



Debates

WEEKLY HANSARD

Legislative Assembly for the ACT

EIGHTH ASSEMBLY

28 NOVEMBER 2012

www.hansard.act.gov.au

Wednesday, 28 November 2012

Leave of absence	119
Petition: Dyslexia—petition No 138 (Ministerial response)	119
Cost of living pressures	120
Education—early childhood	149
Ministerial arrangements	163
Questions without notice:	
Budget—deficit	164
Health—secure mental health unit	164
Community services	167
Health—mental health	169
Alexander Maconochie Centre—needle and syringe program.....	171
National Multicultural Festival—government support.....	173
Health—health promotion grants program	177
Tourism—government support.....	179
Canberra Hospital—adult mental health unit	182
Health—policy.....	184
Government—ministerial and crossbench staff	187
Roads—network	189
Centenary Hospital for Women and Children—maternity services	203
Health—preventive measures	227
Adjournment:	
Legislative Assembly sittings	241
Canberra Philatelic Society	241
Woden Community Service.....	242
West Belconnen Health Co-op	244
Belconnen dog park	244
Tandem	245
Legislative Assembly business	246
Waste—management	247
Adjournment	250

Wednesday, 28 November 2012

MADAM SPEAKER (Mrs Dunne) 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.

Leave of absence

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

That leave of absence be granted to Mr Corbell for this sitting for personal reasons.

Petition

Ministerial response

The Clerk: The following response to a petition has been lodged by a minister:

By **Ms Burch**, Minister for Education and Training, dated 27 November 2012, in response to a petition lodged by Ms Hunter on 22 August 2012 concerning the recognition of dyslexia as a learning disability.

The terms of the response will be recorded in *Hansard*.

Dyslexia—petition No 138

The response read as follows:

Under the Federal Disability Discrimination Act 1992, it is unlawful for an educational authority to discriminate against a person on the grounds of the person's disability. Under the act dyslexia is categorised as a "neurologically based learning difference or disability".

All funds provided to ACT schools to support the education of students includes funding to support those students with a disability. Ensuring students with a disability are able to access and participate in education and training on the same basis as those without a disability can require additional funding depending on the adjustments and support required.

In August 2012, the former Minister for Education and Training, Dr Chris Bourke MLA, announced the establishment of a Taskforce on Students with Learning Difficulties. The aim of the Taskforce is to examine how to improve assessment and support for children and young people in ACT public schools with learning difficulties.

Key issues to be considered include students experiencing language disorders, comprehension and processing disorders, dyslexia-related issues and significant difficulties in general numeracy and literacy. It is expected the issues raised in this petition will be discussed at Taskforce meetings.

I, as the Minister for Education and Training, will receive an interim report from the Taskforce in December 2012. The final report is anticipated to be complete by June 2013 and will include:

- a list of recommendations and/or options around learning difficulties for me to consider
- an evaluation of the current level of available support for teachers
- examination of the current level of school-parent engagement and communication including the level of support available for parents
- assessment of advances in teaching and learning with regard to learning difficulties
- evaluation of standing research literature and best-practice evidence.

The work will be furthered through a National Partnerships initiative on collecting nationally consistent data for students with a disability.

Cost of living pressures

MR SESELJA (Brindabella—Leader of the Opposition) (10.02): I move the following motion in relation to the outrageous cost of living pressures on Canberra families:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) the increasing cost of living pressures on Canberra families;
- (b) that the 2012-13 Budget Cost of Living Statement documented an average increase in ACT Government rates and charges on Canberra families to more than \$9 000;
- (c) that the Labor-Greens Parliamentary Agreement does not act to reduce the cost of living pressures on all Canberra families;
- (d) the Labor-Greens Parliamentary Agreement will result in significant cost increases for Canberra families through the 90% Renewable Energy Target; and
- (e) that ACT Labor's tax changes will increase cost of living pressures through massively increasing property rates by shifting \$350 million per annum in foregone revenue in today's dollars on to rates, amounting to an average increase of \$2 500 per household; and

(2) calls on the Government to outline how it will lower cost of living pressures on Canberra families.

There is no doubt that the ever-increasing cost of living is one of the critical issues facing the people of Canberra, certainly the people in my electorate of Brindabella but also across the board in Molonglo and Ginninderra. It is being felt, it must be said,

most particularly in the outer suburbs. It is the outer suburbs of Canberra that are feeling the cost of living increases that in many cases have been imposed upon them by their ACT government.

I would like, as part of this motion today, to go through what some of those cost of living pressures are, what some of the policy levers are that the government is pulling and how we should be approaching this issue to ensure that cost of living is front and centre and that lowering people's cost of living is absolutely at the forefront of the government's thinking, because it has not been to date. The outer suburbs are feeling it the most. We saw that at the recent election with the outer suburbs, particularly the southern suburbs, voting overwhelmingly for change, voting with their feet, saying to the government, "You have let us down on cost of living and something needs to change." What we say in the Assembly is that something needs to change and that doing things in the way that this government has done them for 11 years will simply lead to more pain for families and make things harder and harder.

Let us go through some of the stats and see why Canberrans are feeling these cost of living pressures, as I say, most particularly in the outer suburbs of Canberra. Since Labor was first elected, taxation per capita has gone up 90 per cent, the highest in the country. Real taxation is up 55 per cent, property rates 90 per cent and rents 77 per cent. Water prices have tripled, with more increases likely due to the blowout in the Cotter Dam. Electricity prices are up 85 per cent, with another increase of 17.8 per cent to pay for the federal Labor and Greens carbon tax, supported by the local Green-Labor coalition.

As I said, rates have increased 90 per cent under the Labor government. Let us look at some of the suburbs that have copped it particularly badly. It goes right across the board, but some of the outer suburbs have copped it particularly badly. In Banks there has been a 152 per cent increase over that period, in Charnwood a 158 per cent increase, in Chisholm a 130 per cent increase, in Dunlop a 137 per cent increase, in Spence a 148 per cent increase and in Holt a 138 per cent increase—to name a few. It is no wonder that the people of Tuggeranong voted so overwhelmingly for change when we look at what they have been copping. I mention Banks at 152 per cent, Bonython at 118 per cent, Gilmore at 113 per cent, Kambah at 107 per cent, Oxley at 107 per cent, Richardson at 124 per cent and Wanniasa at 110 per cent. People's incomes have not gone up by this amount over this period and now we have got a government that want to make things worse through their tax changes. They are making it worse already and that will continue in the coming years under their tax changes.

Before I get into some more detail on that I will touch on some other issues. We know that there are other cost pressures that are being felt by Canberra families. Child care, for instance, in the ACT is \$13 a day more expensive than the national average. Now, for the first time, first homes cost, on average, over \$400,000. The government is making it more expensive for first homebuyers by changing concessions, seeing some first homebuyers having to pay up to \$11,000 extra in stamp duty.

This is a record of failure when it comes to cost of living. We in the Canberra Liberals believe that this continues to be the most significant issue for the people of Canberra

and, as I said, most particularly for people in the outer suburbs of Canberra. When you go through that list of rate increases you see it is the outer suburbs that have felt it. Many of those families are struggling with very large mortgages, many families have a number of children and many have the extra cost pressures that go with living in the outer suburbs. They are feeling it and this government has done nothing to address it. The motion calls on the government to outline how it will lower the cost of living pressures on Canberra families. At the moment it seems there is very little focus on that in the Labor-Green agreement, which I will come to in a moment.

The Canberra Liberals pushed very hard for a cost of living budget statement. Whilst it was watered down by the coalition, we certainly believe that it provides an important indicator, though a far from perfect indicator, of the kinds of cost pressures that are being imposed by the ACT government. There are some that are imposed by the federal government, there are some that are there as a result of living in the city we live in and there are some directly as a result of government action and inaction.

We know that there was a \$641 increase for an average family in the 2012-13 year due to ACT government taxes and charges. That is according to the government's own numbers. That is according to their cost of living statement, which leaves a number of things out. But even on that cost of living statement we saw general rates go up 9.6 per cent, utilities 11.5 per cent, electricity 17.8 per cent, gas 11.5 per cent and sewerage 8.2 per cent. Charges will rise from \$8,400 per year to \$9,066 per year, with a \$600 increase in one year. Families are being forced to pay that. Of course, many of them are paying much more. The ambulance levy and the utilities tax were not included. The increase in CTP insurance is not accounted for. The family in question apparently does not park their car, which can add another \$3,240 a year to their charges. Of course, if the family has a child that attends a non-government school they will be paying more in fees due to their child being funded approximately \$1,300 less than a child attending a non-government school across the border in New South Wales.

There is very little attention in the Labor-Greens parliamentary agreement in relation to the cost of living pressures. There are a number of policies outlined. The only mention of note in relation to the cost of living is "to help Canberra households reduce energy, reduce emissions and save money on utility bills". That is a worthy aim, but let us look at the actual policies that are behind that. The policy mechanisms chosen for this include a 90 per cent renewable energy target and the rollout of the large-scale feed-in tariff scheme. That will lead to cost increases.

Let us move to electricity. Electricity has increased 85 per cent since ACT Labor came to power. As I noted earlier, there was a 17.8 per cent increase in the last year, mainly as a result of the carbon tax which the local Labor-Greens coalition have supported. Research released by Choice in 2012 shows electricity is the expense that household decision makers are most concerned about. Analysis conducted by Nielsen released in October 2012 found that increasing utility bills continue to concern Australians, with electricity, gas and heating prices being a major concern of 40 per cent of Australians. It is the 10th consecutive quarter where rising utility bills have been the biggest concern.

Despite this, the Labor-Green coalition is implementing policy that will see electricity prices skyrocket by implementing their 90 per cent renewable energy target for all Canberrans. Requiring households to have 90 per cent renewable energy based on today's cost and the average household use of electricity would see electricity bills increase by \$490 a year. That is just for the average household. Where there are more people in the household, it could be many hundreds of dollars more. Labor and the Greens argue in response that the cost of renewable energy will decrease over time, but the federal government's energy white paper states:

While many clean energy technologies are currently not cost-competitive, that is expected to change dramatically over the next two decades.

Two decades, Madam Speaker. They are saying to Canberra families, who are feeling those cost pressures now, who have seen their electricity prices increase by 17 per cent just in the last year, that in two decades, under the 90 per cent renewable energy target, they will start to see some decreases potentially as renewable energy becomes cheaper. We can all be committed to renewable energy, but we need to be conscious of the cost impacts on households. There does not seem to be much, if any, thought going into it from the Labor-Greens coalition's point of view. There seems a dogged determination to push ahead with a 90 per cent target come what may.

I would remind members that the 20 per cent renewable energy target that exists nationally does not come without costs. A 20 per cent renewable energy target is a challenging thing for our nation. It does involve costs. It is something that has been signed up to in a bipartisan way federally. What we are being asked to do and what is being implemented by this government is not a 20 per cent target but a 90 per cent target, with all of the additional costs that come with that.

Let us look, in the time that I have left, at some of the detail in relation to the government's tax reform. The government have \$350 million of taxes they want to abolish which they have shown in the 2012-13 budget papers will be through property rates. Pre reform, the abolished taxes are conveyances, \$294 million; duties on insurance, \$44 million; duties on life insurance, \$2.3 million; and the proposed payroll tax cut, \$6.8 million, totalling around \$350 million. That is \$2½ thousand per household per annum when that amount is transferred on to rates.

The government tell us that this will be done for the cost of a cup of coffee a week. That is what they have said; that they can do it for a cup of coffee a week. Well, we know that already people are seeing increases in relation to this change—in Hackett, 20 per cent; in Turner, 27 per cent; in Chifley, 17 per cent; in Hughes, 25.9 per cent; in Duffy, 17 per cent; in Chapman, 21 per cent; in Hawker, 25 per cent; in Griffith, 32½ per cent; in Red Hill, 44.79 per cent and in Narrabundah, 26 per cent—to name but a few. That is not a cup of coffee a week. That is the first year of the reform and people are already seeing those massive increases.

We were told that it was going to be fairer and more equitable; it was going to be not just efficient but fairer. We had the only person going out there publicly and defending the government's tax reform in the week leading up to the election, Ben

Phillips, saying, “All the work we did on the Quinlan review—well, don’t take too much notice of that table that says rates will triple. We don’t actually have an alternative to that table.” They still have not put out an alternative. I would ask Mr Barr, when he gets up, to give us the alternative. What will rates be in five years, in 10 years or in 15 years? In fact, most pertinently, what will rates be when you abolish stamp duty, which is what you committed to at the election? Katy Gallagher said it in the ads; she said it in a number of forums. She said, “We’re abolishing stamp duty. We’re not collecting any more revenue.” So when will stamp duty be abolished? Because when stamp duty is abolished and those other taxes are changed, \$350 million will be imposed on household rates.

We had a change of heart from Ben Phillips, it seems, because before the election he was saying it was efficient and it was equitable. After the election, it turns out that it is actually more efficient but less equitable—more efficient but less equitable. He has changed his tune either side of the election in terms of what this does. We agree with the latest statement from Mr Phillips. We agree with the latest position from Mr Phillips that it is less equitable. Of course it is less equitable. We are seeing households, many of whom have been in their homes for many years, whose property values have increased over that time but their income has not necessarily. In fact, in many cases it has declined. Yet they are being asked to pay thousands of dollars more per year to pay for the government’s so-called efficient reforms. This will continue to be an issue. The outer suburbs of Canberra said very clearly that cost imposts placed on them by this Labor government are too much. They have sent a very clear message. The Canberra Liberals have heard it and we will continue to fight for those families who are suffering under the burden of cost of living pressures. *(Time expired.)*

MR BARR (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Sport and Recreation, Minister for Tourism and Events and Minister for Community Services) (10.18): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for raising this issue this morning. It is of course an important issue for Canberrans and one the government is very happy to discuss. However, it is important to focus on the facts, Madam Speaker, and that is something the Leader of the Opposition struggles with most of his life.

The government have a very proud record of assisting those in need and the most vulnerable in our community. We offer a range of concessions to assist with cost of living pressures, including utilities, education and training, housing and land, health and wellbeing, and transport.

As part of our targeted assistance strategy we have focused on providing assistance to those who are most in need, whether it is through concessions or through other means. The government have a particular focus on making housing more affordable for Canberrans who wish to rent and buy.

Earlier this year, I released phase III of the government’s affordable housing action plan, which furthers the government’s work in this area and demonstrates our commitment to providing affordable housing to Canberrans, particularly those on lower incomes.

Importantly, though, the government assist all households in the ACT with cost of living pressures by helping to build a strong economy that supports and creates jobs. An essential part of this is our tax reform plan, which is designed to make our tax system fairer, simpler and more efficient and, of course, ensure Canberra's continued economic prosperity in its second century.

What those opposite appear to be finding hard to grasp is that we want the territory to continue to be a modern, thriving economy with high quality services and public infrastructure. If we want that then we need to ensure that we have the capacity to raise funds effectively into the future. There is no doubt that the previous tax system was outdated and in need of reform.

The Henry tax review made this point very clearly at a national level and encouraged states and territories to head down what is a difficult path of reform. As I mentioned in question time yesterday, every state and territory faces this challenge. We all know what we need to do on tax reform, but at this stage the ACT is the only jurisdiction that has actually had the courage to do something about it.

The key parts of our tax reform agenda include reducing stamp duty over the short term and abolishing it over the longer term. For the benefit of the Leader of the Opposition, who appears not to be able to read, stamp duty is abolished by 2032. Abolishing insurance duties, which will be complete by 2015-16, will see the ACT become the only jurisdiction in Australia that does not tax insurance—a cost of living benefit to every Canberra household. It is a cost of living benefit to every Canberra household.

They will see a 10 per cent reduction. All tax will be abolished. The current 10 per cent tax will be abolished on their motor vehicle insurance, on their home contents insurance, on their building insurance. If they work in a field that requires some form of professional indemnity insurance, the tax on that is abolished. If they are a business that has motor vehicles as part of their business, the tax on the insurance on that motor vehicle is abolished.

We have also increased the payroll tax threshold to provide a \$17,000 payroll tax cut to every business in the ACT that pays payroll tax, and 115 businesses now pay no payroll tax at all. They did previously under the old arrangements. Importantly, and perhaps an area that has not been discussed as much, the reforms to land tax have significantly benefited those who are renting a home. Seventy-six per cent of all rental properties in this city received a cut in the land tax that is applied to those properties. Of course, we are redesigning our rates system to ensure it delivers revenue in a more efficient system, in a more efficient way and is progressive in its application.

What the Leader of the Opposition conveniently leaves out of his list is the one-quarter, the 33,000 properties in the territory, that had their rates cut as part of a move to a more progressive rates system. The Leader of the Opposition always leaves that out. That is because the Leader of the Opposition has no interest at all in representing the issues that are faced by the lowest income Canberrans and those who occupy the lowest valued properties in this city. He is not—

Mr Seselja interjecting—

MR BARR: 33,000 properties had their rates cut as a result of the changes.

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, members!

MR BARR: Thank you, Madam Speaker. 33,000 properties had their rates cut and the concessions and rebates that were increased ensured that for all of those in those lower value properties, the combination of the rates decreases and the increases in—

Mr Seselja interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, members! Mr Seselja, Mr Barr has the floor.

MR BARR: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Those properties that received a rates cut equalled nearly 25 per cent of all properties in the territory. Of course, everyone who was in receipt of a concession, particularly pensioners—I will come to this in a moment—had that rebate increased. It is important to note that these measures are designed to ensure that the tax system is sustainable in the long run and that it allows the government to maintain and enhance the high standard of living that our community enjoys.

In saying this, the guiding principle behind the reform plan has always been that those households who can least afford it should pay less and those who can most afford it should make a greater contribution. That is a very sound and progressive principle to apply to taxation. It is why targeting concessions and assistance are a very important part of tax reform.

For example, through the expansion of the pensioner duty concession scheme, from the beginning of July this year homes valued at up to \$570,000—up from \$470,000—were made eligible for a full pensioner duty concession and the partial concession was extended on homes valued up to \$715,000.

The expansion of the general rates rebate for pensioners and concession cardholders is another key way of delivering a significant cost of living benefit to low income earners. I noticed that the Leader of the Opposition opposed this as well. So he wanted every pensioner to have their rebates go back from \$565 to \$481. There is your champion of social justice, Madam Speaker!

The Leader of the Opposition wants pensioners to pay more whilst he delivers big tax cuts to those who live on Mugga Way. That is the difference between Labor and Liberal. The Leader of the Opposition wants pensioners to pay more and concession cardholders to pay more, but he wants to give big tax cuts to the millionaires' row on Mugga Way. He used Red Hill as an example. That is the contrast. I am very happy for that policy contrast to be front and centre.

The eligibility criteria for the rates deferral scheme have been expanded. Again, from 1 July this year, non-pensioners—those above 65 years of age—whether they are working or not, have been able to defer their rates, subject to income and assets tests, allowing more Canberrans to access this scheme.

The duty deferral scheme, which has been available for households prior to the tax reform, has in fact been extended and allows eligible households to amortise their duty for a period of 10 years, which is an increase from the previous five-year period. This, of course, was a key recommendation from the taxation review. The government's tax reform is the right thing to do. It spreads the burden more evenly and it does not focus the collection of our revenue on a narrow base. It ensures that the tax system is fairer for households and fairer for businesses.

Reform is difficult. It is very easy for the Leader of the Opposition to just say no. He has had a lot of practice at that and that is why he is still the Leader of the Opposition and will spend the best part of a decade in that role, provided his colleagues are going to continue to support him—

MADAM SPEAKER: Relevance, Mr Barr. Keep to the motion, Mr Barr.

MR BARR: And we are very happy to see that happen. We are very happy to see that happen. Very happy.

Mr Seselja: You will never be—

MR BARR: You can spend a decade sitting in that chair, Mr Seselja.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Barr, you will not address Mr Seselja. You will address the motion and you will be relevant to the motion.

MR BARR: Thank you, Madam Speaker. This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to ensure that we undertake reforms that are necessary for our community and for business. Every credible economist supports shifting tax from inefficient to efficient taxes. The Henry tax review and our Quinlan tax review supported this shift in taxation. The Business Council of Australia and all of the other major peak bodies support such a reform at state and territory level.

Locally, the Canberra Business Council, the chamber of commerce and the Property Council have all indicated their support for this approach. The Housing Industry Association just yesterday did the same thing. Many in the not-for-profit sector support this reform. In fact, many Liberal treasurers in other parts of the country have indicated their support for this approach.

The only people who oppose it are those opposite. Once again, they are saying no for the sake of saying no. Thankfully, the government was returned and tax reform will endure. We will provide the right settings to grow the territory economy and ensure that the burden of taxation is spread more widely. If we are serious about tackling cost of living pressures, we need to have a tax system that is fair. In simple terms, that

means those who cannot afford it should pay less and those who can should pay their fair share. So those who cannot afford it will pay less and those who can should pay their fair share.

In thinking about cost of living pressures, it was interesting to hear the Leader of the Opposition raise the issue of compulsory third party insurance. It is worth noting that again the Canberra Liberals voted against a meaningful reform of that particular scheme that would have seen premiums reduced for Canberra motorists. But, no, doing the bidding of the Law Society and putting the interests of lawyers ahead of the interests of Canberra motorists, they voted down another important reform.

If you are serious about cost of living issues, you will support reform of third-party insurance that will ensure that there is competition in the marketplace and that downward pressure is put on premiums. In relation to electricity, it is interesting to note the price differential that there is between the average Canberra household and the average household across the border in Queanbeyan. It is \$1,000 a year cheaper. It is \$1,000 a year cheaper in the ACT than the equivalent household in Queanbeyan. That is an important point to make. The arrangements that are in place in the ACT save the average Canberra household \$1,000 a year.

The Leader of the Opposition might scoff at that \$1,000 a year saving, but for Canberra households that is significant, very significant, and is something that should be supported. The government will not be supporting the Leader of the Opposition's motion. He can continue to re-run the same tired arguments that failed him in the 2012 election, the same tired arguments that failed him in the 2008 election, and he will continue to sit miserably in that chair as opposition leader for as long as he serves in this parliament.

MADAM SPEAKER: The question is that Mr Seselja's motion be agreed to. Before I give you the call, Mr Smyth, in the spirit of how I would like to see this chamber run, I would like to draw members' attention to the rules about offensive and disorderly language and perhaps also to the pages in the *Companion*.

There have been a couple of occasions in this debate already this morning where there have been things that go fairly close to accusing people of being fast and loose with the truth. Accusations of people being liars are entirely disorderly and as you come closer and closer to those accusations I will take a very dim view of that in particular.

I am putting people on notice now that the sorts of words like "this is a fact that someone has been struggling with for a very long time", whilst not particularly offensive, perhaps in a context may be considered offensive. I will take a very dim view of accusations against people's character along the lines that they are liars. I will just put that out there. And here ends the lesson for the morning.

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (10.33): Madam Speaker, it is interesting that one of the chief bulwarks of the government before the election who said, "No, the Canberra Liberals' triple your rates campaign is wrong," has now come out after the election and said that there will be many losers and few winners in the government's property

tax reform. Not my words but those of economist Ben Phillips. An economist from the University of Canberra says there will be many losers and few winners in the government's property tax reform.

This is the minister who thinks it is fair and equitable that people should pay their fair share but cannot define what "fair" is. He stumbled when he said, "People should pay a fair share," and I perhaps incorrectly interjected with, "So, what's fair?" And you could see the blank expression on his face. He did not have an answer for what is fair.

If you look at the summary of the reforms that have been implemented from one of the individuals who helped put the package together, he now confesses there will be many losers and few winners in this government's property reform. Mr Phillips said increasing rates will be more efficient but less equitable. And this is what the reform is all about—it is about making it easy for a government that cannot manage its finances by making it more efficient but less equitable. The government have said what they want is certainty in their revenue so that they can smooth it out. Given the criticism they have rightly faced over the last 11 years of getting their estimates so wrong, they have picked a system that will make the government look good, but they do not care who pays for it.

What did Mr Phillips say? There are people who have often very low incomes but fairly high rate payments. We know in his article, the op-ed that he wrote, that he said rates will increase heavily. Well, how heavily will they increase? Over what time frame will they increase? Of course, yesterday the minister was all over the shop. In question time yesterday he said that over the next few years we will continue to reduce stamp duty across the board. He did not say, "We're going to get rid of it." I noticed this morning that, when called on it, he said, "Well, yes, we're reducing it and then we're getting rid of it."

If you know you are getting rid of something and the time frame over which you propose to get rid of it, you would have thought you might have done the work and might be able to table at least a document—a single document perhaps, maybe a small document, 20 lines, 20 years, the percentage on each of those lines as to what it will go down by. But, of course, the government have not produced such a document, and I suspect the government will not because they have not done the work.

That is the problem with this—we have a Treasurer who is flying blind. He is more interested in the headline about being Australia's world-reforming Treasurer rather than working out the impacts on the cost of living of ordinary Canberrans. He cannot tell us how his plan will be implemented. He cannot say what the increments are over the many years except to say that in 20 years it will be done. But we do not know whether it will all occur this year, five years, seven, nine, 13, 15, 20 years from now. If you have got a plan for this "brave reform" and you have actually worked out how you are going to do it, surely you would be brave enough to table that document and tell people what your true intention is.

Mr Barr: The five-year plan was released on the budget day.

MR SMYTH: Twenty years, where is the 20-year plan?

Mr Barr: The five-year plan was released on budget day.

MR SMYTH: Five-year plan? But the budget is only four years. If you look at the numbers in the budget, it only covers four years.

Mr Barr: So we went a year ahead of that, too, didn't we?

MR SMYTH: He is a year ahead of it now! Well, where is the rest of it?

Mr Barr: Release the document. Release the document, Brendan.

MR SMYTH: Yesterday we saw the weasel words start to emerge: "We will continue to reduce stamp duty; this is budget neutral; no child will live in poverty by 1990; Gungahlin Drive will be built on time and on budget."

Mr Barr: There will never, ever be a GST, Brendan. There will never, ever be a GST.

MR SMYTH: We have heard these lines. Remember Jon Stanhope before the 2008 election: "We will deliver a surplus every year."

Mr Barr: Paint the grass green at Canberra Stadium. Fujitsu, Impulse Airlines.

MR SMYTH: These are the problems with this government.

Mr Barr: Blow up a hospital, why don't you?

MR SMYTH: They are good on the—

Mr Barr: Why don't you kill someone blowing up a hospital? Why don't you do that?

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, Mr Barr!

Mr Seselja: Point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: I think it is all right; I think I can manage this one, Mr Seselja.

Mr Seselja: Well, if I could just make a point of order, Madam Speaker, Mr Barr may be defensive about the fact that he has no answers on this—

MR SMYTH: Could we stop the clock?

MADAM SPEAKER: Yes, stop the clock, please.

Mr Seselja: but to accuse Mr Smyth of killing someone, as he did across the chamber, shows what a low-life he is, frankly, and the level of debate that he wants to take us to in this chamber. He should be asked not just to withdraw but to apologise to Mr Smyth for bringing this parliament so quickly to such a disgraceful use of language—

here in the chamber today accusing Mr Smyth of killing someone. That is the Deputy Chief Minister. We hear about standards. The Deputy Chief Minister accused Mr Smyth of killing someone. He should not just withdraw; he should apologise and hang his head in shame.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Barr—

Mr Barr: I will—

MADAM SPEAKER: No, sit down.

Mr Barr: I will withdraw, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Sit down. Mr Barr, I just had a discussion before Mr Smyth began about the way we do not reflect upon people's character. I was letting a fair amount of interjection go because I believe a certain amount of interjection is acceptable in a debate. But you lowered the standard and completely disregarded the things that I said. The accusation that Mr Smyth killed somebody is utterly and completely unacceptable. I heard the words, and I will not tolerate it. The next time you interject in that form, I will name you.

Mr Barr: Madam Speaker, I withdraw and apologise. I would ask the Leader of the Opposition to equally withdraw the assertion that I am a low-life.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Seselja?

MR SESELJA: I withdraw.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you. Now, can we just all take a powder. I believe there should be robust debate in this place, and I will continue to adhere to that. But it will be civil and there will not be reflections upon people's character. I will take a very hard line on it. Mr Smyth, to resume.

MR SMYTH: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Of course, the Treasurer does not even go to the facts of the issue. I was not a member of the Assembly when the hospital—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Smyth, just stick to the debate.

MR SMYTH: No, well, I think I have a right to address what was said about me, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: I think you could use standing order 46 at the end of the debate.

MR SMYTH: No, I am using this as an example of the debating technique of those opposite. When they cannot address the facts, they go the slur. Indeed, the opening line of the Treasurer was to go straight to the slur on the Leader of the Opposition. Did not have the facts, did not have a counterattack, so we will just go the slur. It is what we know of Andrew Barr and it is what we—

Mr Gentleman: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Gentleman.

MR SMYTH: I will stop the clock, if I may.

Mr Gentleman: Debate is supposed to be relevant to the motion on the notice paper. I would ask him to be relevant to that.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr Gentleman. Sorry, can we please stop the clock. The debate is relevant. Mr Smyth was referring to Mr Barr's opening words, and that is clearly relevant to the debate. However, I will ask Mr Smyth to refer to members by their title and their surname. Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Thanks, Madam Speaker. Let us go to the facts. It is a fact that the Treasurer just said that cost of living is a tired argument. This is the man who talks about equity, but his own statement a couple of minutes ago was that cost of living is tired. Cost of living is tired? Well, get out into the suburbs, Treasurer, and talk to those who are being affected. I know he likes to poke Red Hill. You always know he is in trouble when he goes straight to Mugga Lane. It is the only address he can pick out of his head. There are people who are not as well off in terms of cash flow in Red Hill, but let us leave the Red Hill argument out of it. Let us go to, for instance, Narrabundah. Narrabundah is not full of the wealthy and well-off, but Narrabundah has seen its rates go up 26 per cent. How is that fair and equitable?

Of course, then there are the rich of Hackett, who had a 20 per cent increase, and the minister thinks that is fair and equitable? Then there are the people of Hughes. They are all millionaires in Hughes according to the Treasurer, so he slugged them with a 25 per cent increase. And Hawker, clearly everybody in Hawker is well-off. They copped 25 per cent as well. If you are one of the rich burghers of Griffith you got a 32 per cent increase. Well, the Treasurer thinks it is okay to tax you because you are sitting on a property and you are wealthy, regardless of whether or not you can pay it.

Mr Phillips says himself that there are people who often have very low incomes but often have fairly high rate payments. Yes, they do. And this is the Treasurer who ignores them because cost of living is a tired argument. Well, cost of living is how people survive, Treasurer. Cost of living is what people have every day when they focus on what they can expend and what they cannot expend.

You can read the litany of increases under this government where taxation has gone up 90 per cent, where property rates are up 90 per cent, where rent is up 70 per cent, where water prices have tripled, where electricity is up 85 per cent. I am sure he thinks cost of living is a tired argument, because he does not have an answer. He says all of the world's economists have said this is a good thing. Well, they do not live in Canberra. Anybody who wants to comment in an esoteric sense about tax reform, go for your life. But they do not live in Canberra. They do not live in Banks where the rates have gone up 151 per cent. They do not live in Bonython where they have gone

up 118 per cent. They do not live in Calwell where they have gone up 110 per cent. I can read the whole list if you want. This is a Treasurer who does not live in the suburbs and does not understand because he does not get out, he does not talk to people and he does not care.

It is easy to say, “Well, all the other states are talking about getting rid of conveyancing.” Yes, they are. I think Bruce Baird is talking about the federal government paying for it. Bruce Baird is not talking about New South Wales tripling—

Mr Barr: Mike Baird.

MR SMYTH: Mike Baird—I apologise. Mike Baird is not talking about tripling rates in New South Wales; he is talking about addressing some of the imbalances we have between federal and state finances. He is not talking about tripling rates. He said he thought the income tax spread should be better.

Mr Barr: He doesn’t levy rates. He levies land tax, and he’s increased that.

MR SMYTH: Well, that is right. There you go. The Treasurer creates the illusion that all the other states and territories are following him, but when you actually put the facts on the table, the shifting sands start. Again, the shifting of the Treasurer is noted by so many people.

There are questions still to be asked here. There are things that need to be addressed. The Treasurer says the opposition leave out the 33,000 properties whose rates went down. How do we know that is true? Table the document that proves that. Table the document. If we know the rates on apparently 33,000 properties went down, give us the rest of how much they went up, and give us the five, 10, 15 and 20-year projections, because surely you have done that work. You have done that work, haven’t you?

Mr Barr: Yes.

MR SMYTH: Well, table it. Table your documents. You did not have the documents—

Mr Barr: It’s in the five-year plan that was released.

MR SMYTH: No, no, no. We are asking for the work by Treasury. We go back—in that case, rates are clearly tripling, by your own documents. You say it is in the tax review. This is the question. Mr Coe asked this question and we were referred to the Quinlan review. Well, table the documents. Table the sheets that show what happens after the five years, what happens in 10 years, what happens in 15 years, what happens in 20 years. Tell us when stamp duties apply. Instead of it being a tired argument, tell us when you will take cost of living seriously and reduce the burden on the people of the ACT. *(Time expired.)*

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (10.45): The Greens will not be supporting the motion as proposed by Mr Seselja. I have made it clear that I am willing to work with both sides and that I will support any proposal that is backed up by evidence to show that it is in the long-term best interests of Canberra and Canberrans. So if Mr Seselja can show me any evidence that Canberrans will be better off in the long term by not increasing our uptake of renewable energy then I will be happy, more than happy, to reconsider my position. But if he does happen to find that evidence, he should probably get on the phone to Lord Monckton and some of his colleagues, as well as perhaps the International Energy Agency, because so far no-one anywhere in the world has managed to come up with anything even remotely credible in that regard.

