouth in this place any Liberal in the room has to start screaming so that I cannot be heard. We see it all through the day. It is just disruptive and disrespectful.

I thought we had moved past that divide that has existed and been stirred up every now and again. We usually see it around election time, from my memory of being in this place. Usually about six months before an election the Liberal Party start going out and saying, “The Labor Party doesn’t support non-government schools.” They have no evidence for it. Nothing in the work that we have done to support non-government schooling over the past few terms would support that.

In relation to some of the funding issues, I will go back and have a look at when the Liberals last governed in this town, because my memory is that some of those serious funding issues arrived for historical reasons. Yes, we can try and address that. If we had loads more money I think we would as an Assembly pour it into educating our children and making sure that, regardless of where those children go to school, they get access to the best quality education ever.

There is a very important role for public education. Public education is the safety net of all education. It is, Mrs Dunne. You may roll your eyes, but for people who—

Mrs Dunne interjecting—

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Mrs Dunne, order! I have asked you before, and I will not ask you again. That is it.

MS GALLAGHER: For people who cannot afford private education or on their own beliefs do not want private education, it is essential that we have strong public education. It underpins all education. If you have a strong public education system it will benefit the non-government school system as well.

I really think it is time to move past the finger-pointing of who supports whom in education and to just generally accept that every single member in this place, all 17 of us, support education and educational choice. On the Labor Party's side—and I imagine it is similar on the Liberal Party's side—we also believe that public education is there as the underpinning of all education. It always has been and it will continue to be so. We have a strong public education system in the ACT. We have a strong private education system in the ACT. We have non-government school advisory education committees; we have a government school education committee. We talk with the non-government sector all the time. We work collaboratively. We sort through issues when they arise.

Maybe this is the firing pistol: the Liberals have finally woken up. There is an election on and there are going to be the knockers and there are going to be the builders—the ones that actually want to get on and do something and then the ones that want to tear it all down, criticise and complain and not come up with any of the solutions. But I think we all in this place, in Catholic education week of all weeks, should stand together, united. Mr Doszpot, I believe your motion was drafted precisely in a way to enable you to deliver the “us versus them” speech that all of you have come in here and given. That is the reality. That is why it was drafted that way. That is why there are amendments.

It is a real shame that in Catholic education week this is the way you behave. We imagine it will continue all the way to the election. But don't you dare go out there and allege that the Labor Party does not support non-government education. You can say it in here as much as you like, but you cannot go out there and perpetuate that myth. It is not true. I support education for all children in the territory, regardless of where their parents may choose to have those children educated. I have one of my children educated in a non-government school at the moment, because that is the right thing for her. It is not the right thing necessarily for the others. So I make those choices based on the needs of my children. I will continue to do that, as can other parents.

Isn't it a bit of a sad day when, in Catholic education week, the Assembly cannot even agree on the fact that we all support Catholic schools?

Ms Hunter's amendment to **Dr Bourke's** amendment agreed to.

Question put:

That **Dr Bourke's** amendment, as amended, 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.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Disability services—parking

MS LE COUTEUR (Molonglo) (4.37): I seek leave to amend my notice of motion.

Leave granted.

MS LE COUTEUR: I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) that there is a high need for disabled parking spaces in Canberra as Australian Bureau of Statistics statistics show that around 20 percent of Canberrans have some form of disability and the ACT has a growing ageing population;
- (b) that although there is a national Building Code of Australia standard for the number of spaces designated for disabled parking, this standard does not meet the needs of Canberrans;
- (c) that a 2008 Territory and Municipal Services commissioned study found the national standard on minimum spaces insufficient for the ACT's needs, and found an average need for a minimum of 3 percent of all parking spaces in shopping centres to be disabled parking; and
- (d) the Territory Plan *Parking and Vehicular Access Code* has been increased to require 3 percent minimum disability parking spaces; and

(2) calls for the ACT Government to:

- (a) increase the minimum disabled carpark provisions in the Territory Plan *Parking and Vehicular Access Code* for town, group and local centre parking, as well as parking at hospitals and other public facilities which the Government is responsible for, to a ratio of 4-5 percent disability parking;

- (b) review the design of the disability parking spaces which are being implemented in accordance with the *Australian Standard for Off-street parking for people with disabilities*, in thorough consultation with the ACT disability sector, to develop an appropriate standard for the ACT;
- (c) finalise scheduled works to bring all town and group centre carparks to the new reviewed standard for parking for people with disabilities;
- (d) ensure that all local centres meet the revised standard for parking for people with disabilities;
- (e) increase enforcement of illegal parking in disability parking spaces, including after hours; and
- (f) report to the Assembly by the August sittings on:
 - (i) progress on the 2008 ACT Disabled Parking Study recommendations; and
 - (ii) progress on the issues in this motion.

I have brought on this motion today because over the years that I have been in the Assembly there has been a steady stream of constituents who have written to me or rung up about disabled parking issues. It is a real issue. In passing, I want to make it clear that, despite things which are said about the Greens by various other parties, the Greens do acknowledge that the car is an integral part of Canberra's current transport system and that there are people, particularly disabled people, who are dependent upon car transport and it is really important that we get a transport system working properly. An appropriate parking provision for disabled people is a seriously important part of that.

As well as having raised this issue, all Green MLAs over the years that we have been here—I am of course going back to our predecessors as well—have consulted with a number of Canberra's disability organisations about this issue and people with a disability are particularly concerned about the lack of parking spaces for people with a disability. Robert Altamore, who is the executive officer of People with Disabilities, pointed out the bleedingly obvious, that if disabled people cannot park their car, they cannot do their shopping, they cannot get their prescriptions, they cannot meet up with friends for coffee. These are things that people like us take for granted. We are in a position that we can, if we are taking a car, walk a distance or we can walk, we can catch the bus, we can cycle.

I briefly mention buses which can be used by disabled people. Those buses are a great idea. However, such a bus fleet is not an adequate substitute for parking spaces for disabled people. There are quite a few disabled people who are not ever going to be able to catch a bus which can be used by disabled people, I fear. My mother certainly is one of those.

The ACT government, to their credit, have increased the standard for the number of disabled spaces above the national minimum. It has been increased to three per cent.

But this does not seem to be enough to satisfy demand. Most town and group centres in Canberra already had the two to three per cent disabled parking spaces available in 2008, which was when the last substantial review was undertaken. And it was clear when this review was undertaken that this was already inadequate. My motion calls for an increase to four to five per cent. It is interesting that it was inadequate in 2008. The population of Canberra has been ageing since then and we all know that as the population ages, the number of disabled people increases. This is an issue which is going to become more and more an issue in Canberra as we age and as transport and parking pressures increase throughout Canberra.

However, averages of parking spaces can be problematic. Although the survey showed that some of the town and group centres provided three per cent for disabled parking, part of the problem was that the requirements were simply not homogenous. The 2008 study showed that the two places where all of the disabled parking spaces were being used at the one time had provided more than the mandatory requirement of three per cent. Kingston, for instance, provided 6.7 per cent of its spaces for disability parking. They were all full. At Cooleman Court, again all of the 3.2 per cent of spaces for disabled parking were full at the time of the aerial survey in 2008. I guess what the figures were showing was that these were particular areas where the population had been ageing and the growth in demand for disability parking had vastly outstripped the provision of parking.

Given how young Canberra is and that we still have suburbs which are fairly homogenous in age, there are higher proportions of aged people and thus generally disabled people in some areas than in others. So there are some really good reasons to increase provision of disabled parking in areas which have higher populations of aged people. And it is my understanding that even ACTPLA staff agree that there simply are not enough disabled car parking spaces in many areas.

Looking at the standards, the Building Code of Australia standard for the number of disabled car parks in shopping centres is one space for every 50, for up to 1,000 spaces. That is a measly two per cent. The New Zealand standard is higher than the Australian standard. It requires one disability access space for up to 20 car parks, two for 21 to 50, and an additional one for each 50 spaces, that is, for less than 20 car parks, a provision of five per cent but overall four to 10 per cent.

In 2008, TAMS commissioned a study which found that the national standard was insufficient and found an average need for disabled parking spaces of three per cent of all parking spaces in shopping centres in ACT group and town centres. The ACT currently meets this target in the majority of places. The report recommended increasing the supply to three per cent where a deficiency existed. The government adopted the recommendation that disabled parking spaces should be increased to three per cent, and this is now part of the 2011 territory plan's parking and vehicular access general code.

My motion also raises issues of parking at local centres. Although there are often one or two disabled parking places and while this is of course proportionally correct, it only takes one or two disabled persons to come to the local centre and the disabled parking places are full. Here we are talking about people who are not in a position to

say: “The car park is full. I will go around the corner. I will park a few hundred metres away. It will not make any difference.” These are people who may end up missing their doctors appointments. These are people who may end up not being able to do their shopping or have to go to another shopping centre to do it, if that is an option, which sometimes, given the driving issues, may not be an option.

I have included hospitals in my motion because, under the Building Code of Australia standards, hospital parking requirements are even less than those for shopping centres, which simply does not make sense. The non-outpatient car parking standard for hospitals is one per cent, and it is double that, two per cent, for outpatient parking. It was a particular issue, I remember, for me a few years ago when my mother was in Canberra Hospital for a month, and I had to take my disabled father there every day to visit her. It was very hard to work out what to do when I could not get a disabled car park as I had an elderly parent who had basically no short-term memory and could not walk any distance. As you can imagine, that was an almost impossible parking situation for me. Nursing homes and aged-care car parks also only require a one per cent minimum disabled parking standard.

My motion also includes other areas which the ACT government is responsible for. This would include parking in spaces like Bruce stadium, other ovals and recreational areas, community centres and so on. Given that three per cent does not seem to be enough disabled parking in group and local centres, increasing this requirement to four or five per cent across the board at places like hospitals, ovals and community centres seem logical. We are only talking about an increase of one to two car parks in many of these sites—a small cost. But this is an amazing, enormous gain if you have a disability and rely on these parking spaces for your access to facilities.

Another issue, aside from the car parking spots themselves, is ensuring that there are sufficient and appropriate drop-off and pick-up sites adjacent to buildings such as hospitals, clinics, aged-care facilities and nursing homes, schools and so on.

Another issue as well as the simple fact there are not enough spaces is the design of the space. This, unfortunately, is a more complex issue. In 2008, 8.6 per cent of disabled parking spaces in town centres and 18.9 per cent in group centres did not meet disabled parking design standards. And the estimated cost in 2008 of remediating these issues across all the town and group centres was only \$165,000. The government committed to rolling out the new standards in town and group centres and has been proactive in this area. And this, of course, is something that we applaud the government for. However, unfortunately, it seems that these standards do not, in fact, meet all the requirements of the many disabled parking space users, and I have had a number of constituent emails on this subject.

ADACAS, which of course is the ACT Disability, Aged and Carer Advocacy Service, say that the main concern that affects their current client group is the new design of the parking spaces, which are not suitable for many people, particularly those with significant mobility issues. They would like to see the issue addressed.

Since the TAMS rollout of the new standard began, which was the most advanced in the country, the parking upgrades have been put on hold due to a number of

complaints about design. It is unfortunate and ironic that where the government has been proactive there has ended up being a number of complaints. The complaints include a loss of disabled spaces to accommodate the new style, yellow-striped section and bollard, that the disabled parking spaces are just not wide enough to allow for wheelchairs and walking frames to be unloaded on the site and sometimes the bollards get in the way of the unloading space. This seems a particular problem when the parking spaces have to share unloading space with wheelchairs. The public simply does not know what the striped painted area means, and people park there, especially motorbikes anyway. There needs to be better signs. The bollards and the lamp posts are often located in obstructive positions. Fortunately, I note that in rolling out these new standards generally, there has not been a reduction in the number of disabled car parks.

Unfortunately, the government did not do enough consultation with disability groups before the standards were changed, and this is not somewhere where I would necessarily criticise the ACT government. Given it is a national standard, you would have thought that the consultation had been done properly and nationally. Unfortunately, we are in the position that being a proactive jurisdiction, we may have to alter the new parking spaces somewhat after review of the design.

The good news, of course, is that this should be a pretty cheap exercise. As I said earlier, the government scheduled works to upgrade all the 19 group and five town centres to provide sufficient space for the new design at a cost of only \$165,000. So I imagine it will be equally as cheap to rectify any issues with the current poor design.