I will go briefly through each of the points in the motion, starting with the claims about the parliamentary agreement. Contrary to the assertions in the motion, the agreement does in fact contain a range of measures that will substantially reduce costs for Canberrans, while at the same time improving their quality of living. No-one regrets their time with their family and friends, and no-one enjoys living in a freezing cold house all winter long. But they do want good-quality government services, and I do not think a single Canberran would choose a dollar in the bank today if it locked in a reduction in their quality of life over the next 20 years. It does not reduce the cost of living if you reduce the price this week slightly but make it twice as expensive next fortnight.

The issues that Mr Seselja talks about when he talks about the costs of living are not black and white. They are complex, long-term issues that involve real planning and difficult decisions, not thought bubbles and slogans. Rather than some very short-term token gesture that may make a marginal difference in the next week or even year, the measures in the agreement actually address the real issues that need to be dealt with over the coming decades.

I notice that Mr Seselja in his speech referenced the carbon price in a rather derogatory way. I am sure he has seen the Essential Media Communications polling this week, and it must really hurt to find that the carbon tax package is more popular than the federal Leader of the Opposition. I think that must be a difficult fact to absorb.

When it comes to electricity, the agreement contains a real plan to address the long-term costs of electricity, whilst doing our fair share to address climate change. If Mr Seselja is really interested in the cost impact of the policy, I am sure he can tell us what the price forecasts are for renewable energy over the next 20 years and the corresponding forecasts for the price of coal-fired power. He might also be keen to tell us about the many thousands of coal-fired power producers who are keen to sign 20-year agreements locking in a fixed price for the power they produce.

Of course, there is not a single coal-fired generator anywhere in the world who would do that but there are thousands of everyday Canberrans who are willingly paying the up-front costs of a solar installation, giving us a guaranteed energy supply at a guaranteed price for the next 20 years, and that does not even begin to get to the issue of the fact that all of those ageing coal-fired power stations in Australia will need

substantial capital upgrades in coming years, over the next couple of decades, and those costs will be passed through to electricity customers. Those sorts of long-term considerations are conveniently left out of the conversation.

On the good news on the solar side, added to the guaranteed price that the small-scale generators are giving us, there is the first round of the large-scale feed-in tariff, which has proven that large quantities of solar electricity can be generated right here in Canberra at a very reasonable price, in fact a price that will most likely be cheaper than coal within a decade, and that is why the agreement ensures that the rest of the generating capacity provided under the act will be allocated. Of course, some of that extra capacity will also be going towards wind, which is even cheaper than solar at this point. This will ensure that Canberrans get all the benefits of being the early adopters and that we have new sustainable industry and new sustainable jobs and, of course, greater economic diversity.

Over the last 20 years, according to the Energy Supply Association of Australia, energy prices have increased by about 150 per cent across Australia, and all the evidence suggests that the price increases for coal-fired power over the next 20 years will be even greater. The large-scale feed-in tariff price that effectively caps the cost of electricity for the next 20 years is a fantastic deal for Canberrans and will actually help keep prices down rather than push them up. The challenge for Mr Seselja is to show us any modelling to suggest that prices will be higher under the 90 per cent renewable plan than they will be if we stick to coal-fired power.

Undoubtedly, of course, the best way to reduce energy bills is to improve efficiency, and the agreement also deals with this. For those doing it toughest, the agreement will mean that public housing is more energy efficient and that the energy concession is indexed to the actual price of electricity to ensure that we maintain the community support for those most in need. For those in rental properties, it begins the process of creating incentives and, hopefully, obligations for landlords to make their properties more energy efficient. Again, this will predominantly help those Canberrans on the lowest incomes.

Let me turn to the question of transport. The agreement also provided for a much-improved public transport network, giving more Canberrans the option not to have a second car but to ride, walk, get the bus and, even soon, the tram instead. This is a sustainable and cheaper future that Canberrans want. It is a comprehensive package of transport reforms that will improve walking and cycling infrastructure, the bus network, and start the rollout of Canberra's light rail network. This integrated system will give Canberrans a real choice for getting around the city. What is more, if they do have to drive, the agreement also contains an initiative to promote car sharing, making the cost of a car cheaper.

The choice is really quite simple. Do we want to lock Canberrans into a future of car dependence and congestion, forcing them to get into their car earlier and earlier every morning to get to work on time and arriving home later and later each night as congestion worsens, all the while spending more and more money on the ever-increasing cost of fuel? Or do we want to give them the option of reducing their time commuting, saving money and being able to spend more time with their families? I think most people would see that as a fairly clear choice.

But no amount of dogma from the opposition about cars and how they represent families will change the fact, proven across the world, that the only lasting way to reduce traffic congestion is by improving public transport. There are actually limits as to how many roads you can build and how much you can widen them.

Let me turn briefly to the tax reforms. I would have thought that being told by the expert who did the work in the first place that the Leader of the Opposition's assertions were wrong would have been enough of a cue to just step quietly back and let it go, particularly now the election is over and the short slogan is no longer needed. But that is clearly not going to be the case and we are going to have to wait till 2016, with the benefit of four years of rates notices in front of them, and then perhaps we will see from the Canberra Liberals an acceptance that rates will not have tripled, and nothing even remotely like it.

The tax reforms are complicated. Pretending that you can capture them in a three-word slogan or even a whole sentence really is a disservice to the people of Canberra and puts Mr Seselja as the only political leader, Labor, Liberal or Green, in the whole country that cannot accept that stamp duty is an inefficient tax and that it is in our economic interest to get rid of it.

As we said during the campaign on many occasions—

Mr Smyth: On a point of order—sorry to interrupt.

MADAM SPEAKER: Could we stop the clock, please.

Mr Smyth: I was just curious as to the allotment of 15 minutes to Mr Rattenbury for this debate.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Smyth, the standing orders say that the first crossbench member speaking will be given 15 minutes. I think it is probably not a debate for now but something that, if members wish to raise this issue, admin and procedure might consider. But as the standing orders currently stand, and Mr Rattenbury holds a sort of a dual role of a member of the government and also a member of a crossbench party, and that is represented by extra allowance and the like for staff, I think that it is within the bounds of the standing orders that Mr Rattenbury be allocated 15 minutes to speak. That would mean, of course, that every time Mr Rattenbury speaks on a motion for the first time he will get 15 minutes to speak.

Mr Smyth: I would seek your advice. Perhaps you are right that admin and procedure may be the place for it but the standing order also refers to the first government member speaking. Given that Mr Rattenbury is a minister, therefore he is a member of the government, what in effect we have now is two government members each getting 15 minutes. He is either a member of the government or he is not, and there needs to be a primacy, I suspect, of whether he is government first or crossbench first. I would suspect that he is a member of the government first if he is taking the wages.

MR RATTENBURY: On the point of order, Madam Speaker, I have actually only spoken for 7¾ minutes. So whether it was a 10-minute or a 15-minute speech, Mr Smyth is really taking this up in a most inappropriate place, and this is an incredibly ungenerous way to conduct himself in this chamber.

Mr Seselja: Is that a point of order or—

MADAM SPEAKER: I do not think it is a point of order. It is on the point of order. Mr Smyth raised the point of order. Mr Rattenbury has responded. This is something that actually occupied my mind when I was reading this this morning. The 15 minutes was put up for you, Mr Rattenbury. If you choose not to use 15 minutes, that is a separate issue. I take your point. I think that there are arguments both ways. This is not the place to address them. I thank you for raising it with me, and I will raise it with administration and procedure.

Mr Smyth: And if I can just clarify, I happened to look up and notice that seven minutes was still left and the minister had been speaking for some time. It was only then that I realised that he had actually been allocated 15 minutes. Normally if two ministers speak the second minister only gets 10 minutes.

MADAM SPEAKER: It is something that exercised my mind this morning when I was going through the procedures, but it cannot be resolved here. Mr Rattenbury, to resume.

MR RATTENBURY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. We were talking about tax. I might come back to Mr Smyth's point at some other stage, because I think it also reflects the fact that I have certainly indicated to his leader—

MADAM SPEAKER: Please be relevant. If you are going to bring it back, bring it back at another time. Be relevant to the motion now, Mr Rattenbury.

MR RATTENBURY: Excellent discipline that I am sure Mr Smyth will stand to as well. We were talking about tax, and as we said during the campaign—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Rattenbury.

MR RATTENBURY: Yes?

MADAM SPEAKER: Sit down, please. Mr Rattenbury, I asked you to be relevant. I do not need a lesson from the former Speaker about how I should conduct myself here. Throughout this debate I have asked people on both sides to be relevant, and I do not need to be chipped by you.

MR RATTENBURY: For the sake of clarity, Madam Speaker, I was not seeking to chip you. I was referring to Mr Smyth. I nonetheless note your observation.

I was talking about tax. As we said during the campaign on many occasions and as WIN news managed to work out from the information available publicly, rates across

Canberra will rise by an average of about six per cent per year as insurance, tax and conveyance duty are phased out. And there can be no question that tax reforms send a clear signal to the market that we want more affordable housing.

I have circulated an amendment to the motion, and I move the amendment circulated in my name:

Omit all words after “That This Assembly”, substitute:

“(1) notes:

- (a) that while Canberra has the highest average incomes in Australia, there are many Canberrans experiencing real financial hardship;
- (b) the transition to greater use of renewable energy, improving energy efficiency and providing more sustainable transport options will generate significant savings for Canberra households in the short-term and over the coming decades; and
- (c) the tax reforms implemented in the 2012-2013 Budget:
 - (i) encourage more affordable housing;
 - (ii) reduce the cost of doing business; and
 - (iii) improve the economic efficiency of our taxation system; and

(2) calls on the Government to:

- (a) implement targeted assistance measures to help Canberrans most in need;
- (b) reduce Canberra’s reliance on increasingly expensive fossil fuels for electricity and transport; and
- (c) report to the Assembly by August 2013.”.

I think that the amendment addresses the real issues concerning the cost of living for Canberrans. The citizens of this city earn on average \$200 more per week than anyone else in the country but there are many who do not share in that prosperity, and it is our job to make sure that the benefit of the ACT’s economic success is distributed fairly and that we do not leave people behind. There are many low-paid workers, such as those in the childcare sector that we will be talking about later today, as well as people who are unable to find work or are carers of ill family members and are doing it very tough, and I want to make sure that there are targeted initiatives in place to help these groups in our community.

There are real pockets of disadvantage, and the only way to address them will be through specific initiatives that respond to historic disadvantage and make our communality fairer for everyone. The amendment notes this reality and recognises our obligation to do something about it.

The amendment also reflects the facts and not the deceptive slogans about tax reform. There has never been a credible review of taxation that has suggested that stamp duty and the insurance levy are economically efficient. We should be celebrating the fact that we are the first jurisdiction to respond to the evidence and that the majority of Canberrans were not deceived by the scare campaign during the election.

The amendment calls on the government to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels and report to the Assembly by August. And I can certainly say that I think that report will give us some very useful points on which to consider these matters further in the future. I commend my amendment to the Assembly.

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (10.59): I move the following amendment to Mr Rattenbury's proposed amendment:

Add new paragraph (2)(d):

“(d) table in the Assembly by first sitting week of February, the Government modelling of general rates increases once stamp duty is abolished.”.

The amendment is very simple. The government claims to know what is happening, and this amendment simply lets the rest of us in on the secret. The amendment calls for the government modelling of general rates increases once stamp duty is abolished.

The minister is already on the shifting sands whereby yesterday he said they would reduce stamp duty. This morning he says, “We will reduce initially and then we will get rid of it.” Let us know. If he knows that timetable—and one would assume that if he has a 20-year plan, he has that timetable—then the very simple thing to do is for the minister to simply table that information for the benefit of all of the Assembly and for the benefit of the Canberra community at large.

We have given them a generous amount of time to put together the information. I assume there are volumes of folios and a large number of files where this work has been done, so we have given the government until the first sitting week in February to bring this modelling back to this place. Of course, if they wanted to they could circulate out of session through the Speaker's office, and then we would all know exactly what is going to happen with rates.

Cost of living is a very important issue for the people of the ACT. It was certainly an issue that was raised with me constantly during the campaign, particularly in the outer suburbs—Gordon, Banks, Conder—where they have seen enormous increases and they have felt enormous increases in their rates notices this year. People want to know what is happening. They want to know what is happening so that they can start planning. They want to know what is happening so that they can start making decisions about their personal finances, so that they do not put themselves in a precarious position.

The minister is being less than clear now about his reforms. The story is changing from day to day in this place—and let us face it, this is the third day since the election

and we have already had two different versions of what is happening in regard to rates from the Treasurer. So it is important that this information is made available.

It is a very simple request. For the Treasurer, with all of his resources, it should be a very easy piece of information to put together, and I would simply commend the amendment to members.

MR BARR (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Sport and Recreation, Minister for Tourism and Events and Minister for Community Services) (11.02): The government will not support Mr Smyth's amendment. I have already released information for the next five years and I will update further information with the budget in 2013.

MR SESELJA (Brindabella—Leader of the Opposition) (11.02): I am not surprised that Mr Barr does not want to support this amendment but there does not seem to be any reason, and he certainly did not put any reason, as to why he would not release this information.

The government cannot have it both ways. They cannot sit there and tout tax reform and claim the good parts of tax reform without being honest with the community. It is all well and good to say "five years", but let us be clear about the five years: the five years does not give people any detail. It does not demonstrate to them what their rates will actually be.

Putting that aside, it is all well and good to claim "five years". But this government are saying they are abolishing stamp duty. They went to the community and said they were abolishing stamp duty. They are claiming the positive aspects of the reform, where the taxes come down, and pretending that there is no downside for the community when the taxes go up.

It is perfectly reasonable, if Katy Gallagher is going to go out there before an election and say, "We're getting rid of stamp duty"—that is what she said; they have said they are getting rid of stamp duty—for this Assembly and the community to say, "Okay, if you're getting rid of stamp duty, when you get rid of stamp duty what will that mean for rates?" Why won't you tell us? Why won't you be honest about it?

This goes to one of the common misconceptions about this whole debate. There are some in the media who believe that Labor failed on this reform—and they did; they failed absolutely, and Mr Barr has been blamed as the one who failed. I would be very happy to have a go at Mr Barr along with everyone and say that he failed to sell his tax reform. But that is not the problem. It is not that he failed to sell it; it is that it is unsellable. And that is what some of the cheerleaders for this reform have failed to acknowledge. Why did he not go and put the information out there? Because the information says that people's rates will triple.

Whenever they have actually done the numbers—in the Quinlan review they did the numbers—they said, "Yes, rates will have to triple." Then they said, "No, we didn't mean that, that's not government policy." If it is not that then what is it? The fact that

Mr Barr and the government are refusing to release this information suggests that the Canberra Liberals are 100 per cent right, that the Quinlan review when it spelled it out was 100 per cent right, and it said that rates will triple.

If there is an alternative, where is it? If there is an alternative, put it out there; otherwise you are being dishonest with the community and you are hiding it. So I do not accept the criticism of Mr Barr, I do not accept the criticism of some in the media who say that Mr Barr failed to sell the tax reform. He did not sell the tax reform, that is true, but the reason he did not sell it is that it is unsellable. It is unpalatable. They have pretended that there is a tax reform with no downside. They have pretended that they are going to get rid of these taxes, but no-one is going to have to pay. It is going to be a cup of coffee a week, we are told. That is not true. It is not true now, it will not be true in five years time, it certainly will not be true in 10, 15 or 20 years time once stamp duty is abolished. So be honest.

I commend Mr Smyth's amendment. It should be supported. I will be interested to hear what the crossbench or government member, Mr Rattenbury, has to say on it, because for the purposes of this debate I understand he is a crossbench member. I will be interested to hear his views on it. Is he going to support the government and be a government member on this one or is he going to say, "Yes, put it out there; we've got nothing to hide"? Mr Rattenbury has indicated that he is a supporter of tax reform. His former leader, the former parliamentary convenor, Ms Hunter, perhaps lost her seat as a result of tax reform, it could be argued. So if you believe in it, put it out there. That is all we are asking with this amendment.

We are saying, "Okay, you've said you're going to get rid of stamp duty. When you get rid of stamp duty what will rates be?" Have we ever seen such a tax reform? Would it have been acceptable when the Howard government introduced the GST, not a popular change at the time? When the Howard government introduced the GST, what did they do? They said, "We're going to reduce certain other taxes, wholesale sales tax, we're going to reduce income tax, and we're going to have a GST. That will increase the cost of some things."

Would it have been tenable for them to say, "We can tell you how much money you will get back in your income tax; we can tell you how much you will save on wholesale sales tax; but we can't really tell you how much extra you will have to pay when the GST comes in"? That would be untenable; it would be ridiculous. Yet that is exactly what this government are doing. They have been allowed to get away with it by some of their cheerleaders, but we will not let them get away with it.

The question before the Assembly is: if you believe in tax reform, if you believe, as Mr Phillips did before the election but not after the election, that it is not only more efficient but also more equitable, show us. Put the numbers out there; otherwise all we have to go on is the Quinlan review, which says they will triple.

If there is an alternative, what is it? That is why he did not sell the tax reform—because he knew he could not. If he used the actual numbers, if he went out there and said, "This is what we're going to do," the community would not have been too happy about it, which is why, right through the campaign, they kept saying, "No, none of it's true. It's not true; it is a scare campaign."

We always found it quite interesting that with all the resources of Treasury they did not put out an alternative. They said that what was in the Quinlan review was no longer their policy but they refused to put out the alternative. Here is the opportunity; here is the first vote in this Assembly where, if we are wrong, you can prove it. You can put out the documents, put out the modelling, that show what they will be.

That is the simple question before the Assembly. Do we want to know or do we want to hide it? If the Assembly votes today to hide it, it will confirm that the Quinlan review is right and that there is no alternative; that in fact rates have to triple in order to pay for the abolition of stamp duty.

It is time for the government to put up or shut up. They have said it is a lie, but they have no alternative to the modelling that they have put out. The modelling they have put out shows a tripling. So if that is wrong, what is it? Put it out there.

Government, crossbench, whatever we are facing here, has the opportunity to vote today to actually call for this document, call for this modelling, and then the people can actually know. The people of Canberra can actually know the truth. Mr Barr can tell them, "Here it is. When we abolish your stamp duty, your rates will go up by X." For those people who live in Hawker who have seen a 25 per cent increase, your rates will go up by—how much? Where is it?

A vote against this amendment today is a vote to hide the facts and it is an acknowledgement that there is no alternative to the Quinlan review—that the Quinlan review is all we have. That is the government's policy. That is the only way you can do it. If they are now going to change that policy, as I predicted they would some time ago, they should be honest about that. They should say, "Yes, we got it wrong. It was not equitable. It was going to see a massive cost burden on Canberra families. We got it wrong. We're not going to do it. We are going to find other ways."

So put up or shut up. Here it is. Here is the opportunity. Vote for it. It is a simple amendment. All it does is call for the modelling. A vote "no" is an acknowledgement that you have not been telling the truth. You have been hiding the truth and you are going to continue to hide the truth.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo—Minister for Territory and Municipal Services, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Housing, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs and Minister for Ageing) (11.12): Perhaps it would be easier if I helped Mr Seselja with his confusion about my role in this chamber, as he has brought it up during this discussion. I am a crossbench member of the executive. I sit on the crossbench. I have indicated perfectly well to Mr Seselja that I am prepared to work with him and his colleagues, and in a debate like this where I am not bringing forward a position that I have previously agreed to in cabinet I am quite open to voting with them. So hopefully that will ease the confusion for Mr Seselja and his colleagues and we do not have to keep hearing the same boring lines for the next four years, although I expect we probably will.

On the proposed amendment by Mr Smyth, Mr Seselja has put the challenge out there that if you believe in it put it out there, or words to that effect. I think the information is out there. We have a large amount of information already available. In budget paper No 3, for example, on page 46, which we have spoken to a number of times, we have found that a lot of the information that we think is necessary is there. We have a framework in place, and from the numbers in the budget papers you can see the impact over the next five years of these changes. I think it is quite clear.

In the longer term these things involve a series of policy decisions, and in my discussion with Treasury they have been quite clear about that—that governments will have to take necessary policy decisions along the way, and some of those things will vary. I do not think that it is a simple case of saying, “Give us 20 years of projections.” We have just had the GST cited to us as a good example. I do not recall John Howard ever releasing 20 years of price predictions under the GST. I do not think it is a credible scenario, and on that basis I will not be supporting the amendment.

MR HANSON (Molonglo) (11.14): I am not surprised that Mr Seselja is a little confused about Mr Rattenbury’s role, because Mr Rattenbury says one thing and then does another. He says, “I’m a crossbench member of the executive; I’m not a member of the government.” But at every step so far through the parliamentary debate and particularly in the chamber over the last couple of days—we saw it yesterday with his disgraceful agreement with the government that they would essentially nobble the public accounts committee—he has acted as a member of the government. So the confusion that has been caused is by Mr Rattenbury, who stands up and says, “I’m a member of the crossbench,” and then behaves as a member of the government. If this is the way he is going to behave over the next four years, trying to create this illusion around himself that he is a separate member, that he has distanced himself from the Labor Party, but then on every occasion he is simply in lock step with the government and agrees with them, why bother with this pretence? Why waste the Assembly’s time? Why take your 15 minutes of glory to try and push forward some Greens position? It is just simply untenable. You are wasting everybody’s time by doing so.

What Mr Rattenbury needs to do, if he is going to separate himself from the government, is actually start to take a considered opinion, an objective opinion. But he is not doing that, because what Mr Rattenbury said was essentially that the information is out there, and what Mr Smyth and Mr Seselja have made quite clear is that the information is not out there. Mr Barr says that he has put it out there for the next five years, and that is a matter of dispute, because there is certainly a lack of detail. But what Mr Smyth has specifically asked for is: what is that rate of rates when stamp duty is abolished? We do not know that.

So we have got a government promise, which the Greens backed, that said, “We are going to abolish your stamp duty, and it is coming out of rates,” but they are not telling us what that impact is on rates. The community deserve to know. The whole election essentially was fought on that issue, without that information being available.

Is Mr Barr saying that he does not know? Is it because the government do not know; they do not know what your rates are going to be?

The point is that you have either got an incompetent Treasurer who is unaware of what the impact on rates is going to be and he has just embarked on a crusade without having done the sums, or—the more likely scenario—he knows exactly what the impact on rates will be, because we have seen it in the Quinlan review, and he just does not want to release it to the public. So I would say to the crossbench member of the executive: what is he afraid of? Let us put that information there. Why hide it? Let us put it out there. If he thinks that it is all the information that has been made available, well and good. Why not support Mr Smyth's amendment so that we get to the bottom of what has happened and we get the information?

I think the reason is that the crossbench member of the executive has got a lot of, shall we say, trinkets—a lot of embellishments to his office, a lot of prestige, a lot of benefits from being a minister. He has essentially sold his soul as a Green. The party have sold out. We saw this in the last Assembly: at the beginning in 2008 they made lots of statements about being independent of the Labor Party, but increasingly we saw over the four years a move from where there was genuine debate in the chamber, where there were genuinely three parties, to a point at the end in 2012 where there were only two parties. We said it regularly, and we were proved by the vote and the debate that there were two parties. We saw the result of that. The Greens lost 75 per cent of their members. They were all but wiped out and, instead of heeding that message, what Mr Rattenbury has done is get closer to government.

So I would say to the crossbench member of the executive: take this opportunity to show that you are a crossbench member of the executive or, I think it would be reasonable to say, do not expect us to treat you that way. If you are going to vote with the government at every step, if you are just going to back up the government's argument at every step, it is quite clear, as Mr Seselja has said, that you are in a coalition, and do not expect us to say that there is a Greens party and there is a Labor Party, because there is not; there is simply a Labor-Greens coalition, and that is the evidence. All you are doing in this chamber as a crossbench member of the executive, as you call yourself, is reinforcing the evidence that we have already seen.

So I commend Mr Smyth's amendment to the Assembly. We have seen today two things: the fact that the government is hiding the truth from the community and that the Minister for Territory and Municipal Services, who is part of this government, is simply a member of this government. Those are the two things that come out of this, and it is disappointing to the community but I think it reinforces not only the motion that has been put forward to this chamber by Mr Seselja but also what this election was fought on. And it probably emphasises why the Liberal Party got such a good vote.

Question put:

That **Mr Smyth's** amendment to **Mr Rattenbury's** proposed amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 7		Noes 8	
Mr Coe	Mr Seselja	Mr Barr	Ms Gallagher
Mr Doszpot	Mr Smyth	Ms Berry	Mr Gentleman
Mr Hanson	Mr Wall	Dr Bourke	Ms Porter
Mrs Jones		Ms Burch	Mr Rattenbury

Question so resolved in the negative.

Question put:

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

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 8		Noes 7	
Mr Barr	Ms Gallagher	Mr Coe	Mr Seselja
Ms Berry	Mr Gentleman	Mr Doszpot	Mr Smyth
Dr Bourke	Ms Porter	Mr Hanson	Mr Wall
Ms Burch	Mr Rattenbury	Mrs Jones	

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question now is that the motion, as amended, be agreed to.

MR DOSZPOT (Molonglo) (11.24): I thank Mr Seselja for his motion that highlights the increasing cost of living pressures on Canberra families. Mr Seselja referred in particular to the outer suburbs, but this issue is just as relevant in the areas of the inner north and the inner south—areas like Hackett, where the increase has been 20.16 per cent; Turner, 27 per cent; Chifley, 17 per cent; and Hughes, 25 per cent. And, while we are talking about percentages, in dollar values the cost has gone up in Deakin by \$2,320 per annum; Yarralumla, \$2,577 per annum; Duffy, 17 per cent; Chapman, 21 per cent; Hawker, 25 per cent; Griffith, 32 per cent; Red Hill, 44 per cent; and Narrabundah, 26 per cent.

A lot of my new constituents live in areas that are deemed to be above average in earning capacity, and there are obviously people who fall into this category; but there are a large and growing number of people, who are seriously affected by the increasing cost of living pressures, living in these areas. They are the elderly pensioners who have lived in these areas all their lives; they bought houses 40, 50 years ago and now in their twilight years they face the prospect of having to sell their homes as they simply cannot afford the 29, 35, 42 per cent increases they have just

faced. And these figures never go down, so once those figures have gone up they can expect prospects, as Mr Seselja has so clearly enunciated, of similar rate rises in the following years and consecutive years.

So, at a time when people should be enjoying their retirement years, they face uncertainty, fear and upheaval in their lives. I met many of these people during the last campaign, and the message from these people and the Canberra community is a message that is lost on this government and crossbench. They refuse to listen to the community. They refuse to listen that the people of Canberra are facing pressures that they have never faced before.

Mr Barr has reinforced that government attitude here this morning, an attitude of not listening to the community and repeating a mantra that seems to be at odds with even the government's own past policies. Mr Barr has stated here this morning that the cost of living argument is a tired argument—shame on you, Deputy Chief Minister and Treasurer, and shame on your government and party for supporting such a callous attitude to our Canberra community.

Mr Barr had a famous saying in his education portfolio that the old class warfare is over. Well, Mr Barr, it seems that you have reignited, through your callous, draconian measures, class warfare. Instead of class warfare being over, Mr Barr, you have declared class warfare over all of Canberra. That is what your actions have caused and that is what the people of Canberra are suffering through.

In Mr Seselja's motion he also noted:

that the Labor-Greens Parliamentary Agreement does not act to reduce the cost of living pressures on all Canberra families;

A sideline, if you like, or an additional issue that this Greens-Labor parliamentary agreement also facilitates is a never before seen protection of this government from scrutiny by this Assembly. The committee system, which has in the past been a mechanism that allows scrutiny of this government, has now been neutered very effectively by this new parliamentary agreement, first of all by giving the chairmanship of three committees, education, health and planning, to government backbenchers. They are hardly likely to put this government under great scrutiny. So what we have been talking about—the third-party insurance that the Greens represented in our previous Assembly—has been exacerbated by this new Greens presence, which has been reduced to one but in effect has acted as an even greater blockage to scrutinising this government.

I thank Mr Seselja for bringing this motion into the chamber this morning. It is quite instructive that, through all of the debate that we have heard so far here this morning, from Mr Barr and from Mr Rattenbury there is not even an acknowledgement about the deep concern in our community—a concern that has been reflected in many ways, not the least of which Mr Rattenbury should be well aware of: the loss of three of his colleagues. Yet the concern of the community, the concern about the increasing cost of living, the pressures on our Canberra community, is not being listened to, acknowledged or even cared about by this government or by this coalition.

I thank Mr Seselja for his motion this morning.

MR SESELJA (Brindabella—Leader of the Opposition) (11.31): This is an issue that is not going to go away, as much as this government would like it to, as much as this coalition government uses words like “this is a tired debate”. I think we had the Chief Minister in a previous Assembly saying, “This is a silly debate.” It is not a silly debate. The cost of living pressures on Canberra families are real. The government exacerbates them, it seems, at every turn. There has never been a genuine commitment by this government to actually addressing cost of living issues.

We were hearing from people during the campaign in Tuggeranong about why they, as traditional Labor voters, were voting Liberal for the first time at this election. Cost of living was one of the issues that came to the fore. There were two major issues that I was hearing from the people of Tuggeranong. We saw an electorate in the ACT which, on a two-party preferred basis, I think at the last election was 63-37. Yet we saw the Liberal Party win the popular vote. Why was that? Why did so many traditional Labor voters switch their allegiance?

Cost of living was one of the fundamental concerns. The ignorance of this issue by this government will be to the continuing detriment of these people. The people of Lanyon moved en masse with their vote to get rid of this government with an 18 per cent swing. For the people of the Lanyon valley—the southern-most part of Canberra—there were two issues. It was cost of living and it was local services.

It was the neglect of their area and it was the fact that they were being asked to pay more and more and more to the government when the government was giving them nothing in return. They were not getting the services that they deserved, but the government keeps putting its hand out for more and more taxes and ever-increasing taxes. These people are not silly. They have seen their rates increase massively in the last decade and they also are not silly because despite the government’s denials, they can work it out for themselves. They can work out that when the government says they are going to get rid of stamp duty and replace it with rates, they know that they are going to be copping it.

How do we know they are going to be copping it? It is because of the way this coalition voted on this amendment today. We know they are going to cop it because the government continue to hide the detail. If they were not going to cop it, they would not hide the detail. They would put it out there. How many times do we see the government put out projections, long-term projections? They will do it for greenhouse gas emissions, they will do it in all sorts of other areas, but when it comes to what their tax reform will mean to the community they refuse to. It is an abrogation of their responsibility. It is fundamentally dishonest. They have been dishonest since they announced this tax reform because they have pretended that there is no downside. They have pretended—

Ms Gallagher: We were dishonest?

MR SESELJA: Yes, you were. Yes, you were, completely. If you were honest, you would have voted to release the documents. Show us the money. You sat there. You know how we will know? You know how the community will know? They will know

in four years time. We will see the ads replayed. In four years time they will look at that from Katy Gallagher where she said, “It is not true. It is going to be a cup of coffee a week. That is all it is going to cost you.” People will look at their rates bill and know that she was not telling the truth. They will look at their rates bill and they will know that you were not being honest with the community. If you are honest, why would you not release it?

Ms Gallagher: Don’t give me lectures on being honest with the community.

MR SESELJA: Why would you not release it? Absolutely; very happy to compare notes.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Seselja, sit down. Stop the clock, please. Ms Gallagher, please stop addressing Mr Seselja across the chamber. Mr Seselja, please refer to me. Do not address your comments to Ms Gallagher.

MR SESELJA: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Address your comments to the chair.

MR SESELJA: I will. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I will address them to you because, Madam Deputy Speaker, I would be very happy to compare notes on honesty and truthfulness with the Chief Minister. She told people, she told the community, that this was not really going to mean anything for them. You could get all of the benefit with none of the pain. That was the message that she gave the community. “A cup of coffee a week—what is that? A cup of coffee a week—that is nothing.” That was the message.

Having said for the last few years that cost of living is not an issue—turn off the Foxtel for a while; you will be right—she then looked them in the eye and said, “Nothing to see here. Nothing to see here.” If there was nothing to see here then you would be very happy to release it, would you not, Madam Deputy Speaker?

Mr Hanson interjecting—

Ms Gallagher interjecting—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Hanson and Ms Gallagher!

MR SESELJA: You would be very happy to release the numbers. The fact that they will not, the fact that they still refuse suggests they have something very serious to hide. It suggests that all of that modelling that was done as part of the Quinlan review was right. No-one said that it was wrong. No-one has given an alternative as to how they are going to get there.

She looked people in the eye and said, “We’re getting rid of stamp duty.” When are you getting rid of stamp duty? It is in 20 years. She did not say that bit in her announcement. It is 20 years. She did not say that before the election. She said, “We’re getting rid of stamp duty.” If you are getting rid of stamp duty, replacing it

with rates and lowering other taxes to the tune of \$350 million a year, how much will it be? \$2½ thousand a household in today's dollars—a tripling of rates in today's dollars. There it is.

As I say, if there was an honest alternative from this government, one that undermined our case, one that gave comfort to the community that it was not true, that they had nothing to worry about, one that backed up the cup of coffee a week, they put it out there. We have called on them to and at the first hurdle they have refused. The nine votes in this Assembly have been used to hide the truth from the community.

This issue will not go away. It continues to be an issue. It will continue to be an issue. Regardless of this government's attitude and regardless of the nine votes in this Assembly, we will not stop fighting for those families who have been deceived and who are copping it time and time again from this government. This is an issue that we will continue to pursue with vigour. We will do it with relish because we look forward to representing those forgotten people in outer suburbs in particular who continue to cop it from this Labor-Greens coalition.

Question put:

That the motion, as amended, be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 8		Noes 7	
Mr Barr	Ms Gallagher	Mr Coe	Mr Seselja
Ms Berry	Mr Gentleman	Mr Doszpot	Mr Smyth
Dr Bourke	Ms Porter	Mr Hanson	Mr Wall
Ms Burch	Mr Rattenbury	Mrs Jones	

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Education—early childhood

MS BERRY (Ginninderra) (11.40): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) the significant investment by the previous Government in early childhood education and childcare;
- (b) that this investment has almost doubled the number of childcare places in the ACT since 2001, following a long period of stagnation;
- (c) that over this period there has been a 33% increase in the number of long daycare centres in the ACT;

- (d) that more recently the Government invested in building new childcare centres in areas of demand, including new centres in Holder, Franklin and Flynn, with a land release schedule for new centres in McKellar, Giralang, Holt, Conder, Gungahlin and Macathur;
 - (e) the increase of 500 childcare places in 2011-12;
 - (f) the commitment of a further \$4.5 million to deliver more affordable quality childcare across Canberra to create up to 100 new childcare places, establish three more childcare centres and offer scholarships to build the skills of our early childhood education and childcare workers;
 - (g) the rally of 17 November by many hundreds of ACT based early childhood educators calling for better wages and conditions; and
 - (h) the commitment the ACT Government has made to improve the recruitment and retention of early childhood educators; and
- (2) calls on the ACT Government to:
- (a) reaffirm its commitment to ensure ACT families continue to have access to high quality and affordable childcare;
 - (b) continue to implement the provisions of the National Quality Framework for childcare; and
 - (c) continue to support early childhood educators to increase the awareness and appreciation of their training and professionalism including recognising the importance of the BIG STEPS campaign.

This motion is about what the ACT Labor government are doing to increase the availability of early childhood education and childcare places, what we are doing to support families to access places, what we are doing to ensure the quality of education and care, and what we are doing to ensure that workers in the sector are properly valued and paid.

The ACT Labor government recognise just how important it is to the families of the ACT that they can access quality education and care services for their children. We know early childhood education plays a vitally important role in the development of our children. The research is there that supports that, but we as parents who have had our children in early childhood education and child care know by watching our children grow what a positive role educators have played in our children's lives.

For most parents, it is the first place to which they entrust the care of their children outside of the family circle. For many children, it is also the first place where they begin learning about the world around them, how to make friends, reading and writing and how to be creative.

We also know, however, about the challenges governments face in being able to provide all families with the opportunity to have their children in early childhood

education. That is why the ACT government has delivered 500 new early childhood education places and will deliver a further 500 places over 2012-13. This will mean that many more families will be able to have their children in quality education and care as well as being able to participate in work.

I know from the conversations I have had with people in my old suburb of Holt that they are looking forward to the new centre that will be developed at Holt near the Kippax family and health centre. I know it will make a difference in their lives and their families' lives to be able to access care and education.

The ACT government is helping families to access education and care services and to provide advice to help families make informed choices about their children's early education. We have long been providing access to information about services through publications such as *Choosing childcare in the ACT* and the *Guide to children's services in the ACT*.

Labor demonstrated our commitment to raising the bar in early childhood education and care when we signed up to the national partnership agreement in 2009. From January 2014 under the national quality framework, all ACT educators required to meet the educated care ratio will need to hold or be working towards a minimum certificate III level education. All educators will have the necessary knowledge and skills to make the most of every child's potential.

We know workforce capacity is going to be an ongoing challenge for both the government and the sector and we know these quality reforms are important for our children. We are, therefore, taking steps to assist the education and care sector to address these workforce issues. We have, in collaboration with the ACT Children's Services Forum and the sector, made substantial progress in implementing the ACT education and care workforce strategy.

The strategy focuses our efforts on four key objectives: (1), attract new educators to the sector; (2), retain existing educators in the sector; (3), develop and build the skills of the sector's workforce; and (4), raise the professional profile of the sector in the ACT community.

Earlier this year Minister Burch launched the early childhood scholarship program, providing more than 80 full-time scholarships for educators to obtain the certificate III qualification. I know from my work with United Voice that I talked about yesterday in my speech that, for people in the sector who are already on low incomes, having the cost of the scholarship being something they do not have to worry about and for which the government has taken responsibility will make a huge difference to their lives, and also their ability in being able to meet the national quality framework and be able to provide the highest quality care and education for our children.

The certificate III is the minimum qualification requirement set out by the national quality framework and it is based on extensive research that tells us that qualifications matter. More than half of the scholarships have already been awarded, and applications will open again in January. Based on the overwhelming success of this

program, we have committed to extend the program for another three years. In addition to this, we will also fund a program to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to complete early childhood education and training.

Furthermore, we will offer scholarships to contribute to the costs of obtaining an early childhood teaching degree, which will become more important as this will be a requirement of the national quality framework as well, so that we start to move people through their qualifications and bring more teachers into the sector.

Another key initiative which the ACT government has proudly supported is an awareness campaign designed to attract new educators to the sector and increase the community's understanding of the important work our professional educators do each day. The government is investing \$16,000 to kick-start this initiative. Just as significant is the fact that the sector itself has joined together to raise the rest of the money to develop TV commercials, marketing materials and a website. A further \$50,000 has been pledged by this government over the next two years to ensure the ongoing success of the campaign. This campaign will serve to increase the capacity of the education and care workforce to meet the growing demand for childcare places.

In August 2008 ACT Labor launched the big steps campaign along with the sector and United Voice. Big steps, as we know, is the campaign for professional recognition and wages for early childhood educators. By supporting big steps, the ACT government recognises early childhood education as an essential service which fulfils key educational workforce participation and social inclusion goals. The Gillard government is already having this conversation with the sector because they, too, recognise the vital role early childhood educators play in our community and with our families and our children.

As I spoke about yesterday, it is important to ensure that early childhood educators are properly recognised for the role they play in the development of our territory's children. In my previous life, I was struck by the fact that some educators and carers could not afford to have their own children in education and care. It is incumbent on us, I believe, to ensure that this does not become the norm.

This government is not looking at these important matters in isolation. Rather, it is implementing a broad range of measures to find more effective solutions, solutions which ensure families can choose education and care with confidence, and that the work of our educator workforce in the ACT is valued. It is therefore vitally important that today the Legislative Assembly reaffirms its commitment to the early childhood education sector, to deliver on these commitments to ensure that ACT families continue to have access to high quality and affordable childcare, continue to implement the provisions of the national quality framework for childcare and reconfirm its support for early childhood educators and their big steps campaign, which aims to achieve professional recognition and professional wages.

MR HANSON (Molonglo) (11.48): I rise today to speak about the importance of early childhood education and child care and the failure of the previous and current Labor governments to support and encourage this important sector. I also foreshadow that I will be circulating an amendment to this motion to reflect that. Unfortunately,

Ms Berry's motion today fails to acknowledge the failure of the Labor government to support this important industry, this important sector, the inefficient use of taxpayers' money that they have spent pretending to support this sector and the failure to understand the impact of rising childcare costs on Canberra families.

Ms Berry's motion asks us to note the significant investment by the previous Labor government in early childhood education and child care. However, in 2008 the Labor Party promised two new childcare centres at a cost of \$4 million. Neither of these centres have been built and now the government wants to spend almost double that on just one centre in Holder. The motion asks us to acknowledge the investment in a range of new centres. However, the centre in Holder does not even yet have a development application submitted. This is despite the funding being committed for the centre in the 2011 budget and then rolled over in the 2012 budget. There has been no action on the construction of this centre and nearby residents are no closer to having access to additional places for their children.

It was only in February this year that I rose to speak in support of my colleague Mrs Dunne's motion calling on the government to reconsider whether this was the best use of taxpayers' money. As a father of two boys, living in Holder, I understand the need for childcare services in that area and I can sympathise with those families struggling to get their children into a centre and struggling to meet the high cost of placing them there. There is no doubt that more childcare options are needed in the Weston Creek area.

The Canberra Liberals understand that small businesses form the backbone of the Canberra economy. We are committed to supporting their potential to succeed and there is clearly a market for childcare services in Weston Creek. We should be supporting a community group or business to get into this market, not pushing them out by building an expensive government centre. I am sure there are a number of businesses that would appreciate the development opportunity to establish a centre in Holder. Indeed, I have spoken to a number of such operators who are confused by the government's position.

This motion does get something right. This centre, when it is built—if it is built—will be at significant cost to the taxpayer. The only thing that the Minister for Disability, Children and Young People can confirm is that this centre will cost taxpayers around \$60,000 per place. However, just recently a community organisation built a childcare centre in Harrison at just under \$28,000 per place. It must be asked why it is costing the ACT government so much more to build a similar facility. We can only assume that the Holder childcare centre will be added to the long list of Labor's failures to deliver on infrastructure—the GDE, the Cotter Dam, the women and children's hospital, the prison and now the Holder childcare centre, no doubt late, over budget and costing the taxpayers more than they should be paying.

The construction of the Flynn childcare centre was also at a huge cost to the taxpayer. This centre cost ACT taxpayers \$4 million and taxpayers only ended up with an additional 10 places. The centre was an amalgamation of two existing centres, one of which was being forced from its premises. In redeveloping part of the Flynn Primary School in this childcare centre the lack of consultation and lack of respect for the local community has been widely criticised.

The motion also asks us to consider the number of childcare places available prior to 2001. I very much doubt that the Canberra families struggling to get their children in child care in 2012 really have much concern about what was happening in 2001. In fact, the inclusion of such redundant information just further shows how out of touch the current minister, who no doubt had a role in drafting this motion, is with the current needs of Canberra families.

The constituents that call my office and the constituents that I met out on the campaign trail do not talk about child care prior to 2001. They talk about the problems with child care in 2012. They talk about the difficulty of getting their child into a place, the long waiting lists, the fact they can only get their child into a centre a long way from their home or workplace, the fact that they are forced to have their children at different centres and how the rising cost of child care is impacting on their family. They do not talk about the impact of these issues prior to 2001. It is important to note that the demographics, population growth and the practice of working parents have changed so significantly in the last 10 years that comparison to 2001 in this sector is largely irrelevant.

The motion today calls on the government to reaffirm its commitment to affordable child care. Unfortunately, Ms Berry is at odds with her ministerial colleague Ms Burch on this matter. Ms Burch has long argued that the ACT government plays no role in the cost of child care. In fact, she has said this on many occasions on the floor of this chamber. She stated on 27 October:

I go back and say that the fees set by childcare centres are for those centres to determine. It is not for my office or my department to determine the cost of childcare.

On 16 February this year she said:

As I have said here a number of times, it is the business models, it is the decisions of the childcare centres themselves about the fees they set.

However, Ms Burch in fact does not even understand the cost structure of childcare centres. The changes to childcare costs due to the implementation of the national quality framework for child care, Ms Burch stated, were zero. In fact, she was still stating this in February this year, when she said in the Assembly:

On that basis, I would say that the call on the services to mete out quality services, which is what parents want, is within the ambit of the services, and it makes no difference, from what I can see, to the costings of services.

It is the sort of riddle in which Ms Burch normally speaks in this place and sometimes her statements are somewhat difficult to understand. Reading that, I think the balance of what she says is pretty clear. She is saying that there is no impact on the cost structure. I think that is what she meant. Maybe she can confirm that. But this was despite stating in late 2011 that the cost would only be \$1 to \$3 a day per child. More importantly, this is despite a Productivity Commission report stating that the average increase for two children per day would be \$30. It is difficult to comprehend how a

government can reaffirm their commitment to affordable childcare when their own minister cannot understand what costs drive childcare fees. We have seen the Productivity Commission say for two children per day an increase of \$30, we have seen the minister say an increase of between \$1 and \$3 and we have seen the minister say no cost increase as a result. When you are asked to believe which one is telling the truth, would you believe the Productivity Commission or would you believe Ms Burch?

Canberra already has the highest childcare costs in the country. Families currently pay \$75 per week more than the weekly average. This is from a Productivity Commission report that also showed the cost in the ACT was rising faster than in the rest of Australia. The year prior, Canberra families were paying \$60 more than the average per week. Now they are paying \$75 per week more.

The ACT Labor government are out of touch with Canberra families on the issue of child care and Ms Berry's motion today affirms that fact. I believe that what you have seen from Ms Berry's motion is an attempt to pat the government on the back for work that they are not doing and a lack of comprehension with what is happening in the sector. In much of what we see from this government, and particularly this minister, there is a discrepancy between the rhetoric—often the rambling and confusing rhetoric that we get from Ms Burch—and the reality on the ground.

I have circulated an amendment to the motion which I will be circulating shortly. That amendment provides a more realistic, more accurate, snapshot of what is actually happening on the ground and the reality of what is occurring. I was out doorknocking in the lead-up to the election and I knocked on the door of a lady called Jo, whom I know, in Weston Creek, in the suburb of Weston—so close to the Holder childcare centre we are talking about. She works at the childcare centre where my youngest son went. She was at home and the reason was that, despite the fact that she worked in a childcare centre, she could not get a spot for her children in a childcare centre.

That is the experience of many parents across this town. This is not an issue that just affects women; it affects parents. It is very difficult to find a spot in a childcare centre. Often if you do find a spot it is a long way from where you live or where you work and often, if you have got more than one child—you might have two or three children or, in the case of Mrs Jones, four children—actually finding four spots in a childcare centre is near impossible. You might find there is a spot in Hawker, there is a spot somewhere else, in Weston, there is a spot maybe down in Tuggeranong, but it is just impractical. If we want parents to be engaged in the workforce—we want women to be in the workforce and we want men to be in the workforce—then they have got to have access to childcare. At the moment that is simply not happening effectively. If you do find child care then the cost here in the ACT is exorbitant. It is way beyond the national average and that cost is increasing exponentially.

So for Ms Berry to come in here with a motion that has no doubt been written by the minister to pat the minister on the back and a speech that was no doubt written by the minister or her staff again trying to pat the minister and the government on the back, when the opposite is the truth on the ground, I think is disingenuous. We will not be supporting this motion. What we will be doing, as I foreshadowed, is moving the

amendment that has been circulated in my name that calls on a couple of things. After a series of notes that actually provide a much more realistic picture of what is happening in the sector, it calls on a couple of things, and that is, to provide opportunities and support for the development of additional early education and childcare places by the private sector and community organisations. I think that this government needs to heed that. It needs to make sure that it provides opportunities for this sector to flourish rather than what it is doing, which is essentially going into competition with this sector. It is squeezing out business, making business less effective, and doing so at great cost to the taxpayer and in a grossly inefficient manner.

That is the first thing the amendment calls on. The second is to write to the federal government stating support for a Productivity Commission review into childcare to ensure that childcare is more accessible, affordable and flexible for parents. I think that there is need for a Productivity Commission review. I certainly support what my Liberal coalition colleagues are calling for in the federal arena. I think it would be a very useful body of work. What we would see then is a realistic view of what options this government can take, rather than continual attempts by this minister to come into this place and pat herself on the back for what can only be considered as a failure in management of this sector.

As I said, I will not be supporting this motion. My colleagues and I believe that this government and this minister are not only managing this sector poorly but are out of touch with the reality on the ground. Because there is more work to be done and we need to be forward looking, we need to have a Productivity Commission review, rather than just simply bumbling along as we are and seeing availability decrease and costs increase. I now move the amendment circulated in my name:

Omit all words after “That this Assembly”, substitute:

“(1) notes:

- (a) that the availability of quality childcare and early childhood education plays an important role in supporting families and the productivity of our economy;
- (b) that the previous Labor governments have failed to support and encourage the early childhood education and childcare sector in the ACT;
- (c) that the previous Labor government spent \$4 million of taxpayers funding an additional 10 childcare places at Flynn;
- (d) the Labor government has proposed to spend \$7.5 million on a childcare centre in Holder, at a cost of \$60 000 per place;
- (e) that no action has been made on building this facility including no development application for such a centre;
- (f) that a childcare centre was built by a community organisation in Harrison at a cost of \$28 000 per place, considerably below the Labor Government’s proposed investment;

- (g) that a Productivity Commission report found that with the implementation of the National Quality Framework for childcare that the cost of childcare will increase by \$30 per day for two children;
- (h) the Minister for Disability, Children and Young People stated that the cost would only increase by \$1-\$3 per day; and
- (i) that Canberra families currently pay \$75 per week above the national average for childcare; and

(2) calls on the ACT Government to:

- (a) provide opportunities and support for the development of additional early education and childcare places by the private sector and community organisations; and
- (b) write to the Federal Government stating support for a Productivity Commission review into childcare to ensure that childcare is more accessible, affordable and flexible for parents.”.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (12.02): The ACT Greens recognise that, for many parents, returning to work after the birth of a child is a high priority and that some parents and carers are having difficulties finding appropriate and affordable child care. Certainly this is something that was evident to me in recent times, particularly during the election campaign. I had one lady approach me up at Lyneham shops and we had a lengthy discussion about her personal difficulties of finding a place. She had actually had to postpone returning to work. It is but one example but I think a very illustrative example of the difficulties that people are facing.

I think we all know that the ACT is currently experiencing something of a minor population boom. It has done for a number of years now and there is a corresponding increase in demand for early childhood education and childcare services. I also understand there are many other reasons why a family may seek child care, such as personal illness or changed care arrangements, such as a kinship foster care situation.

I believe that all Australian families are entitled to access high quality, affordable child care when they need it. Recent research into brain development and early childhood psychology has clearly highlighted the need for child care to be engaging, exciting and evidence based. I also believe that people working in the childcare sector should be fairly remunerated for the work they do. The Greens understand and support the catchcry of United Voice on this matter that quality costs. Federally, the Australian Greens have been consistently calling for an immediate increase in the pay rate for childcare workers and the phasing in of much larger increases to reflect the skill level required in, and the importance of, childcare work.

The commonwealth government has a major role to play in supporting childcare centre managers to both recruit and retain the best possible staff and to better negotiate the challenges many services are facing in light of the recent national quality framework. We also need to work with the commonwealth to ensure that more is done to support carers' ability to afford this quality child care and ease some of the pressures facing working families.

Locally, the ACT Greens are supportive of the ACT government's policy to build more publicly funded community-based and not-for-profit childcare facilities. I will continue to support community-based responses to the needs of local families and their children, whatever their circumstances. It is clear, however, that the ACT needs to plan these centres strategically and in accordance with population movements. The Greens are committed to both the long-term sustainability of the sector and to providing more childcare spaces for our growing city. I will be maintaining an interest in the government's progress on these issues and I welcome the contribution to the debates that Ms Berry will no doubt offer over the coming months and years.

With regard to Mr Hanson's amendment, having just seen it I should probably make the observation at this point that I will not be supporting amendments, certainly lengthy and detailed ones like this, that are presented in the chamber. I think there is plenty of scope, since the administration and procedure meeting at lunchtime yesterday, for our offices to enter into a discussion. I would need to fact check some of the points that have been made in here and enter into some further discussions.

I should probably make it clear at this point that we all know how the election turned out. I am one member and I will not sit in this chamber and entertain detailed amendments like this that I have not seen before coming down here. I do not want that to be a difficulty in working together. It has been 24 hours now since this motion was circulated and it was being prepared prior to that, presumably. The Liberal Party will not have seen it because it is Ms Berry's, but it has been 24 hours. I think that if we want to have serious discussions about entertaining amendments then we should do that in a serious time frame. That is not to preclude the fact that, of course, on the floor things will happen; that is quite decent. But this is clearly not something that was just knocked up on the floor. This has clearly had some thought. The fact that my office was not approached about this prior to the debate indicates that there was no serious scope to actually want to negotiate an amendment.

MS BURCH (Brindabella—Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Disability, Children and Young People, Minister for the Arts, Minister for Women, Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Minister for Racing and Gaming) (12.06): I congratulate the newest member for Ginninderra on introducing this motion and note that this is Ms Berry's first piece of private members' business. Welcome to the Assembly, Ms Berry.

This government has a long history of investment in education and care and the ACT Labor government has seen the education and care sector grow substantially over the past decade. We have delivered an increase of over 500 places in 2011-12 and we will provide an additional 500 places over 2012-13. We have overseen a 94 per cent growth in the number of childcare places since 2001 and a 33 per cent increase in the number of long day care places.

This is in stark contrast to the stagnation in investment prior to 2001 where under the Liberals there was no growth in long day care services between 1998 and 2001. I understand why Mr Hanson would see that as irrelevant. If I had that record, I would want to bury it about 10 feet down as well.

The ACT currently has 120 approved centre-based services providing full day care that support working families. There are also four family day care services, with a fifth service being assessed for approval. In addition, the government funds the provision of 74 public preschools, with two more preschools nearing completion in Gungahlin. Additional places will continue to come online as a result of the \$9 million investment put aside for infrastructure in 2011-12. Upgrades to existing education and care centres are also well underway and will provide around 200 additional places.

Further investment in the last budget will see this growth continue. We have committed to another 100 places through further upgrades and extensions to existing centres. This is on top of the government's investment of \$42 million to build the early childhood school in Franklin, which will include a 120 place education and childcare service. We are also investing \$7 million to build a centre at Holder to accommodate 125 children. It is my understanding that the DA has been lodged. There are also a number of private providers intending to establish new services in the ACT.

For example, a new childcare centre will be built in Gungahlin following the recent sale of land for a value of \$2.4 million. That will be located on the corner of Anthony Rolfe Avenue and Hinder Street. There are at least 80 places there. Between 80 and 125 places will come online at Holt following the sale of a block to a developer there. A recently released site was purchased at McKellar. Only in this week's *Chronicle* there was notice of a new private enterprise opening in Crace. For the Canberra Liberals, through Mr Hanson, to say that there is no facilitation of investment by the private sector here could not be further from the truth.

It is also worth noting that 72 per cent of services here in the ACT are with community organisations. They are run by not-for-profit community organisations and 18 per cent are privately owned. Thirty-five of those community-managed services are operated by properties owned by the Community Services Directorate of the government.

I am not quite sure what Mr Hanson is trying to do by saying that we should not be investing in bricks and mortar to support children's services, given that over 70 per cent of services provided to mum, dad and kids here in the ACT are through community organisations. I am not quite sure if you are asking them to go out and find their own capital costs, Mr Hanson.

MADAM SPEAKER: Ms Burch, could I remind you of standing order 42 and ask you to address the chair, not Mr Hanson.

MS BURCH: I will, Madam Speaker, and I would, through you, say that it is the Canberra Liberals' policy now to ask community organisations to come up with their own capital infrastructure cost. At a time when demand is high for places, it is critical that we consider the quality of care. It is worth noting, though, that in 2010 we did have a reported vacancy rate of nine per cent and in June 2011 that vacancy rate was 16 per cent. While it is certainly still tight in the sector, I think that demonstrates that the investment that this government has put in is making a difference in the places available for Canberra families.

I have also been a strong supporter of the quality framework. Under the new quality standards, parents can have the confidence that when they leave their child they know that they will be safe, that they will learn and that they will be cared for by committed and qualified workers. Quality in child care is crucial and the Labor government has been proud of the fact that we have good quality child care. Even you, Madam Speaker, have been on record with Ross Solly saying, “No doubt, here in the ACT we have good quality child care.”

Nevertheless, I was surprised that the Canberra Liberals failed to release a single childcare policy during the last election. There was nothing, not even the infamous well-versed and well-thought-of by the Canberra Liberals centralised bureaucratic childcare waiting list that you, Madam Speaker, when you had held that shadow portfolio, promised would be the centrepiece of Canberra Liberals’ policy.

There was not a single word about supporting Canberra families and early childhood services by the Canberra Liberals in the whole election, not a centrepiece, not even a word, not a policy. I do also note that Mrs Dunne wrote to Carers ACT a week before polling day to say that something would be released soon. They are still waiting. It is a bit like the Canberra Liberals forgetting CIT and saying that they would rally around and get that policy in. We are all still waiting for that.

MADAM SPEAKER: Relevance, Ms Burch.

MS BURCH: The relevance is lack of policy from the Canberra Liberals, Madam Speaker. We will provide funding to—

Mr Hanson: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson has a point or order. Ms Burch, could you resume your seat?

Mr Hanson: Madam Speaker, the minister is not only not being relevant to the debate and raising matters of party policy—Liberal Party policy—but she is also being repetitious in the debate. So under both standing orders, I would ask you to bring her to the point and back to the subject of the motion.

MADAM SPEAKER: The thing about repetition and being tedious is that it is a tenuous thing. We all probably fall into that from time to time. I did ask the minister to be relevant to the debate. Again, I would remind the minister that a quick comeback of a smart line is not necessarily making it relevant to the debate. I asked you to be relevant to the debate, which in this case is child care.

If you want to criticise the opposition for their childcare policy that is fine, but when you range into other policy areas, that is not fine, and I will ask you to come back to the debate. Ms Burch.

MS BURCH: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am quite happy to talk about the Canberra Liberals’ childcare policy, but it would take a nanosecond because there is none. Mr Hanson today has indeed proved that. He asked today what we have done.

We have supported the community sector by upgrading their bricks and mortar to expand the number of childcare places.

He talks about the failure to deliver on something. We have brought online over 500 places with another 500 in the pipeline. We have supported the workers.

Mr Coe: Flynn works so well.

MS BURCH: Flynn does work well.

Mr Coe: How much did it cost?

MS BURCH: It does work well.

Mr Coe: How much did it cost?

MS BURCH: You go to Alkira or Gumnut and you say to any of the families that take their children there that that does not work. All the talk from across that table is for naught because the reality is that the Canberra Liberals do not have an iota of an idea about child care, because they have no policy.

They say we have fees above the national average, but they do not then make mention that under the federal Labor government out-of-pocket expenses for child care are low. They are lower than when the Liberals were in power.

They also made some comment about fees. Fees are set by the services. We did a piece of work that looked at community services, community-governed services, the private services and the fees they charged on a daily basis. There was no significant difference. We are providing support to the workforce, providing bricks and mortar and providing land release. I have just read out a number of places there that are buying into land because they have confidence that children's services will be supported by this government.

The workers know here that they will be supported. The Canberra Liberals have let Canberra families down. They went to the election with not one single notion of support. Mr Hanson talked about squeezing child care. But they did nothing for child care here in the ACT. *(Time expired.)*

Question put:

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

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 7

Noes 8

Mr Coe	Mrs Jones	Mr Barr	Ms Gallagher
Mr Doszpot	Mr Seselja	Ms Berry	Mr Gentleman
Mrs Dunne	Mr Wall	Dr Bourke	Ms Porter
Mr Hanson		Ms Burch	Mr Rattenbury

Question so resolved in the negative.

MADAM SPEAKER: The question now is that Ms Berry's motion be agreed to.

MS BERRY (Ginninderra) (12.21): Thank you to Mr Hanson for being part of my first experience in moving my first item of private members' business. I do not know yet whether I have enjoyed that. We will see.

I think Mr Hanson's comments reflect a bit of a serious misunderstanding about the role of early childhood education in our community. A couple of weekends ago over 12,000 people across the country—educators, parents and community supporters—came together supporting the big steps campaign and the role that early childhood educators play in our community. It seems that in Mr Hanson's world early childhood education is either an opportunity for making money or that it is some sort of an impost on government.

This government's view, however, is different and we understand the importance of early childhood education. Mr Hanson believes that he can speak on behalf of ACT parents. Well, he does not speak for Angela Shearer, a mother of two children under the age of four years who fully supports the government's active role in early childhood education and the big steps campaign. She says, "Educators do work that requires specific skill sets and training and I cannot understand how society does not recognise this and pay accordingly." She is concerned about the high rate of turnover of staff and she says, "Why should I expect my children to feel comfortable around strangers if I do not? Big steps and professional wages would mean better continuity of care."

She goes on to say that she believes that early childhood educators are truly amazing and inspiring people. She says, "They are responsible for the future health and development of my children and their impact has lasting effects on learning and emotional stability. Quality educators form genuine bonds with my children. They educate, care and love my children, which is why the continuity of care is so vital. The expectations placed on childcare educators are vast and highly demanding."

Mr Hanson also forgets to mention the vital role that educators play in the development of our children, educators like Tim. Tim is passionate about working in early childhood education and he is studying for his Bachelor in Early Childhood Education. He just turned 25 this month.

But for Tim, his passion for this work has meant that he has had to return to his home in Harden, New South Wales, travelling to work in Nicholls every day because he cannot afford to live in Canberra on the childcare educators' rate of pay. It is a trip which takes him 1½ hours each way. That is the dedication he has to the sector. He will travel that distance, do the work that he loves, to give our children in the ACT the best start in their life for a wage of \$18-something an hour.

I would also like to draw attention to the scholarships that the ACT government has been providing to the early childhood sector. Whilst Mr Hanson was saying that the government is pretending to support the sector, if the government had not been providing these scholarships for people on low incomes like early childhood educators,

the cost would go to parents. By the ACT government having these scholarships in place and putting more scholarships in place to improve educational outcomes for our children, to provide that high quality care, the cost is being borne by the government, not the sector.

I also want to draw to Mr Hanson's attention that Holder's application has been lodged and it has been approved. I have to say, Madam Speaker, I am disappointed but not surprised that the opposition will not support this motion. One other initiative that the ACT government has brought together for the early childhood sector in recognising the important work that educators do in our community is by implementing the community service portable long service leave scheme. It is something that also is a small thing but it goes a long way to recognising the important work that educators do in our community.

I am hoping that in my work here in this place I will be able to help the Canberra Liberals to understand the important work that early childhood educators do in our community. I would like to ask for their support today for my motion and to show their support publicly for the work that early childhood educators do.

Question put:

That the motion be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 8

Noes 7

Mr Barr	Ms Gallagher	Mr Coe	Mrs Jones
Ms Berry	Mr Gentleman	Mr Doszpot	Mr Seselja
Dr Bourke	Ms Porter	Mrs Dunne	Mr Wall
Ms Burch	Mr Rattenbury	Mr Hanson	

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

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 12.27 to 2.30 pm.

Ministerial arrangements

MS GALLAGHER (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Health and Minister for Higher Education): I advise members that the Attorney-General and Minister for the Environment and Sustainable Development will not be here during question time. I will take questions on his behalf in his absence.

Questions without notice**Budget—deficit**

MR SESELJA: My question is to the Treasurer. Treasurer, this year you delivered the biggest deficit in territory history of \$381 million. In 2013-14 you have a projected deficit of \$117.6 million. On 9 November 2012 you released a statement saying the election commitments made by Labor during the campaign and from the Labor-Greens parliamentary agreement total an extra \$68 million in 2013-14. Treasurer, how will you fund the additional \$68 million in new spending without blowing the already \$117 million deficit?

MR BARR: You can wait until budget day to find out.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Seselja, a supplementary question.

MR SESELJA: Treasurer, what is the total cost of Labor Party election commitments and initiatives from the Labor-Greens agreement in 2014-15, and how will you fund this?

MR BARR: As I have said publicly, the estimates range between \$60 million and \$80 million over the forward estimates period—\$60 million to \$80 million per annum. There are, of course, a number of offsets contained within the 2012-13 budget, including the health growth funding envelope that I believe the Leader of the Opposition would be aware of.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Treasurer, what is the total cost of Labor Party election commitments and initiatives from the Labor-Greens agreement in 2015-16, and how will you fund this?

MR BARR: I refer the Deputy Leader of the Opposition to my previous answer.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Treasurer, what is the total cost of Labor Party election commitments and initiatives from the Labor-Greens agreement in 2016-17, and how will you fund this?

MR BARR: Obviously the Deputy Leader of the Opposition is having some difficulty diverting from his pre-prepared script. I refer him to my previous answer.

Health—secure mental health unit

MR HANSON: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, on 30 September this year a *Canberra Times* article on Labor's mental health election promises states:

Labor also said its estimates for two other projects—a new, six-bed adolescent centre and 15-bed secure unit—might change because operational expenses needed to be confirmed.

The secure mental health unit was originally promised by Labor in 2005. Why is it that after seven years you are still unable to estimate how much this promise will cost ACT taxpayers?

MS GALLAGHER: As the member will be aware, there have been a number of changes to the project over that time. The first one was the decision not to locate it on the grounds of Canberra Hospital. We then went through a process which was the original decision that I inherited when I became health minister. That decision was overturned. We then went and identified a site. The former site of Quamby was identified as the most appropriate site. We went through a process there. It developed through that that the cost of that project on that site would be in the order of \$30-odd million, which was a lot more than the money that had been appropriated for it when it was co-located. So that money was returned to the budget whilst further work was being done. That work has been done, including a review from Health Infrastructure New South Wales, who have looked at the price that has been costed on that project and have said that, in their view, it is about 20 per cent higher than they would have estimated if it was to be built in New South Wales. We have also had an expert review done of the model of care and the constraints of operating—

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MS GALLAGHER: Madam Speaker, through you, the constraints of providing that service in such a small facility on that location and the government is—

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MS GALLAGHER: Through you, Madam Speaker, as you have instructed us to follow, so I will not respond to Mr Hanson's repeated interjections—

MADAM SPEAKER: Quite right.