Given the feedback I have had since tabling this motion yesterday, I would urge a review of the parking spaces, with thorough consultation with ACT disability groups, to ensure the government is actually rolling out the right policy. My amended motion addresses that issue.

One of the other issues, of course, is enforcement. There is simply inadequate policing of non-authorized use of disabled parking spaces. Whenever the parking inspectors do a blitz on disability parking spots, there are always fines dealt out. There is certainly an idea among some members of the public that disability parking signage simply does not apply after hours. We know that is not true. People with a disability do sometimes go out after business hours. Hopefully they often go out after business hours. They still need car parking.

When the number of spaces for parking for people with disabilities is so restricted and already so high in demand, it is very important that we do our best to ensure that the right people are being given an opportunity to use these spots. It is also important that members of the public who regularly use these spots illegally understand there are consequences and, in fact, feel the consequences.

So, in summary, I would commend my motion to the Assembly. I have not had any feedback from the other parties as to what their views might be but while I was speaking I did notice that two pieces of paper turned up on my desk. Hopefully I will have an idea soon what their views are on this important subject where we really need to do better in Canberra. Car parking is part of our transport system, especially for disabled people. And we need to do it better than we are at present.

MS GALLAGHER (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Minister for Health and Minister for Territory and Municipal Services) (4.52): I thank Ms Le Couteur for bringing this motion to the Assembly. Can I start by saying the government would like very much to support this motion. We believe that with some amendments we are able to. I had hoped that your office would have been informed of the amendments that the government was considering. I am a bit surprised if you were not aware of the amendments which I have circulated in my name. I seek leave to move the amendments.

Leave granted.

MS GALLAGHER: I move:

(1) Omit subparagraph (1)(b), and insert after subparagraph (1)(d):

- “(e) that Transport for Canberra, the Government’s policy and strategy for transport 2012 2031, introduces a strategic parking framework, one commitment of which is that ‘parking for people with disabilities will be improved to ensure people with mobility restrictions are able to park easily and ensure priority parking and drop off points are safe, sufficient and conveniently located’;
- (f) that, consistent with the Transport for Canberra strategy, the Government will develop a strategic parking framework, which will include an action to review parking requirements for people with disabilities;
- (g) that the Government, through Parking Operations, treats the matter of enforcement of illegal parking in disability parking spaces as a priority as part of its normal and out-of-hours patrols, and that these efforts will continue, to ensure the spaces are available to those who are entitled to use them; and
- (h) that the parking infringement notice penalty for stopping in a parking area for the disabled is \$180, which is considerably higher than the \$81 penalty imposed for overstaying a parking meter or exceeding the time limit;

(2) Omit all words after paragraph (2) and substitute:

“report to the Assembly during the August sittings on progress on the 2008 ACT Disabled Parking Study recommendations.”.

Parking for people with a disability is a very important issue—not just for our community but right across Australia. Members would be aware that the government does not control all parking in the ACT. There are three types of parking. The first is public parking for public use, which is managed by the government. Then there is private parking for public use, such as in the large shopping centres. And, thirdly, there is private parking for private use, which is also known as tenant parking, in office, business and residential complexes.

The government is required to manage and balance its public parking stock to meet the needs of a number of users, such as users of loading zones, bus stops, taxi ranks, permit zones, short and long-term parking, as well as for people with a disability. Overall, the total number of TAMS-controlled standard and disabled parking spaces across town and group centres is 13,686. Of these, 411, or three per cent, are disabled parking spaces.

Mr Assistant Speaker, the motion by the Greens proposes that the level of mobility or disabled parking be increased to around four to five per cent of places. The government will continue to respond to requests for additional mobility spaces on a case-by-case basis, as we do now. This best reflects the needs of particular centres and locations within that centre. Providing a blanket increase would not necessarily assist those in need while at the same time it could disadvantage other users of car parking spaces.

It needs to be recognised that holders of mobility parking scheme permits have additional benefits beyond the use of special parking bays reserved for such permit holders. Mobility parking scheme permit holders can park free of charge at meters and in ticket parking areas for up to two hours if the time limit on the parking sign is 30 minutes or less and for an unlimited time if the time limit on the parking sign is more than 30 minutes. The same extended times apply to other government car parks and on-street parking areas that are free but time restricted.

Ms Le Couteur's motion refers to the program of works to bring town and group centre car parks to the new Australian standard. In 2008 a detailed assessment of parking facilities for people with a disability in public car parks within town and group centres was undertaken by a consultant on behalf of Roads ACT. The study considered parking provision rates, accessibility, utilisation and a review of policy and demand trends. The provision rates were found to comply with the standards at the time of the review. However, some deficiencies were identified in relation to space dimensions, pavement grade, pram ramps and superseded signage.

In 2009 changes to the relevant Australian standard for off-street parking for people with disabilities was introduced. This new Australian standard is a legal requirement for all new works after May 2011. While it is not mandatory to retro-fit older spaces, there are benefits in having consistent arrangements across the ACT, and this is the approach the government has taken.

As a result, Roads ACT has developed a program of works to address the deficiencies identified in the 2008 study as well as the changes to the Australian standard. The program has a focus on 90 degree "wide bay" spaces and the majority of spaces that were identified as suitable for conversion to the new standard—some 261 out of 325 spaces—have now been completed at town and group centres. The remainder of these 90 degree spaces—some 64—are scheduled to be converted by the end of 2012.

Some older style spaces will, however, remain—for example, parallel parking spaces adjacent to a kerb and those which are set at an angle other than 90 degrees. These will be addressed in future programs. Some of the older style spaces are not able to be

converted to the new standard and will need to be relocated. Where possible, requests for additional spaces received directly by Roads ACT or through correspondence to other members, and indeed myself, have been covered by this program of upgrading works. For example, additional spaces have been provided at the Tuggeranong town centre and the Jamison shopping centre.

Unfortunately, I think it is clear that the new Australian standard has caused some disquiet in the community. The previous standard was based on the familiar “wide bay” arrangement, where motorists had space to manoeuvre their vehicle and use equipment such as walkers or wheelchairs. One of the main changes in the new standard is the space layout and the introduction of a shared area, with a bollard to prevent illegal parking on the shared area. These changes take account of new vehicle technology, including side discharge ramps.

The government has received a number of complaints about the new standard, such as the requirement for some users to reverse into the space to make best use of the shared space on one side of the bay. Also, the bollards that are in place to prevent illegal parking on the shared space have required ongoing maintenance after being hit by vehicles or vandalised. Roads ACT plans to investigate and trial the use of more flexible designs and advice will also be sought from interstate authorities who are implementing this new standard. As I understand it, we are a bit ahead of the game. It will be interesting to hear the feedback from interstate jurisdictions as they implement this new standard.

The motion calls on the government to ensure that all local centres meet the new requirements. This is certainly the intention of the government over time. However, upgrades at local shopping centres are yet to commence. The government plans to defer this work pending clarification of issues relating to the most suitable bollard to use, and to allow further public consultation. In light of the concerns that have been raised, there is a need to improve public awareness of the new standard, the implementation works and the correct use of the shared space at a local level.

Some motorists feel that the new spaces are smaller than the previous “wide bays”, whereas the spaces are actually wider when the shared area is taken into account. I am aware of a particular case relating to the rollout of the Australian standard for off-street parking for people with disabilities that is currently before ACAT. The same matter has also been raised with the human rights commissioner and has been taken up with the commonwealth Disability Discrimination Commissioner and with the Director-General of TAMS.

As I have said, the new Australian standard does require some drivers to reverse into a dedicated space in order for them or their passenger to alight onto the shared area. We recognise that this can be difficult for some users. In order to address these concerns, Roads ACT plans to send information with a mail-out to all holders of a mobility parking permit and additional information will be placed on the TAMS website. Parking Operations is providing an educative role as part of its enforcement of mobility parking spaces and this includes issuing warning notices to holders of a mobility parking permit parking incorrectly in the shared area.

The motion today also refers to parking at hospitals. This implies that the number of disabled car spaces at the hospital is lower than the number available in car parks. The advice that I have received from the Health Directorate is that there are 1,186 public car spaces at the Canberra Hospital, 174 of which are mobility spaces. This represents 14.7 per cent of the car park spaces.

The Health Directorate has engaged a traffic consultant to review parking operations at Canberra Hospital pursuant to staged building activities at the Canberra Hospital until 2020. The consultant is conducting a campus-wide traffic management strategy and traffic infrastructure solution to cater to each group, including disabled parking arrangements. The consultancy review report is expected to be delivered in the near future and will inform future parking needs across the hospital campus throughout the period of redevelopment.

In terms of another part of today's motion, the enforcement of illegal parking in disability parking spaces, Parking Operations treats this issue as a priority as part of its normal and out-of-hours patrols. Efforts will continue to ensure the spaces are available to those who are entitled to use them. These efforts are backed up by the penalty levels. The parking infringement notice penalty for stopping in a parking area for the disabled is \$180, which is considerably higher than the \$81 penalty imposed for overstaying a parking meter or exceeding the time limit.

I will shortly be providing additional information to Ms Le Couteur in relation to progress with implementing the program of works following the 2008 disabled parking study. This follow-up information is in response to questions on notice 1977 and 1984 which she asked previously. I would also be happy to provide a copy of this information to other members if they are interested. Alternatively, if deemed necessary, a further report on progress with these issues can be provided by the August sitting, and my amendment goes to that.

The provision of parking spaces for people with a disability is a complex issue in view of the detailed legal and technical matters included in the relevant standards and guidelines. The design and implementation programs can also be relatively complex and be affected by ongoing car park redevelopment projects.

My amendment seeks to add to Ms Le Couteur's motion in the sense that, at the heart of it, we cannot agree to the increase of four to five per cent in mobility parking. Something that we have alluded to in transport for Canberra is that we will continue to look at the ways to improve mobility parking. My amendment goes to that. The Assembly cannot just accept that that is the right thing to do without understanding the full impact of taking that decision and what it would mean for other car parks around the territory.

The second amendment just requires me to report back to the Assembly during the August sittings on progress of the ACT disabled parking study and its recommendations. I think the other thing we need to acknowledge is that we will be trying to get some advice from interstate on how the implementation of the new standard is going there as well. As I said, we are ahead of the game, in a sense, in the rollout of the new standard. It will be interesting to see if the feedback we are getting from the community is replicated around the country.

MR DOSZPOT (Brindabella) (4.17): The issue of disabled parking spaces in the ACT is certainly a topic of much discussion in conversations with the veterans' community and also the disabled community. One has only to listen to talkback radio or read local papers to know what a vexed issue it is in our community. Availability has always been an ongoing issue, but I know that of even more concern are the latest changes to configuration and layout and the number of people who illegally park in disabled car park spaces. Only a couple of weeks ago my colleagues—opposition leader, Mr Seselja, and member for Molonglo, Mr Hanson—hosted a seniors health forum and the issue of disabled car spaces was a very hot topic.

Over recent months constituents have written to me and my colleagues expressing a number of concerns in relation to this. They have raised their concern and perception that the upgrades have resulted in less spaces available. They have raised the difficulties of the bollards—their visibility and location—the difficulties around the yellow safety areas and the need for those who use wheelchairs to sometimes reverse into spaces in order to better access the yellow-lined space, and the frequency of patrols by parking officers to ensure illegal parkers are penalised.

I appreciate that the 2009 changes to the Australian standards for parking facilities, and specifically off-street parking for people with disabilities, have forced a reconfiguration of space layout and the introduction of shared zones. Whether this was sufficiently explained and publicised to the disabled community is open to debate. But it is possible that it was not, given the amount of angst this issue has caused, and is still causing, in our community.

I raised this matter with the Chief Minister in her role as TAMS minister in a recent question time. At the time she provided assurances that there had been some work around bollards, but most of the work being done was without any loss in numbers of accessible car parks. I think the disabled community need an assurance that any changes to configuration and layout do not reduce the number of car spaces.

This motion addresses the need for disabled parking spaces and suggests that the national standards do not meet the needs of Canberrans. I note that the motion refers to a TAMS-commissioned study in 2008 that found that Canberrans had an average need of three per cent of all parking spaces to be designated for disabled parking. I note this motion is seeking a ratio of four to five per cent.