MS GALLAGHER: Through you, I have explained the reasons for that project. It is going to be a very difficult project to deliver. I am acutely aware of the advice that the government has been given around the difficulty in staffing and the nature of the service that is provided in forensic mental health. It is a very, very particular group of clients and when you have a small number of beds like that it puts constraints on the service. I am aware of that. As I said, we have not finalised our thinking on this project. We do need a secure unit.

Mr Coe interjecting—

MS GALLAGHER: The project is going to be built for the long term. I am not going to build something that will not suit the needs of the forensic mental health clients in this city. I will not rush it and build something that will be incapable of being staffed

and that does not provide the services that that client needs or the workforce to provide it. So, yes, it is complicated and I am going to take the time to make sure we get it right.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Minister, the adolescent health unit has been promised for the last four years. Why are you still unable to estimate how much this promise will cost ACT taxpayers?

MS GALLAGHER: Like the forensic unit, it will be costed when the final decisions are taken in relation to the project.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Minister, what benefits will this facility bring to the mental health community?

MS GALLAGHER: I thank Ms Porter for the question. I would remind members that the forensic mental health services are being provided. They are being provided at the jail, they are provided on an outpatient basis where appropriate, and indeed they are provided within the adult mental health unit—the new adult mental health unit that has been opened—as appropriate. So the clinical needs of clients of the forensic mental health service are being managed.

With respect to what we are trying to design here, we have taken some lessons from where a small unit has been opened, and those jurisdictions are actually saying that, if they had their time over, they would not build a unit like that because of the problems they have experienced since opening it. So we are conscious of learnt lessons from other places, and we are trying to address those and make sure that the final building, when it is costed—and my expectation is that it will be done through this budget process—is actually a building that not only is going to meet the needs of the people who are going to spend a lot of time there, because they are traditionally fairly long-stay patients, but also meet the needs of the workforce that we will need. I do not imagine that Mr Hanson is going to be putting his hand up to work there. It is a very specialised workforce and we have to make sure that the service that we run, for the very small group of people that will need this service, is going to be able to be delivered. They are the things that we are considering as we finalise the project.

MR COE: Supplementary question, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Chief Minister, when will the secure mental health unit and the adolescent mental health unit be completed?

MS GALLAGHER: That will be dependent on budget decisions.

Community services

MS PORTER: My question is to the Minister for Community Services. Minister, can you update the Assembly on the challenges and opportunities facing the ACT community sector?

MR BARR: I thank Ms Porter for the question and for her interest in community services. Members would be aware that the community sector is an essential partner with government in the planning and delivery of community services here in the territory and that all state and territory governments currently are facing pressure to work with pressure on budgets and pressure to deliver an ever-increasing range of services to the community.

This opportunity, I think, is before us to work with the community sector to undertake structural reform to ensure that we are able to deliver high-quality services and that we get value for the \$130 million that the territory government invests in the community sector each year. This is a significant investment, \$130 million, to support vulnerable members of our community. There is always an opportunity to work with the sector to ensure that this money is targeted, is spent wisely and, most importantly, improves people's lives.

There is no doubt that the community sector is at the beginning of a significant period of change, driven of course by a number of major national reforms, including the implementation of the equal pay case, the introduction of the national disability insurance scheme and the establishment of the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission. The NDIS, for example, is a groundbreaking social reform that is placing individuals at the centre of decision-making processes and ensuring that vulnerable members of the community have a say in the services that they are provided.

The challenge ahead for all of us in the sector is to think about how we deliver services in this changed environment. I think this also presents a great opportunity to work with the community sector to make sure it is even more capable and skilled and even better able to make the vital contribution that so many disadvantaged Canberrans depend on.

But, above all, these reforms present an opportunity to deliver better services to people in our community, to provide services that give them a roof over their head, to feed their families and give them the support they need to build their skills and to find a job. This is why the ACT Labor government remain committed to creating the economic environment that supports jobs and sustains services, why we are the only government in Australia to undertake meaningful tax reform that supports economic growth, makes housing more affordable, reduces the costs of insurance and, most importantly, boosts employment opportunities. And that is why we will continue to talk about the long-term benefits that tax reform delivers to this community.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Minister, what will the government do to support the community sector undertaking this reform?

MR BARR: The government will continue to work with the sector on reforms to position the sector for the future. We have supported sector reform through the establishment of the Community Sector Reform Advisory Group. The initial focus of this group has been to reduce the costs of doing business for community sector organisations, to support skills development and to support stronger governance.

Some of this work aligns very nicely with work I initiated earlier this year in relation to red tape reduction for ACT businesses, so I can see great value in bringing together this work across the two directorates to remove and reform regulations, guidelines and requirements that no longer work or are no longer required to make doing business with government as straightforward as possible.

The key goal here is to free up time and resources so that the sector can focus on service delivery.

MR HANSON: Supplementary, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Minister, have you consulted with your federal colleagues to identify how the NDIS will be funded beyond a trial in the ACT?

MR BARR: Those conversations are ongoing.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Minister, could you outline your priorities for the community sector? Do you think that they align with the sector's priorities?

MR BARR: I have just gone into some detail to outline the priorities for the next 12 months. Those particularly relate to structural reform within the sector and to providing red tape reduction that will enable the community sector to get on with service delivery to ensure that we are maximising resources to those in greatest need. If Mr Hanson had been paying any attention to previous answers, he would have known that.

Mr Hanson: On a point of order, Madam Speaker, the second part of my question was whether he thinks that both priorities accord with the sector's own priorities. I ask the minister to come to that point.

MADAM SPEAKER: Have you finished your answer, Mr Barr?

MR BARR: Yes.

Health—mental health

MR WALL: My question is to the Minister for Health. Clause 5.4(a) of the Labor-Greens parliamentary agreement states that a new mental health community-based after-hours crisis and assessment team will be established. When will this team be established and what is the cost of this item?

MS GALLAGHER: I thank Mr Wall for the question and for his interest in the Labor-Greens parliamentary agreement. As Mr Wall will be aware, the Labor Party went to the election with a promise for additional investment of \$35 million in mental health related services over the term of the Assembly. That is clearly outlined in our policy documents. Some of that is funding for new services and additional staff for the mental health services. We already have an after-hours crisis and assessment team. I will be taking advice from the directorate about some extra support for the community sector in terms of the provision of those services, but we had already, as part of our commitments, identified that a proportion of that \$35 million was to be provided to the community sector, and this is one of the priorities within that allocation.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: What will be the distinction in roles between the current crisis treatment team and the new team?

MS GALLAGHER: That will be determined on advice from the clinicians that work in both the non-government—

Mr Hanson: You just don't know.

MS GALLAGHER: That will be determined—I don't think it is any secret, Madam Speaker—from representations. If anyone had spent any time in the non-government sector in relation to mental health services, they would realise that this is one of the priorities of the non-government sector—the capacity to provide urgent, out-of-hours support to people who are experiencing crisis.

The community sector currently provide a lot of those services. They do it; that is where people recover from their mental illness, and we have been making quite large proportions of the extra funding going into mental health available to the non-government sector. The practicality and the model of care that will be determined must be done in conjunction and in consultation with the non-government sector and the treating clinicians who work for the government crisis and assessment team. That is how we deliver all of our services.

Through every budget, when we identify an allocation of money to go into a particular area of mental health where the pressure is, we allocate the money and then we negotiate with the non-government sector about their delivery of that service. I do not tell them how they will deliver the service. They are the experts. The government provides the extra support. It is to provide after-hours crisis support, Mr Hanson, from

the community sector in conjunction with government services. That is how the community sector and government mental health sector work now. It is how they will work under this agreement reached with the Greens.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Minister, will this service be provided by ACT Health or contracted out to a community-based organisation?

MS GALLAGHER: The CAT team is a team that is ACT Health Directorate staff. That again will be determined in consultation with the sector. If there is extra money to go into mental health, it will be negotiated between the non-government providers and the government provider. At the moment we have the largest proportion of any jurisdiction anywhere funding community-based mental health services. Some of that is delivered by the Health Directorate and some is more appropriately delivered by the non-government sector. The non-government sector have indicated a desire to provide after-hours crisis support, or have some additional capacity to do that. Also, on the other side, the CAT team I think would benefit from additional resources as well. That will be negotiated within the envelope that we have identified.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Gentleman.

MR GENTLEMAN: Chief Minister, can you advise what threats there would be to the implementation of this very positive initiative without negotiation with these service providers?

MS GALLAGHER: I thank Mr Gentleman for the question. The challenge in the health sector is always ensuring that you have the clinicians, the experts in the field providing the advice about how to roll out particular programs. Politicians cannot determine how particular programs in the health sector are to be delivered. We can certainly say that this is for after-hours crisis and assessment—

Mr Hanson: You don't even know what it is.

MS GALLAGHER: I do know what it is, Mr Hanson.

Mr Hanson: You don't know when it's being delivered, how much it costs.

MS GALLAGHER: I do know what it is and I have to say I know a lot more about it than you. What I am saying to you is that this will be negotiated with the non-government sector as part of the \$35 million that we made available. I do not even think the Liberal Party had a mental health policy, did you? Did you have anything to say about mental health at all? I do not recall it. But you certainly did not have a \$35 million package—

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson!

MS GALLAGHER: comprehensively to look at—

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MS GALLAGHER: None of it—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson. Order! First of all, Chief Minister, don't ask Mr Hanson questions across the chamber. Mr Hanson, I would ask you to be more orderly. Your intervention of standing up and answering a question was not appropriate. Ms Gallagher, you have the floor.

MS GALLAGHER: Thank you. Just to complete the answer, Madam Speaker, none of that \$35 million is rollover. Mr Hanson is wrong again, as usual, as expected. In the next four years we will expect the same.

Alexander Maconochie Centre—needle and syringe program

MRS JONES: My question is to the Minister for Health. Clause 5.7 of the Labor-Greens parliamentary agreement states that a needle and syringe exchange program will be established at the AMC medical centre. When will this program be established and how much will it cost?

MS GALLAGHER: I thank Mrs Jones for her interest in the needle and syringe exchange program and, hopefully, her support for the needle and syringe exchange program at the AMC. Again, I am very happy to be in the position where I am where I get to implement the commitments that we took to the electorate.

This was one of the commitments we made clear beforehand that we would want to pursue. I think the next step for us, and the work is underway by the Health Directorate, is a consultation process around the model that we have identified as being the preferred model to implement. I am not going to put an artificial timetable around it because this will require, I think, the collaboration of corrections and Corrections Health. Those discussions are ongoing but the government remains committed to it.

In terms of cost, it is expected to be a very low cost model, as in the model identified the doctors are currently paid for. The model identified is that a prisoner attending an appointment as a patient will be seen by a doctor whose salary is currently paid for, and, if they meet the criteria, they would be provided with safe injecting equipment. It is a very low cost and already provided by the Health Directorate in a number of different settings.

MRS JONES: A supplementary.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: How will you guarantee the safety of correctional officers at the AMC when this project is established?

MS GALLAGHER: My view on this is the dangers being faced by corrections staff are faced on a daily basis. They work in a very, very difficult workplace. There is injecting equipment in the jail at the moment. They face those dangers now. The key to getting this developed and to seeking the agreement of corrections staff is that it actually supports the health of prisoners who are entitled to their health care. I think we would all agree with that—that prisoners are entitled to adequate health care, that they should be protected from harm while they are in the jail—again, this meets that—and that we provide a safe workplace for prison staff. That is already done through the work that corrections do now in minimising the risks to staff. But let us not pretend that those risks are not there now; they are.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Gentleman.

MR GENTLEMAN: Minister, can you tell us what the threats to the ACT community would be by not addressing the spread of communicable diseases at AMC?

MS GALLAGHER: I thank Mr Gentleman for the question. As we know, hepatitis C is prevalent in about one per cent of the community. At the jail it is more like 60 per cent. That is what we are dealing with. And, for most of those people, they actually leave the jail. Yes, they have friends and they have family and they have children and they have work colleagues and they have a whole range of people they have contact with. The danger to the community in allowing this prevalence to continue and putting our heads in the sand and hoping it will go away, despite all the evidence to the contrary that it will not, is that the risks that they bring out into the community actually spreads to the rest of the community—to your children, to my children, to your family, to my family. That is the risk, and that is what we are trying to do.

Mr Hanson: Quasi legalisation of drugs.

MS GALLAGHER: Mr Hanson unhelpfully interjects “quasi legalisation of drugs”. It is a traditional conservative argument, and, if you read the evidence, it is completely wrong.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Seselja.

MR SESELJA: Was Keith Hamburger wrong in his conclusion in relation to the quasi legalisation of drugs? How will you implement this, given that corrections officers continue to be opposed to this program?

MS GALLAGHER: There are a couple of issues. Yes, I personally disagree with Keith Hamburger on that issue. I do not believe the model that we have put forward in any way supports the quasi legalisation of drugs. The efforts that go into confiscating drugs, stopping drugs going into the jail and punishing prisoners where contraband is identified will all continue.

The doctors have made it very clear to me that they are not the slightest bit interested in being a part of any contact around the drugs that are being used. Their view is that when they see a patient that comes to them—

Mr Seselja: They close their eyes.

MS GALLAGHER: No. This goes to the model, Mr Seselja. You might be flippant and laugh it off but this goes to the model that when a patient comes to the doctor and their veins have collapsed—and that is what we are dealing with here, very sick people with collapsed veins—they want to treat it. A doctor wants to treat that and provide them with the best care they can.

One of the options, apart from counselling and apart from the provision of drug treatment services, is to minimise the harm that is being done. That is the view of the doctors, but the doctors have been very clear that it is not around endorsing or allowing the use of drugs.

In relation to the second point, around public servants dictating what they will and will not allow in their workplace, that raises another issue for the government. If we are to accept that view that corrections staff can determine how, when and what goes on, then we would expect the teachers to be able to do it. We would expect nurses to be able to say, “Hang on, I have a patient here who is very dangerous and who is threatening me and I am not going to provide a service to do that because I am worried about that.” If that is a position you endorse, that is very interesting and it will flow to every other public servant in this town. So there is a reason. We must pursue this, and we will. *(Time expired.)*

National Multicultural Festival—government support

DR BOURKE: My question is to the Minister for Multicultural Affairs. Minister, what plans does the government have to further enhance the Multicultural Festival, especially in the centenary year?

MS BURCH: I thank Dr Bourke for his question. Next year’s National Multicultural Festival will be held from Friday, 8 February through to Sunday, 10 February, and I do encourage everyone in this place to come along and attend and to encourage their families and friends to come along as well.

The centenary theme will be reflected through the entire program of performances at the festival. Importantly, the event provides the focus and opportunity for multicultural community groups to acknowledge and celebrate the 100 years of Canberra’s development and their involvement in this growth. The ACT government leads the organisation of this event and for next year has provided an additional \$100,000 to ensure that the necessary infrastructure and appropriate decorations are available to adorn the centenary National Multicultural Festival. On top of that, I am delighted at ACT Labor’s election commitment to build this new funding into the festival’s budget for future years—

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, members!

MS BURCH: a \$420,000 commitment. This will keep a great event in great shape.

I do note the mirth and hilarity coming from the other side. But this was part of our multicultural policy that we took to the election, and I will note that the Canberra Liberals were absent in having a multicultural policy when they went to the election.

MADAM SPEAKER: Minister, would you be directly relevant to the question, which was about the centenary festival?

MS BURCH: The additional funding for the next festival has enabled new additions to the festival, such as the African Village and the Bengali Showcase. We have also provided new funding to allow the reintroduction of an edgy Fringe Festival. The cultural performances for these new concepts will be local to international and will provide a focal point in the event for the respective local community groups and the arts sector alike.

The centenary team has generously contributed entertainment, including performances from acclaimed singer Geoffrey Gurrumul Yunupingu as part of the 2013 Indigenous Showcase.

A record number of applications have been received. So far, over 300 stallholders have applied for a stall to showcase their cultural community throughout the festival.

There will be five major stages and one platform where performances will be staged, in addition to roving street entertainment and buskers. A feature of the 2013 festival will be a significant increase in the part played by roving performers and buskers.

Opposition members interjecting—

MS BURCH: I am just hoping that none opposite will want to come back and be part of the roaming and performing buskers, because they are not very entertaining.

This presence will allow festival attendees, particularly community members with mobility issues and families with children, to enjoy the roving performers from the extensive seating arrangements available in and around the festival.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Minister, how will the government be supporting the Fringe Festival from 2013 and how will it link in with the Multicultural Festival?

MS BURCH: In September this year I approved \$20,000 from the ACT arts fund for the costs of a fringe festival in 2013. In 2013 the Fringe Festival will take place in conjunction with the ACT Multicultural Festival and will run over the afternoon and evening of Saturday, 9 February.

Members interjecting—

Dr Bourke: On a point of order, Madam Speaker, I cannot hear the answer to my question. The minister is only a metre away from me.

Members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, members!

Mr Smyth: Madam Speaker, on the point of order, the Treasurer was comparing the length of fringes of the gentlemen of the Assembly and it is entirely inappropriate that he do so.

MADAM SPEAKER: It is entirely inappropriate. Can you stop the clock, please, Clerk? As I said yesterday, there was not interjection; there was more than a low murmur of conversation that did make it difficult for anyone to hear Ms Burch. I think that, again, courtesy is required so that we can at least hear the person answering the question.

MS BURCH: Following a call for expressions of interest for a creative producer to stage the Fringe Festival and assessment by an independent panel, I have appointed Mr PJ Williams and Mr Nick Byrne, who submitted a joint application. They have more than 25 years experience, including theatre, festival direction and radio. They are founders of Impro ACT theatre and have previously produced a variety of festivals in Canberra.

The Fringe Festival producers will provide opportunities to celebrate and explore different multicultural experiences. These will include a culture mash, young musicians from different cultures playing together; fringe dwellers, short documentaries by local film makers in the homes of mixed culture families that will be screened at the festival; world karaoke, with language-of-origin hits, open to audience participation; living stories, younger generations being interviewed about their experiences as migrants or Australian born children of migrants; and the world record haka, an attempt to gather as many people from different cultures to learn and perform a haka together. *(Time expired.)*

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Gentleman.

MR GENTLEMAN: Minister, what evidence is there that the Multicultural Festival is helping to boost Canberra's international reputation?

MS BURCH: Last year's National Multicultural Festival documentary, filmed by 2012 festival sponsor GoConnect Pty Ltd, was launched on 3 October and has been viewed by over 93 million people through internet TV around the world. That is 93 million people around the world who have seen Canberra showcased through the National Multicultural Festival.

This year the festival boasts world class entertainers, including performances from the African Village and the Bengali Showcase, who will perform alongside local renowned cultural entertainers and performers.

The festival has evolved into an event where performers from all over the world wish to showcase their cultures and talent. For 2013 cultural performances from the following countries will participate just to name a few: Latin American countries such as Venezuela and Argentina, Korea, Papua New Guinea, China, and African countries such as Kenya and Botswana.

There are cultural performing groups coming from 25 countries. The extensive program of next year's festival is world class and demonstrates the popular event is much loved and looked forward to by tourists from all over Australia.

In 2013 the festival will have 74 embassies involved in the event. This level of international interest and involvement promotes our city across the world. The windows to the world are the embassies which embrace this opportunity to showcase their country to Australians.

Another exciting first for the 2013 festival is the request for a Korean film crew to come to Canberra to film the 2013 festival for further showcasing on the national Korean media. I think that demonstrates that this really is not only a beloved local but a national and international festival of our multicultural community.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: I understand that the Austrian community is quite interested in having some kind of a display of stock sport at the Multicultural Festival—having a space available to display that sport to the community. Is there any possible consideration from the government to having a demonstration of the sport at the Multicultural Festival?

MS BURCH: I am trying to imagine 250,000 people in Garema Place with 300 stalls, five stages and a sports activity, Mrs Jones. It could be somewhat crowded. But I am sure that if that group want to talk to the Office of Multicultural Affairs and explore the activity—certainly the footprint has expanded. We have certainly moved beyond Garema Place. We are now coming in to Civic Square, hosting the Indigenous showcase, London Circuit, and other streets have certainly been taken over. I think the success of this shows that the ACT Labor government really does well by our multicultural community. Whilst I am not quite sure if you were involved in your party's conversations before the last election, it is disappointing and it has certainly been noted by the multicultural community—

MADAM SPEAKER: Relevance, Ms Burch.

MS BURCH: that there was an absence of a multicultural policy from the Canberra Liberals.

MADAM SPEAKER: Minister Burch, when I call your attention to relevance, I expect a response, not for you to continue to talk over me.

MS BURCH: Sorry, I was just finishing the answer to the question, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Sorry, irrespective of whether you were just finishing, if I call your attention to relevance I expect you to respond, and I expect that of all members.

Health—health promotion grants program

MR DOSZPOT: My question is to the Minister for Health. Clause 5.2 of the Labor-Greens parliamentary agreement states that funding under the health promotion grants program will be focused on achieving positive health outcomes for children. What programs will not receive new funding as they do not meet this focus?

MS GALLAGHER: I do welcome the Liberals' intense interest in section 5 of the parliamentary agreement for the Eighth Assembly. It is very flattering that it is getting so much attention. I am very happy to talk about section 5.2 on the basis of our very extensive health commitments that we went to the election on, most of which were copied by the Canberra Liberals, which we also take as great flattery. The highest compliment that can be paid is when one copies our entire election plan.

The health promotion grants program, as members would be aware, has an annual process of just over \$2 million. I have been in discussions with a number of non-government organisations, many who work in the health sector, about making sure that that \$2 million a year—\$2 million a year—that goes out the door actually returns some positive health benefits that are measurable. I know that Mr Smyth will agree with me there. If you are allocating \$2 million, we should be able to evaluate and measure whether that is having any impact on our preventative health strategy and improving health. Basically, when we look at our Chief Health Officer's report, I cannot say that that has been delivered on current statistics available to the government.

Mr Hanson: Why don't you get a task force together then and have an ACT preventative health strategy?

MS GALLAGHER: The task force is already in place, as I explained to you during the election campaign. It is another one where you came and copied the work that was already underway in the health area.

Mr Hanson: You have a preventative health task force, have you? You have a preventative health strategy?

MS GALLAGHER: We do, Mr Hanson. The work has been under development—

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, members!

MS GALLAGHER: I am so happy that you find it so entertaining, Mr Hanson—the fact that you are the—

MADAM SPEAKER: Standing order 42, Chief Minister.

MS GALLAGHER: Yes, Madam Speaker, and I am trying to abide by your directions. I really am. It is very, very difficult when it turns into a sort of comedy show on the other side.

MADAM SPEAKER: Perhaps you should not be quite so tempted, Chief Minister.

MS GALLAGHER: The \$2 million—it may mean that some groups that would apply under the current arrangements, the current criteria, if we align it as we had indicated prior to the election, when I said that I wanted a greater focus on children's health and making sure that we were dealing with areas of physical activity, active transport to school and appropriate weight or healthy weight ranges for children—this will be the focus of the health promotion grants round.

But this is money that is applied for every year. So in that sense, I cannot answer hypothetically what groups that may apply may not be eligible anymore without knowing who they are and what they would be applying for.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, will this affect the distribution of funding for groups applying for the 2013-14 funding round?

MS GALLAGHER: For the funding rounds that are already open, they would continue as normal.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Minister, you said that the ACT has a preventative health task force. Can you tell us who is on that task force, please, and give us its terms of reference? You also stated in your answer that the ACT has a preventative health strategy. Could you please table that strategy?

MS GALLAGHER: This is a whole-of-government group that has been put together. It has Tony Stubbs on it, it has the Chief Health Officer on it and it has a number of other officers on it. I am very happy to provide you with that list. They have been working on a whole-of-government strategy for active living. Some of that work of course was contained in our election commitments, but it has been work that I asked—

Mr Hanson: That is not a task force.

MS GALLAGHER: It is a task force.

Mr Hanson: No, it isn't.

MS GALLAGHER: It is a task force, Mr Hanson. They have been tasked—

MADAM SPEAKER: Ms Gallagher—

MS GALLAGHER: with a particular job to do. That is what they are doing. It is a group of people that have been given a task, and that is what they are doing.

Opposition members interjecting—

MS GALLAGHER: That is a normal definition of a task force. You might be surprised at that, but that is what normally happens when you pull together a task force. You are pulling together different people to do a particular job and provide advice, and that is exactly what they are doing.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Minister, could you give us some examples of why health promotion is particularly important to the Canberra community, particularly in relation to obesity in children?

MS GALLAGHER: I thank Dr Bourke for the question. We will be discussing this later today in Ms Porter's motion before the Assembly. But I think what is very clear in all of the data, and this is why we have got a national health prevention agency that has been commissioned and set up nationally, is that in Australia, in terms of the burden of disease and in terms of the pressures that are facing our health system, they are coming at us from a younger generation; that is, when you have 30 per cent of your children under the age of five bordering into the unhealthy weight range, you are going to have very significant pressures on the health budget when those young people get to the age where they start consuming health services. And they will start consuming them earlier. The statistics are not going the way we would want.

We have set ourselves the target of zero growth, and that is about stopping the continuing increase in the number of people, particularly children, who are bordering into the unhealthy weight ranges. That is a very significant challenge that we have set ourselves. Unless we start setting some goals and actually refocusing a lot of our effort into this area, the community will not be able to pay for the health system that is required to meet the burden of disease that comes with those very scary statistics.

Tourism—government support

MS BERRY: My question is to the Minister for Tourism and Events. Could the minister update the Assembly on the work the government is undertaking to help achieve the goals of the federal government's tourism 2020 vision?

MR BARR: I thank Ms Berry for the question and for her interest in matters tourism and events. The tourism 2020 strategy is a national plan that has been agreed to by the federal government and, indeed, all state and territory governments. The aim is to build resilience and competitiveness within the Australian tourism industry and to provide a road map to help steer the industry towards its full potential.

The ultimate goal is to double the overnight tourism expenditure in this country annually, so the goal is to get to \$140 billion annually by the end of this decade. This

would significantly increase tourism's contribution to the national economy. Each state and territory, as part of the 2020 strategy, will have a contribution to make towards the national goal. It is through initiatives such as our special events fund, the event assistance program, the festivals fund and innovations like the human brochure campaign that Australian Capital Tourism is already working towards this growth target.

But there is of course more to do. At the tourism industry awards last Friday I had the pleasure of announcing that Australian Capital Tourism will lead an industry focused strategic plan for our tourism region for the period 2013 to 2020. The strategic direction will focus on implementing programs that align with the federal government's vision, and this of course sets an ambitious target for doubling overnight expenditure in the ACT by 2020.

To achieve this, the strategy will consider both supply and demand issues that need to be focused on, and these include labour and skills, investment and regulatory reform, access to our market, growing demand domestically and also growing demand internationally from key markets, and, finally, a particular emphasis on improving the tourism industry's digital capability.

To achieve this ambitious target the government and the tourism industry will work closely together. Through Australian Capital Tourism we will undertake an extensive consultation process in development and preparation of the strategic plan and will work directly with the key industry groups. Core to the implementation of the plan will be the government's commitment to the continuation of the special event fund, continuation of the Enlighten autumn festival and additional funding for organisations like the National Capital Educational Tourism Project and the Canberra Convention Bureau.

We will continue to work with our vibrant tourism and events sector to grow domestic and international visitation and, most importantly, grow the economic contribution that this sector makes to the territory economy.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Berry.

MS BERRY: How is the ACT government utilising the centenary year to boost tourism and achieve the goals of the tourism 2020 vision?

MR BARR: The centenary year does provide, perhaps not surprisingly, a once in a 100-year opportunity for our city. We have the opportunity to work in partnership with a number of national institutions, and in fact a number of national companies, to promote our city during the centenary year.

I would like to particularly acknowledge the very strong support that we have seen across the sport and recreation sector in Australia, particularly the major sports who have all committed to events in Canberra in the centenary year. So we will see a number of firsts in our city—the first time the Australian cricket team has ever played in Canberra. It will be the second match under lights at Manuka Oval—a fantastic achievement for this city and one that we certainly hope to build on with the local

cricket community. Of course, AFL, rugby league, rugby union, netball, golf—all of the major sports—have indicated that they will be supporting centenary activities. In addition to bringing major events to the city, they are also working with the ACT government and the centenary team to promote Canberra's centenary to fans of the various sports.

Members who have had the opportunity to see the first volume of the centenary year will be aware of the depth and breadth of the program. It will be a year like no other that this city has experienced. It does represent a fantastic opportunity for us to leverage off those significant events and to build a long-term legacy for the tourism and events sector. We look forward to closing the year with the launch of the new Canberra brand that was funded in this year's budget.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Minister, you did mention an expanded Enlighten at the tourism awards on Friday night. Will Enlighten mark III be smaller than Enlighten mark I, bigger than Enlighten mark II or larger than Enlighten marks I and II combined, and what will actually happen in this expanded Enlighten?

MADAM SPEAKER: I think Mr Smyth is asking you to enlighten us about Enlighten, Mr Barr.

MR BARR: I look forward to making those announcements in due course, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: What is the government doing in relation to building tourism demand from Asia and the region, and what is the progress on securing international flights into Canberra airport?

MR BARR: A core of the territory's plan to build tourism demand from Asia is our efforts to secure direct international flights to the city. The \$420 million development of the Canberra airport does provide us with the opportunity to reach out to new tourism markets, with particular focus in the first instance on New Zealand and Singapore.

The ACT government have been in ongoing negotiations with airlines and we are very confident that, with the very strong support of the Canberra airport, and indeed of all of the major tourism stakeholders in the city, that we can be successful in seeing international flights into Canberra airport. This will be assisted by the government's commitment to deliver a new international marketing campaign in support of these new international flights. With business and diplomatic travel likely to be a very key part of flights to both New Zealand and Singapore, our international marketing campaign will focus on the leisure end of the market to support these new routes.

Canberra Hospital—adult mental health unit

MR COE: My question is to the Minister for Health. A Health Directorate spokesperson is quoted in the *Canberra Times* on 1 October stating that the acute adult mental health unit has had an average occupancy rate of 99.4 per cent since opening. The additional beds, promised by Labor in the election, will not be opened until 2016-17. Given that the unit is currently operating with such a high occupancy, how will the unit cope with demand for beds until 2016-17?

MS GALLAGHER: There are extra beds that can be commissioned at the adult mental health unit. In fact, in the last budget we provided some extra funding for that. The ideal bed occupancy, from a clinician's point of view, is 85 per cent. Most inpatient units run higher than that; 89.4 is high but it is still within a manageable range. We work with the staff in the adult mental health unit.

You cannot have your beds at 70 per cent, because then you have got funded capacity sitting there idle. So there is a line where you have to make sure you are using your beds efficiently and safely. We work with the staff around that. But this is a challenge in every single mental health unit.

Mr Coe: Ninety-nine, not 89.

MS GALLAGHER: Yes. In every single mental health unit in the country, the minute you open beds, they are filled. You can go to any mental health unit anywhere and you will find that that is the story. So it is not just about funding extra beds. It is about extra services in the community. It is about ensuring that the discharge planning and the community sector are able to take people as they step down from care. It is about subacute care, Mr Coe. Some of the agreements we have reached with the commonwealth government over subacute care were extra beds for the mental health sector. Not everyone's needs can or should or will be met within the acute adult mental health unit. It was not designed for that.

So the responses to where you have high occupancy rates need to be multifaceted responses. A simple answer of just commissioning new beds will not solve anything because those beds could be filled straightaway. Mr Smyth knows it. We all know it. The minute you open beds anywhere in the hospital, those beds are filled.

In terms of responding to high occupancy in a way that is affordable in the long term for a sustainable health system, you have to look at other areas such as the ones I have outlined before.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: What other options are there for patients, such as the case mentioned in the same article where a woman waited three days in an assessment unit, who need inpatient mental health care but cannot access the unit?

MS GALLAGHER: What other options there are? There are other options: the step-up, step-down facilities, of which we are commissioning more. The mental health assessment unit, which this government actually started and funded—

Mr Smyth interjecting—

MS GALLAGHER: Mr Smyth, it one of those “you thought about it, you wrote the theme song, you sang the theme song”.

Mr Smyth interjecting—

MS GALLAGHER: In every area of government it was your idea, you pressured for it, you got it.

MADAM SPEAKER: Ms Gallagher, could you sit down, please. Ms Gallagher, you were asked a question by Mr Coe about options. You were distracted by Mr Smyth. Do you want to answer the question? Do you have anything more to say to Mr Coe’s question about options?

MS GALLAGHER: I will. The options are more community supported accommodation. It is looking at the operations of 2N, which is also a mental health unit, and the occupancy rates there. So that comes through our network of services. It also looks at the capacity within the acute mental health unit. I agree it is not ideal to be running a unit at that bed occupancy. We are working with the staff around that, but the simple answer of extra beds is not one that is sustainable or cost efficient in the long run.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Minister, is it a regular occurrence that patients spend extended periods in the assessment unit, such as the patient who spent three days waiting before being sent home?

MS GALLAGHER: It is difficult to answer that question but, yes, there are long-stay patients that stay in the mental health assessment unit, and they will do that for a number of reasons. It is one of the issues with our four-hour rule within the ED. The mental health assessment unit was never set up to just quickly process people through that, because a number of people come to that unit and they will stay for four, six or eight hours and then they will be supported at home. Whether they have people who are caring for them at home, whether they have stabilised—all of those issues are met through a clinical mental health response.

In terms of the focus on EDs around timeliness, because the mental health assessment unit is classified within the emergency department, that does place pressure on pushing people through that unit very quickly. I know there are times when you can have waits—long admissions, waiting and a bed in the adult mental health unit. My response to that, Mr Hanson, would be: are they better off staying in an area where

they are being cared for appropriately by mental health staff or, in the pursuit of not having long-wait patients in the mental health unit, is it best to kick them out, or kick out someone in the mental health unit?

These are decisions that clinicians need to make. If the mental health unit is full and there is a person that needs to be cared for safely in the mental health assessment unit, which is a six-bed specialised unit within the emergency department, and they are going to ruin the numbers or have a long stay there, what is the option? Boot them out and make your numbers look good? Boot someone else out from the adult mental health unit to make them look good?

Mr Hanson: How often does it occur?

MS GALLAGHER: It happens—and, again, I guess it depends. I would have to take some advice on exactly how often it happens. But to my knowledge, where there are patients in the emergency department, the longest waits within the emergency department would occur in the mental health assessment unit.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Gentleman.

MR GENTLEMAN: Minister, can you tell us what concerns you would have about just providing beds and not the community support services to go with them?

MS GALLAGHER: I think any health minister has to make sure that there is efficient use of the health dollar, and the most expensive part of the health system is the provision of beds. They are important, and you have to provide more of them as the health system grows. But you also have to be looking at how you provide your services. So that goes to the models of care, the partnerships in the community sector, the amount of care that can be provided in home. Increasingly, people are wanting care in the home. Hospital in the home is a very popular program delivering good results not only for freeing up capacity within the hospital but for people who actually want to be cared for at home with appropriate clinical support.

All of these are part of the new health system under health reform. They will continue. It is easy to understand the focus of people on beds as being the only answer, but it simply cannot be the answer because, one, there are issues around work force, two, there are issues around budget and, three, it never solves the problem. You open the beds and the beds fill up. It does not change what needs to happen in the health system to make it efficient and effective for patients. Beds in the hospital are not necessarily what patients want. They want access to care, and that care needs to be provided in a variety of settings.

Health—policy

MR GENTLEMAN: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, can you please advise the Assembly how your plans for health over the next four years will create a sustainable, modern health system?

MS GALLAGHER: I thank Mr Gentleman for the question and, indeed, for the health-focused question time we are having today—my favourite subject. I will just go through some of the plans we have across the health system. These were commitments that the Labor Party made. Interestingly, a number of them were the commitments the Liberal Party made too after the Labor Party had made them.

We have made commitments of \$170 million to add 170 beds across the health system and an expansion of hospital-in-the-home by 24 bed equivalents to make more efficient use of our hospitals. To improve on facilities at Calvary hospital, we will be looking at a car park there and also fit-out for a new birth centre. There is extra money for cancer outpatient services with the cancer centre, which I am sure all members will be very pleased to see open next year. There is \$10 million for outpatients to keep up with the growth in demand we are seeing there.

There is extra money going into mental health, an extra 5,000 operations over the next four years and the employment of an additional 500 doctors, nurses and health professionals. As I have just said in answer to previous questions, it is not all about beds and the traditional way of providing health services. It has to be around different ways of working and making sure that we are meeting those areas of pressure.

For example, there are new services like a maternity assessment unit to provide rapid transfer of women to high level obstetric care, the mobile dental clinic to take dental services into places like aged care facilities, the new paediatric stream within the emergency department to change the way that we triage and treat children and the new rapid assessment and planning unit at Calvary hospital, which is a new response for people who present to Calvary with more complex conditions.

We are also looking at more services in the community to take pressure off the two main hospitals, which are experiencing unprecedented demand, and to free up space and enable the expansion of acute services within those campuses. I am referring to things like the new walk-in centres in Belconnen and Tuggeranong, the new subacute hospital, the University of Canberra Public Hospital and also some of the services that will open at the Belconnen enhanced community health centre next year, which will provide people with access for the first time to renal dialysis closer to where they live on the north side of Canberra. That will be a big change and ease some of the pressure for renal dialysis services at the Canberra Hospital.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Gentleman.

MR GENTLEMAN: Chief Minister, how will the commitments that you have made to invest in health infrastructure support your vision for a modern and sustainable health system?

MS GALLAGHER: The health infrastructure program is a complete overhaul of the way that we have been providing health services and it is a long-term project. It is not necessarily going to deliver the changes we would like to see across the health system immediately, but what it does is create the capacity within the system and support new models of care as they are provided, particularly in the community, with things like

Belconnen enhanced community health centre being able to provide more acute type care within the community-based setting. So this is work that has started. We have invested \$650 million towards the health infrastructure program. We have also made some commitments around the next four years, and those include things like walk-in centres, the University of Canberra Public Hospital, the birth centre car park and new wards and facilities to house the additional beds.

The major projects currently underway include the community health centres, the women's and children's hospital stage 2 and the cancer centre. These will significantly improve the facilities available to patients. Indeed the surveyors on the accreditation visit that I talked about in the adjournment debate last night visited the new facilities that are across the health system, including the community health centre in Gungahlin and the new services at Canberra Hospital, and the view of the surveyors, who do this as part of their careers, was that the facilities available to people in Canberra were, in their words, simply stunning.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Chief Minister, how will the collaborations you are pursuing between education and health benefit the health system over the next four years?

MS GALLAGHER: A very important part of our election commitments was the link between health and education and the capacity to support education through the investments that we are making in the health system. Obviously the University of Canberra public hospital is a real partnership which will cement the University of Canberra as a regional health university of excellence. Not only will it create bed capacity for subacute care; it will also ensure that the University of Canberra is able to market itself as a hospital university. It will be able to market that overseas to students. It will be able to train many of our new health professionals and provide a pool of graduates to work across the health system. And it will be able to foster research within the ACT, which is all very much in line with our desire to grow the education side of our economy.

With the partnerships that we have put in place with ANU, if they make provision for some extra funding to go into cancer research at the John Curtin School of Medical Research, we would agree to fund a centenary chair in cancer research at the ANU. Again, the potential of that is to bring a world-leading expert in cancer right here to the ANU, who would then have access to our regional cancer centre. The fact is that it provides services to the region, to the patients coming in there and, importantly, for our clinicians, our junior clinicians, it provides access to potentially a world-leading researcher, to be part of that world-leading research.

We think these are sensible, modest investments that we have to do anyway in terms of the University of Canberra public hospital. Providing that connection with the university will bring a lot of benefit to the local economy, to the university and to the health system as a whole.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Minister, how can we believe any of your assurances about health infrastructure given the appalling track record of this government, including the fiasco of the Canberra Hospital car park, the women's and children's hospital that is so over budget and running so late, the secure mental health facility that is seven years late and you do not even know what it is going to be and when and how it is going to be delivered, the adolescent mental health facility which, again, you do not understand how that is going to be delivered after four years, and the many other health projects? How can we be assured you will deliver the project on time and on budget?

MS GALLAGHER: I take your guidance on this, Madam Speaker, but I understood supplementaries were not to have preambles attached to them.

MADAM SPEAKER: I did not hear a preamble from Mr Hanson.

MS GALLAGHER: Right.

MADAM SPEAKER: I think he began his sentence with an interrogative pronoun.

MS GALLAGHER: That is an interesting interpretation of the preamble, but I take your view on that, and we will use the same with our supplementaries, Madam Speaker.

It goes to question time yesterday: it is difficult to answer a question that you just do not agree with. I have been reforming this health system and investing in infrastructure at record levels that no other health minister has been able to achieve in the ACT. We are systematically—

Mr Smyth: You're right—the lowest outcomes for the country.

MS GALLAGHER: There you go; talk down the health system. Never miss an opportunity to talk down the excellent health system that we have in the ACT. We have an excellent health system. We are building excellent buildings. Yes, we have changed the scope of some of the projects to make sure they deliver what we want them to deliver. I am proud of the investments we are making in health infrastructure, and I am proud of the fact that we won the election and we have got four more years to build the infrastructure that this city needs, and you, Mr Hanson, can sit there and carry on from the opposition benches.

Government—ministerial and crossbench staff

MR SMYTH: My question is to the Minister for Territory and Municipal Services. Minister, I refer to appendix 2, dot point 4 of the Greens-Labor agreement which states:

Cabinet documents are only to be provided to Ministerial staff in accordance with the Cabinet handbook. The Cabinet handbook is to be adhered to at all times by all Ministerial staff.

Minister, how will you determine which of your staff are ministerial and which are crossbench staff?

MR RATTENBURY: That is not a delineation that has been drawn clearly in my office. My staff have a range of responsibilities. I think in my discussions with the Chief Minister I have indicated it would be arbitrary and artificial to draw distinctions. Those staff who do have to work with ministerial documents have clear training and that training is being arranged. They will have clear guidance on what the protocols are, as all the rest of the staff who work for ministers do. So I will expect staff who work for me to follow exactly the same guidelines that apply to all ministerial staff.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Minister, how will you ensure that your crossbench staff are kept separate from your ministerial staff on matters of cabinet confidentiality?

MR RATTENBURY: As I indicated in my previous answer, my staff will be trained in the protocols that are applicable to all staff that work for ministers.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Minister, how will your staff be expected to behave on matters you have considered but then refused to support with regard to cabinet?

MR RATTENBURY: I am unclear of the purpose of the question. As I have indicated, the staff will be trained and expected to adhere to protocols that all ministerial staff do. In matters where I have participated in the cabinet discussion and, under the agreement, have indicated to the ALP that I intend to take a different view and I do not agree with the decision of the other members of cabinet, obviously there will be a necessity for both me and my staff to not use in any inappropriate way information that we have had access to. That would be a breach of the cabinet handbook.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Minister, will your staff, including your staff working on your crossbench issues, be also required to assist in some ministerial duties and, if so, how can they do that without breaching cabinet handbook guidelines?

MR RATTENBURY: As I indicated in my very first answer to Mr Smyth, I certainly do not intend to draw arbitrary lines. Certainly in this place the Greens have a significant track record of using information in an appropriate manner. That is a track record we intend to build on. As I have also previously indicated, the usual protocols will be applied to my staff that apply to all staff.

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

Roads—network

MR COE (Ginninderra) (3.43): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that the:

- (a) vast majority of Canberrans depend on cars as their primary mode of transport;
- (b) ACT government has failed to maintain and improve the road network in pace with Canberra's growing population;
- (c) Canberra Liberals announced plans to:
 - (i) bring the total roads capital works budget to \$700 million;
 - (ii) fund the duplication of William Slim, Athllon and Horse Park Drives;
 - (iii) enhance the street sweeping program;
 - (iv) install flashing lights in school zones; and
 - (v) provide thousands more parking spaces; and

(2) calls on the ACT government to improve Canberra's road network by implementing the Canberra Liberals' policies.

The vast majority of Canberrans depend on private vehicles, cars, for their primary mode of transport. This is a fact of which the ACT Labor-Greens government are in denial. They have failed to comprehend that for most Canberrans, by every survey, every indicator, every anecdote, there is just not a genuine alternative to driving cars.

The Canberra Liberals accept that most people who drive in Canberra do not do so because they are going for joyrides or because they enjoy spending money on their vehicles. They use their cars as a way of facilitating their complex lives. People drive from home to work via school, childcare, shops, the post office or other intermediaries. Public transport does not meet this demand. Whilst we could try to pretend that buses or even light rail could facilitate this, I think it is not reasonable to think that, for most Canberrans, public transport in Canberra will be a substitute.

As part of the agreement with the Greens, the Labor Party has committed to spending billions on light rail to serve just parts of North Canberra. Light rail is not going to help residents of Belconnen, South Canberra, Woden, Weston Creek, Tuggeranong, or neighbours in Queanbeyan, Jerrabomberra, Murrumbateman, Yass and others. The government is spending money on the ideological crusade without fully understanding the cost benefits of such a scheme, nor how much taxpayers are going to have to spend to prop up this regime.

As stated in the motion on the notice paper, the government has failed to maintain and improve the road network in pace with Canberra's growing population. Now that the government has expanded to include Mr Rattenbury, a red-green coalition government, the centre of gravity in the government is moving even more to the left, even more against families using their cars, putting even more pressure on the cost of living.

All members of this place, especially those on this side of the chamber, remember the travesty of the GDE and the government's woeful and irresponsible management of the associated works. Whether it was the fact that it took more than a decade, the cost skyrocketed from \$53 million to \$200 million, the ridiculous single lane—the grade separated road that was single lane—the road that was inadequate on day one, the bridge collapse, the poor quality pavement, the misleading signs at Glenloch Interchange, the insufficient slip lanes onto Parkes Way, the botched speed limits and more, the GDE was iconic of this government's failure to manage our city's infrastructure and to design roads to keep pace with our city's growth.

The Canberra Liberals announced policies that would help alleviate some of the chokepoints and overall deteriorating conditions of the territory's road network. Included in the suite of policies we took to the election was a commitment that a Canberra Liberal government would inject an extra \$125 million to fast-track and upgrade Canberra's roads, bringing the total roads capital works budget to \$700 million. We unashamedly want to reduce travel times, relieve congestion and improve safety.

As Mr Seselja said back in September, we make no apology for committing more money to roads and to upgrading our roads before they become too congested. Much of the focus would be in Gungahlin, the fastest growing part of Canberra, and Tuggeranong, the most neglected part over the past decade.

ACT Labor's short-term thinking on infrastructure has left Canberrans not only footing the bill for their budget blowouts but also having to cope with inadequate road infrastructure. The ACT Labor government continues to apply an outdated, scattergun approach to infrastructure delivery, and Canberrans are left with poorly planned, late and over-budget roads as a consequence.

The Canberra Liberals understand the importance of proper planning and would ensure road infrastructure is done properly from the start by engaging what we proposed, the infrastructure Canberra commissioner, backed by an industry board. I was very proud to be part of policies to duplicate three critical single-lane roads that carry thousands of Canberrans every day. The duplication of William Slim Drive in Belconnen, Horse Park Drive in Gungahlin and Athllon Drive in Tuggeranong would all improve travel times, leading to greater productivity and therefore improving the quality of lives for Canberrans.

The different approaches to road policy are stark. The Canberra Liberals support motorists and accept cars as a part of life in the nation's capital. The Labor-Greens government think that cars are bad and people should feel guilty for driving them.

The Canberra Liberals were also extremely proud to announce that we would enhance the street sweeping program, a service so many people in Canberra think should be a core function of a local government. In my years in this place, basic municipal services such as grass mowing, graffiti removal and street sweeping are amongst the most frequent concerns raised with me as a local member. The government has let down the electors of the ACT and has failed to deliver better local services in exchange for the increasing rates revenue they are collecting off the captive taxation base.

On 30 May Mr Seselja and I announced that the Canberra Liberals would install school zone speed lights at every ACT school, if elected. Such signs are a simple way of reminding drivers to slow down in school zones and are effective in other states. As a result of Mr Rattenbury's decision to join the Labor government, this policy will not be enacted and Canberra's school zones will not be as safe as they should be. As the new Minister for Territory and Municipal Services, I hope he will accept that this is good policy and, as part 2 of the motion states, "improve Canberra's road network by implementing the Canberra Liberals' policies".

Let me remind the Assembly of what some notable people have said about the installation of flashing lights in school zones. The New South Wales Commissioner for Children and Young People, Ms Vanessa Whittington, said:

... the Commission believes every school in New South Wales should have a flashing light warning system in place so that all children enjoy the same level of protection. The Commission supports the Auditor-General's recommendation to improve the visibility of school zones by increasing the use of flashing light warning systems and fitting flashing lights at all school zones with non-standard operating times.

Mrs Kelly MacDonald from the Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations of New South Wales said:

Flashing lights remind drivers of the presence of a school in the area and therefore the presence of students as pedestrians. It is unfortunate that drivers can sometimes choose to ignore road signs around schools especially when trials have shown that drivers reduce speeds significantly when flashing lights operate.

Our policy would have complemented existing policing, community awareness and school-specific measures aimed at combating speeding and other road safety issues.

Finally, the motion I move today calls for the Labor-Greens government to implement our policy to provide thousands more car parking spaces across the ACT. As the member for Ginninderra, I was proud to be part of an announcement to provide hundreds more car parks in Belconnen, including 500 new car parks in the town centre over and above natural growth, and 100 spaces at Calvary hospital. We also committed to more spots at Erindale and elsewhere in the ACT.

The Canberra Liberals are proud of the policies we took to the election, and we were pleased to receive much positive feedback about our plans. The options we put

forward are sensible, affordable, realistic and will make a significant difference to transport in Canberra. I ask those opposite to support the motion and implement our plans for a better Canberra.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo—Minister for Territory and Municipal Services, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Housing, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs and Minister for Ageing) (3.51): I thank Mr Coe for bringing this motion to the Assembly, and I recognise his intent interest in cars, roads and parking.

As the portfolio minister with responsibility in this area, I can say that the government will not support this motion today. It is simply not reasonable that we agree to implement a list of Liberal Party election announcements presented through a vague motion in the Assembly.

Investing of public funds and the associated decision making should always be transparent and be supported by credible information. Both I and the government recognise the importance of developing and maintaining the road network, but it needs to be seen in the context of the overall integrated transport solution for Canberra.

Road upgrades need to be considered in the broader planning context of Canberra and the type of city we need to build for the future. Members who observed the Assembly over the last four years will know that, as a Green, my interest lies in building a Canberra that is sustainable, equitable and resilient to future challenges. We need to be mindful of the challenges of climate change, constrained oil supply, growing congestion, cost pressures and maintaining social inclusion for all of Canberra's citizens.

I am fortunate that this is an area where I share a lot of common ground with the Labor Party, and together as a government we share a positive transport vision for Canberra. The government has expressed this vision through its transport for Canberra plan, a plan that calls for substantial investment in public transport and a strong mode shift away from private car use towards public transport, cycling and walking.

The parliamentary agreement between the Greens and Labor sets out a strong agenda to help achieve this. It provides for significant new investment in our bus services, new park-and-ride facilities, an increased focus on walking and cycling and, of course, the long-awaited start to a Canberra light rail network. I might clarify at this point for Mr Coe's benefit that that is a start to the light rail network. He suggested that billions would be spent on light rail just to service north Canberra. In fact, the most recent cost estimate is \$614 million, well short of "billions", and certainly the intent is to expand the network across parts of Canberra that Mr Coe referred to in his speech.

Of course, we cannot do it all in one go, but what I can say is that in this term of the Assembly we are committed to getting a start to that network. We are certainly building it in the most pressured corridor in the ACT, but certainly I see it continuing to other parts of Canberra once we get that first stage finished. Of course, these things are constructed in stages.

We should not underestimate the positive impact these investments will have on the road network and on Canberrans who travel by car. They are an essential response to preventing congestion in the future, to increasing social inclusion and even lowering the cost of living. Transport costs are now the second highest cost for Canberra households, primarily because of the high costs of running a car.

We can learn lessons from a city like Los Angeles, a city that is notorious for its car dependence. Los Angeles is now fighting to grow its public transport system as rapidly as possible. A few years ago its citizens voted to approve a sales tax increase to pay for public transport improvements, including light rail extensions. This is in recognition of the myriad problems that have evolved from car dependence.

We will not create a successful and sustainable city by pursuing a transport system dominated by car use. I encourage Mr Coe to take an interest in sustainable modes of transport, as they are the modes of transport we want to rapidly grow in our city. Compared to other capitals in Australia, we already have some of the highest rates of car ownership, car kilometres per capita and the lowest public transport use.

I will turn to some of the specific items in Mr Coe's motion. Firstly, I disagree with Mr Coe's assertion that the ACT has failed to maintain and improve its road network. In its annual report for 2011-12, the ACT government reported that some 88 per cent of its road network has been assessed as in good condition. Canberra roads and traffic are widely regarded as some of the best in the nation. The Independent Engineers Australia report card awarded the ACT's road network a B. This is the highest rating of all our infrastructure categories. It is also the highest mark of any Australian jurisdiction.

The ACT government has progressed a very substantial road upgrade program in recent years, and members may remember supportive comments from the NRMA regarding the record road spending in successive government budgets.

One of the upgrades that the government is already progressing is the upgrade of William Slim Drive between the Barton Highway and Ginninderra Drive. It has already been subject to project development over the last two years. Forward design funds of \$1 million were allocated to the design of a duplicated road between the Barton Highway and Ginninderra Drive as part of the 2012-13 budget process. William Slim Drive is one of a number of roads under consideration for inclusion in the 2013-14 capital works program.

Regarding Horse Park Drive, it carries an average of about 15,000 vehicles a day, meaning it is not the highest priority for an upgrade. Members may be aware that the recognised trigger to consider a road upgrade of a single lane main road is when it carries in excess of 18,000 vehicles a day. However, Horse Park Drive remains an upgrade that is under active assessment and consideration in recognition of the growth of further suburbs in Gungahlin.

The duplication of Athllon Drive between Drakeford Drive and Sulwood Drive is not currently on the directorate's program for upgrade. However, it too is being watched closely. This section of road carries on average about 14,000 vehicles a day.

The focus in Tuggeranong at the moment is on upgrading Ashley Drive, which carries in excess of 18,000 vehicles. The ACT government has funded \$7 million for the first stage of its duplication and a further \$19.6 million over the term of this Assembly to construct the second stage.

On the issue of street sweeping, the ACT already has a comprehensive program of street sweeping which means every street is swept a minimum of twice per year. This resulted in approximately 17,600 kilometres of streets being swept in 2011-12 and the removal of some 14,000 cubic metres of debris from ACT streets. I understand Mr Coe's interest in this area as street sweeping contributes to the look and feel of Canberra. It is also important for keeping paths free of glass and other obstacles.

Currently TAMS allows members of the public to report isolated debris on road shoulders and cycle paths, and these will be cleaned within three working days of the report. I appreciate that Mr Coe wants to enhance street sweeping and that he has asked for the street sweeping program to be made public. This is already on the TAMS website, so I encourage Mr Coe to help distribute it to his constituents, perhaps along with the TAMS mowing program, which is also available on the website, and I know he has taken a significant interest in that as well. I note that currently 83 per cent of residents who responded to the most recent TAMS customer service survey were satisfied with the existing street sweeping program.

For the interest of the Assembly's new members, Mr Coe tabled a motion just before the election that was about the installation of flashing lights at schools, and he has spoken to it at some length again today. The ACT government does not support the blanket introduction of these flashing lights at schools. Safety at schools is absolutely a key issue. Certainly it is something the Greens have pursued, and it featured strongly in the active transport plan that my former colleague Caroline Le Couteur released in 2009.

The reality is that it is not the best approach to simply adopt a blanket treatment implemented in New South Wales and apply it to the ACT. It does not necessarily guarantee any better or safer outcomes. Traffic conditions around schools are different in New South Wales. Many schools are on or near major arterial roads. ACT schools are generally located within residential areas and clear of major roads but for a few exceptions. Hence, our schools do not generally affect major or high-volume traffic routes.

ACT school zones operate between 8 am and 4 pm on school days. This is again different than in New South Wales where the zones generally operate between 8.30 and 9.30 in the morning and then 2.30 to 4 pm in the afternoons. The all-day performance and safety record is one of the features of the ACT system and, on the basis of this, the ACT government has no plans to change the current policy.

I am perfectly happy to look at targeted locations where installing lights will have merit. TAMS is currently considering the circumstances where flashing lights will assist road safety in the vicinity of schools or other areas of high levels of pedestrian activity, such as pedestrian crossings in town or group centres.

As I have said, the government is not supporting this motion, but that does not mean it will never undertake the projects listed in the motion. Indeed, as I have said, we are already working on the duplication of William Slim Drive. Other projects are under consideration, and we are looking at installing flashing lights at targeted locations. But it would be quite irresponsible to agree to these major measures via this motion in the Assembly, particularly one that I do not believe the Liberal Party has properly thought through. For example, the Liberal Party does not even know the cost of the major road duplications that it is requesting. I note that Treasury was unable to cost these road duplications when the Canberra Liberals promised them during the election because the Liberals provided insufficient detail. Of the Liberals' roads promises Treasury said:

Treasury notes no specific projects have been identified, and as such, Treasury is unable to confirm the reasonableness of capital costs to deliver particular projects.

How much would these duplications cost the ACT budget? How much would they cost ACT taxpayers? Would the Liberal Party just agree to taking a mystery amount of funds from the budget regardless of how that would impact on other areas that need funding or the budget's bottom line?

The item in the motion calling for the government to "provide thousands more parking spaces" is also poorly considered. It appears to be a rather lazy addition to the motion. Where would these thousands of extra car parking spaces go? How much would they cost? What impact would they have on the broader planning of our urban environments? This is not covered in the election promises put forward by the Liberals, at least the ones submitted to Treasury, and they are the ones that I treat with some seriousness. Those promises submitted to Treasury refer only to 32 new parking spaces in Erindale and a \$250,000 study about parking.

What we need is a sensible, considered approach to parking that takes into account all the ways that parking can impact on our city and its citizens. These include impacts that are not always obvious and are far-reaching, such as the long-term transport patterns of our city and the inclusion of people with a disability, older people and people who cannot drive. No thoughtful policymaker will agree that the community will benefit if we just unthinkingly increase the amount of parking without considering the way this shapes the city in the future.

We should remember, for example, that there is around a 25 to 30 per cent vacancy rate of the car parking across Canberra's town centres. These figures have just been gathered through a 2012 parking survey. This is a sensible way to approach changes to Canberra car parking. We should also remember that there are significant public transport improvements in the pipeline, such as more bus services, bus priority lanes, light rail, and park and rides. These are the kinds of measures that will help alleviate parking pressure.

In conclusion, while we will not support this motion, the government are taking a sensible approach to the road network. There are various upgrades in the pipeline and

others under consideration, including some of the items flagged in the motion. My intention is to take informed decisions on roads and other transport matters that will produce good outcomes for the ACT community, for the environment and for business. This will be guided by a sensible and sustainable approach to the long-term development of Canberra and the relevant technical information that confirms the need and the measures required to achieve these outcomes.

MRS JONES (Molonglo) (4.04): I rise today to speak in support of Mr Coe's motion calling on the government to improve roads in this city and, in my view, particularly in our city's north. People who spend their life savings on a new home in Gungahlin deserve to be able to get to work in a reasonable time frame. The current state of two roads in particular in our city's north needs attention. Despite new suburbs on either side not yet being even completed, Horse Park Drive is only one lane in either direction, and residents who have paid top dollar for new houses in Amaroo, Forde and now Bonner are moving at a snail's pace every morning and every evening.

We live in the capital city of our nation. We expect a high quality of roads in our city, and I think this is reasonable. But it seems that, under this government, no road is ever built wide enough and it is not until the road is at breaking point and the people are extremely frustrated that, finally and reluctantly, this government makes an effort to improve the road. A main road that runs between major suburbs is not a luxury; it is a vital basic service, as are local shops, schools, parks, electricity provision, water provision and sewerage services.

You will be pleased to know I was studying up on Roman roads the other day and I learned that the road was made with a metallised surface constructed for the infantry to walk along while earthen bridle paths were provided so that the horsemen could ride along the side of these tracks. It seems to have been the inspiration for the construction of the aptly named Horse Park Drive, where the only people who seem to be able to move along in peak hour are motorcycle riders who ride along the verge beside the road. And that is not to mention Gundaroo Drive, which for over a decade now has been gridlocked nearly all day.

Having doorknocked very large swathes of Gungahlin during the recent election campaign, I can inform the Assembly that there is a great deal of frustration with a government which levies a high tax for service provision only to fail to deliver the basic services of proper main roads. It is like beer service on a champagne budget. I think the good people of Gungahlin have better things to do than to sit in their cars morning after morning, evening after evening on Roman-inspired, clearly inadequate roads.

Mr Rattenbury referred to a need for sensible and considered plans to improve such facilities. How did we get to this point where the roads are gridlocked before a plan has been developed to provide adequate roads? It is no longer good enough to say that Gungahlin is a new area. There are children who have been born, have grown up and have left home in Gungahlin and still the roads are inadequate. It is about time the government did something about it.

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella) (4:07): Can I thank Mr Coe for this motion today. I join in his interest in roads, transport and infrastructure in the ACT, particularly sustainable infrastructure and sustainable transport systems. It does fall a little into my bailiwick, in that for the past two years, of course, I was the executive director of the Motor Trades Association.

I thought I might share with those in the Assembly today some statistics on motor vehicles in the ACT. Currently the ABS stats tell us that we have 370,000 people that reside in Canberra. We had, according to the ACT motor vehicle registry, in 2011 310,000 registered motor vehicles. Of course, the city was designed by Walter Burley Griffin for 30,000 people, not 370,000. So that figure of 310,000 registered motor vehicles breaks down to one registered motor vehicle for every person of driving age and over. It is increasing at the same rate as our population growth, that is, two per cent per annum according to ABS stats. That is a possible extra 6,000 registered motor vehicles on the road every year. It is great for MTA members, of course, because that keeps their businesses going, but it is hardly sustainable for Canberra.

The development of the road network is very important. However, it needs to be seen in the context, as I have said, of an overall integrated transport solution for Canberra. This solution will involve not only road upgrades but sustainable investment in public transport services and infrastructure improvement, including light rail and, of course, more investment in walking and cycling.

If we look at the government's transport for Canberra policy, we will see that it sets a strategic direction for informing the delivery and prioritisation of transport infrastructure, programs and services across the territory. It also includes measures to manage travel and parking demand in the most efficient and cost-effective way for the Canberra community. These initiatives are vital to respond to the challenges of air quality, congestion and greenhouse gas emissions.

In terms of the road network, transport for Canberra establishes an orbital ring road network, with the efficient movement of traffic and freight being the main priority. A key missing connection in the network is the Majura Parkway. This \$288 million road link, jointly funded with the Australian government, will be a new 11.5 kilometre road connection that will link the Federal Highway to the Monaro Highway. It will provide a high-standard, four-lane route servicing freight, tourism, locals and interstate visitors.

Members will be aware that the contract for construction of this project has been let to the company Fulton Hogan. The company is gearing up and I expect that Canberrans will see work start on this site, on this essential piece of road infrastructure, in the very near future.

The orbital road network is complemented by, and works in tandem with, the rapid public transport corridors, where we aim to prioritise public transport in order to manage traffic and travel demand most efficiently. On these rapid transit corridors we use measures like bus priority lanes, transitways or, for the Gungahlin to city corridor, light rail, to ensure that as many people as possible can use public transport rather

than private vehicles for their commute. This efficient way of managing travel is demonstrated by the Flemington Road transit lane, where buses constitute around 1.8 per cent of vehicles but carry nearly half of all persons in the corridor in that morning peak. Members will also be aware of work along Barry Drive which will also deliver a high-standard, dedicated bus facility for public transport users in the highly patronised route from Belconnen to the city.

Transport for Canberra also establishes mode sharing targets to encourage more people to walk, cycle or catch the bus to work. Transport modelling for the policy demonstrates that, by 2031, meeting these mode share targets will allow us to maintain congestion at 2012 levels, despite significant population growth over this 20-year period that I have mentioned.

The motion requests additional parking spaces. Let us have a brief look at the current status of parking in Canberra. There are already a considerable number of vacant parking spaces in the city centre and various town centres. The preliminary results from a 2012 parking survey provide some key data in relation to the supply of car parking spaces, as well as demand and occupancy information.

The following figures for occupancy or demand for parking at the major centres show some interesting results. Canberra city had around 27 per cent of its public and privately run parking unoccupied during the mid-morning survey period, and the figures for the other town centres were also around this figure, 26 per cent in Belconnen, 38 per cent in Gungahlin, 29 per cent in the Tuggeranong town centre. Woden had around 27 per cent unoccupied public and private spaces, and Barton-Parkes had around 16 per cent.

Preliminary figures from the 2012 parking survey indicate the following supply figures for the major centres: Canberra city had around 25,600 public and private spaces, with almost 7,000 spaces available during the mid-morning survey period; Belconnen had around 13,200 public and private spaces, with almost 3,500 spaces available during the mid-morning survey period; Gungahlin had 3,200 public and private spaces, with more than 1,200 spaces available during that period; Tuggeranong had around 10,300 public and private spaces, with almost 3,000 spaces available during the mid-morning survey period; Woden had 10,800 public and private spaces, with almost 3,000 spaces available during the mid-morning survey period; Barton-Parkes had around 14,900 public and private spaces, with over 2,300 spaces available during that morning survey period.

These preliminary figures show that there is a significant spare capacity in all centres, noting of course that midday parking demand is generally higher than the mid-morning figures show, but still within capacity. If the purpose of constructing thousands of additional car spaces is to address a shortfall in parking supply, these figures clearly show that there is no shortfall.

Government car parks in the city and town centres are generally on land that is earmarked for future development; so constructing additional car parks on this prime land may undervalue or delay its potential return to the government in the form of land sales. This forgone revenue, combined with the costs of constructing and

maintaining new car parks, means that building thousands of extra car parks is unlikely to be the most economically or financially feasible way of managing parking demand in Canberra.

In summary, development of Canberra's transport system needs to be seen as an integrated package of investments covering all transport modes, not only roads but public transport, both buses and light rail, walking and cycling. A balanced investment in all modes will lead us to a more healthy and sustainable future.

MR WALL (Brindabella) (4.15): I rise today to speak in favour of this motion put by Mr Coe. Many residents in my electorate of Brindabella raised serious concerns about the quality of the roads in the ACT during the recent territory election campaign. One road in particular that plays a crucial role in the electorate of Brindabella is Athllon Drive. Failing to duplicate the section between Drakeford and Sulwood drives is a serious overlooking of the amount of traffic that that road carries. One of the Liberal polices was always to duplicate that road. All Labor took to the election was a point-to-point speed camera for the residents of Tuggeranong along the same stretch.