I am not convinced that this would address the major concern of the disabled and veterans' communities—if letters are an indication of the community concern. Their major concern is illegal parking. The way I see it, if there are more disabled car parks, and particularly if they are provided at the expense of general parking, the temptation and frequency of illegal parking will simply increase. The reality is that, whatever your philosophical or ideological views, Canberra is a city that needs car parks overall. The reality is we have a government that does not inherently believe it is a government responsibility to provide car parking.

My colleague Mr Coe has been at pains and at lengths to highlight the flaws and weaknesses in the government's transport strategy. The government says it will

develop a strategic parking framework, but if it is anything like frameworks in education we can expect a failure to deliver. We need more car parking of all types, not only disability car park spaces. We need a better approach to accessible transport. We need a better way of ensuring that the car spaces that are there for disability are used by people with disability.

There seems to be a great demand in our community to ensure that justice is served by having people with disability use disability car park spaces. We need to know that every effort is being made to police the existing car spaces to ensure that they are being used correctly. This motion does not address those four issues and, on that basis, the opposition will not be supporting the motion as it stands.

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) (5.08): I rise in support of the amendments moved by the Chief Minister, Katy Gallagher; I think they stand. I understand the intent and the thinking behind the motion from Ms Le Couteur. As minister for disability—and it is the same for Steve Doszpot—a number of people make contact with my office about parking and a range of access matters. I think one of the most predominant ones is around the improper use of disability parking.

That is probably something that we as a society should have a broader conversation about. You can police it—you can increase surveillance by TAMS workers in terms of infringement—but it is also a conversation that we as a community ought to have, in many ways, to self-regulate and self-police when we see people clearly improperly using a parking area that has been set aside for people with a disability.

It is worth looking, again, as a community, at various aspects of how we support and improve access for people with a disability. Whilst the intention and the thinking behind Ms Le Couteur's aim of increasing the percentage is a true and a proper thing to think about, I am not quite sure if that of itself, without other considerations, would indeed provide that broad range of improved access for those with a disability. That is why we have put our amendments on the table. I commend them to the chamber.

MS BRESNAN (Brindabella) (5.10): I commend Ms Le Couteur for her motion and for highlighting the needs of people with disability and bringing this important issue to the Assembly. One of the major issues for people with a disability and also older people is social inclusion and access to services. Access to health and other services, employment opportunities and social connections are crucial, particularly for people with disability. If a person with limited mobility or their carer is using a car for transport, not being able to access disability parking due to a lack of spaces can mean not being able to attend an event or a service or having to walk or use a wheelchair over a long distance, which can be physically straining. We also know the population, including people with disabilities, is ageing and the changing needs of all people must be incorporated into the built form. It is also important that people with disabilities are able to obtain and maintain their independence, and travel is one of the most important factors in this.

The issue of disability parking also raises human rights issues. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which the Australian

government has ratified, states under article 20, personal mobility, that parties shall take effective measures to ensure personal mobility with the greatest possible independence for persons with disabilities, including by facilitating the personal mobility of persons with disabilities in the manner and at a time of their choice and at affordable cost. The provision of accessible parking spaces is also promoted through principles expressed in a number of other articles.

In looking at an issue such as disability parking, we need to look at the rate of disability in the community. A People with Disabilities ACT report looking at employment of people with disability in the ACT public service notes that statistics show that about 17 per cent of the ACT population has identified as having a disability. Obviously not all people who identify as having a disability will have mobility issues, but many will. Currently the percentage of disability parking spaces provided is set at a minimum of three per cent. We also know there have been ongoing problems for people who use wheelchair accessible taxis, and I would not be surprised if a number of carers go above and beyond in transporting those they care for and require improved access to disability parking spaces.

Using public transport is also an ongoing difficulty for many people with disability, and using a car may be at times the only form of available transport. Around 30 per cent of bus stops in the ACT meet disability access requirement standards, which is quite a low level. On top of this, only half of ACTION's bus fleet are disability accessible. Understandably, this makes travel very difficult, particularly as there are many areas of Canberra that are not well serviced by ACTION.

TAMS has a commitment in line with the national disability standards to have 100 per cent of its fleet compliant by 2022 and 100 per cent of stops compliant by 2021. This target is some time away, and while it is of benefit and a positive to have these standards, we need to acknowledge that improvements need to be made in the meantime and that not all people with disability can use public transport.

I wrote to the former Minister for Territory and Municipal Services a number of times about how unreliable the timetable was in relation to buses turning up. We know that it is another issue in terms of people with a disability. Not only do they have to find an accessible bus stop, but then they need to coordinate that with the bus arriving.

Mr Coe: The real-time system is coming soon.

MS BRESNAN: That is right. But they need to trust that the bus will arrive, and that is where the issues occur. As I said, I wrote to the minister a number of times about this. Non-accessible buses would arrive when the timetable said it should have been an accessible bus. This is extremely disruptive for a person who already has mobility issues and creates great difficulty for people with disability in planning their day.

I will briefly refer to what Mr Doszpot said. I find it interesting that he said none of what Ms Le Couteur had in her motion addressed key issues. A couple of the issues he raised was about the number of car parks. We need to point to the fact that Ms Le Couteur's motion looks at increasing the minimum percentage, which would increase, by my calculations, the number of car parks. He also said the motion did not address the issue of parking spaces not being used legally. The motion actually states:

... increase enforcement of illegal parking in disability parking spaces, including after hours ...

I am not sure if he has looked at the detail of the motion. I understand he is going to support the government's amendments, which actually remove all of those things which Ms Le Couteur's motion has. It is quite vague in terms of how you would address it when Ms Le Couteur's motion actually has specifics, including the percentage of the parking spaces and including enforcement. It also states:

... ensure that all local centres meet the revised standard for parking for people with disabilities ...

That will now be removed from the motion. It is disappointing we are not getting support for these very specific measures which Mr Doszpot says we need, but he is going to support the government's amendments which do not address them in any way.

I once again commend Ms Le Couteur for trying to do something today for people with disability. Mobility transport is specifically a key issue for people with disability and affects many areas of their lives. While we will obviously get something up today with Labor and Liberal voting together, it is disappointing we are not going to get something which will achieve real change.

MR DOSZPOT (Brindabella) (5.17): I seek leave to move some amendments.

Leave granted.

MR DOSZPOT: I move:

- (1) Omit subparagraph (1)(g).
- (2) After subparagraph (1)(h), insert:

“(i) this Government has actively restricted access to car parking of all kinds;”.

I have covered all the things that I wanted to say about these amendments during my previous talk on this. I will leave it as per my previous comments and commend the amendments circulated in my name.

MS LE COUTEUR (Molonglo) (5.18): I am heartened by the fact that everybody here has spoken very positively about the need for more disabled parking and the need for better enforcement of disabled parking regulations. I am really glad there is tripartisan agreement on that. My colleague Ms Bresnan spoke more eloquently than I could do about the real need for disabled parking. I applaud everyone for their agreement with that. But, given that, I am actually very disappointed that my motion will not be passed as I moved it.

As to Ms Gallagher's amendments, it was a little disappointing that I first saw them as a piece of paper that flitted in front of me while I was speaking. As this is a somewhat technical matter, it would have been helpful if they had been circulated earlier. I have no problems with the additional things she wants to note. Yes, they have got a transport for Canberra strategy and the government says in that they will develop the strategic plan parking framework. That is fine. I am very glad to hear that the government through Parking Operations treats enforcement of illegal parking in disability parking spaces as a priority. I would have to say that not everyone else would agree that they are treating it as a priority. It may be a priority, but more is needed. I am very pleased, of course, that the fine for parking illegally in disabled car parking areas is higher than other parking fines. This is how it should be.

I am, however, disappointed that the only thing the government wants to actually commit to doing is to report back to the Assembly in the August sittings on the progress of the 2008 ACT disabled parking study recommendations. That is a study of four years ago. I also point out that that, of course, is one of the things the Greens ask for in our motion.

I will go through quickly what it is that the Liberal Party and the Labor Party want to take out of the motion, despite both saying that disabled parking is important. The Liberal Party clearly said there should be more disabled car parking and that there should be better enforcement. Despite that, the Liberal Party does not wish to agree to increase disabled car parking. They are voting against that. That is paragraph (2)(a). They do not want to agree to paragraph (2)(d), which is increasing enforcement of illegal parking. Despite the fact Mr Doszpot called for it, he does not want to support it as a motion.

No-one wants to support reporting to the Assembly on progress of the issues in this motion. I guess that makes sense because they will have removed all the things we have called for from the government, apart from reporting back against a four-year study.

The positive thing is that I am really pleased everybody agrees we have a problem with the provision of disabled parking, the current design of disabled parking and the enforcement of disabled parking regulations. I am disappointed the other two parties do not see fit to agree to what I and the Greens think is a positive set of recommendations to address this. But, as I said, I am very pleased that, hopefully, this will mean that in the long term we get better provision of disabled parking, because we certainly need that in the ACT.

Question put:

That **Mr Doszpot's** amendments to **Ms Gallagher's** amendments be agreed to.

Assembly voted—

Ayes 4

Mr Coe
Mr Doszpot
Mrs Dunne

Mr Seselja

Noes 9

Mr Barr
Dr Bourke
Ms Bresnan
Ms Burch
Mr Hargreaves

Ms Hunter
Ms Le Couteur
Ms Porter
Mr Rattenbury

Question so resolved in the negative.

Question put:

That **Ms Gallagher's** amendments be agreed to.

Assembly voted—

Ayes 9

Mr Barr
Dr Bourke
Ms Bresnan
Ms Burch
Mr Hargreaves

Ms Hunter
Ms Le Couteur
Ms Porter
Mr Rattenbury

Noes 4

Mr Coe
Mr Doszpot
Mrs Dunne

Mr Seselja

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Roads—Fadden

MR SESELJA (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (5.28): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) there are considerable safety concerns from Fadden and Macarthur residents regarding speeding motorists on Coyne Street;
- (b) the Government has erected signs last year to address this issue, but they have proven to be ineffective;
- (c) residents have witnessed a high number of accidents and near misses; and
- (d) this is an important road for families with children attending Holy Family Primary School and Fadden Primary School as well as an important road for people living in the area; and

(2) calls on the ACT Government to:

- (a) immediately address community concerns by initiating traffic calming measures; and
- (b) report to this Assembly on measures taken by the last day of the June 2012 sitting week.

I bring this motion to the Assembly's attention today because it is a very serious issue, and a serious safety concern for residents in Fadden and Macarthur as well as parts of Gilmore and Chisholm who use Coyne Street for their daily commutes. I have received representations from residents in the area. Being a Macarthur resident myself, and having driven on this road many times, I can personally say that this stretch of road is dangerous, particularly in the wet. It is perhaps no surprise that the *Chronicle* has called Coyne Street the crash central of the area. It is reasonable that local residents want this to be fixed now.

In putting this out today, it is interesting to look at some of the feedback I have received today on this motion. Some was from an old school friend asking why this is still an issue. She says that they had problems there back when we were at school. Another resident in the area has got back to me and said that she has lived in Carson Street for 22 years and uses Coyne Street every day. She says it is only a matter of time before someone is killed.

Murray Gordon, one of the Liberal candidates for Molonglo, has got back to me and said that he lived in Coyne Street in 1998. He said: "We had a small community group that lobbied the administration of the day pre self-government for such measures. I had a file an inch thick, but the best we got was regular assessments of traffic volume which was reported to us. It was similar to rubbing salt into the wound. I wish you much better luck."

So this is an issue that is not new. It is an issue that has been around for a long time. Now it is time the issue is fixed. That is what we have been doing. We are consulting with the community. We have been hearing what residents have been saying. We have been seeing this with our own eyes. This motion calls on the government to act.

We know residents are concerned. Fadden resident Toby Keen had this to say:

We have lived here five years ... the day we moved in there was an accident. And it's been happening ever since.

Most times when it rains you will hear people lose it. The light pole has probably been replaced 10 times, the trees have been hit a number of times—only a couple of weeks ago, someone took a tree out.

There was an incident involving Leanne Nowland last September when a ute lost control and slammed into her car. As she described it:

He did a big 360 and came on to my side of the road. It's just a really dangerous piece of road. In the past six months, there has been five accidents that we know about but I'm sure there has been more.