Ms Burch: You forgot about Ashley Drive.

MR WALL: Athllon Drive.

Ms Burch: No, but we are going to duplicate Ashley Drive.

MR WALL: You are going to duplicate Ashley Drive, and it is very much appreciated that Ashley Drive is being looked at, although I do recognise that work is still yet to commence on that project.

Streets in local suburbs are also unsafe. Ones that are no stranger to members of this place are Coyne Street and Clift Crescent in Tuggeranong. Those roads, I believe, are in the process of being assessed but other streets which were consistently raised with me included the section of Tharwa Drive along Mentone View and Paperback and Forsythe streets in Banks.

Mr Rattenbury alluded to the department already having a comprehensive street sweeping program. A local constituent of mine in Gowrie has had to take to sweeping the street himself in order to clear leaf litter and prevent water inundation during storms, because of the government's lack of consistency in heading through smaller suburban streets to clean the streets. I believe it is a very important issue to have addressed.

I believe that the motion should be agreed to and that the extra funding for roads and additional car parking spaces is also essential. Residents of Erindale struggle on a daily basis, particularly along the Gartside Street segment, to find parking. Peak times are the worst time along that stretch, and the Liberals' policy for additional kerbside parking would certainly remedy this issue.

MR SESELJA (Brindabella—Leader of the Opposition) (4.18): I thank Mr Coe for bringing this motion forward. It is a core responsibility of government, certainly a

core responsibility of an ACT government. Both local roads and major arterials are critical to the liveability of Canberra.

One of the wonderful things about Canberra has been its road network. I think there is no doubt that we inherited a very good road network upon self-government. In 1989, I think you would argue that we had, for a city in Australia, about the best road network in the country. I think that we have come back to the field significantly, unfortunately, over the last 20-odd years. We have seen that particularly in the last decade or so where there really has been very little in the way of improvement and, where it has occurred, it has been painstakingly slow, as we know with places like Gungahlin Drive—a decade to build 10 kilometres or so of road.

The Canberra Liberals do believe that there should be greater investment in roads. We should not be waiting. The people of Tuggeranong, whom I represent, along with the people of south Woden, have not seen many upgrades to their roads in recent years. They have been neglected.

We know that Gungahlin has suffered, and that was one of the reasons the Canberra Liberals had a plan to duplicate Horse Park Drive. That is critical, I think, along with places like William Slim Drive. To duplicate Horse Park Drive is a critical component as Gungahlin grows.

But likewise, even though Tuggeranong has not been growing in recent years, we have still seen pressures on its road network. We have still seen some big gaps. In fact, even though Tuggeranong has not been growing, we know that the eastern corridor over the border has been growing, and that is putting pressure on the Monaro Highway. Anyone who regularly uses the Monaro Highway knows that that is a road that is starting to suffer from a reasonable amount of congestion.

So it is up to the government now to be planning, not to be waiting until the congestion becomes unbearable. Places like Athllon Drive do need to be duplicated. Athllon Drive is not just important for car users, it is important for public transport users. It is a very important link between two town centres. So Athllon Drive does need to be upgraded. Yes, Ashley Drive indeed does, and the government should get on with that. Anyone who experiences delays around there of a morning knows the importance of that. But we do need to be planning for the future.

I think that as we look to the future it will be, certainly for the people of Tuggeranong, the Monaro Highway. It is going to be one of the critical ones; likewise the Tuggeranong Parkway. As we see the Molonglo valley come online, there is going to be more and more stress on the western side and the western road network and the south-western road network for the people of Tuggeranong, for the people of Weston Creek, for the people of the Molonglo valley.

The Canberra Liberals fundamentally believe in proper planning when it comes to these issues. Infrastructure reforms are important. Something like infrastructure Canberra is a really important policy, and if it was not for the fact that the Canberra Liberals had proposed this policy I suspect the Labor Party would have adopted it by now, because it is compelling policy. It is good policy. It is the sort of policy that

improves people's lives. It is the sort of policy that ensures we do not wait until the last minute to get the road upgrades that we need and to get the infrastructure upgrades that we need.

I do commend Mr Coe for bringing this motion forward. Mr Coe, of course, has been a great advocate for better local services, a great advocate for the people of Ginninderra. He has served very well in that and he is doing a great job as a shadow minister. So I commend him for his work, for his commitment to local services and for this motion today.

MR COE (Ginninderra) (4.22), in reply: Mr Rattenbury said earlier that it was lucky that he was the minister responsible for roads and that his views conveniently tied in with those of the Labor Party. Some may call it lucky; others may say it is because they come from the same ideological perspective, and that perspective is, as I said earlier, a perspective whereby they want people to feel guilty about driving their cars. They want people to not enjoy a high quality of life. They want people to pay more, to surrender more to the state. They want, in effect, more central control, and with Mr Rattenbury as the minister for roads, in amongst the Territory and Municipal Services portfolio, that is exactly what that ideology is going to get.

At the start he said it was a vague motion and then later on said he would address the specifics of it. It just goes to show how erratic this minister is and how inconsistent his decisions are going to be over the coming years—or however long the sham coalition lasts.

It is quite specific what we are proposing in paragraph (1) of the motion—so specific that he in fact addressed each of the specific points in his speech and then went on to say that we did not cost it. Yet for each of them he said the government was working on it. So it seems to me that we have yet another politically motivated speech from Mr Rattenbury, the same sort of speech we got from any Labor member or any Greens member in the previous Assembly, which goes to show that there is no substance; it is all about party politics, and in actual fact the alliance we have today is as close as it could possibly get.

Mr Gentleman chimed into the debate by saying that parking is really not an issue in the ACT and that anybody in Canberra who thinks that parking is an issue is wrong. He went on to say how many spots are vacant. Well, tell that to anybody who drives to Barton each day for work. Tell anybody who has a meeting in Barton during the day that parking is plentiful in and around the parliamentary triangle. Try going to Cooleman Court on a Saturday or Sunday morning. Try going to Jamison on a Saturday or Sunday morning. Try going to Gungahlin on a Saturday morning. It goes on and on.

The fact is that the provision of parking spaces, like the other services that are mentioned in this motion, are core services for a local government, and if this government, including the new Greens member, did not get sidetracked with issues of little or no consequence for the vast majority of Canberrans but got on with the core business of running our city we might actually have some solutions to the problems which are posed to members of this place on a daily basis through telephone calls, through emails, solicited by doorknocking or at shopping centres.

These are all real issues. They should not be discounted by Mr Rattenbury or discounted by Mr Gentleman. These are real issues that need to be addressed by a government that is serious about concentrating on core local services.

Mr Rattenbury also addressed the benefits of the light rail network. If he honestly thinks that the light rail network is going to take a significant number of cars off the road between Gungahlin and the city, I think he is having himself on. How many people are actually going to live within walking distance of a light rail stop, a light rail station?

If the light rail gets built, it goes from Gungahlin Marketplace down Flemington and then straight down Northbourne. That is not going to do much for people who live in Palmerston. It is not going to do much for people who live in Nicholls. It is not going to do much for people who are in Ngunnawal or in Casey or in Amaroo or in Forde—it goes on and on and on.

The fact is that this is all about an ideological crusade. It has got nothing to do with improving services for the people of north Canberra, the ACT—or Gungahlin residents, who are supposedly the beneficiary of this scheme.

Mr Rattenbury says he is more interested in sustainable modes of transport. Let us not forget that this is a government that is spending \$123 million a year on buses that only eight per cent of Canberrans use. As I have said many times before in this place, I believe that of that eight per cent that are using buses many are doing so because they have to, not because they want to. This government has an obligation to improve the bus system, not to simply spend more money willy-nilly. It has to spend that money properly. There is nothing sustainable about a public transport system whereby it costs \$47,000 every single day for empty buses to travel 17,000 kilometres every single day.

To put that in perspective, under this regime you have got empty buses going 100,000 kilometres every weekday or five million kilometres a year. It is absolutely staggering. And, rather than actually trying to fix the bus network, we have Mr Rattenbury on his ideological crusade to spend more money on another issue, without fixing the existing infrastructure, without delivering upon the existing services which are so substandard at the moment. As Mr Hargreaves once said in this place, with light rail you run the risk of replacing the most profitable and best aspects of the bus system with an unprofitable and inefficient light rail system. That is what this government is embarking on.

Yes, there is merit in looking into light rail, but we think there is a lot of merit in looking into it before committing billions of dollars of taxpayers' money. This government has gone for an ideological crusade rather than a tangible solution for the people that elected it.

I do hope that the Labor government implements our policies. We think there is much capital expenditure that needs to be spent appropriately, including on William Slim, Athllon and Horse Park drives. We do believe that the street sweeping program

should be enhanced. We do believe that flashing lights should be installed in school zones and we do believe, despite Mr Gentleman's thinking, that we should have more parking spaces in and around the ACT.

I urge those opposite to implement the ACT Liberal Party's policies.

Question put:

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

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 7		Noes 8	
Mr Coe	Mrs Jones	Mr Barr	Ms Gallagher
Mr Doszpot	Mr Smyth	Ms Berry	Mr Gentleman
Mrs Dunne	Mr Wall	Dr Bourke	Ms Porter
Mr Hanson		Ms Burch	Mr Rattenbury

Question so resolved in the negative.

Motion negatived.

Centenary Hospital for Women and Children—maternity services

MR HANSON (Molonglo) (4.34): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) that on 15 November 2012 the Minister for Health commissioned a review into maternity services at the Centenary Hospital due to concerns women are being pressured to leave just six hours after giving birth;
- (b) that the announcement of this review follows:
 - (i) repeated warnings from the Australian Nursing Federation that the model of care at the hospital is flawed;
 - (ii) warnings from doctors that capacity issues at the hospital may compromise patient safety;
 - (iii) construction delays of approximately 18 months to date with the hospital yet to be completed;
 - (iv) cost blow outs in the hospital of \$20 million to date;
 - (v) safety concerns after a section of the building fell apart and nearly hit a baby;

- (vi) safety concerns after code blue procedures failed; and
 - (vii) concerns raised by staff of high stress and poor morale; and
 - (c) previous problems with obstetrics at The Canberra Hospital; and
- (2) calls on the Minister for Health to:
- (a) ensure that the review into the Centenary Hospital is conducted by an individual or organisation independent of the ACT Government;
 - (b) circulate to Members the terms of reference for the review as soon as they are finalised;
 - (c) circulate the review to Members within one week of it being received by the Minister; and
 - (d) make a statement to the Assembly explaining what she is currently doing to address the concerns raised by doctors, nurses and patients.

Mr Assistant Speaker, at the outset let me say I am very happy to have retained the health portfolio. It is perhaps the biggest and most important portfolio in terms of budgetary impact and impact on our community and it is also the portfolio perhaps most poorly managed by this government. That is not to say that other portfolios have not been subject to some shocking maladministration by this government.

The election is over but, predictably, the problems that plague our health system remain. The new Centenary hospital is one such problem and is a fiasco entirely of the minister's making. In fact, it is a symbol for so many of the projects that we see from this Labor government and an example of the poor administration of the health system by Katy Gallagher. It is so bad the minister has ordered a review into her own botched project. I think you know that things are bad when a government is reviewing itself. No doubt her intent is to conduct an internal review that will be limited in scope and will not answer some of the tough questions that need to be answered, questions like: why is a brand new \$110 million hospital already full? Why is it late, in fact so late that it is not going to be completed until perhaps next year? Why is it over budget, in fact tens of millions of dollars over budget? Why was the hospital based on a flawed model that has resulted in mothers being pushed out only six hours after giving birth? Why did the minister ignore the advice of experts and, in this case, particularly the Australian Nursing Federation? Why was the hospital opened with safety flaws that nearly resulted in at least one baby being seriously injured by bits of the building falling apart and another baby when a code blue failed? Why have doctors warned that capacity constraints may compromise patient safety? Why has staff morale plummeted, with midwives and doctors terribly upset, under enormous pressure and horribly stressed?

The problems with this new hospital are significant and they are serious and mothers and staff are currently suffering as a result of this fiasco. Let me quote from a number of media articles that highlight this appalling situation. I will quote from the *ABC* from 16 November:

ACT Chief Minister Katy Gallagher has ordered a review into maternity services at Canberra's new Centenary Hospital, amid concerns women are being pushed out just six hours after giving birth.

The Centenary Hospital for Women and Children has been open for just three months but is already operating at capacity.

The facility brings together women and children's services under one roof, but it does not include any extra in-patient maternity beds.

The new hospital was built on the model that the majority of women would be discharged within 24 hours of giving birth, but that has not been happening.

Ms Gallagher says she is fielding complaints from both mothers and midwives.

Australian Nursing Federation ACT branch secretary Jenny Miragaya says that the hospital plans should have factored in the increase in birth rates. "I would have thought that the Canberra Hospital, knowing that it had a five per cent increase in births every year for the last five years, would be requiring additional capacity for inpatient beds," she said. You would certainly think so, wouldn't you, Mr Assistant Speaker? AMA President Dr Andrew Miller agrees, saying the current model needs reviewing.

It is fair to say that the minister has got this very badly wrong and staff and patients are now paying a very heavy price. Mothers are being pushed out sooner that they should be and staff are under enormous stress. I have had a number of mothers raise their concerns with me and a large number of staff. In fact, it is a shame that Mr Rattenbury is not here because he would confirm that in the lead-up to the election we were both campaigning at Cooleman Court and a very irate midwife approached both of us and spoke at length about the concerns that she and other staff had with what was happening at the Centenary hospital. She spoke about the downgrading of staff morale, the number of staff going on sick leave and stress leave and how upset they were. Mr Rattenbury, if he listened to this, would no doubt confirm that that is the case. I have been advised that at least one obstetrician has resigned and, as I said, many nurses are on sick leave. But who is responsible? No doubt the minister will claim that she is not, because she is the minister responsible for nothing when it comes to the problem in our health system. Let me quote from the *Canberra Times*, which has an interesting take on this:

Canberra health requires thorough planning. ACT Labor's announcement yesterday that it will pump an extra \$30 million over the next four years into the new Centenary Hospital for Women and Children sounds on the surface like a good idea, but raises serious questions about the long-term planning that has gone into the facility.

A week ago the *Sunday Canberra Times* aired serious concerns from the ACT branch of the Australian Nursing Federation that sections of the new hospital were already full and unable to meet demand just weeks after stage one opened.

The major concern raised by the nurses was that the government, now seeking reelection, had ignored warnings as far back as 2009 that the number of beds was not sufficient to cope with demand.

Just seven days ago Chief Minister Katy Gallagher said the new facility would be able to service the needs of the Canberra community for a decade once stage two opens next year. Yet this week another \$30 million has been pledged to increase the number of beds.

The government refutes the Nursing Federation's claims that it used the wrong modelling to calculate the required size and scope of the facility, but says it is working on new projections.

If its initial modelling was correct, why then is an additional \$30 million required, and why were the extra beds not incorporated into the budget at the outset?

They are good questions. The minister was warned the model was flawed back in 2009 but chose to ignore those warnings. Again from the *Canberra Times*:

Perhaps more concerning than these is claims from the ANF that for more than two years they have been raising concerns about capacity with the ACT government, but their repeated attempts to access plans and scrutinise them fell on deaf ears.

Nurses know the inside workings of hospitals and where the pressure points are better than anyone; they are the eyes and ears of a hospital. If that valuable knowledge bank has not been properly tapped in the planning of the new facility, as the union claims, then it would appear to be a major oversight by those charged with delivering this important facility.

Ms Gallagher makes great claims in this place that she is the champion of the staff of the hospital and I somehow attack the staff. Let me be very clear that, when it comes to the women and children's hospital, the staff are not happy with this minister because this minister has ignored them and she has delivered a model that is putting them and the patients that they care so much about, the women who give birth in this town and their young infants, in terrible situations. They are being pushed out of the hospital shortly after giving birth. I assure you, Mr Assistant Speaker, that many of the mothers and many of the staff that I speak to put this right at the feet of Katy Gallagher because she is the person who ignored the advice, who spent three years with her head in the sand saying everything was under control and the new hospital had sufficient beds and then in the lead-up to the election said it was adequate for a decade. All of a sudden there is a backflip, there is an extra \$30 million and we need all these reviews.

This does remind me a little bit about the jail. Mr Smyth would certainly recall that. What did they say when the opposition asked questions? I remember, as Mr Corbell said in 2007, it would have capacity for the next 25 years with its current bed configuration. What has happened? It is already full and the ACT taxpayer has had to pay for the retrofitting of that facility to fit bunk beds in. There is money being spent

on planning for what they are going to do with it. Let us hope we do not see bunk beds in this new Centenary hospital. But it does appear to be a pattern of incompetence in planning from this government, this genius. So the poor old taxpayer has footed the bill for \$90 million. That blew out to \$110, and now he is going to foot the bill for god knows what to remediate this government's incompetence—\$30 million, \$40 million? Maybe the minister can tell us what it is going to be.

The hospital still is not complete. It was meant to be complete in June 2012 but it looks like being next year now. What the government did was open half of it in the lead-up to the election and come up with a new name for it, which was stage 1. The rest of the hospital is in temporary facilities. If you want a bit of an amusing read, go to the estimates inquiry of this year where we had a dispute about what was temporary and what was not temporary. The minister says, "No, it's not a temporary facility." Let me quote from Dr Brown, the Director-General of the Health Directorate:

There are then services that will be moving to temporary locations as part of stage 1. They include paediatric outpatients, the birthing suite, the foetal medicine unit, postnatal short stay, maternity assessment unit and maternity and gynaecology outpatients.

If the minister thinks that this is just an inconvenience for mothers, it is not; there are far greater concerns. Let me quote again from the *Canberra Times*:

A shortage of beds at the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children is forcing expectant mothers to be transferred to Calvary Hospital to have their babies, a senior obstetrician says.

Private obstetrician Andrew Foote said that since stage 1 of the new hospital opened in August, it had become more common for patients to be transferred to Calvary Hospital at Bruce. It now seemed to be becoming a regular occurrence. "It's got a whole lot worse and the concern is patient safety," Dr Foote said.

Midwives have previously expressed concern about the capacity of the new hospital.

Dr Foote said a patient had recently arrived at Centenary Hospital to have labour induced in the morning but had to be transferred to Calvary, causing a delay in the procedure.

"She didn't actually start the drip for induction until 2pm," which compromises safety.

"That's our concern, that patient safety is compromised because it meant that she did not have the baby until the middle of the night when we were on skeleton staff.

"Inductions are more likely to see the baby be distressed and see an urgent caesarean. Fortunately nothing went wrong with her."

Dr Foote said Centenary Hospital operated on a "flawed model" which assumed a significant number of women would be able to go home within 24 hours of giving birth.

“That’s a great model and it would be good if everyone did that. The problem is that they have not taken into consideration that that sort of model only works if you’re under 35, if you’re a normal weight and you have a normal pregnancy,” he said.

“And unfortunately in Canberra there a number of people who are not under 35, who are not normal weight, who do have medical conditions and don’t have a normal birth.”

Let me repeat what Dr Foote from the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists said:

... our concern, that patient safety is compromised.

When it comes to patient safety, we already know that there were two events where patient safety was compromised. I read again from the *Canberra Times*:

A baby was lucky to escape injury after a wooden panel dropped from a wall onto a cot in the new Centenary Hospital for Women and Children. Staff have raised safety concerns about the new hospital after the accident on Wednesday night and several other incidents.

They included a communications failure which resulted in neonatal staff failing to receive an urgent ‘code blue’ call for assistance with a critically ill baby in an operating theatre.

At the time I said of these two near tragic events that it appears that the hospital had been opened before it was ready and safety was compromised. The question is: was there any pressure from the government or anyone else to get the hospital open before it was safe to do so? Will those sorts of questions be asked in the government’s review? I doubt that very much. I think they are questions that need to be answered.

In terms of my motion and what I am calling for, we need these answers. We know that this government and this minister have a track record when it comes to covering up problems in obstetrics and maternity. You will recall that in 2010 we saw dysfunction and bullying that led to the resignation of 13 doctors. The minister said, “That’s just doctor politics and it’s mud-slinging.” But two reviews were conducted. She has buried one, cleverly doing it under the Public Interest Disclosure Act. The other one, which was forced on her by the opposition, noted a number of things. Let me quote from that investigation:

There is evidence of systemic reticence to address staff performance issues ... The clinical governance at the Canberra Hospital maternity unit appears to be inadequate ... There was an apparent lack of cohesion amongst the executive team at the Canberra Hospital ... There appears to be considerable confusion over the role and delineation of some senior management positions ... It appears that the chain of command often fails ...

The problems seem to be going on, but will we find out? If we do not make sure that the terms of reference are adequate and comprehensive and that the review is

conducted by an independent body, you know what is going to happen. There will be a froth and bubble review that will just simply say what the minister wants it to say.

This is Katy Gallagher's 10-year war. Remember that? She said there was a 10-war raging in obstetrics. She attacked the doctors. Anyone that made a complaint she attacked, just as the staff who have come to me with their concerns were threatened: "Don't say anything or you'll be in trouble." She attacked the doctors when they made their complaints and that was described by the AMA as a thinly veiled threat.

So I say to members that we need a review, and the minister has commissioned one, but we cannot just let this be a cover-up, just as it was previously attempted by this government. We need to make sure that any review is thorough and covers all those questions that need to be addressed and that the reviewer is independent of this government, independent of this minister, who has a track record of cover-up and deceit when it comes to maternity in this town.

MS GALLAGHER (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Health and Minister for Higher Education) (4.49): The government will not be supporting this motion, and I have an amendment, which I believe has been circulated. If not, it will be circulated.

Mr Hanson: We have got it.

MS GALLAGHER: Right. I will speak to that amendment as I address particularly the incorrect components of Mr Hanson's address. I begin by saying we have had an election and I have been judged on my performance in the Health portfolio, Mr Hanson. I have been judged and I won that little challenge you set out. I remember sitting at meetings with you in estimates and different committees where you said you looked forward to implementing all of these when you were the Minister for Health, and I draw your attention to the vote in Molonglo, because that is the endorsement of me as the Minister for Health.

Mr Hanson: You're an arrogant woman.

MS GALLAGHER: No, I am not arrogant at all, Mr Hanson. You were arrogant when you said that you would be the health minister and that you believed that you would take my job, and you have not. And it hurt, and it will be four years more, Mr Hanson, of you sitting there and giving the same speech that you have given for the last four years.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MS GALLAGHER: The speech you gave today was the speech you have given on every health debate pretty much for the last four years—the same lines and the same derisory attacks on the public health system.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MS GALLAGHER: Light on facts, light on understanding of issues, light on dealing with the real challenges in the health system.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Gentleman): Mr Hanson, the Chief Minister has the floor.

MS GALLAGHER: Do not worry about that; you just keep going with your set lines that you determined years ago, and they will continue. Whilst that happens, we will continue dealing with—

Mr Hanson: Point of order, Mr Assistant Speaker.

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Chief Minister, can you take a seat for a minute.

Mr Hanson: Under standing order 42 the minister is required to direct her comments through you. If the minister continues to stand there and address me and talk to me, I think it is only reasonable that I respond.

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, if you could refrain from interjecting, you might find that she addresses her comments through the chair. However, I call on the Chief Minister to address through the chair.

MS GALLAGHER: Thank you, Mr Assistant Speaker. I must say, coming from a serial interjector in this parliament, we are not going to be taking lessons from you, Mr Hanson.

In relation to the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children, it opened in August 2012 and stage 2 will open in 2013. The reason it was done in stages is because there is no other way to continue to provide public maternity services whilst you build a new hospital around them. This view that only half the hospital was opened as some sort of political stunt again indicates the lack of understanding of how you actually provide continuity of services whilst you are building new facilities. If we built the whole hospital at one time, we would have had to close the public maternity service, and that was not an option, particularly as the birthing centre of choice for Canberra women—and I noticed this was not included in Mr Hanson's speech—is the Canberra Hospital. Women want to come to the Canberra Hospital because of the facilities and the standard of care, and that is presenting us with some demand pressures.

When you look at the number of births—and Mr Hanson went on at length about not being able to understand demographic projections—the demographic projections are right—there has been a less than two per cent increase in birth numbers across the ACT. So the numbers that we based the decisions on were correct. The single thing that has changed is that there has been a massive shift from the private sector to public maternity services, and that is something the opposition ignores. So in the last five years there has been—

Mr Hanson: Always an excuse.

MS GALLAGHER: Well, these are the facts, Mr Hanson. They do not suit your argument, but they are the facts. Over the last five years there has been a 25 per cent increase in births in the public sector.

Mr Smyth: So you had not noticed that?

MS GALLAGHER: That was not included in the planning of the hospital, Mr Smyth.

Mr Smyth: Why not?

MS GALLAGHER: Because it had remained constant in terms of the private system because the changes that came in to cap private obstetric fees were brought in after the decisions had been taken about bed numbers in the public system. So unless we could have projected forward into our looking glass and seen that private obstetricians were not going to adjust their prices so women are now up to \$6,000 out of pocket for having a private birth in Canberra—that is how much it can cost you, because that is how much is charged—

Mr Smyth: But you didn't notice that shift over the last five years?

MS GALLAGHER: It was not a shift over the last five years, Mr Smyth. It was a shift—

Mr Smyth: Well, you just misled the house. You just said there was a 25 per cent shift over the last five years—

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Order, Mr Smyth!

MS GALLAGHER: It was a shift that occurred gradually and has changed with changes to the private health insurance. That is the change that has happened, and what has happened is that Calvary private are not doing the amount of births that they were doing. John James private is not doing the number of births that they were doing. The number of births in the public system continues to grow, and that is because women are making a choice.

So the landscape has changed. The birth numbers have not changed; the demographics for the women have not changed; what is happening is that the public system is taking an increased burden. So in 2006-07—Mr Smyth might want to listen to this—births in the private sector made up 34 per cent of all births within the territory. This has reduced to 24 per cent in 2011-12, and it is continuing to reduce. That is what we are seeing. Yes, more and more births are coming, and private obstetricians are noticing that because the births are happening in the public system.

On the one hand, it is an incredible compliment for the public system and the standard of care that is being provided at the Centenary hospital and at Calvary public. On the other hand, it is placing immense pressure on the public resourcing of maternity services. So when you look at the change that is being felt in the hospitals, it is about 17 additional births every week that are being delivered through the public system.

In relation to some of the other issues that Mr Hanson mentioned, I will go to the issue of the review. The model of care was negotiated by the clinicians themselves with input from a whole range of areas. The ANF have not been warning me for three years that the Centenary hospital was not built to capacity. In fact, I recall a conversation within the last year where that issue has been raised with me. That is simply not true, and I do not believe that Mr Hanson has any evidence to support the claim that for three years I was told something different.

The model of care that was implemented at the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children required that a woman stay a minimum of six hours after a birth, but that for women who were well they would look to be discharged within 24 hours. But the minimum would be six hours, and that was for a healthy woman, a healthy baby and someone who wanted to leave the hospital.

I have had several complaints. I have not been inundated with complaints. I have certainly had a couple of complaints; I have also had more letters saying the hospital is great and thank you for the care that has been provided than I have had complaints. But, yes, I have had a couple of complaints directly to me around women who feel they would have liked to have stayed longer but could not or were asked to leave to create room for other women to come in. I have also had two midwives speak to me, so let us just deal with the facts. Mr Hanson has had one midwife; I have had two midwives talk to me at different functions I was at about how they feel the model as it is being implemented places pressure on them to encourage women to leave early. So based on the two midwives that have spoken to me and two women who have had babies there, I spoke to the director-general and asked her to commission a review into the model of care as I felt that it needed to be looked at with fresh eyes considering what is happening in practice.

The director-general is undertaking that review; there will be independent expert opinion taken as part of that and experts will provide input into the review. The terms of reference and the final report will be released. We release all reviews that I can think of. There was one that was not released in relation to the Public Interest Disclosure Act, and I put on the record again, as I have for the last three years, that I did not determine that that review would—

Mr Hanson: You set it up that way to cover it up.

MS GALLAGHER: Mr Assistant Speaker, that is simply incorrect and Mr Hanson knows it. He should be required to withdraw that, unless he has got evidence to prove it actually was my decision to set up a public interest disclosure. As Mr Hanson would know, the minister does not have the decision-making power in relation to that, and there is no evidence to support that interjection from Mr Hanson. It is a lie and he continues to lie by peddling that in this place.

I am more than happy for the review to be public, and the terms of reference will be public. Independent experts will provide input into that review. We will consult with everyone, but the review is into the model of care. The review is not into the

operations of the hospital, so let us be clear about that. It is into the model of care which determines that women should, if they and their babies are well, ideally have a length of stay of 24 hours or less—within that six to 24-hour capacity.

They are the complaints I have had. I have not had other complaints around the hospital. I think there are some issues with staff that have plagued that area that we are aware of and that the directorate is working on. There are still people that feel the decisions taken around the maternity review were difficult for individual clinicians, and we lost clinicians through that process. I know Mr Hanson never talks about those people that actually moved on throughout that process.

In relation to the staff member who has left, I have looked into that, and there is nothing unreasonable about that staff change. I do not imagine Mr Hanson is suggesting that no doctor or no nurse ever leaves their post or, if they do, it is clearly something to do with some dysfunction. I understand the issue that led to that doctor making that claim.

The amendment I have circulated shows exactly what has been happening—we have a new hospital. Half of it, stage 1, is open. Stage 2 is well underway. We have a significant increase in public birthing services. We have a study that will go to a number of different areas. If there is going to be growth in demand for public beds and public birthing services that growth must happen on the north side of Canberra—that is, Calvary hospital. That is their role and that is where the extra births will go. Not all births will be done or should be done or can be done at Canberra Hospital. We have a maternity services network. We have two hospitals which both provide public birthing services. They will need to transfer patients, and they do transfer mothers between the two hospitals depending on what is required. That will continue.

I do not understand whether the opposition are saying that should never happen, that if Canberra Hospital is full to capacity, women should never be transferred to Calvary or vice versa—if Calvary is full, there should be no capacity to transfer women to Canberra Hospital. That is why we have a networked maternity service. That was the decision taken out of the maternity services review to build up the network of our two public hospitals so that we could provide better clinical service across the two campuses. That is supported by the public clinicians who work in and across both the hospitals.

As Canberra grows, it is like every other large city—if one hospital is full, the other hospital creates the capacity. That is what happens in other hospitals in New South Wales. In some places in New South Wales you actually transfer patients to other jurisdictions if there is no room in hospitals. That is what needs to be done to create that safe care for patients.

I have no doubt that the clinical care provided at both the hospitals is of excellent quality. I think there are some issues we have to work through with staff; we are aware of them and we will continue to do that.

I move the amendment circulated in my name:

Omit all words after “That this Assembly”, substitute:

(1) notes:

- (a) that Stage 1 of the new Centenary Hospital for Women and Children (CHWC) opened in August 2012 with Stage 2 opening in 2013 offering women and their babies state of the art facilities including a brand new neo-natal intensive care unit for the capital region;
 - (b) that there has been a significant increase in demand for public birthing services over the past two years;
 - (c) the commitment to resource an independent feasibility study by 30 June 2014 into whether the ACT should have a stand-alone publicly funded birth centre and to assess demand for public birthing services on the north side of Canberra;
 - (d) the commitment to establish a two-room birth centre at Calvary Public Hospital to allow for 200 births a year through the midwife-led continuity of care model;
 - (e) the current models of care available in the ACT that aim to ensure that the majority of all women at Canberra Hospital be cared for in a continuity of care model;
 - (f) that the Minister for Health has commissioned a review into birthing model of care developed for maternity services at The Canberra Hospital to ensure that women and their babies are provided with the care they need throughout their stay;
 - (g) that the review will look at the model of care, future demand, strategies to address current demand pressures and ways to support the staff at the CHWC in the work they perform;
 - (h) that terms of reference for the review, and the final report, will be publicly released; and
 - (i) that the review will be undertaken by the Health Directorate with independent experts providing input to the review; and
- (2) agrees that public maternity services should be provided within the Maternity Services Network that covers both public hospitals to ensure the efficient, effective and safe use of public funding of maternity services.

Mr Assistant Speaker, there is pressure because of the construction site that operates around them, but there is no other way we could have done this work. You cannot build a hospital and shut down your services; we had to do it in two stages and move people into the new building so that we could deal with the construction in the old building. It has all been done with rational thought behind it. I know the Liberals like to create hysteria around it, but this review into the model of care will clarify whether we need to make any further changes to the model of care to make sure that women and the staff who work there are feeling supported.

MRS JONES (Molonglo) (5.04): I rise today to speak in support of Mr Hanson's motion calling for an open and transparent review into the women and children's hospital. I arrived in Canberra as a defence wife in January 2006, one of the hottest summers Canberra has ever experienced. It was at the end of the drought. I was eight months pregnant with my first child. We did not have a house and our car was on a train being moved from the NT.

I spent the last month of my pregnancy moving into a house while developing pre-eclampsia and desperately trying to work out how the hospital system worked. We had barely any money. Moving house interstate is a very expensive business. I went in for a public midwife appointment and I was told my blood pressure was up and I was not going to go home. I was going to be admitted to the maternity ward pending a decision about what was wrong with me and if my baby was okay. I was in a new city, I knew no-one and I was about to learn about how stressful birth and a new baby can be.

To cut a long story short, after days of careful monitoring and an attempt at an induction which left my baby's heart rate fluctuating wildly, my beloved little Felix was born at 5.30 am by way of an emergency caesarean section. I had an adverse reaction to the drugs I was administered. I was deeply disappointed that I had developed pre-eclampsia and that I had several layers of surgical scar as well as a hungry baby who was too weak to easily feed. I experienced every emotion under the sun, including deep sadness, great joy, anger, fear and anxiety.