I spoke to Leanne and her family. We should not underestimate just how distressing some of these accidents can be for people, particularly when there are children involved. Fortunately, I am not aware that anyone has been in fatalities on this stretch of this road. It is up to us to do all we can to make sure there never are any fatalities. But even when there are not fatalities, there is a cost to these accidents. There can be serious injuries; there can be minor injuries; there can be trauma. It is important that we deal with these black spots. This clearly, in my opinion, is a black spot.

Another local resident, Dee Gibbon, noted that she had personally seen four accidents over the last six months. She had this to say about the street:

I actually feel really unsafe driving along here—especially with kids in the car ...
I don't think people are dying but it's just causing enormous issues.

This is how the *Chronicle* characterises Coyne Street:

An inspection of what appears to be a relatively benign bend in the road reveals the remnants of past carnage.

Missing and contorted signage and trees taken out are the first indicators that something along the road is wrong, but it's only after talking to locals that the true extent of the problem becomes clear.

When we had heavy rainfall last November and police had to attend to car accidents, Coyne Street was one of the handful of streets that had collisions.

We have spoken to local residents about this street. They have raised serious worries about their safety. This motion seeks to address their concerns before we see further collisions and, God forbid, a fatality.

This government's track record on maintaining our roads has not been a good one. We could go into some detail on that, but I am just keen to see this motion get up. The people of Tuggeranong, like all people in Canberra, deserve to have their local concerns taken care of. Safety on our roads has to be very high on the list of local concerns. We in the Canberra Liberals believe that a good local government, an ACT government, should be focusing on these local issues—listening to the community, consulting with the community and addressing these issues. That is something we would like to do in government, but here we can do it today by directing the government to get on with it and go down the process of traffic calming measures.

I understand that, with some amendments, there will be support for this motion. I am pleased about that. It will be an important win for residents in the area. It will be an important win for people who use this regularly. We know that there are schools in the area, some of which my kids attend. They are at Holy Family. Fadden primary is around the corner. And there are many people using this for their daily commute.

We as an Assembly have an obligation to do all we can to make our roads safer. This road has clearly been identified as having too many accidents. I am very hopeful, and I will be very pleased if the Assembly passes this motion today—that we give a very

clear indication to the government that we want traffic calming measures there so that we can avoid accidents in the future. If that is indeed the case, it will be a great win for people in the local area.

MS BRESNAN (Brindabella) (5.34): I thank Mr Seselja for raising the issue. The Greens are happy to support this motion with some amendments which I will speak to and move later. Traffic calming measures are something that the Greens strongly support, as traffic calming means designing roads to reduce the speeds and the volumes of traffic in the area. We support traffic calming as a way to improve the safety of residents, to protect and encourage pedestrians and cyclists and to make streets more amenable to neighbourhood activities.

This is critical to having healthy Canberra neighbourhoods. Our neighbourhoods are not just freeways for cars to speed through. They are the places where people live, children play or walk to school, people ride bikes and people enjoy the amenity.

There are a range of options available for traffic calming. These include reduced speed limits, limiting traffic access, warning signs, raised pedestrian crossings, pavement treatments, chicanes or narrower lanes. There are examples that are less known in Australia but are well used in other parts of the world, such as very low speed residential streets with mixed vehicle and pedestrian traffic. These are sometimes called living streets, because they prioritise the needs of pedestrians, playing children, cyclists and low-speed motor vehicles.

I support Mr Seselja in raising the issue of Coyne Street in Fadden and Macarthur. I am aware of the problems on this street. I know, as Mr Seselja has already referred to, that residents are reporting a large number of crashes on the street, and other incidents. And I know, obviously, that this was the subject of an article in the *Chronicle* recently.

I also know that road safety is something the government takes very seriously. We have recently heard about the good safety record of the ACT in having a year without a road fatality, although tragically that ended over the weekend with the death of a young motorcyclist.

We would like to point out that although the ACT did have a low fatality rate last year, it also had its highest number of vehicle crashes for the last 10 years. This puts the fatality figure into some perspective. It is clear that with so many vehicle crashes we are very fortunate that there were not more deaths on our roads.

We support the construction of appropriate traffic calming measures at the dangerous part of Coyne Street, to improve safety and to avoid potential future tragedy.

I believe that the need for priority traffic calming measures in the Tuggeranong region is not just limited to Coyne Street. There is a nearby location, Clift Crescent in Richardson, where there have been previous fatalities and where there still appears to be a large amount of speeding and dangerous driving.

In March 2009 there was the tragic death of two people on Clift Crescent. In April 2009 I wrote to the then transport minister and was informed that Roads ACT were

conducting speed surveys and would reassess traffic conditions. I was told that, depending on the results of the assessment, further action may be taken, although I did not receive further information about the assessment.

Following an email from a constituent in March this year noting that there were still problems with speeding on Clift Crescent, I wrote to the current transport minister. I understand that this constituent contacted four of the Brindabella members. The constituent mentioned watching a car travelling along the street one night at an estimated speed of between 140 and 160 kilometres per hour, which I think is extraordinary. He also noted that cars regularly travel between 70 and 80 kilometres an hour and that people rev their cars and drive dangerously down the street. He also pointed out, and I have witnessed this for myself, that the main problem is between the two intersections at Clift Crescent and Kiddle Crescent as they come off Ashley Drive.

I would like to note the response. As I said, I wrote again to the transport minister. The response stated that Roads ACT reassessed the traffic conditions at Clift Crescent in February 2012 to evaluate the performance of previous measures put in place. And there were some traffic calming measures put in place. They primarily are reflectors, which are put on the road as almost a psychological barrier to make it appear that the road is narrowing. The results indicated that the average speed was less than 60 kilometres an hour. However, it notes in the letter that it seems that there are isolated instances where motorists travel at high speeds during off-peak times.

I went down and met with residents on Friday, 27 April, last week. They noted that there is still significant speeding along that road. I witnessed it myself when I was there. There were probably well over four cars travelling well over 60 kilometres an hour down that road. And there have been some recent incidents where we were lucky that there was not a fatality. One recent incident included a car overturning into someone's yard. Also, there was a car chase with police, on the weekend or very recently, down Clift Crescent.

As I said, I witnessed problems myself. It was 9.30 in the morning when I was there, so that is not exactly an off-peak time. We know there are schools around there. There is a scout hall; there are shops. There are a lot of people moving around there. We know also that there have been people hit on that road, which is extremely concerning.

I will go now to the amendments which I will move. Firstly, my amendments add Clift Crescent as an area that needs to be addressed with traffic calming. And they ask the government to consult with local residents about the problems and necessary measures before implementing them.

In talking about the issue, I take Ms Burch's point about conducting that consultation first. That is a good way to go. Having met with the residents on Friday, I know that they have some very good ideas about where measures should go and what sort of measures they should be. As I outlined in my speech earlier, there are a number of ways you could go about it. One of the things they particularly would like to see is a pedestrian crossing that is also a speed bump. As I said, I witnessed a lot of speeding along there. I think it is quite necessary there. They do have some very good ideas, so

I take the minister's point that consultation first is a good way to go—and then to actually implement those measures once that has been agreed to by the residents. As I said, they have got some very good input to provide and should be listened to.

That was one of the key things from meeting with the residents. They want to be listened to. They want the department to actually speak with them. They want to say, "These are the sorts of things we want to see here, and this is the location where we think they should go." Before the department just goes and does it, they want to be spoken to. That was made very clear to me. I was going to write to ask that a meeting be held with them. It is good that we can get that meeting held, and then the measures can be implemented as a priority after that.

Secondly, my amendments call on the government to "give greater priority to traffic calming in Canberra's neighbourhoods". This is consistent with the work of the Greens throughout this Assembly. We have consistently raised issues concerning traffic safety, vulnerable road users, and safety in neighbourhoods.

I refer, for example, to the submission that we made to the process to amend the residential estates and residential subdivisions elements of the territory plan. In that submission, we emphasised the need to systematically apply principles of safety and sustainability and to revise the rules and criteria to reduce traffic volume and vehicle speeds.

We endorsed changes to ensure lower speed street design. Lower vehicle speeds make a substantial difference in reducing the risk of injury for cyclists and pedestrians, particularly, as I have already noted, around neighbourhoods, shopping areas, and community facilities. Most unprotected road users survive if hit by a car travelling at 30 kilometres per hour; the majority are killed if hit by a car travelling at 50 kilometres per hour.

Our submission also asks for various other layout and design changes to improve safety and amenity in residential areas. My amendments require the government to review and revise relevant design standards to favour the safety of pedestrians, cyclists, children and older people. I believe that there are considerable changes that can be made to these standards, which means reviewing Austroads design standards. The Greens' view is that these standards are not always adequate for a jurisdiction that wants to prioritise pedestrians, cyclists, children and older people. I refer the government, for example, to the work of researchers from the Monash University Accident Research Centre, who have developed standards that they recommend should overlay the Austroads standards to ensure that vulnerable road users are properly accommodated.

My other amendments ask the government to table a list of locations where residents have asked for traffic calming or complained about persistent speeding and to produce and table a list of Canberra streets prioritised for traffic calming improvements.

I look forward to the government doing this work, talking to the community and implementing these changes. They will lead to safer and more active communities—in Canberra all around and in Tuggeranong. I move:

Omit paragraphs (1) and (2), substitute:

(1) notes:

- (a) that there are considerable safety concerns from Fadden, Macarthur and Richardson residents regarding speeding motorists on Coyne Street and Clift Crescent;
- (b) that the Government has erected signs and added some street reflectors and traffic islands to address this issue, but they have proven to be ineffective;
- (c) that residents have witnessed a high number of accidents and near misses, and there have previously been fatalities on Clift Crescent;
- (d) that these are important roads for families with children attending Holy Family Primary School, Fadden Primary School and Richardson Primary, as well as important roads for people living in the area; and
- (e) traffic calming and slower speed limits are important in Canberra neighbourhoods to improve road safety, opportunities for riding and walking, and community interaction; and

(2) calls on the ACT Government to:

- (a) immediately consult with local residents of Coyne Street and Clift Crescent concerning traffic calming measures;
- (b) following consultation, initiate agreed traffic calming measures as a priority;
- (c) give greater priority to traffic calming in Canberra's neighbourhoods by:
 - (i) reviewing and revising relevant design standards to favour the safety of pedestrians, cyclists, children and the elderly;
 - (ii) tabling a list of locations where residents have asked for traffic calming or complained about persistent speeding; and
 - (iii) producing and tabling a list of Canberra streets prioritised for traffic calming improvements; and
- (d) report to this Assembly on measures taken by the last day of the June 2012 sitting week.?"

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) (5.44): I do thank Mr Seselja for his interest in road safety and for raising this issue in the Assembly.

The ACT government takes road safety very seriously and is committed to reducing the number of accidents on our roads. In relation to this motion, Coyne Street is a

major collector road operating at a 60 kilometres per hour speed limit. Recent traffic data from Roads ACT suggests that the street is presently operating within its capacity as indicated in the ACT residential development code. Concerning road safety, crash records in Roads ACT show that there have been 13 reported vehicle crashes in Coyne Street—I think it is the top end from Jackie Howe through to Bugden—during the last five years.

When compared to similar streets in the ACT, Coyne Street is presently not ranked as a high priority for road improvement programs managed by the TAMS Directorate. Mr Seselja wrote to the Chief Minister on 5 April this year, on behalf of a constituent, about the Coyne Street road safety issues. In the response the Chief Minister advised Mr Seselja that Roads ACT would further investigate traffic issues on Coyne Street. Depending on the outcome of this investigation, and subject to other priority traffic safety measures on the Road ACT program, further traffic calming measures may be implemented in Coyne Street to complement the yellow hazard signs erected last year.

The Chief Minister has undertaken to provide the results of the ACT Roads investigation to Mr Seselja, and, as I understand it, the Chief Minister will be pleased to report to the Assembly in June this year. In comparison to other Australian jurisdictions, the ACT has an established and well-designed road system, a general urban environment and a small, well-defined geographic area. Nevertheless, road crashes remain a significant issue for ACT residents.

The government, through Roads ACT, has existing programs to manage and improve the ACT road system. This is in addition to safety improvements funded under minor new works programs and capital upgrades programs. Road safety will always be an important consideration in the planning, design and construction of our new roads.

In order to provide structure and focus for its road safety activities the ACT government has created the ACT road safety strategy and action plan. This plan applies the four Es—encouragement, education, enforcement and engineering—to address road safety issues. The strategy provides a framework for addressing ACT road safety concerns over the next 10 years. The action plan provides a list of items to be progressed over three years from 2011 aligned with the short-term initiatives in the national road safety strategy 2011-20.

The previous road safety strategy 2007-10 and its supporting action plans were based on an integrated approach to improving road safety, using a range of education, encouragement, engineering, enforcement, evaluation and support measures. The new strategy for 2011-20 continues this integrated approach, but with a stronger vision element based on Vision Zero, more robust application of national “safe system” principles and stronger measures to address cultural change.

The strategy and the action plan are also designed to support the ACT implementation of the national road safety strategy 2011-20. The strategy adopts and complements the principles of the national strategy, in particular its visions, targets and focus on the safe system approach.

As I have said, the ACT government takes road safety very seriously, is committed to reducing the number of accidents on our roads and has strategies and actions to

address our safety concerns. Our current process applies a priority assessment process that ensures the highest priority safety measures are implemented.

I note that Ms Bresnan has circulated an amendment that includes Clift Crescent. Being a resident of Chisholm I use both Clift Crescent and Coyne Street on a regular basis and, whilst I have not been involved in an accident, certainly I am aware from talking with many people that Clift Crescent in particular does seem to have a bit of a history of poor driving practice.

I think it is worth noting that traffic calming measures are an important part of overall road safety, but responsible driving at the end of the day is the key to road safety in any community. Whilst we can design and engineer the safest roads, it is most unfortunate that some within our community are bent on irresponsible driving, causing danger and a level of despair to the broader community. I understand Ms Bresnan's amendments have been circulated, and the government will support those amendments.

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (5.50): I actually saw one of the accidents that I suspect prompted the constituent to write to members about safety on Coyne Street. Like Mr Seselja, I come through that street every morning. I drop my son off to school at Holy Family, and Coyne Street is the route of choice then to get to the Monaro Highway. At times it is a very, very busy street, and it is not just at peak hour; it is not just school hours on Monday to Friday.

At the other end of Coyne Street you have also got the mmpowerdome, which is a fantastic facility but a lot of people use it and there is a lot of coming and going, and next door to it of course you have got the Macarthur scout hall. So it is a very busy street and it is a street that has a dubious record. You often go past and see mangled signs, mangled trees or excess bits of cars lying on the street.

But I suspect that members have not read the report on the Ashley Drive, Monash road network upgrade feasibility study that is on the ACT government TAMS website. I bring this report to people's attention. It was mentioned in debate on the approp bill yesterday that what it recommends is:

... that a further detailed traffic study be undertaken to examine the traffic generating characteristics of Gowrie, Fadden and Macarthur, and assess route choice and alternative routes in the area. This would permit further development and implementation of the most appropriate treatment(s).

The primary alternative route that this report talks about is Coyne Street. There is also Kellett Street, which links Bugden Avenue to Isabella Drive, and of course if you follow Bugden Avenue around you can come off at Statton Street on to Ashley or you can come off Bugden Avenue itself on to Ashley. But the majority of people, if they are not going to go up Erindale Drive, are already heading for the Monaro Highway, and if the traffic arrangements that the government is putting in place modify behaviour, particularly in getting out of Bugden Avenue, then people who currently travel west on Bugden Avenue to get to Erindale Drive will now go east to go to the Monaro Highway, and they will take Coyne Street. It is as simple as that. It is the alternative route.

So the problem is that this street is likely to get worse and we need to have proper consultation. I have an amendment that I will move shortly, but I do not believe it is simply enough to consult with the local residents of Coyne Street and Clift Crescent concerning traffic calming measures, because it also affects the feeder streets.

In Macarthur you can only get in and out on Carson Street or Jackie Howe Crescent, and they feed straight on to Coyne. Out of Fadden you come off Fihelly Street on to Coyne or you come off Bugden Avenue on to Coyne. So you have to talk to these residents as well; otherwise you are just getting a small fraction of the people who use the road and, unless we understand their movements and where they are likely to be going, we are not going to get a proper picture.

Modifying the street for the safety of the residents of Coyne is a worthy cause; the same with Clift Crescent. The residents of Clift Crescent in a way suffer the feeder traffic that comes on to it. Deamer Crescent at the Richardson end and Heagney Street from the Chisholm end also feed on to Clift Crescent, as well as the local streets that feed off it. So what we need to do is to have proper consultation about the area, because if the government, as recommended, goes ahead and does the further detailed traffic study it will cover most of these issues. Coyne Street is the other route out of Fadden and Gowrie at this time of the morning and the route back in in the afternoon.

My amendment to Ms Bresnan's amendment would insert the words "and their feeder streets" after "Clift Crescent". If we are really going to get an understanding, if we are going to make this work properly and we are going to make it work in the long term, let us do the work now and get it right.

On Coyne Street there would be 20 houses, but there would be hundreds, if not thousands, of movements every day on that street: the people that take their children out of Macarthur to go to Fadden primary school; the people of Fadden, Gowrie, Macarthur, Gilmore and Chisholm who take their children to Holy Family; and the people who come from Fadden, Gowrie, Macarthur back into Gilmore and then to Chisholm to take their kids to Chisholm high school. If you do not understand the local traffic movements and the patterns here, you will get it wrong. And that is why it is important that we add the words "and their feeder streets" because otherwise we are going to come up with half a solution. Yes, it will suit the people on Coyne and Clift, but it may lead to greater problems.

I have recollections of traffic calming measures on Learmonth Drive some years ago where we tried so many different solutions because it was a very important street not just to the residents but to the people who used it.

There is a serious issue here and I thank Mr Seselja for bringing the motion on. Coyne is a very important street. It is a small street; it is not a big street by any stretch of the imagination. It is a single lane each way. On the high side there are houses, sometimes with quite steep embankments and driveways, and on the low side it drops down into Fadden pines. This is part of the problem because of the camber and the twists. If you are heading west it sort of twists to the right and then comes back slightly to the left before you are confronted with a stop sign on Bugden Avenue. But, in the wet, with

that sort of zigzag, if you go down on to the lower side you immediately confront the pine trees of Fadden pines, as many a car has come to understand to its detriment and to the embarrassment of the driver, and in some cases to the injury of some. So it is important that we get it right. It is important if we are going to do some work not to do just half the job.

In regard to Clift Crescent, some of us will remember the dreadful accident down there just past the Richardson scout hall and the death of those young people. The memorial is still there. I have great respect for the family and the way that they have set up that small roadside memorial and the way that they tend it. The care and attention that is provided to that little memorial is much to their credit and the love of their loved ones. But it is a stark reminder that Clift Crescent as a through road is often used as a raceway by some, and for the less experienced driver there are some very sharp corners on Clift Crescent. Because it is a large feeder street, and of course it comes off Ashley Drive, in the treatment plan I think it even gets a set of lights. Yes, it does: a signalised intersection from Clift and Ashley.

What you have got from one end is Clift and it runs all the way through to Johnson at the southern end, and it is a through road for a lot of people. If you live in the south-eastern end of Chisholm you may come in off Johnson/Clift to get into Chisholm. If you are going to Calwell you will use Clift to go through. If you are heading to the Hyperdome you may go down Clift to get on to Ashley or down part of Clift to get on to Heagney to get on to Goldstein to get on to Isabella Drive. So Clift in the scheme of things is important, certainly to Chisholm residents and certainly to Richardson residents. Depending on what activity you are undertaking and the location, it does lead to a lot of movements on that street. I am surprised to hear the government say that it is not a high priority on their road safety list. If that is what they think, that is fine. But it is about to become a high priority for the government.

With that, I would trust that the amendment is acceptable to members. We heard earlier from Ms Le Couteur today about the government getting consultation right. You just cannot consult with the people who live on these streets, because their view and their needs, which are very important, need to be modified by the needs of the others that use the street. If you are addressing it as a local traffic problem, that might be fine. But neither of these streets is simply a local street. They are through streets in four or five very busy suburbs, and they are suburbs with a lot of daily movements, and the opportunity is here to get it right.

I thank Mr Seselja for the motion and Ms Bresnan for the amendments that she has added. Clift Crescent is a concern to a lot of people in that part of the world. But we do need to have proper consultation, and I would ask that members agree to my amendment. With that, I move my amendment as follows:

In subparagraph (2)(a), after “Crescent” insert “and their feeder streets”.

Mr Smyth’s amendment to Ms Bresnan’s amendment agreed to.

Ms Bresnan’s amendment, as amended, agreed to.

At 6 pm, in accordance with standing order 34, the debate was interrupted. The motion for the adjournment of the Assembly having been put and negatived, the debate was resumed.

MR SESELJA (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (6.00), in reply: I do thank members for their support for this motion. I am pleased that we will get a good outcome not just for the people in and around Coyne Street, who use Coyne Street on a regular basis, but also for the people who use Clift Crescent, in and around there, so the people particularly of Richardson and Chisholm.

These are the core issues for government, for this Assembly; that we look after local concerns of our residents in the ACT. Certainly I have a great fondness for the people of Tuggeranong. I think that from time to time the people of Tuggeranong get left behind. I think there is no doubt they have been left behind by the government in many ways, but I think that this will be a win for them.

As I said in my opening speech, there are people who have been raising concerns about this particular road since before self-government. So it is an issue that has been around for a long time, and I am very pleased today that the Assembly has said that it is time for the government to address it, go through a consultation process and work out some traffic calming measures.

I hope that we can make these areas safer; that we can have a situation that leads to a lot fewer accidents on those roads; that we can have a situation that leads to people feeling safer when they are on those roads, particularly the residents who live on those roads. So I do again thank members for their support and I look forward to the government implementing the will of the Assembly on these matters.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Dental health

MS BRESNAN (Brindabella) (6.02): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) oral diseases continue to be among the most costly yet preventable health problems;
- (b) 44 percent of respondents to the ACT General Health Survey reported to have delayed using a dentist because they could not afford it;
- (c) children and young people aged under 14 years, and people older than 14 issued with a Centrelink issued Pension Concession or Healthcare card, are eligible for ACT Health's dental services; and
- (d) the mean waiting time for adults on ACT Health's dental services waiting list is 12 months; and

(2) calls on the:

- (a) Australian Government to accept the recommendations of the National Advisory Council on Dental Health and make a significant investment in State dental programs in the 2012-13 budget, and make this the first step towards universal Commonwealth-funded dental care for all Australians;
- (b) Speaker of the ACT Legislative Assembly to write to the Federal Minister for Health and other party political spokespeople for Health advising them of paragraph (2)(a); and
- (c) ACT Minister for Health to explain what reasons, in addition to a lack of funding, cause the mean waiting time for adults on ACT Health's dental services waiting list to be 12 months.

The motion I am moving today seeks to recognise the difficulties people have in accessing dental services. Many people put off accessing dental treatment because they cannot afford it, despite it being an essential component to a person's good health. Not receiving dental treatment impacts on a person's overall health and wellbeing, has a major impact on issues such as nutrition and can lead to serious illnesses and conditions.

The Greens are today proposing that the Assembly, on behalf all people in the ACT, call on the federal government to reinstate dental health into Medicare. In the lead-up to next week's commonwealth budget we are asking the federal government to phase in the inclusion of dental treatment into Medicare over five years to cover preventative and restorative dental treatment so that everybody can afford to go to the dentist.

I think Mr Hanson might be proposing some amendments, although they have not been circulated. I think they were to the effect that it is too late to lobby for this year's budget. It is something that we need to continue lobbying for. If it is not in this year's budget, I think it makes this motion today from the Assembly even more important because it shows how important denticare and dental treatment are to people in the ACT. If the government takes this step of funding denticare, the Greens believe that low income earners, children and younger people, pensioners and people with chronic illness should be the first to access increased dental care.

When a person's oral health is poor, their whole health can be affected. Untreated dental decay can lead to autoimmune disease and joint pain. It can have long-term bacterial implications and a whole range of chronic disease health implications. It can also cause a very high level of pain which then impacts on areas such as diet and nutrition. Dental decay and tooth loss can also affect a person's self-esteem, work opportunities and quality of life as people become sensitive about their appearance. The best way to combat these problems is via prevention and early intervention, particularly if people, especially from a young age, have regular dental checkups.