Several days after the birth, I remember realising that I had to finally find a way of getting this baby to feed or I could not go home. I did not have the money to afford formula at that time and had to find a way of learning to feed this baby who would not latch on properly. It took me several nights and a nurse who I still to this day believe was an angel in disguise, to help me know how to feed my child. It was one of the most testing times of my life.

I went home after four or five days and I was dealing with the strong distress about the birth, physical wounds of having undergone major surgery and the needs of a newborn baby. Now, I do not tell this story to elicit pity. I am telling it because it is a common Canberra tale. Of all my friends who have had babies around the same time, at least half of them have experienced serious complications with either the birth or with getting used to the idea of having a baby to care for. Some of my friends have had severe issues learning how to breastfeed and some had babies who would not sleep at all.

This is why the issues being faced by the new women and children's hospital are of deep concern to me. For women who have spent years in the workforce and then are having their babies a little later in life, as is the norm these days in Canberra, the statistics of complication are much higher. By the nature of the professional demographic of capable women we have here, there is clearly a higher incidence of complex birth scenarios.

Women by their nature often do not want to be a burden. They are easily influenced into going home, sometimes even earlier than they should. We do not always put ourselves first and in the case of a woman who is used to being an expert at her work and having to run a home for many years, usually when she has her first baby it is a deep shock to the system to have to adapt to the hourly needs of a newborn baby through the day and through the night.

Honestly, the mathematical modelling of patient throughput is not a new science. How did the minister get it so wrong? As Mr Hanson has outlined in detail in his comments, there is a plethora of issues facing the facility and the minister's handling of it. Perhaps the federal ALP's cuts to obstetric rebates on 1 January 2010 caused this whole debacle, but I would have thought that a serious minister would have seen the rise in demand coming. The minister instead buried her head in the sand.

If the same amount of effort was put into the planning process by the minister as she seems to put into the development of her media opportunities, we may not be in the position we in are today. It is not just an academic pursuit or a partisan matter; it has real impacts on real women.

I can tell you that I met a number of midwives while I was out doorknocking thousands of homes for this year's election who were very grumpy about the reduced capacity of the new facility as compared to the old one. They actually said to me that we have opened a new facility with fewer beds.

I am not claiming that there are fewer beds, although I believe that there are fewer birthing suites. Everyone wants to see new facilities for women but for goodness sake, if there are fewer rooms overall while public births are on the rise, and the new facility was supposed to deal with this matter, did the minister actually not know what was being built? How could it have possibly made sense to her?

I cannot fathom how a minister, who herself has gone through the birthing process no less than three times and who has a vast staff at her fingertips, did not pick up that the same or fewer beds was not going to provide more capacity than the old facility. I hope for the sake of the patients that corners are not being cut and that the minister can come up with a solution to this most serious of matters.

As the shadow minister for women in this place, I believe I speak for thousands of Canberra women who expect that this situation will be remedied as soon as possible.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (5.10): Our maternity services are a continuing issue of concern to members of the Assembly and many members of the public. I thank Mr Hanson for raising this issue today. All parents want to be assured that they are going to get the best and the safest maternity services possible when they put their lives and the lives of their babies into the hands of hospitals and professionals.

Mr Hanson has raised various issues which are of concern. These issues do not give parents-to-be the certainty and security that they need to have when going in to give birth, which can be a very stressful time in one's life—as Mrs Jones has just touched

on. The Greens were pleased when the minister announced that she would be commissioning a review into maternity services and the birthing model of care at the new Centenary Hospital for Women and Children earlier this month. Mr Hanson's calls for this review to be a thorough and transparent process are extremely valid.

The ACT, as we all know, is a growing territory with an increasing population and a recent spike in new births. We must always remember that any new facilities will be utilised not just by those living within our borders but also from the broader capital region. It is therefore vital that we as a city and a community have the full range of services needed to provide the best quality health care and not a one-size-fits-all approach.

We also need Canberra's services to be built with an eye on the future as we inevitably expand and to base this planning on constructive feedback with relevant stakeholders and experts. As a result of these considerations, in this context I have considered the options around this review and I discussed these with the minister's office.

The Greens agree that it is very important that the review includes independent advice from relevant experts but I do not accept that the review should be established as a completely independent entity, given the additional costs and time that this would entail. I agree with the review as put forward by the Minister for Health as it will be undertaken by people who fully understand the current systems which are in place and will include independent input and advice.

We need to give real respect to the ability of the Health Directorate to deal with problems relating to resourcing and care and we need to appreciate that we have overwhelmingly good outcomes in our health system including in the area of maternity services here in the ACT. I think that we are lucky in Australia that we have an independent public service. I think that in a circumstance like this having the capability of the directorate to actually sit and review these things, to use their expertise and knowledge to work through these situations, has merit and is something I think that we can have confidence in, particularly in light of some comments I will make later.

The other thing I would say is that while we need to recognise the problems we also need to acknowledge the positives. The contribution of a nurse's care and attention, a ward officer's help and banter, and a midwife's understanding and commitment are all recognised by patients and their families but too often go unrecognised in this place. I certainly agree with Mr Hanson that this review should be publicly transparent. Consequently, discussions with the minister's office have ensured that, as well as outlining the areas that the review will cover, Ms Gallagher's amendment now includes ensuring that the terms of reference and the final report will be publicly released.

As well as addressing issues around the birthing model of care review, Ms Gallagher's amendment also notes that there will be a feasibility study by June 2014 which will assess demand for public birthing services on the north side and into whether the ACT also needs a stand-alone publicly funded birth centre which is not located on an acute hospital site.

This is something that midwives and parents have been calling for over many years and that the Greens are pleased to see. We know that many birthing outcomes and indicators, such as lower rates of caesareans and inductions, are much improved by giving women the opportunity to use a birthing centre. We also know that when a birthing centre is not attached to a hospital these rates improve even more.

The Canberra midwifery program run at the birth centre is a great model which allows women to have a natural birth in a relaxing, home-like environment supported by midwives. It is under very high demand. Around 600 women use the service each year and it has an extremely long waiting list. Generally, if you want to use the centre, it is wise to book within one to two months of becoming pregnant if possible. This means that many parents are simply not able to access the service. In fact, we understand the unmet demand means that around 400 mothers miss out on this opportunity each year.

The Greens support the additional birth centre being created at Calvary which will give northsiders more options but this does not address the calls for a stand-alone centre, nor does it address demand for public birthing services on the north side. There is huge demand on birthing services in the ACT. As we increase capacity we should also be increasing people's options. The Greens believe that the option of having a midwife-led natural birth needs to be in the mix of options available to Canberrans.

On that basis, I will be supporting Ms Gallagher's amendment to Mr Hanson's motion. I believe it picks up the key points as I read Mr Hanson's motion. The essence of the first part of his motion, as is the nature of these motions on private members' day, gives Mr Hanson's perspective on things. It cuts a particular narrative. Ms Gallagher has her interpretation. But I think the important paragraph is the second one, which is the "calls on" section. To my mind, the two most important parts of Mr Hanson's motion are to circulate to members the terms of reference and to circulate the review to members once it has been completed.

The proposal from Ms Gallagher actually speaks to public circulation of those documents. In some ways, that is even more preferable. It does not just come to members; it gets to the entire community. So I think the central parts of Mr Hanson's motion have been picked up in the amendment. On that basis I will be supporting it.

MR HANSON (Molonglo) (5.15): We will not be supporting the amendment and I am disappointed again that Mr Rattenbury will be siding with the government because it clearly does not go to some of the important points that are in my motion. It does raise the question also, just from a technical point of view, as to when Mr Rattenbury got this amendment as compared to when we did. We got it circulated about an hour ago. Obviously, Mr Rattenbury got it well before that, I imagine, because he said earlier this day in response to an amendment that I put through that he would not support amendments that were delivered at short notice and that were detailed, which is exactly what has essentially happened to the opposition.

So it is interesting that Mr Rattenbury chooses now to support an amendment that has been circulated at short notice and is complicated when earlier in the day he said that

he would not do that. What we see is that it perhaps depends on who is the author of the amendment as opposed to when it is circulated.

There are a number of points in the minister's amendment that do not meet the requirement that I have in my motion. You will notice that at point 1(h) this will be publicly released. I ask the question: when will it be publicly released? I have asked for it to be seven days after it has been produced. I am referring to the review and the final report. But we may never get those.

Timing is very important in this place because what you may find is that we do not see those for months. The report might come in and the minister will sit on it. Maybe the minister is going to sit on it till she has got her government response to it, although the government is doing it, so we simply do not know, and that is why the timings are important, so that the community knows what is going on, and it does not afford this government the ability to cover up.

I say this because it is clear that that is the record of this minister and that is the record of this government. Although Mr Rattenbury talks about the independence of the public service, let me say that I have been greatly troubled, and the community has been greatly troubled, by the fact that a friend of the minister doctored health information. A senior executive at the Canberra Hospital who is a close friend of the minister is doctoring information. She said that she was doing it for the political imperatives. We know from the Auditor-General's view that others were also—

Ms Gallagher: Point of order, Mr Assistant Speaker.

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Gentleman): Point of order, Chief Minister.

Ms Gallagher: The official that Mr Hanson makes comment on did not say that, just for the record.

Mr Seselja: On the point of order, Mr Assistant Speaker, it is not up to the Chief Minister to use points of order frivolously as debating points. That was a debating point. It is unreasonable to get up there. If she does not like what is being said, there are mechanisms to do that, not to stand up and interrupt Mr Hanson when he is speaking.

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr Seselja. Mr Hanson, continue.

MR HANSON: Yes, clearly that is a debating point. I do not know if we will get to it in time. I have asked Mr Smyth to bring up the Auditor-General's report. Clearly, there is a point in there, I think page 53 from memory, where Kate Jackson does say that the political imperative at a number of levels, including from the minister's office, was part of the reason that she was doctoring information. Hopefully, we will get the quote.

The Auditor-General also found that it is highly likely others were involved. I think in that case we have seen the previous problem with obstetrics where the minister did everything in her power to cover up what had happened. We have seen the widespread

doctoring of information. I think that given the problems we have seen in maternity and the real concerns now that surround this hospital in terms of safety—you have got doctors saying there are safety concerns, you have got nurses saying that they are ignored, you have got code blues that failed, you have got parts of the hospital falling down, you have got a hospital that is at least \$20 million over budget and that is running 18 months late at least—it is reasonable that whoever looks into these issues is independent of the government.

If the government has nothing to hide, if the government has nothing that it is trying to obscure, why could it not be an independent review? The government does not want that. What the government wants to do is review itself. I think we understand with the way they have acted in recent days in trying to nobble the public accounts committee, the way they have carried on in this Assembly so far as a majority government with the support of Mr Rattenbury, that this government is going to do everything it can to avoid scrutiny.

There is a lot of froth and bubble in what the minister is doing with her amendment. She is trying to appear reasonable, but ultimately what this does is miss a couple of very key points that are in the motion that we brought forward. In terms of the timings, both the terms of reference and the final review have to be circulated in a timely manner. And the review needs to be independent. This fails that test.

There is also another point in here that I must refer to, which is the feasibility study into the independent birthing centre. There was some debate in the chamber yesterday about the cost of that. I have referred to the Greens' policies, which apparently were all sent to Treasury for costing. So unless the government got it wrong, it was \$300,000 allocated to the cost of that.

I must say again that we have got a government that is now saying it is a great idea to have this review. It is a \$300,000 review into something that the minister objects to, that she thinks is unsafe, that she knows that we do not support, that is not supported by clinicians. She is wasting \$300,000 of taxpayers' money. This is part of the suite—

Ms Gallagher: Read the agreement. It does not speak of \$300,000.

MR HANSON: The policy that the Greens put forward went to Treasury and was costed by ACT Treasury. The review into an independent birthing centre was costed at \$300,000. So unless Treasury got it wrong, unless all the Treasury costings were completely flawed, it is a \$300,000 review. I make that point.

Mr Assistant Speaker, we will not be supporting this amendment. What this amendment seeks to do is water down the motion and remove again scrutiny by the opposition of this government into what is a horribly flawed project that is causing great distress to staff and to patients.

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (5.23): Just following on from what Mr Hanson said, it is important that we get this right. You only have to go to the record of the government on delivering major capital works to get the expectation that the government will not get this right, and they have not got this right. To have a government review that

investigates itself does not seem to be open and accountable government, something which is apparently written into the Greens' agreement but which we do not seem to be getting a lot of at this stage.

I have no expectation of the government that they will ever get capital works right, and it is based on the Gungahlin Drive extension, the prison, the mental health facility, Tharwa Bridge and the car park at the hospital, just to name a few. The list is long and sad and expensive for the people of the ACT, and the women's and children's hospital will certainly fit into that category as time goes on.

The defence of the minister seems to be "We didn't know. We didn't know there was going to be this shift." She says that, in 2006-07, 34 per cent of births were delivered privately and in 2011-12 it was down to 24 per cent. But apparently nobody in the interim noticed there was a trend. There was absolutely no trend that showed that, despite the Nursing Federation saying that. The Nursing Federation was referred to in a *Canberra Times* article on 9 September:

But perhaps more concerning than these is claims from the Australian Nursing Federation that for more than two years they have been raising concerns about capacity with the ACT government, but their repeated attempts to access plans and scrutinise them fell on deaf ears

The *Canberra Times* on 16 September also wrote:

A week ago the *Sunday Canberra Times* aired serious concerns from the ACT branch of the Australian Nursing Federation that sections of the new hospital were already full and unable to meet demand just weeks after stage one opened.

The major concern raised by the nurses was that the government, now seeking re-election, had ignored warnings as far back as 2009 that the number of beds was not sufficient to cope with demand.

The Chief Minister and health minister has not been able to rebut those concerns that were raised. There was this feeble line: "Nobody raised it with me directly." It was in the paper. The concerns are there, and the problem for the Chief Minister, now aided and abetted by Mr Rattenbury, is that this review will not be open. The minister says, "We ultimately release most reports." Maybe you do, but, then again, you have not on some very key reports. It would be interesting to see what is in this report.

So, the question is: even if you did not expect the shift from the private back to the public, why would you build a hospital with the same capacity, knowing full well that birth rates were up, population growth was up and the population of the ACT was growing in that period? Perhaps you had missed in cabinet the planning for the whole new town centre called Molonglo, and perhaps you had missed the large capital expenditure year after year that the government puts into Gungahlin for the new suburbs. Even if you did not pick up on the trend that there was a shift from private to public, surely you were aware that the population of the ACT was growing. And there have been press releases about that very fact that the population has been growing. But no capacity was built into the new facility to accommodate that. And that, minister, is your failure. It is your failure to adequately plan and adequately get ready.

It is interesting that the minister says, “Look, there’s been a 25 per cent shift over the last five years.” But apparently she did not notice that. She did not notice a 25 per cent shift over five years and did not notice the other number from 34 per cent in 2006-07 to 24 per cent in 2011-12. Private births reduced by a third—not in the last year, not since the hospital had commenced to be built, but in 2006-07. Well before the planning for the hospital was being done, the numbers were shifting then, but no-one in the government noticed. This is the point that Mr Hanson seeks to make, and this is why his recommendation that the review is conducted by an individual organisation independent of the ACT government is so important.

The Greens’ agreement talks about undertaking to ensure an accountable and transparent government that is responsive to the community. There are community concerns, in one way, through the nurses federation and in other ways through mothers who had been shunted out of the full women’s and children’s hospital before they felt they were ready to go. As one woman said, she was moved out, the breast milk that she had expressed for her twins was being cleaned up by the cleaner as she was made to sit in the waiting room. That is not how to conduct a women’s and children’s hospital. That is not a women’s and children’s hospital that respects mothers that have just delivered their children, and it is not a women’s and children’s hospital that one would expect in the nation’s capital of one of the wealthiest countries in the world.

The question is: how did we get it wrong? And the government, aided and abetted by Mr Rattenbury, as the Green, independent minister—I am not sure what he is today, whether he is Green, independent, government minister or crossbencher—has answered, “Yes, it’s okay for the government that I am now a part of to investigate itself”. We have seen the minister’s record on this where critical investigations were undertaken and never saw the light of day. It is very important that Mr Hanson’s paragraph 2(a) at least is included.

Releasing it? We think it should be released as quickly as it has been received, and we believe the terms of reference should be circulated at least to members and made public as soon as they are finalised. Certainly the terms of reference will have a great impact on this.

The Chief Minister and health minister said, “I’ve been judged and I have won that.” Worse than the hubris in this is the denial, the absolute denial, to take some criticism that is outlined in Mr Hanson’s motion. None of it has been shown to be wrong. None of the facts in 1(b) (i) to (vii) have been shown to be wrong. In 1(c) Mr Hanson refers to “previous problems with obstetrics”. That is not wrong. In 1(a) he refers to the review being commissioned on 15 November. That is not wrong. So all of what is in paragraph 1 of Mr Hanson’s motion is correct. It is factual. None of it has been disproved, but we are going to delete that. Perhaps there needs to be a change to the standing orders that says you just cannot delete everything in a motion and put in something that is the antithesis of the motion so that, because you have got the numbers, you ramrod it through. Take your knocks if you have to, but disprove the case. To avoid the case is to make the same problem again in the future.

We know from this government, from their litany of failures on capital works projects, that they make mistakes time and again. They break their promises time and again. And you only have to go to the GDE. Mr Corbell's promise in 2001 was on time, on budget, which would have been \$53 million in July 2005 I think it was. Instead, it opened last year with about four times the budget and it caused everybody enormous angst.

Just go to the timings on the women's and children's hospital. Capital funding in the 2008-09 budget was \$90 million over four years with an expected completion date of June 2012. That is from budget paper 4, page 172. We know it cost more than \$90 million and we opened up half a hospital. It seems to be a tradition amongst the Labor Party. I wonder what public-funded capital work in August 2016 will be half open in the continuing tradition of the Labor Party in this territory and their inability to deliver capital works.

We know Ms Gallagher told the *Northside Chronicle* that the new building would be constructed and functional before the end of 2011. Here we are at the end of 2012 and we have got half a hospital, and there is serious concern about the functionality of it. Budget 2009-10 was rolled over from 2008-09 and from 2009-10 to 2010-11, and from 2011-12 to 2012-13. In the 2010-11 budget there was a transfer of \$7.37 million from phase 1. It just goes on. It is a litany of failure to deliver significant capital works to the standard they should be delivered on time and on budget in a city that should get better for its money.

This is the problem. All we have from the minister is continuing denial—denial after denial of responsibility, denial after denial of the facts, denial after denial of her role in it. It is constantly, in this case, letting the women and the children of the ACT down, and they should not be. (*Time expired*)

Question put:

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

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 8

Noes 7

Mr Barr	Ms Gallagher	Mr Coe	Mrs Jones
Ms Berry	Mr Gentleman	Mr Doszpot	Mr Smyth
Dr Bourke	Ms Porter	Mrs Dunne	Mr Wall
Ms Burch	Mr Rattenbury	Mr Hanson	

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

MR HANSON (Molonglo) (5.38): I thank members for their contributions. In particular, Mrs Jones, thank you very much for your words. I think your perspective as a mother of four children, at last count, was very useful. Mr Smyth, again, with your wealth of experience, I thank you for your contribution. I am disappointed, I must say, that Mr Rattenbury will not be supporting the motion unamended as such

and he actually supported the amendment because it weakens quite significantly the requirement for scrutiny and the requirement for the independence that is necessary this debacle of a project.

Before I sum up, I would like to refer to a matter of debate that occurred when Ms Gallagher was speaking relating to the Auditor-General's review into the doctoring of emergency department data done by Ms Jackson. Ms Gallagher may wish to listen to this because she essentially called me a liar. She said it was not true about the words "political imperative", and I would now like to quote from the Auditor-General's review so it will be very clear to members.

The mistake I made is that I thought it was page 53. It is actually page 86. So I beg forgiveness for that mistake, but let me give the context of what this is. It is from the Auditor General's review, page 86, which says:

With respect to changes made to hospital records throughout 2011, the executive—

that is, Ms Jackson—

also advised Audit of the following:

It's an extremely high pressure environment. People work a little bit under the pressure that inability to meet performance indicators will result in, I guess, up to and including things like losing your job.

She is saying the pressure causes people to lose their jobs. The Auditor-General then asked whether people were actually removed from their jobs because they didn't meet these performance indicators, and the executive advised yes. So people are losing their jobs because of the pressure they are put under. The Auditor-General then asked whether it was because of the environment of pressure and that that was the motive and the executive responded, yes, it was because of the pressure she was put under. And this goes back to the point: where did that pressure come from? Let me now quote the point which the minister disagreed with:

It's seen—it's seen as an imperative politically to ensure that we meet the target and I think people felt at different levels increasing pressure that needed to be met.

So it was political. And this was the point that we went through in the debate. The Chief Minister said that was not in the Auditor General's report. I invite you to look at page 86 and to read the surrounding paragraphs. The imperative was political, and that is what Kate Jackson said. The minister, in denying that is what she said, now has to accept that the imperative for Kate Jackson to alter that data was political, and, if it was not from the minister, who was it from?

Back to the issue at hand, although it is clearly relevant: this government's trustworthiness, their ability to actually provide data, provide information that is honest and this minister's ability to provide information that is open and transparent. As we have seen through the obstetrics debacle of 2010, when she did everything she

could to cover up data and to attack the 13 doctors that resigned, all the way through to her refusal today to accept that it was the political imperative that led to the fabrication of data at the Canberra Hospital. We need to make sure the review of this hospital is independent.

It is quite clear there are questions that will not be answered in this review. You can imagine how it is going to come back, no doubt commending the minister for building such a wonderful hospital, but what we will not know is why it is already full? A \$110 million dollar hospital. Will it go to the matter of why this hospital is so late? It was meant to be fully opened late last year. It is not going to be opened until late next year, and that is just on current projections. Why is it so over budget? Why is it \$20 million dollars over budget? Will we ever find that out? Why was it based on a flawed model and why did this government get the model so badly wrong?

Why did she ignore the advice of experts? The ANF say they have been providing warnings to the government for a while. The minister here today said she had received no warnings, I think, until this year. That is a matter of dispute. Why was the hospital opened with safety flaws? There are two that we know of—the code blue and parts of the building falling apart and nearly landing on a baby. Two infants nearly died. Will we ever find out answers to that? Why is that doctors have warned of safety concerns through capacity constraints? Do you think any of these will come in this review?

What about the staff morale? Do you think there will be an inquiry as part of this into what we are hearing from the nurses? What Mr Rattenbury and I heard very clearly from a midwife on the eve of the election—a very irate midwife—was that she and her colleagues were very upset, going on stress leave, and very, very concerned about what is happening, not just for themselves but more so for the patients. The midwives and the doctors and the other staff that work in that hospital do so because they are passionate about the health care they provide. They are passionate about the mothers they look after. They are passionate about the babies they deliver. They are so distraught about the fact that they have these young mothers, or in some cases older mothers, whom they are pushing out of this hospital because the model is flawed because this government did not do the job right.

Let me read a quote that I did not read in my speech. It is from the *Canberra Times* of 8 October:

Upon returning from a visit to the twins in the neonatal intensive care unit, she discovered her personal belongings had been removed from her room and a cleaner was in the process of taking breast milk she had expressed for the twins from the fridge.

Mrs Holland spent the next two hours in a waiting room before she was discharged.

“I told the nurse I felt like a homeless person,” she said.

This is a woman that had twins, who had a code blue, a code blue that failed, who says she felt like a homeless person. And this is the shining star, the jewel in the crown of Katy Gallagher’s health redevelopment plan. A hospital that cost

\$110 million, that should have cost \$90 million, that she is now backfilling with another \$30 million, that is well over a year later, that doctors have raised safety concerns about, that midwives are absolutely distraught about and that mothers are saying they feel like homeless people. That is what this minister is saying is a shining example of this government.

What is going to happen as a consequence of the debate in this Assembly today and the amendment that has been approved, with the help of Mr Rattenbury, is that we will not get to the bottom of what has gone wrong. We will not get the truth of what has happened. We will not understand why the minister got it so badly wrong. What we will get is some nice review praising the government, probably with a couple of comments in there on where they could have improved the service and so on. But the people that will be the big losers out of that—the big losers—will be the mothers and the staff and the infants who currently are not getting the services they should get in our health system.

We have come to this place again wanting scrutiny from this government. Again we have been thwarted, and it is disappointing. What we asked for was quite reasonable, and when you look at the notes that I brought into this place for my motion, all of them were factual. All of them covered essentially the story of what has happened. Nothing is inflammatory. I think even Mr Rattenbury said so in his speech—it was essentially a dissertation on what has occurred so far with this hospital project.

It called on some reasonable things: to ensure that the review into the hospital is conducted by an individual or organisation independent of the government—they did not want that—to circulate the terms of reference as soon as they are finalised—there is no mention in the amendment about the timings—to circulate the review within 24 hours of being received by the minister—no doubt she will sit on it, and she has organised it that way—and to make a statement to the Assembly to explain what she is currently doing to address the concerns raised by doctors, nurses and patients.

I do not think anything that was in that motion was unreasonable. We have again found ourselves in a situation where the minister has failed and has done everything she can to make sure the votes she has in this place thwart any attempt to uncover just how bad it is so that we can fix it in the future.

Question put:

That the motion, as amended, be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 8

Noes 7

Mr Barr	Ms Gallagher	Mr Coe	Mrs Jones
Ms Berry	Mr Gentleman	Mr Doszpot	Mr Seselja
Dr Bourke	Ms Porter	Mrs Dunne	Mr Wall
Ms Burch	Mr Rattenbury	Mr Hanson	

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Health—preventive measures

MS PORTER (Ginninderra) (5.53): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

(a) the Chief Health Officer's 2012 report which found that:

- (i) 52.9% of ACT adults were either overweight or obese in 2009-10;
- (ii) almost half of all children aged 5 to 17 years were not within a healthy weight range;
- (iii) 43.1% of ACT adults are not sufficiently physically active;
- (iv) smoking rates had improved but further efforts were required to reduce rates particularly amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders;
- (v) chronic conditions accounted for approximately 80% of the total burden of disease and injury in the ACT, with cancer and cardiovascular disease among the leading disease categories;
- (vi) the disease burden from chronic diseases is expected to increase over the next decade, largely due to an ageing population and changes in lifestyle; and
- (vii) approximately one-third of the overall disease burden can be attributed to largely preventable risk factors that impact adversely on the incidence and prevalence of many chronic conditions; and

(b) the importance of healthy lifestyles and preventative health strategies in reducing the burden of disease and injury on the community; and

(c) the ACT Government's current initiatives in preventative health; and

(2) calls on the ACT Government to report back to the Legislative Assembly in 12 months on progress being made by the Whole-of-Government Healthy Weight Group and other efforts being made to reduce the burden of disease.

In speaking to this important matter today, as a former registered nurse I firstly would like to commend the government on its investments to date in preventative health. Importantly, this Labor government has had the foresight to recognise that the investments we make today will deliver enormous benefits to individuals, the wider community and our health system over the longer term. I would also like to commend the Chief Minister on her courage to set the government a bold target to halt the rise in obesity levels. I am sure she will elaborate later on this.

Although Canberra is generally a very healthy community, there remain some worrying trends which have been confirmed once again by the Chief Health Officer's 2012 report, which was tabled here in the Assembly in August of this year. As members know, the report provides information on the health and wellbeing of the ACT population, including trends and indicators in health status, potential public health risks, morbidity and mortality, notifiable conditions, health promotion activities, harm minimisation activities and access and equity indicators relevant to health. It provides a wealth of information to support and inform government in the development of relevant policy and programs to address the trends and issues identified, and I thank the Chief Health Officer for his report.

The good news is that our health status is generally stable or improving. We enjoy longer life expectancies, and mortality rates are declining for many leading health concerns, such as cancer, cardiovascular disease, asthma and diabetes.

Pleasingly, the proportion of daily adult smokers has declined from 15.2 per cent in 2007 to 11.7 per cent in 2010. Smoking by secondary school students has halved in just over a decade, and long-term illicit drug use has also decreased. A deal of credit needs to be given to the government, and our Labor federal colleagues in the continued strong endeavour to reduce smoking rates.

Still, many in our community lead unhealthy lifestyles increasing the risk of premature death and disability. Unfortunately, more than half of all ACT adults are overweight or obese and, most worryingly, by kindergarten 15.7 per cent of children are already overweight or obese. The message is fairly well understood—we need to eat better and move more, and yet many are not heeding the warnings and not making those healthy choices. Being overweight and obese increases the risk of cardiovascular disease, some cancers, hypertension, musculoskeletal conditions, respiratory conditions, social isolation, depression and other psychological disorders and sleep apnoea.

Being overweight and obesity are significant public health problems not just in the ACT but for our nation. Chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes and cancer are of significant concern and account for a high proportion of deaths and disability and illness in the ACT. Nutritious food, regular physical activity and maintenance of healthy weight are vital for healthy growth and development in childhood and good health throughout life. They provide a foundation for coping with the stresses of daily life, improve people's general sense of wellbeing and reduce the risk of chronic diseases.

The government has, over many years, been driving this message through a range of initiatives and investments. Whilst I cannot outline all of these today, I would like to touch on a few. In the 2009-10 budget the ACT government allocated \$11 million over three years to support preventative health measures. The initiatives funded closely aligned with the preventive health agenda at the national level through the national partnerships agreement on preventive health signed by the Council of Australian Governments in November 2008. Specific campaigns have been developed

targeting children including promotion of active play, managing screen time, promoting and supporting the adoption of healthy eating habits and the acceptance of water as the drink of choice. Resources and programs have also been developed to support breastfeeding.

Achievements to date include the implementation of the national school canteen guidelines in April 2011, and I remember going with the Chief Minister and Dr Bourke to Hawker College in my electorate before the election where we launched an initiative for drinking water; the launch of ride or walk to school to encourage active travel in ACT schools; the launch of healthy food and sport in partnerships with sport and recreation; and the development of the healthy food at and school program.

The government has also been targeting workplaces promoting activity, healthy eating, smoking cessation, reduced alcohol consumption and stress management. A range of initiatives have been developed, including a pilot in five diverse ACT workplaces, to trial strategies and tools to support workplace health and wellbeing. In the Health Directorate a staff health and wellbeing initiative called “My health” has been established.

I would like to commend the government for recognising the need for a coordinated approach to tackle the risk factors that contribute to obesity. I am aware that a whole-of-government approach is now being led by the Chief Health Officer, and a further \$300,000 has been allocated in the 2012-13 budget to develop a healthy weight action plan to support this whole-of-government project. The Health Directorate has also recently launched its physical activity strategic framework 2012-15 and the food and nutrition strategic framework 2012-18.

The government’s focus is not only on obesity. We know that tobacco, as mentioned before, is a risk factor for a number of preventable diseases, and I am supportive of the government’s initiatives that target vulnerable groups. For example, the Chief Health Officer’s report found that tobacco use among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents was significantly higher than reported by non-Aboriginal residents. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women who gave birth were also significantly more likely to report tobacco use than non-Aboriginal ACT women giving birth.

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.

MS PORTER: To address this, work is underway to implement the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tobacco control strategy, which includes a new social and marketing campaign to encourage healthy lifestyles and smoking cessation in the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. The campaign will feature locally nominated champions talking about their motivation to live a healthy lifestyle. In addition, the Aboriginal midwifery program provided by Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service provides support and education to women about the risk of smoking in pregnancy.

Another important area in preventive health measures that I would like to mention is the pleasing rate of immunisation in the ACT. The ACT continues to report one of the highest levels of fully immunised children at the age of five in the nation. The proportion has increased, and 84 per cent of children were immunised in 2008-09, 89 per cent in 2009-10, and 91 per cent were fully immunised in 2010-11. This trend continued in 2011-12.

We know there is some concern amongst health professionals and the scientific community in relation to those who call on parents not to immunise their children. There have been recent calls on all parents to make sure they carry out these preventive steps and do not expose their children to possibly very debilitating and sometimes life-threatening illnesses.

As a former registered nurse, I have witnessed the death of a child whose parents had decided not to have their child immunised—a child who died from a preventable disease. Pleasingly, as I said, the rates of child immunisation are high and continue to improve, and I would encourage all parents to make sure they immunise their children appropriately.

In conclusion, I commend the government once more for its efforts in the health preventative area and urge everyone in this place to support continued investment in preventive health initiatives to reduce the burden of disease and injury in our community.

MR HANSON (Molonglo) (6.02): I thank Ms Porter for bringing this motion on today. I think it is a pretty good motion and I foreshadow that the Canberra Liberals will be supporting it. I think there may be some amendments coming later from Mr Smyth which add to the motion, but certainly I commend Ms Porter for bringing it on, because I have long been a champion of preventative health in the ACT, as members would be aware. I think perhaps it was the only thing that I and the former member Ms Bresnan ever agreed on.

Mr Rattenbury: There must have been something else.

MR HANSON: I am not sure there was anything else.

Mr Seselja: Queensland?

MR HANSON: Yes, we both supported Queensland in the State of Origin; that might have been another. If I think long and hard there may have been one or two others, but certainly that was one that we both did agree on. Indeed, the Canberra Liberals put out a health discussion paper in February 2010 and this is what I said:

The cost of delivering healthcare in the ACT is enormous, consuming nearly \$1billion of the ACT budget each year and growing at about 11 percent each year.