It was in 1973 that the commonwealth first funded a dental program for schools which was administered by the states. It was not until 1994, however, that the

commonwealth took over from the states in providing full funding for dental services. However, two years later the incoming Howard government chose to remove commonwealth payments and contributions from the dental care scheme. The ACT has the opportunity today to be the first jurisdiction to vote in favour of the commonwealth government reinstating dental health into Medicare.

In late March the Victorian parliament considered a similar motion proposed by Greens MLC, Ms Colleen Hartland. The Victorian Liberal government did not support it, however, and the motion failed despite Victorian Labor members. A similar motion has been put forward by the Greens in the Tasmanian parliament but is yet to be debated. The ACT Assembly therefore has a unique opportunity today, and I believe it is imperative for us to assist the ACT population in having its voice heard by the federal government.

Currently, the ACT government is responsible for funding and providing local dental services. Based on data provided through the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, the ACT government spent \$10 million in 2009-10 on providing dental services. As a per capita spend, the \$10 million equates to around \$27.63 per person per annum, ranking us in the middle of all Australian jurisdictions. I should note, however, that this is a difficult amount to determine as each state and territory charges different fees for dental services.

Little recurrent funding is provided by the commonwealth and that which is is focused on groups for which the commonwealth is responsible. These include the defence force and veterans, intermittent programs like the younger persons dental program and the current chronic disease program, which is ending.

ACT Health's website states that its dental services are available to all children under the age of 14 years who reside in the territory or attend an ACT school, young people over the age of 14 who hold a Centrelink-issued concession card, and adults who are ACT residents and hold a Centrelink-issued pension, concession, or healthcare card.

Dental services include treatment for dental emergencies, oral hygiene, restorative treatment and denture services. They also include denture repairs, denture relines, adjustments and the making of both partial and complete new dentures. As far as I am aware, services are not completely free. For example, parents must pay \$55 for their child's course of care, unless the family is receiving family tax benefit part A at more than the minimum rate per child per fortnight or the family has a Centrelink concession card.

Based on ACT Health's latest annual report, the average waiting time for an adult to access its dental services from the time of first asking for an appointment is 12 months. The indicator improved to about nine months for a period several years ago because of a short-lived commonwealth funding injection, but since then the indicator has reverted to 12 months. Children's wait times are not included in that measure.

In part 2(c) of my motion I would like to make it clear that, while we can call for increased funding, the Minister for Health has, I recall, advised that ACT Health's dental services experience access block and even if more money was spent the

average waiting time could not be reduced. What I am calling for in part 3(c) of my motion is for the minister to explain what impediments, apart from funding, exist with regard to improving the public dental system so that strategies can be identified to deal with this aspect of services.

Not all parents or healthcare cardholders are aware of the services available to them or make use of them. While I am waiting on answers to a question on notice about the ACT data, I can refer the Assembly to Victoria, where only 14 per cent of people eligible use public dental treatment in any year and the average waiting time is about 17 months.

Despite the availability of public dental programs, people on low incomes, including those eligible for public dentistry, are the least likely to visit the dentist on a regular basis and have the worst dental health outcomes. Evidence shows that people eligible for public health care are more than six times more likely to lose their teeth than those who are not eligible. Adults on low incomes can visit a doctor and use their Medicare card, but the only place they can access dental care is in the private sector.

According to the latest ACT general health survey from the 2010 ACT Chief Health Officer's report, 44 per cent of people who responded to the survey have delayed using a dentist because they could not afford it. According to national statistics, 33 per cent of all Australians have stated that they cannot afford to go to the dentist or delay going to the dentist because of the cost. I think they are quite extraordinary figures.

The lack of affordable dental services is picked up by the federal health budget elsewhere. The federal government contributes \$426 million a year towards dental care for high-income earners via the private health insurance rebate—an extraordinary figure. Untreated dental disease costs Medicare \$350 million a year and the hospital system at least \$100 million a year. I think those figures are worth keeping in mind when we vote on this motion today on whether or not we should have money in the federal budget, considering it impacts elsewhere in the federal budget.

Part 2 of my motion refers to the National Advisory Council on Dental Health which was established in September last year to provide the commonwealth government with strategic independent advice on dental health issues. The council issued a report in February this year. The key recommendation supported by all members of the council is that a universal dental care scheme should be a long-term goal.

The report states in clear and simple terms that the commonwealth should fund services and that the states and territories should deliver them. This mirrors the recommendation of the Health and Hospital Reform Commission, whose final report states:

We recommend that all Australians should have universal access to preventive and restorative dental care, and dentures, regardless of people's ability to pay. This should occur through the establishment of the 'Denticare Australia' scheme. Under the 'Denticare Australia' scheme, people will be able to select between private or public dental health plans. 'Denticare Australia' would meet the costs in both cases. The additional costs of Denticare could be funded by an increase in the Medicare Levy of 0.75 per cent of taxable income.

Cost estimates equate to that figure to \$4.1 billion. While on that figure, I again go to those figures where not having dental treatment or universal access to dental treatment is picked up elsewhere in the figures of \$426 million through the private health insurance rebate and untreated dental care costing Medicare \$350 million a year and the hospital system at least \$100 million.

A number of parties have been calling on the federal government to invest significant funds into state dental programs in the 2012-13 budget to make this first step towards universal commonwealth funded dental care for all Australians. The Greens plan for a denticare scheme would involve it being phased in over five years, starting with the most in-need recipients—that is, low income earners, young people, pensioners and those with chronic disease. The scheme would also build the dental workforce and encourage dental health promotion.

There are options on how the commonwealth and states might share responsibility. Those options fall into two broad categories. The first is to provide cap funding that may be used at private dentists, with the patient paying the difference, which has the advantage of using available resources. The second is to expand and support public dentistry, which has the advantage of cost effectiveness in the long run. The Greens federally negotiated with the Australian government early this year to secure \$165 million over three years in funding for dental health, which would be allocated from money raised by the Medicare levy surcharge. This was to ensure that we have a secure commitment to commonwealth funded dental care. It is not a huge amount of money but it is a start.

In conclusion, I hope that both the government and the Liberals will support this motion today. In doing so, we will send a clear signal on behalf of all people in the ACT to our federal counterparts that denticare is long overdue and that we urge the commonwealth government to finally implement it.

DR BOURKE (Ginninderra—Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Corrections) (6.13): Mr Speaker, I thank Ms Bresnan for raising this issue related to the oral health status of Australians, the recommendations of the National Advisory Council on Dental Health and accessibility to public dental services in the ACT.

I think you can take it from me that that good oral health is essential to overall health, wellbeing and quality of life. Yet dental disease, oral disease, is the most common disease in people and continues to have a high prevalence in Australia. This is despite the disease being easily prevented. It is the most easily prevented of all diseases that affect humans.

We know that there is a proven connection between socioeconomic status and dental disease. This has been linked with the cost of dental care. Cost is a significant barrier to regular preventative treatment or early interventions. Studies have shown that those accessing public dental services typically have to spend time on waiting lists and their dental experience is heavily weighted towards emergency care, often without effective follow-up treatment.

A report released by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare in 2011 reported that only 40 per cent of the population have regular check-ups. Thirty per cent say they cannot afford to or have trouble accessing a dentist. This picture is replicated in the ACT, with 44 per cent of respondents to the ACT general health survey reporting that they had delayed dental care because of the cost.

Dental disease is significant. It is the second most costly diet-related disease in Australia. The economic cost of poor dental care, poor dental health, can be measured in direct costs, expenditure on dental services, induced illnesses and associated health costs such as visits to medical practitioners, hospital treatment, pharmacy costs, as well as indirect costs such as lost productivity due to taking days off at work.

Currently, free public dental services in the ACT are provided to all children under the age of 18 years who have a Centrelink card. Children who do not have a Centrelink card can access the same level of care up to the age of 14 but co-payments are required. All adult Centrelink cardholders are eligible for public treatment in the ACT but some co-payments are required.

Despite the subsidised public dental costs, many clients have difficulties making payments. Several initiatives have been introduced to help clients manage co-payments, including payment plans and centrepay, which automatically deducts money from Centrelink payments.

Ms Bresnan's motion asks for more detail on the mean waiting times for adults on ACT Health's dental waiting list. The ACT government accountability indicator for the mean waiting time is 12 months, which the Health Directorate continues to meet. The 12-month indicator is consistent with other states and territories. It is important to note that this waiting list is indicative only of people seeking routine dental care. No eligible ACT resident suffering acute dental pain has to wait more than 24 hours for treatment of an acute condition.

National reviews of public sector dental waiting lists have identified a number of factors contributing to waiting times. These include the number of dentists graduating from our dental schools, as well as the significant pay disparity between public and private sector dentists. I am pleased to inform the Assembly that the Health Directorate has embraced the federal government's initiative to create a new graduate clinical placement scheme which is designed to provide additional dentists to the public sector on a voluntary 12-month placement scheme. The Health Directorate has been involved with the scheme since its inception and we hope to welcome the first graduates under this scheme in early 2013.

The Health Directorate has been extremely active in recruiting dental staff and now takes final year students from the University of Adelaide for clinical placements with a view to recruitment. Last year I had the pleasure of meeting some of those new future dentists at the Moore Street clinic in Civic. The Health Directorate is also helping redress the public-private pay disparity by offering a supportive, attractive work culture and innovative, ongoing education programs for staff.

Whilst dental numbers nationally remain a national problem, the ACT is now well placed to ensure a full complement of public sector dentists. Additional funding in the 2007-08 budget provided a further \$1.7 million to the dental health program over four years to increase access to care. This has seen additional clients being removed from the waiting lists for treatment, a growth in the number of dentists participating in the ACT restorative referral scheme and more support for payment plans for clients referred to the scheme.

Like Ms Bresnan, the ACT government welcomes the finding and report of the National Advisory Council on Dental Health, which outlines options and priorities for consideration in the 2012-13 commonwealth budget. The government also urges the federal government to accept the recommendations of the national advisory council around meeting the long-term goal of providing equitable access to dental care for all Australians.

The government supports Ms Bresnan's call for the Speaker of the ACT Legislative Assembly to write to the federal health minister and others on this matter. The ACT government is committed to providing and improving the provision of public dental services to the ACT and looks forward to discussions with the commonwealth at the intergovernmental level on a model of care and funding to improve access to dental services and the oral health status of Australians. Thank you, Ms Bresnan, for this opportunity to address this important and complex issue.

MR HANSON (Molonglo) (6.20): I thank Ms Bresnan for bringing this matter before the Assembly. I rise today to speak in support of providing timely and comprehensive dental services in the ACT. There is no doubt that good dental and oral health is fundamental to overall wellbeing.

As many of us know, there is considerable pain and discomfort that can arise from oral health problems. For people with chronic problems and ongoing issues, this pain is considerable. It can impact on their ability to eat a balanced diet. It can affect appearance, self-esteem and their quality of life. The social impact of having a missing tooth or an inability to join in a communal meal can have a significant effect on a person and their capacity to interact in the community.

Additionally, the association between dental disease and specific medical conditions is becoming more established. The Heart Foundation publishes widely on the need to undertake daily oral health habits, like brushing and flossing, to help prevent health disease. Infections in your gums can lead to the development of infections and diseases in other parts of your body.

The statistics stated in the motion, of a mean waiting time of 12 months for restorative dental treatment for adults, are concerning. As I highlighted, the pain and social impediment that may arise from oral health problems is enough reason in itself to view 12 months as too long to wait for treatment. I note that the 2011-12 Health annual report states that the target for the mean waiting time is 12 months. This appears to indicate that the ACT government is not putting significant effort into decreasing the mean waiting time. This is why we support the part of the motion that calls on the ACT government to outline to the Assembly what action is being taken to reduce this waiting time.

Whilst this motion addresses some important areas, the execution of this intent has, once again, been fumbled by Ms Bresnan. This motion calls for the Australian government to significantly invest in dental services in the 2012-13 budget. The 2012-13 budget is likely to go to print in the next 72 hours. If Ms Bresnan was serious about lobbying for this investment, she would not have waited until now to start.

Of course, given that the federal government, especially in the current political climate, are highly unlikely to have taken notice that today Ms Bresnan called for this dental service investment, they will only become notified when the Speaker writes to the federal health minister. A quick analysis of the likely time frame for this to occur determines that the letter for the health minister is likely to end up at the earliest—this depends on what other work pressures you may have, Mr Speaker—in one of your adviser's in-trays on perhaps Tuesday morning, the morning of the day on which the federal budget will be delivered.

I do not wish to downplay the significance of the chamber in which I now speak but I do not see a high possibility that the federal health minister will delay the release of the federal budget whilst they contemplate whether to act on the ACT Legislative Assembly's call for investment in dental services.

This does not mean—and I repeat it—that I do not support the intent of the motion, to raise concerns about the level of dental health funding. However, it would be an embarrassment to the ACT Assembly and to the constituents we represent to have such an illogical and ill-timed request made. It seems to be all show and no go.

Additionally, the call by Ms Bresnan for universal commonwealth-funded dental care is out of touch with reality. The current federal Labor government has put our country in some of the biggest debt we have ever seen, billions and billions of dollars, and their bad economic management means that we simply cannot start to responsibly implement a scheme for greater funding for dental care until we have the money to do it federally. Greater dental funding is exactly the type of policy we should be aiming for in Australia but the budgetary situation at this stage makes that simply unviable.

I think it is timely to remind Ms Bresnan and her Labor colleagues that sit across from me about the person who actually took action to increase funding for dental health. The Hon Tony Abbott, in one of his final acts as the federal health minister, established the Medicare dental scheme to give people on chronic disease care plans access to up to \$4,000 of dental treatment work every two years. This was not just check-ups but actual treatment. Under this scheme almost 700,000 Australians have been treated and they have received 11 million incidents of dental services. Mr Abbott, as he outlined in a Press Club address in February this year, envisaged that this would be the first step towards putting dental services more generally on Medicare.

A key difference between the universal dental health scheme that Ms Bresnan advocates and Mr Abbott's aspirational Medicare-based policy is economic sustainability. It is difficult to see how Australians, particularly in the current economic climate, could afford Ms Bresnan's scheme. But Ms Bresnan often does not stop to contemplate the important question of how we will actually afford her ideas. This is one of the joys of sitting on the crossbench.

On 19 March this year, my federal Liberal colleague the shadow minister for health, the Hon Peter Dutton, introduced a bill into the House of Representatives to require the Minister for Health to halt demands for the repayment under the chronic disease dental scheme for a technical breach of the law. Dentists are currently facing demands from the Gillard government to repay Medicare benefits for a service they have already provided. The repayment would mean fewer dental services for needy patients and worse health outcomes. That is the key difference.

The Liberal Party has taken, and continues to take, real action to address dental health issues. The ACT Greens, despite being in alliance with the government, offer paltry and ill-timed requests. If Ms Bresnan was serious about increased investment for dental health, she would have held the ACT government to account on their coalition agreement and demanded that funding be increased in the ACT budget. But Ms Bresnan has chosen what is only, and can only be viewed as, given what it is calling for and the timing, a symbolic motion, with no effect to express this intent.

The Canberra Liberals believe that there needs to be additional support for dental and oral health. We recognise the need in the community, and we will be supporting the motion today, assuming that it is amended. I have circulated an amendment which limits the scope of what Ms Bresnan is calling for, in line with what I have just said. It would maintain much of what Ms Bresnan has put in there, including everything she has noted but replacing what she calls for.

Because I have simply incorporated the elements of writing to the federal Minister for Health and other political parties' spokespeople, it might be helpful if Ms Bresnan outlines whom she considers that to be in the federal parliament, given that there are a range of independents and small parties, so that the Speaker has some guidance on whom he is actually writing to. I now move:

Omit all words after paragraph (2), substitute:

- “(a) Speaker to write to the Federal Minister for Health, and other political party spokespeople for health, and advise them that:
- (i) the ACT Legislative Assembly is concerned about the level of federal funding for dental services; and
 - (ii) the ACT Legislative Assembly supports Medicare-funded dentistry as an aspiration; and
- (b) Minister for Health to provide to the Assembly the reasons why, including possible funding issues, that the mean waiting time for adults on the ACT dental services waiting list is currently 12 months.”.

MS BRESNAN (Brindabella) (6.28): I will close the debate and speak to the amendment, if that is acceptable. I will go to a couple of points that Dr Bourke made about the waiting times. I think he made the point about the waiting times being better here in the ACT. As I pointed out in my initial speech, because every state and territory does provide quite different levels of public dental services and charges, it is

sometimes difficult to make those comparisons. I do take his point, though, that when it is an emergency, people are seen very quickly. I do take that point, but it is quite difficult to compare some of those things.

To respond to Mr Hanson, I would have hoped we had a motion that everyone could agree on, but obviously that is impossible for him to do and there does have to be political sniping and point-scoring, as per usual. I remind him again of some of the points that I made in my speech.

I note again that having a universal dental scheme was a key recommendation from the National Advisory Council on Dental Health. It was supported by all its members and was for, as I said, a universal dental care scheme. It was also the key recommendation from the Health and Hospitals Reform Commission.

This is actually about lobbying over time. This is something the Greens have been lobbying for over a number of years federally, and this is actually reminding the commonwealth government that the states and territories need this funding. It is not just about lobbying in this budget. If it is not in this budget then this motion is even more important because it is stating that we need this funding for a national dental scheme to appear in future budgets.

I think Mr Hanson said it was an embarrassment for me. Again, what is even more of an embarrassment than the embarrassment he is referring to today is how little he seems to understand his portfolio. He is talking about the costs and how the Greens are economically irresponsible. I have referred twice in my speech, but he obviously did not take it in, to the impact that not having a universal scheme is having on the federal budget every year. Again, I point to the contribution that the federal health budget makes of \$426 million a year towards dental care for higher income earners through the private health insurance rebate, \$350 million a year on Medicare due to untreated dental disease and at least a \$100 million a year impact on the hospital system.

The fact that he cannot understand that those costs are borne elsewhere in the health system, probably elsewhere in other budgets as well, shows how little he understands his portfolio and how little he understands the concept of preventative health. This is something we keep talking about. Health is not just about waiting lists. It is actually about prevention. If you do not start investing in these areas, these are the figures you are going to see every year and you are going to see them increase every year because by not treating dental disease that is what is happening.

Dr Bourke referred to, and I did, the effect it has on nutrition and causing chronic disease for people. Those are the things that are not going to appear straightaway. They are going to appear a few years later. They are the things that do not get factored in, the things which I think show who are the economically irresponsible ones. That is the opposition, and that is why they are the opposition.

He said he wanted to give us some timely reminders. It is a timely reminder that the Howard government removed funding for dental care. That is a nice reminder for him. I also have to point to this word “aspirational” which he has put in his amendment. It is a lovely way out of actually doing anything or actually pointing out any real action.

It is the usual policy-free zone of the Liberal Party and, again, not understanding his portfolio.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MR SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, you have made your point.

MS BRESNAN: The Greens will not be supporting this amendment that, again, skirts the issue of any responsibility to actually look at this issue and again shows little understanding of what a huge impact not investing in dental care is having on our overall health budget.

Question put:

That **Mr Hanson's** amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 3		Noes 8	
Mr Coe	Mr Hanson	Dr Bourke	Ms Hunter
Mr Doszpot		Ms Bresnan	Ms Le Couteur
		Ms Burch	Ms Porter
		Mr Hargreaves	Mr Rattenbury

Question so resolved in the negative.

Motion agreed to.

Adjournment

Motion (by **Dr Bourke**) proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Strathnairn Arts Association ACT antique and collectables fair

MR COE (Ginninderra) (6.36): One of the heritage festival events I was pleased to attend this year was the open day held by the Strathnairn Arts Association. Back to Strathnairn Day was an opportunity to visit the Strathnairn property located in west Belconnen in the suburb of Holt and view the Back to Strathnairn Exhibition, an exhibition of memorabilia and photos of the property's colourful past.

Strathnairn is managed by the Strathnairn Arts Association, a not-for-profit arts association that provides space and facilities for Canberra artists and craftspeople. The property also houses an exhibition gallery and a sculpture garden, as well as a gallery which sells the work produced by Strathnairn Arts Association members. I know my colleague Mrs Dunne is well known to those involved at Strathnairn. The rural property has been associated with the arts community for decades and the open day provided an opportunity to hear many stories of days gone by.

I would like to acknowledge the current Strathnairn Arts Association committee members, including the president, Anita McIntyre, the secretary, Trena Langdon, the treasurer, Elizabeth Jermyn, general members Carole Osmotherly, Robin Errey, Carolyn Fitzpatrick and Vivien Lightfoot, and the administrator, Leah Molony. I would also like to acknowledge the manager-caretaker of the facility, Michael Sainsbury, who has been a major part of Strathnairn for the past 20 years. I encourage everyone to take the time to visit the Strathnairn website. They can find out more information at www.strathnairn.asn.au.

Mr Speaker, I would like to acknowledge the ACT antique and collectables fair which took place early last month at the Albert Hall. Thanks to the continuing hard work of Les Selkirk, Robert Harris, the Rotary Club of Canberra City, Rotaract and many other individuals, the fair is now enjoying its 25th year of operation and is considered among antique dealers and collectors as one of Australia's top antique fairs.

The fair is traditionally held at the iconic Albert Hall each spring and autumn and organisers are already working towards next year's fairs. I know Les would like me to stress here on the public record that the certainty of the availability of Albert Hall is crucial to the ongoing success and reputation of the fair.

The Rotary Club of Canberra City has assisted with the fair for more than 15 years and, as a result, it has raised more than \$450,000 through the modest entry fees, raffles and proceeds from lunches and morning and afternoon teas in the hall's supper room. The autumn fair raised around \$8,000, providing to ACT Zonta clubs to support local women in adverse circumstances and provide scholarships for young women studying in non-traditional professions. I look forward to the spring fair and encourage all Canberrans to attend. Again, I commend the Rotary Club of Canberra City for the work it is doing.

Scarlet Road
Belconnen Arts Centre—exhibition
Mental health—young people

MS BRESNAN (Brindabella) (6.39): On 5 April I had the great honour of hosting a screening of *Scarlet Road* here at the Assembly. *Scarlet Road* is about a quite extraordinary person, Rachel Wotton, whom I met on the day. She is a sex worker and her clientele are primarily people with a disability. It is an extremely heart-felt and touching documentary. I know it brought tears to a lot of people who were watching it just to see what a wonderful person Rachel is in the work she does and in advocating for the rights of people with a disability.

I congratulate the sponsors of the documentary: Paradigm Pictures, Touching Base Inc, AIDS Action Council, Sex Workers Outreach Project of the ACT and Sexual Health and Family Planning ACT. I note that Touching Base is a charitable institution that has been active since October 2000. Touching Base developed out of the need to assist people with a disability and sex workers to connect with each other, focusing on access, discrimination, human rights and legal issues and the attitudinal barriers that these two marginalised communities can face.

I acknowledge the people who organised the screening here in the ACT: obviously Rachel Wotton, again an absolutely extraordinary person; Saul Isbister; and, locally, David Heckendorf, Lexxie Jury and Sally Richards. Sally and I were having a chat about this when we were talking about screening *Scarlet Road*. Sally has a son with a disability and she talked about the fact that this is the sort of issue we need to be able to discuss. People with a disability have the same needs, wants and desires as anyone else, and we should not be afraid to have this conversation. I congratulate everyone involved with this wonderful documentary.

On 1 April I attended an exhibition. I missed the opening of the exhibition on 30 March, but the exhibition is at the Belconnen Arts Centre and is called “Open your eyes ... observations and interpretation and hidden treasures ... the soul and spirit of the multicultural community”. This exhibition was presented by the ACT Multicultural Arts Officer. The words from the program are perfect in explaining it:

Through their works, each artist shares their personal reflections and interpretations of the spirit and cultural influences of their country and heritage.

The exhibition is an excellent example of how art can act as an intercultural language, bringing together artists from very different nationalities to share a common vision of promoting and recognising art in Canberra and to show that the art circles do not end in one country, but overlap all over the world.

This exhibition creates a unique multicultural corridor which provides a vibrant artistic kaleidoscope for audiences.

The event I attended on 1 April involved each of the artists talking about their influences and how they came to present the pieces in the exhibition. It was also designed to encourage dialogue amongst visual artists from different cultural backgrounds. The artists included Surya Bajracharya of Nepal, Nida Bangash of Pakistan, Dionisia Salas of Spain and Chile, Marzena Wasikowska of Holland, Yoko Yamaguchi of Japan, and Michal Glikson. I congratulate them and the Multicultural Arts Officer for putting on a wonderful exhibition.

On 16 April I attended the launch of the Mental Illness Education ACT resource, the magazine *Hang On To This*, which provides mental health educational information for young people in ACT schools. I acknowledge that the minister for education, Dr Bourke, launched the resource and announced that the ACT government would fund this resource. I stand to be corrected today, but I understand that this funding is through the Greens’ parliamentary agreement with the government under the item for mental health education in schools. It is great to see that that funding has resulted in this sort of wonderful resource.

MIEACT are an absolutely wonderful organisation. I believe, as do a number of people, they are leaders not just in the ACT but nationally in providing mental health education through the personal stories they tell and their educators. It is great that this resource has got funding. It is wonderful recognition of a wonderful ACT organisation.

International Jazz Day

MRS DUNNE (Ginninderra) (6.44): Last Monday, 30 April was International Jazz Day. It was established last year by UNESCO to raise awareness in the international community of the virtues of jazz as an educational tool, a force for peace, unity, dialogue and enhanced cooperation amongst people. UNESCO's director-general, Irina Bokova, says in relation to International Jazz Day:

From its roots in slavery, this music has raised a passionate voice against all forms of oppression. It speaks a language of freedom that is meaningful to all cultures.

How does this relate to Canberra? Canberra has a vibrant jazz community, anchored in an educational program at the ANU School of Music and with a long history stretching back to Canberra's earliest days. The Canberra City Band, for example, while not playing jazz in the strict sense, embraces the jazz idiom and is Australia's oldest community concert band, established in 1925.

Many of Canberra's jazz musicians have gone on to enjoy a successful international career. Bass player Brendan Clarke, a graduate of the ANU School of Music, is an example. Born and bred in Canberra, Brendan is much sought after for jazz band rhythm sections and is featured on many jazz recordings. Another is cabaret and jazz singer and pianist Craig Schneider, who performed *Rhapsody in Blue* for his graduation recital at the School of Music, accompanied by no less than the Band of the Royal Military College, Duntroon. The RMC band itself is a fine example of our city's jazz heritage. The band is jealously guarded by the people of Canberra as its own because of its professionalism, versatility and accessibility. It celebrated its centenary just last year and this year released a double CD album to showcase that versatility.

The Canberra Jazz Club is another longstanding Canberra institution. It is very active in promoting jazz, especially local jazz. Its president, Margaret Moriarty, is a Canberra treasure and has led the society for many years. Indeed, the Canberra Jazz Club's events program regularly features well-known national and international jazz musicians who have their roots in Canberra, like sax player Niels Rosendahl, keyboardist Luke Sweeting, and drummer Mark Sutton.

My senior adviser would not forgive me if I did not mention bass player Eric Ajaye, an import from the United States but now claimed as a Canberran. Eric is a member of the jazz faculty at the School of Music. Apart from being a true gentleman in every sense, Eric works very hard to develop and promote young musicians. Eric has worked with brilliant pianist Michael Azzopardi, who recently returned from an extended stay in Europe, and the very fine drummer Chris Thwaite, both local artists. He established and leads the Commercial Band ensemble, made up of many students from the School of Music.

But Eric Ajaye is not the only member of the jazz faculty. Canberra is blessed with many other teachers and musicians with international careers—people like trumpeter

Miroslav Bukovsky, trombonist James Greening, drummer Colin Hoorweg, vocalist Vince Jones, sax player John Mackey, guitarist Mike Price, and pianist Matt Thompson.

Miroslav Bukovsky was born in Czechoslovakia and grew up listening to jazz on the then illegal *Voice of America* late-night broadcasts. When the Soviet army invaded Czechoslovakia in 1968, Bukovsky left his homeland and made a new and highly successful life in Australia. In doing so, he founded several jazz bands, including the award-winning Wanderlust.

Canberra has a long and proud history of supporting jazz. In recognising International Jazz Day, I am proud to acknowledge the work of our jazz musicians and the pleasure and enjoyment they bring to audiences here in Canberra, across Australia and around the world.

Reconciliation Australia and Rotary Club of Canberra

MR HANSON (Molonglo) (6.48): I rise tonight to talk about the Reconciliation Australia and Rotary Club of Canberra evening of Australian music event on 27 April 2012 at the residence of the Austrian ambassador. I acknowledge that Minister Bourke was there also. The event was done in partnership with the Rotary Club of Canberra and Reconciliation Australia, but it obviously relied on the very generous support of the Ambassador of the Republic of Austria and Mrs Andrea Porias. The ambassador is a Rotarian and is clearly a very generous and very well-regarded individual.

The evening involved a great array of entertainment. In particular, there was a special guest appearance by Christine Anu. If you have never heard her perform, she is spectacular. We were also entertained by the Ryebuck Bush Band, who provided us with a selection of Australian ballads, including a singalong. The MC of the evening was Ross Solly from the ABC. All proceeds went to support young Indigenous persons to participate in the Rotary youth leader award—that is, RYLA—and the Rotary program of enrichment, RYPEN. The remaining funds will be allocated to selected projects developed by the sponsored participants.

As well as the music there was artwork to be seen. There was a very nice buffet. There was great warmth and generosity on the night. I would like to commend all of those who were involved but, in particular, Gill McFeat, who played a key role in the organisation of the evening.

This was just one event, one activity, conducted by the Rotary Club of Canberra. They do fantastic work across our community. If you go to their website you will see an extensive list of youth programs, vocational activities, international programs and community service projects. It certainly made me very proud to be a Rotarian, to be there on the evening, and also to see some of the other great work that they do.

In recognition I would like to pay note to the board: president Phil Byrne, president-elect, Natalie Vandeppeer-Bradley, secretary Jeff Bradley, treasurer Paul Street, membership Govert Mellink, foundation Gerard Brennan, sergeant Alison Russell-French, international service Michele Whitters, community service Yvonne Luxford,

youth service Paul O'Connor, club PR and website Richard Griffiths and fundraising Desmond Woods, as well as other members of the club in alphabetical order: Zel Bodulovic, Bernard Borg-Caruana, Raymond Cook, Anthony Cooper, David Cossart, Hugh Dakin, Peter Dawson, Ian Drayton, Michael Eland, Michael Faragher, Andrew Fleming, Rick Forster, Markus Gibson-Huck, Neil Gray, Barbara Griffiths, John Hawley, Jeremy Hearder, Colin Holmes, Wendy Hudson, Peter Hughes, Gary Humphries, Klaus-Peter Klaiber, Michael Kumm, Diane Lebson, Gary Lee, Lachlan Lewis, Bruce Mackay, Brian Mann, David Marshall, Lindell McConnell, Gillian McFeat-Lin, Jorge Montalvo, Michael Moore, Helen Moore, Margaret Moore, George Nicola, Jack Olsson, John O'Neill, Anton Pemmer, Hannes Porias, Neil Renfree, Mario Rosi, Roderick Sutherland, Marc Trouyet, Brian Tuck, Gerard Uytterhaegen, Edward Watch, Richard Wilson and Mandy Yap.

Once again, congratulations to the Rotary Club of Canberra and Reconciliation on a tremendous evening. Thank you again to the Ambassador of the Republic of Austria and his wife. Congratulations to the performers, Christine Anu and the Ryebuck Bush Band, and to all those members of the Rotary Club of Canberra not only for that tremendous evening but for the generosity and the community spirit that they show in all of the activities that the club conducts in support of charities and community activities in Canberra, in other regions of Australia and internationally.

Catholic Schools Week Canberra Region Trades Training Centre

MR DOSZPOT (Brindabella) (6.53): This morning I had the pleasure of attending the Catholic Schools Week function at St Michael's primary school, Kaleen. Colleagues from the Assembly who also attended included Zed Seselja, Alistair Coe and Vicki Dunne from the Liberal Party. From Labor we had the minister, Minister Bourke, and Mary Porter, and from the Greens, Meredith Hunter. This is an annual event that most of us have been attending for quite a few years. They generally are very inspirational events that we attend at St Michael's, and today's was no exception.

Congratulations to Mrs Judy Walsh and her fantastic staff, including assistant principal Mrs Val Chiufetelli, Mrs Zita Clifford and Ms Jo Pelle. Father Peter Doai, the parish priest, also supported the event, as he always does. I also congratulate all the teachers and the parents who came along to celebrate this morning's function. The Catholic Education Office had a strong representation, with the Director of Catholic Education, Moira Nadjeki, and her deputy, Mark Hogan, and Helen Casey.

St Michael's primary school, Kaleen is a Catholic systemic school, catering for 215 students and their families. Currently they have nine classes, from kindergarten to year 6. Judy Walsh told us that at St Michael's, the staff, the students and the parish strive to provide an integrated approach to education. The community integrates their faith with contemporary life, and gospel values are reflected in their policies, structures and relationships. The school acknowledges parents as prime educators in their child's education.

St Michael's school motto is "Live in Harmony." It symbolises their desire to live in harmony with God, self, others and the environment. Each member of St Michael's

community, including the parish priest and parishioners, is encouraged to live in harmony by becoming directly involved in school activities and programs, sharing their unique gifts with the community.

Harmony happens when people make a commitment to help one another and to work towards a common purpose, and we were privileged to hear the school choir perform their wonderful school song *That's harmony*. Very briefly, the chorus is:

We are children of the rainbow,
we are children of new hope.
Children of a harmony of which Jesus spoke.
We are children of the living world,
trying harder as we grow.
Giving colours of the rainbow to everyone we know.

Once again, I congratulate Judy Walsh and all her staff on a wonderful morning this morning at St Michael's primary school, Kaleen.

As part of Catholic education week, I was also privileged this morning to be able to attend the blessing and official opening of the Canberra Region Pathways Trade Training Centre, "The Bridge", at Merici college. As usual, it was a very professional event that school principal Catherine Rey presided over. Rain interrupted the initial outdoor part of the ceremony, and a rather drenched but enthusiastic group of around 200 attendees then adjourned to the school hall where the proceedings continued.

Anne Cusack, the 2012 college captain, welcomed the assembled people. The welcome to country was by Aunty Jannette (Nin) Phillips, a Ngunnawal elder. There was the national anthem and the Merici college school band under John Thompson performed very capably. The welcome address from the school board was by Mr Graeme Plenderleith, the Merici board chair. The guest speaker was Mr Callum Hann, Australian ambassador for Jamie Oliver's home cooking skills program and a chef.

There was a reading from Father Bony Abraham, Merici college chaplain. The address and blessing was by Monsignor John Woods, the Vicar General of the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn. There were a number of readings, including prayers of intercession from Virginia Mcleod, Merici college staff member, and Dolores Balzanelli, a parent. Frank Fogliati from Black Mountain School was there. Tookie Capezio, a Merici college staff member, also gave a reading of prayer of intercession. Shae Walsh, a year 11 hospitality student, was another who gave a prayer of intercession. The event officiator was Dr Andrew Leigh, representing the federal government.

All in all, again it was a very interesting and wonderful presentation by the whole school. Particular congratulations go to the principal, Catherine Rey.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 6.58 pm.

Schedules of amendments

Schedule 1

Financial Management (Cost of Living) Amendment Bill 2012

Amendment moved by the Treasurer

1

Clause 4

Proposed new section 11 (1) (f)

Page 2, line 13—

omit proposed new section 11 (1) (f), substitute

- (f) a statement about the effect of the following on an ACT household for the financial year:
- (i) Territory taxes and fees that have a direct effect on the household;
 - (ii) Territory concessions that offset the taxes and fees mentioned in subparagraph (i).

Schedule 2

Financial Management (Cost of Living) Amendment Bill 2012

Amendment moved by Mr Smyth to the Treasurer's amendment

1

Clause 4

Proposed new section 11 (1) (f) (i)

Page 2, line 13—

omit

direct