Indeed, that has come to pass:

The ACT Government is unlikely to be able to sustain this indefinitely ...

What is needed is a new long-term approach to health care in the ACT in which a greater emphasis is given to the provision of preventative health care and primary health care.

Our public hospitals are struggling to meet the needs of the Canberra community. Be it our long elective surgery waiting times, our access block or long waiting times at emergency departments, access to health services in the ACT often trails other parts of the nation. This situation is made more difficult by the large number of patients that use our hospitals, in particular the Canberra Hospital; in fact, 25 per cent or thereabouts of patients come from New South Wales. A piece of correspondence I received before the election from the Australian Salaried Medical Officers Federation makes a very good point:

In Canberra currently there are only 1.9 acute care hospital beds available per 1,000 ACT residents. This is well below the current ... national average of 2.6 per 1,000 ...

That is because of that 25 per cent. When you take away the ACT average, it gets down to that 1.9, one of the lowest in the nation. The demand for health, in particular hospital services, is going to rise significantly over the next 10 years as a result of a growing and ageing population. An analysis conducted by ACT Health in 2007 indicates that by 2022 the number of overnight hospital admissions will increase by 49 per cent and the number of overall hospital admissions will increase from 54,000 to 96,000.

A significant factor in this increased pressure on our hospital system will be a massive increase in the burden of chronic disease. Conditions such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, cancer and kidney disease are all increasing at alarming rates. It is clear that we need to expand the capacity of our public hospitals, but we must also find ways to take pressure off our hospitals.

According to the AIHW, chronic diseases contribute most to morbidity, disability and mortality in Australia. The Chief Health Officer's report referred to in Ms Porter's motion provides a comprehensive view of the impact of chronic disease on the ACT population and I recommend its reading to members. Some of the statistics and trends he outlines are very disturbing:

Chronic conditions accounted for approximately 80% of the total burden of disease and injury. Cancers (19%), mental disorders (15%), and cardiovascular disease (15%) were the leading disease categories contributing to total burden of disease and injury in the ACT.

The reasons for this increase in chronic disease are in part due to an ageing population but also due to lifestyle factors such as obesity and smoking. This is not isolated to the ACT, but with our ageing population it will have a particular impact.

Obesity is an issue that stands out as a looming challenge—and I think Ms Porter has identified this—because of its scale, because of its causal effect on chronic illnesses and because with the right policies much of the burden of disease caused by obesity could be prevented.

According to the ABS National Health Survey the ACT has the highest prevalence of long-term health conditions in Australia despite our relatively young population compared with some other states and despite our relatively high income. With an ageing population, the prevalence of disease will only grow. By increasing the emphasis on the prevention of chronic illness there is great scope to reduce the cost of caring for those with chronic conditions. For example, studies have shown that GP management plans, health checks and school-based exercise programs can be effective in addressing obesity.

We need to target the causes of chronic illness by enhancing preventative health strategies. We need to enhance the early detection of chronic disease, leading to early intervention and treatment of chronic disease, and we need to better promote and support self-management of chronic disease.

In June 2009 the Australian Preventative Health Taskforce released the national preventative health strategy and it covered a range of issues, but quite clearly the issues raised by that task force and its report show that they are complicated issues that require a whole of government approach across all the sectors in our community. Indeed, in the Chief Health Officer's report he identified:

A concerted effort between different sectors of government and commercial sectors and between government and non-government organisations is required

...

This is not just about the Health Directorate; it is whole of government. In fact, it is whole of community and if we are to get serious about a whole of community approach to preventative health it makes sense for the ACT to establish a preventative health task force and a preventative health strategy. The Canberra Liberals argued for this at the election, and it is disappointing that this initiative lacked support from Labor and the Greens.

I must say that I am a little confused by the minister's response to a question at question time today, where she said, "We have a strategy," and then she backed down and said, "Well, we're having one on development," and she said there is a task force but then said, "It is just an active living thing task force."

Quite clearly, this government does not have an ACT preventative health task force, nor does it have an ACT preventative health strategy. Anybody who turned up to the Public Health Association debate in the lead-up to the election—and there were over 100 people there—would have heard me argue as to Liberal Party policies for the requirement for a preventative health strategy and for the task force—and the minister argued against them, and it is disappointing that she did so.

An ACT preventative health task force, including members from the community sector, medical professionals, ACT Health officials and others, could develop a preventative health strategy for the ACT and provide ongoing advice to government on how best to achieve preventative health outcomes for the ACT. The independence of such a body set up that way with a prominent Canberran at its head would make a real difference in shaping government policy and community opinion.

We also pledged an additional \$1 million a year for preventative health measures and it is again disappointing that Labor did not support that initiative. The impact of many chronic diseases can be limited if the condition is diagnosed early and treatment programs are put in place immediately. Often early intervention will prevent chronic disease from becoming so severe that a patient requires hospitalisation.

An effective way to detect chronic disease and to provide early intervention and treatment is through regular visits to a general practitioner. John Menadue, who has conducted reviews of both the New South Wales and South Australian health systems, states that the evidence is clear that countries with strong primary healthcare have lower overall costs and generally have healthier populations, especially where there is higher primary care and primary care physician availability.

A number of federal government initiatives are available to general practice specifically for the treatment and management of chronic disease. The Canberra Liberals recognise the importance of a strong primary healthcare sector in preventative health and limiting the impact of chronic disease on our community, and it was again disappointing that at the election the Labor Party and the Greens did not support our \$5 million package to support GPs in our community.

Once diagnosed with a chronic disease, many patients seek information and help in managing that disease. This support can be provided in part by their general practitioner, but there are also many community-based health organisations that specifically provide support for people diagnosed with chronic illnesses. Much of the support focuses on and enables the patient to self-manage their illness. Self-management involves the person with the chronic disease engaging in activities that protect and promote health, monitoring and managing symptoms and signs of illness, managing the impact of illness on functioning, emotions and interpersonal relationships, and adhering to treatment regimes.

The benefits of this approach are self-evident. Self-management not only allows the patient to live a healthier life but empowers them, which in turn helps them to combat the psychological impact of living with a chronic illness. Self-management also takes a significant burden off our already stretched health and hospital system, often reducing or eliminating what would otherwise require frequent hospitalisations.

Many health services internationally and in Australia have recognised the importance of self-management of chronic disease. New South Wales has a self-management model. Much of this support is delivered by community-based health organisations and groups. For example, Arthritis ACT, in partnership with SHOUT—Self Help Organisations United Together—already deliver chronic condition self-management support in the ACT such as the course “Living a healthy life with chronic conditions”.

At the election the Canberra Liberals proposed enhancing self-management of chronic disease in the ACT by providing an additional \$200,000 a year to help fund groups supporting self-management of chronic disease in the ACT. This would support community groups to deliver information, run self-management courses, provide resources and support people self-managing chronic illness in the community.

Again it is disappointing that the Greens and the Labor Party failed to support this initiative. Instead, what we are seeing is this \$300,000 proposal from the Greens that is going to review a stand-alone birthing centre that the minister has already ruled out supporting. So what I would say to the minister is: why are you spending \$300,000 and why did you support something that you have already ruled out that the Greens proposed, but something that would actually provide support to people managing their chronic illness, something that we know is a problem in line with the motion that has been put here today by Ms Porter, you have ruled out? What an odd set of priorities this government has.

Although Ms Porter's motion is one that we support and has good words in it, the difference between the rhetoric in that motion and the reality on the ground is vast. This government says the right things. The motion is worthy. But what we see is that when it comes to the rubber hitting the road and choices that the government can make, and a choice here clearly between \$300,000 to support a feasibility study into something she has already ruled out, or the Canberra Liberals' initiative of \$200,000 to support the self-management of chronic illness, which is directly in line with the motion being brought forward by the minister's backbencher, what do we see? She supports the Greens.

Is that ideological? It is odd, because it is actually contrary to her ideology, which is not to support a birthing centre. So what is it? It would seem that she has put that \$300,000 in as a measure to secure government ahead of where the money should be being spent in our community, which is to support preventative health and people who are suffering from chronic illness.

I have long argued for better preventative health measures in the ACT. I acknowledge the steps where they are being taken. I acknowledge that work is being done. But I think the glaring gap is that we do not have a strategy. There is a national strategy. It is a comprehensive national strategy with seven steps that are being taken, and it has a number of key outcomes that are sought from that: to halt and reverse the rise in overweight and obesity; to reduce the prevalence of daily smoking to 10 per cent or less; to reduce the proportion of Australians who drink at short-term risky high levels to 14 per cent and the proportion of Australians who drink at long-term risky high levels to seven per cent; to contribute to "close the gap" target for Indigenous people, reducing the life expectancy gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

There is a strategy federally. There is a task force federally. The Canberra Liberals proposed this at the election and the Greens and the Labor Party rejected it. I simply do not understand why, and it was unfathomable to me that at the Public Health Association debate in front of over 100 people, where we were talking about the need

for better preventative health, where we were talking about the need for better coordination, where we were talking about the fact that this needs to be whole of government, indeed whole of community, the Greens and Labor would not support it.

So it seems that the government will not support a measure that is proposed by the Canberra Liberals and that makes all the sense in the world, but when it comes to providing \$300,000 for a review for something this government have already ruled out, they will support it. So this government are driven by politics, not by what is in the best interests of the community.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (6.17): I would like to thank Ms Porter for raising this motion today. The Greens are also very concerned about issues around healthy lifestyles, preventative health and healthy children. I think that addressing the increasing occurrence of childhood obesity and chronic illness is vital. The Greens have a very strong preventative health agenda, and active living and healthy lifestyles are a major part of this. We have been pleased to see that this has also been a growing area in health policy in the ACT, and more generally across Australia.

It is of huge concern that almost half of Canberra's children are not within a healthy weight range and that this trend increases into adulthood. This places a huge burden on our health system later down the track, as you can see with the small number of statistics Ms Porter noted in her motion alone, such as cardiovascular disease.

We know that we could reduce the pressure on our health system if we could reduce the incidence of disease and injury in the ACT which stems from chronic and preventable conditions related to inactive lifestyles and obesity. A key plank to achieving this is through implementing proactive preventative health measures.

The Greens' focus on early intervention in mental and dental health, as well as preventative health initiatives around diet, nutrition and physical activity, is about making the health system focus more on people's overall wellbeing and reducing pressure on the acute health system.

Ms Porter noted that rates of smoking have improved in the ACT overall but that further efforts need to focus on reducing rates of smoking for our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. Smoking is a major contributor to the life expectancy gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians and alone is responsible for 20 per cent of all deaths for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The national partnership agreement on closing the gap in Indigenous health outcomes includes important work on this issue. We are very lucky to have the national coordinator for tackling Indigenous smoking, and recent ACT Australian of the Year, Dr Tom Calma, based here in Canberra. I would like to take this opportunity to formally congratulate Dr Calma on his award, and I look forward to meeting with him to discuss a range of issues, including Indigenous smoking, in the near future.

According to the ACT Health Council, obesity is actually the biggest threat to the ACT's high life expectancy. Changes in food purchasing habits need to occur if we are to improve our society's health. The Greens understand that, to do this, we need to support children and families to eat healthier foods.

The Greens have been pushing for many reforms in this area, and for children specifically. To improve the health of all students, we would like to protect children from targeted junk food advertising, improve school canteens and expand breakfast clubs, and create more school gardens.

We understand that public school canteens are becoming increasingly complex to run and manage. This is due in part to fewer parents having the time to devote to volunteering and the increased work of complying with new policies. We also know that many school canteens across the country are ill-equipped to provide fresh and healthy food, with only heat-and-serve facilities and insufficient fridges and cooking areas. We would like to see the ACT build on the success of our well-established and successful school gardens, support young people to learn about more sustainable patterns of living, and build capacities for thinking, valuing and acting to create a more sustainable future.

In terms of the breakfast clubs, research studies indicate that children who eat breakfast perform better in school. Unfortunately, it is estimated that approximately 25 per cent of children regularly miss breakfast. Around the country there are hundreds of breakfast clubs which provide healthy food to children who may need a better start to the day. This is something that we need to think about very closely here in the ACT.

The Greens of course have been speaking about dental health, a very important part of overall long-term health and eating habits. It is certainly disturbing to hear of people who simply avoid raw fruit and vegetables because their teeth cannot cope with them. That is why we have pushed very actively at a national level to have denticare come onto the national agenda. We think there is a range of improvements that can be made here in the ACT to increase access to dental care.

There are a number of items in the parliamentary agreement which directly address healthy diet and lifestyle issues. In light of getting close to our adjournment time I will not go into details on those now, but I know that a number of members in this chamber have taken a very close interest in the parliamentary agreement, as question time demonstrated today. I look forward to a range of questions about those items at a later time.

I will simply conclude by saying that the Greens have long argued that preventative health is an investment that pays high dividends for people, the community and the health system. We believe that the best way to improve quality of life, health outcomes and ease pressure on acute health services is early intervention and encouraging healthy lifestyles. Thus, I will be supporting Ms Porter's motion today. I thank her for bringing it on as an important matter that should be discussed in the Assembly.

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (6.22): It is an important motion. As Mr Hanson did, I thank Ms Porter for bringing the motion on today. I would refer members to paragraphs 1(b) and (c). In paragraph 1(b) Ms Porter talks about the importance of a healthy lifestyle and preventative health strategies, and in paragraph (c) she talks about the ACT government's current initiatives in preventative health.

We all heard the minister speak at question time about how there is a preventative health task force in place and that she does actually have a preventative health strategy—or almost. When she was asked about the health promotion grants, she made the statement that we will be able to evaluate and measure whether that is having any impact on our preventative health strategy and improving health.

So she tells the Assembly that we have a preventative health strategy. There was a bit of across the chamber chatter, which of course, Madam Speaker, you would not allow. But Mr Hanson then poses the question:

You have a preventative health task force, have you? You have a preventative health strategy?

Ms Gallagher said:

We do, Mr Hanson. The work has been under development—

In fact, by her own admission earlier in the piece the Chief Minister misled the Assembly by claiming something that she did not have—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, Mr Smyth! You just used the words that the Chief Minister misled the Assembly. That can only be done by a substantive motion. I am going to ask you to withdraw.

MR SMYTH: We will think about that. But the Chief Minister claims something—

MADAM SPEAKER: Sorry, I asked you to withdraw.

MR SMYTH: The Chief Minister claimed something that does not exist. There is no preventative health strategy and there is no preventative health task force. Members, if you go onto the website for ACT Health and you type in the words “preventative health strategy” or “preventative health task force” three reports are found, or three references are found, in other documents. But there is no such strategy and there is no such task force.

I thought, Madam Speaker, that it is my poor IT skills. The minister, in her desperation, said, “Yes, Tony Stubbs is on that.” So I thought that I would enter “Tony Stubbs” into the ACT Health website. It does not appear. So I thought that perhaps it comes under Chief Minister. So I put it into the ACT government website, and Tony Stubbs is found in one reference for the GP task force, I think from 2009.

So it does not exist. It is a fantasy. After 11 years of failure, the government is currently working on it. That is why the amendment that I have circulated is very important. I move the amendment circulated in my name:

Add:

“(3) calls on the ACT Government to establish an ACT Preventative Health Taskforce; and

- (4) calls on the ACT Government to develop an ACT Preventative Health Strategy.”.

MADAM SPEAKER: The question is that Mr Smyth’s amendment to Ms Porter’s motion be agreed to.

MR SMYTH: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The amendment makes it abundantly clear that the Assembly wants these things. Of course, the government will vote for this because they believe in preventative health task forces and they believe in preventative health strategies, because the Chief Minister told us she already has them. So it will be impossible for the government to oppose these amendments and it will be impossible for the Greens minister, in whatever position he is performing today, to oppose this, because apparently he is in favour of it as well. So let us see whether people actually live up to what they say.

So what paragraph (3) does is to call on the ACT government to establish an ACT preventative health task force, not an active living task force. I am aware of the active living program that the Heart Foundation runs. I searched for “active living task force”. I could not find it either on either of the websites; so this must be a very special task force because nobody is allowed to know who is on it and nobody is allowed—

Ms Gallagher: Don’t patronise.

MR SMYTH: “Don’t patronise,” says the Chief Minister. You were patronising when you told us that you had a preventative health strategy, and you do not have one. You told us.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Smyth, standing order 42.

MR SMYTH: Sorry, Madam Speaker. Through you, Madam Speaker, the Chief Minister was patronising to the entire place. Indeed, she was patronising to the entire ACT community when she thought that because she said it, the people of the ACT would believe that she had a preventative health strategy and that she had a task force. She has neither.

So let us make it abundantly clear. We can fix this today. We can add paragraphs (3) and (4) to Ms Porter’s motion and the government can then get on with the job. Apparently, if you believe what the Chief Minister said, this work has been under development. Having already said that she had it, that the task force is in place, she went on to say:

... as I explained to you during the election campaign. It is another one where you came and copied the work that was already underway in the health area.

She said that the work has been under development. So the strategy does not exist and the task force does not exist. So what these two additions, paragraph (3) and paragraph (4) do, is establish beyond doubt that the ACT Assembly, all of us, representing the people of the ACT, would like to see a preventative health task force. Prevention is better than cure. A number of us have said that here this afternoon.

So let us put it beyond a doubt. Let us all agree to it. Because the Chief Minister thinks it is already coming, it will not be a burden for her to agree to these things. It will not be a burden at all for the government in its entirety to agree to this. It is important to have a strategy. We can talk about it, but we need deliverables.

If you go to Ms Porter's motion, she does outline some of the problems which assail us as a community. Fifty-two per cent of adults are overweight or obese. Half the children aged five to 17 are not within a healthy range. Forty-three per cent of adults are not sufficiently physically active. Smoking rates have improved, but there is more to do, particularly among our Indigenous folk. Chronic conditions accounted for approximately 80 per cent of the burden of disease and injury.

If I remember rightly, approximately a third of the ambulance trips to the emergency department at our hospitals are those for people with chronic illness. This goes beyond the Health portfolio. It affects all aspects of government. Apparently, we all agree that we should be working on preventative health. Surely then it is not unreasonable to have a preventative health strategy. It would not be unreasonable to have a task force to work on that strategy and have a task force to help deliver that strategy.

The minister spoke of the Heart Foundation's active living program. I have to say that if you have not read the document, it is a very, very comprehensive document. It covers a whole lot of things like city planning and access to important infrastructure, whether it be, for instance, things like light rail, bus services, cycle paths, footpaths, sporting grounds and things of that nature. The Heart Foundation is to be commended for the work that they have done because what it does is say that you can build a city that by its existence helps people to be active.

Of course, we know that there was a report early this week or late last week that said it was not what our kids were eating that particularly made them obese or fat. It was their lack of activity. I can remember the days, and it is not so long ago, when I was a child. We were very lucky. We lived in Colebatch Place in Curtin. It was part of a Radburn estate which looked onto a park. The backdoors of the homes fronted the street, the fronts of the houses fronted onto a park.

It was not uncommon on even a school afternoon for 20 or 30 kids to be out the front playing football or cricket. We actually managed two full cricket sides and a cheer squad. It was the same with the football. Kids used to get out. These are the things that such a task force would look at. These are the things that a task force would include in its strategy. These are the things for which we should have targets.

For instance, we know that throughout the drought the government shut ovals. They denied communities good playing surfaces. They are now spending a fortune to rehabilitate those surfaces. There are suburbs without ovals in this city. That is a shame because that discourages kids. That sends a really interesting message: "No, we are not going to keep your oval because we cannot afford to. We think it is unimportant."

This is why it is important that you do have an ACT preventative health task force and strategy. It is important if we want to age in place. For instance, another one of our policies during the election was a pool for Lanyon. The people of the Lanyon Valley—you can look at the voting on this—particularly felt that that was a good idea. The people of Lanyon told Mr Wall, Nicole, Val, Zed and me that, yes, they were interested in a green bin. They did not want their rates tripled and they wanted a pool. UnitingCare, I think it is, is building at Gordon, just opposite the Lanyon shops, quite a large aged-care facility. There are a lot of older people in Lanyon. People think it might be the tail end of nappy valley but it is not.

The government itself has built a large complex of about 56 aged persons units near the Lanyon shops which, again, needs facilities to support it. If we want to keep people healthy into their older years and keep them out of the acute healthcare system, and if we want to reduce the cost of running the system so it does not grow at the rate that it has been growing, to do that we must address preventative health, we must prevent chronic illness and we must look at chronic disease management. These were policies that we took to the election. The Chief Minister decried both of these policies that are absolutely the essence of Ms Porter's motion today.

It is a policy of keeping people well for as long as you can. They will inevitably get ill. The ACT has some of the highest rates of illness in the country. We know that from the reports. The figures are expected to double in the next decade. If we do not get ahead of it now, we will never catch it or the expense of catching it will be so enormously large and such a big impost on the budget that it will be nigh on impossible.

I commend the amendment to the chamber.

Motion (by **Ms Burch**) proposed:

That debate be adjourned.

Mr Hanson: Are we talking about adjourning the debate or adjourning the Assembly?

Ms Gallagher: The debate.

Mr Smyth: Why can't we just finish it?

Ms Gallagher: Because we have set the time.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order! We cannot debate the question whether the debate can be adjourned.

Question put:

That debate be adjourned.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 8

Noes 7

Mr Barr	Ms Gallagher	Mr Coe	Mrs Jones
Ms Berry	Mr Gentleman	Mr Doszpot	Mr Smyth
Dr Bourke	Ms Porter	Mrs Dunne	Mr Wall
Ms Burch	Mr Rattenbury	Mr Hanson	

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Debate adjourned to the next sitting.

Adjournment

Motion by **Mr Rattenbury** proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Legislative Assembly sittings Canberra Philatelic Society

MR COE (Ginninderra) (6.37): It is very disappointing that Wednesday evening sittings seem like they are going to be cut from the sitting week, as demonstrated today. There are two items that were listed for debate today that will not be discussed because this government wants to sit for fewer weeks, have longer lunches and shorter days. We do not think it is acceptable and we will be doing everything we can to continue Wednesday evening sittings.

I rise today to put on the record my support and congratulations for the Philatelic Society of Canberra, which is celebrating its 80th birthday. The Philatelic Society of Canberra was formed in November 1932, with 18 members. The aims of the society include the cultivation, study and advancement of philately in all its branches. The society holds meetings to exchange information, read papers, deliver lectures and hold discussions about philately.

At its first meeting, the society elected the Postmaster-General, the Hon Archibald Parkhill, as its patron, and H Woodhouse as its first president. The society met regularly during the 1930s to conduct general business, view members' displays and conduct exchanges. Many young members joined the society during this period and the society ran a junior competition to encourage young people to become involved.

The society was less active during the war but resumed activities in 1946. New initiatives at that time included the production of blank first-day covers for members, as well as Christmas cards to raise funds. Meetings became irregular in the early 1950s but resumed in 1956, and there have been regular meetings ever since. Through the 1960s the society settled in the Griffin Centre and established a club room as a

venue for meetings and to house its library. Meetings increased, and the society held its first exhibition in the Albert Hall in 1963.

The society reached its height during the late 1970s and early 1980s, with over 270 members. It won the “Stamp News” most active society competition on four occasions and commenced holding national conventions and publishing *Capital Philately*. Other activities included post office and school displays, as well as the school of philately and National Stamp Week.

During the 1990s the society ran junior meetings, commenced a monthly stamp fair and focus group meetings and established the postcard branch and the Machin study group. The Australian Philatelic Federation introduced the Australian philatelic order in the 1990s and several members of the Philatelic Society of Canberra became members of the order.

More recently, the society has moved many of its activities online and members have been able to use the internet to contact other philatelists to buy and sell stamps and conduct research. While stamp collecting is not as widespread as it was in the past, the society continues to be an active club, with regular meetings, a strong library and the publication of *Capital Philately*. The society’s current committee comprises the president, Ian McMahon, vice-president Darryl Fuller, secretary Tony Luckhurst, treasurer John Vassallo and other committee members—Tim Cowley, Bruce Parker, Paul Barsdell, Jeff Trinidad, John Davis, Marilyn Gendek, Daniel Tangri and Jenni Creagh.

To celebrate their 80th birthday, the society hosted a lunch at the Hellenic Club on 4 November, which was very well attended. As an aside, it is worth noting that the Hellenic Club is a superb venue for the Canberra Stamp Show which is an exhibition held in very high regard all around the world. At the lunch, it was wonderful to hear of the role the society has played in Canberra and in the lives of the members. I was very pleased to be given an opportunity to say a few words on behalf of my grandmother about my late grandfather, Mr Alan Salisbury ISO. He collected for many years and was the 1980 “Stamp News” collector of the year and was made a member of the Australian philatelic order in September 1995.

I was honoured to be part of the 80th birthday celebrations and I congratulate the society on their many achievements. People interested in finding out more about the Philatelic Society of Canberra should visit www.canberrastamps.org.

Woden Community Service

DR BOURKE (Ginninderra) (6.41): I rise tonight to commend the work of the Woden Community Service and, in particular, their progress in building a reconciliation action plan. I was proud to be at the launch of the latest plan recently where Auntie Jannette Phillips gave her welcome to country. Julie Evans from Woden Community Service and Leah Armstrong, the CEO of Reconciliation Australia, both spoke of the importance of taking action to build reconciliation in our community.

Woden Community Service’s vision is about building a diverse and cohesive community—a community that welcomes all its members, acknowledges the original ownership and custodianship of the Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples, respects their continuing cultures and values their contributions to our lives

today. Woden Community Service wants to help redress some of the disadvantage experienced by first Australians through its programs. It will also enjoy the fruits of reconciliation.

Woden Community Service is one of six regional community services in Canberra. In my electorate of Ginninderra in April this year I had the pleasure of launching Belconnen Community Service's reconciliation action plan. We celebrated BCS's commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and to reconciliation in the workplace and the community.

Reconciliation is nation building. In 1788 this country was invaded and the dispossession of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders began. This is our history. We cannot change it. We cannot ignore our history because it is part of us. Yes, we can change our future to become an Australia without shame and embarrassment or the anger of dispossession. As I said in my inaugural speech in this Assembly, reconciliation will be the nation building task of this century, a nation building that redefines what is Australia and what it means to be an Australian. As Phillip Pepper, Gurnai elder said, we are what we make ourselves to be. Australia is its people, the land and a shared future.

Reconciliation action plans are about building a future together. In organisations and communities, these plans are about taking practical, planned steps with visible progress. Good intentions alone are not enough. The ideal of reconciliation is generally welcomed in our community, but knowing where to start can be confronting without a plan or a framework. Reconciliation Australia offers their extensive expertise online and in person to organisations wanting to start the reconciliation journey.

Woden Community Service's plan was developed by staff, members of the Woden community, including the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, and other community organisations working together. The Woden Community Service RAP working group draws on staff across the organisation and regularly reports to staff and the leadership group. The process of developing a RAP plan brings people in and makes implementation less daunting. Actions of the plan are about building a dialogue, including getting to know the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community better and building mutually beneficial relationships, actively participating in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and their events, projects and celebrations, and making Woden Community Service accessible to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and ensuring their needs are met by the service.

The plan is about building respect and celebrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture. Part of this is building cultural awareness in staff through courses and using ACTCOSS's cultural awareness self-assessment toolkit. It is about creating opportunities, actively building the capacity through recruitment, training, supporting governance and business opportunities. I congratulate Woden Community Service on their reconciliation journey. It is inspiring to see their commitment and to see them enjoying the benefits that flow from this initiative. As the first Indigenous member and minister of the ACT Legislative Assembly, I am honoured to have been part of the launch of Woden Community Service's latest reconciliation action plan.

West Belconnen Health Co-op

MS PORTER (Ginninderra) (6.46): I rise briefly this evening to talk about the West Belconnen Health Co-op, as mentioned yesterday evening by Dr Bourke. As members may remember, I was part of the small steering committee that worked to establish the co-op. I know, Madam Speaker, you also attended some of those meetings in the early days when we worked together to establish the co-op. I applaud the work and success of that co-op, which has been achieved under the chairmanship of Michael Pilbrow and his fellow board members. They are holding their AGM this evening. I hope to get to some of that after the adjournment debate and to be able to congratulate the board in person and also welcome the new board. Again, I congratulate them on all their wonderful work.

Belconnen dog park

MS BERRY (Ginninderra) (6.47): This evening I want to talk about one of my many experiences on the campaign trail, and that is my interactions with some of the dogs and their families who live in the community out in west Belconnen, what they mean to the homes that they live in, and the ACT government's announcement to improve the Belconnen dog park facilities in Belconnen to allow for smaller dogs to roam freely without being intimidated by larger dogs.

Just by way of providing some context, my volunteers and I visited some 7,000-odd homes over the course of the election campaign, right throughout west Belconnen. Among the many interesting things that stood out to me and my team was the sheer number of families with dogs. They were everywhere.

Some of the more memorable dogs I came across were Deevo the whippet from Macgregor, Reg the sheepdog from Holt and Toby the terrier from Dunlop. I took my own dog, Elkie, out on the campaign trail a number of times and I can definitely guarantee that on a number of occasions Elkie was the real vote winner.

As those amongst us who are dog owners know all too well, owning a dog is a lot of fun. Dogs provide good company, lots of affection and unconditional love. Well, it is not really unconditional because, for a dog, food always comes before love.

Many studies show that owning a dog improves your health by encouraging you to get out and about and they are shown to help reduce stress levels. Madam Speaker, in your new role, if you do not have one already, perhaps you will become a dog owner in order to manage anxiety levels regarding the behaviour in this place.

In June this year the Chief Minister announced a \$170,000 upgrade to the Belconnen dog park. This upgrade will create a new space for smaller dogs so that owners of small dogs can bring them to the Belconnen dog park and know that they will not be threatened by larger dogs. The upgrade also includes expanding the parking available for this popular dog park.

Many dog owners in west Belconnen take their dogs to the park to socialise, catch up with friends and get their dogs some exercise. On the campaign trail, I received a lot of positive remarks about this improvement and they were very happy to hear that the government was playing an active role in building and improving this kind of infrastructure in our community.

Therefore I was very pleased when the government announced that it would soon be designing and building a brand new dog park in the inner north. This \$300,000 investment will ensure that dog owners in Canberra's north are well looked after and that they will not have to go very far to give their best friend a safe and social place to play.

These initiatives show that the ACT government cares not only for the people of Canberra but for their dogs as well.

Tandem

MR WALL (Brindabella) (6.49): I rise tonight to acknowledge the work of Tandem. I recently had the opportunity to attend the Tandem AGM for 2012. Tandem offer a wide range of services to the community, supporting families of children with a disability, adults with a disability, people suffering from mental illness, as well as support for the frail aged. The services they offer to their clients range from after-school and holiday care programs to home care and respite services. In the past financial year, Tandem provided over 115,000 hours of care to in excess of 600 Canberrans. These hours of service are delivered by over 180 dedicated staff and volunteers.

I would like to pay a special mention to the members of the Tandem board: the President, Peter Gordon; Secretary and Public Officer, Karen Noble; Treasurer, Cath Sutton; and the general members Steve Dascarolis, Mark Vergano, Catherine Argall PSM, Joan Ross, Patrick White and Ron Kingsbury OAM. Their dedication to Tandem and the community continue to enrich the lives of many Canberrans.

I would also like to congratulate one of Tandem's services, Tandem House, for being awarded the ABC's Saturday gardening spruce-up. Each year ABC Canberra conduct a garden makeover of a local not-for-profit charity. Many of the landscaping materials are donated by local businesses, and countless Canberrans will give up their time on Saturday, 1 December to provide much of the manual labour required to plant plants and construct garden beds. Recently Tandem CEO Cheryl Pollard said:

We are thrilled to be welcoming the Saturday Breakfast team and the wider Canberra community to Tandem House on 1 December. This event will not only help to raise people's awareness of the needs of many in our community, but will also help to provide all those who go to Tandem House with a fun, safe and accessible outdoor space to enjoy.

I wish Tandem and all of their supporters all the best for the upcoming spruce-up. I congratulate Tandem again for all the hard work they continue to do in the community and I look forward to building a strong relationship with them over the coming term.

Legislative Assembly business

MR HANSON (Molonglo) (6.52): I would like to make a few brief comments about the conduct of tonight's debate that was curtailed. I must say that I was severely disappointed. There was a motion that we all essentially agreed on in this place. There were some amendments that were going to be discussed. But it was a worthy motion discussing preventative health—something that is important to our community. There was some important debate to be had, particularly with the amendments, in terms of the requirement for a task force and a strategy. There remains some element of confusion about that.

I think it highlighted the very poor decision by the government and Mr Rattenbury to decide that we would essentially muzzle debate on a Wednesday, against the standing tradition of this place throughout the last Assembly, which was that on a Wednesday night we would sit late, until all matters of business had been concluded. Sometimes that was done by seven; sometimes it was done by 9.30. But for this government to make the decision that they were going to adjourn debate in the middle of one of their own member's motions, to prevent a member of the opposition from raising a very important motion, I think again highlights the arrogance and hubris with which this government is operating.

We have seen members of this government, most notably the Chief Minister and Minister Burch, sit there pointing out forefingers and saying "four more years, four more years" in a really arrogant, hubristic, disgraceful way—

Mr Doszpot: "Crass", I thought was a better word.

MR HANSON: "Crass" is a good word, Mr Doszpot. I think that if the community saw the way that this government was carrying on—and in particular, for those members who did not vote for this government, which is carrying on in its arrogant fashion, to see that it is cutting debate for their own members—the community would be egregiously disappointed in what has happened. I want that noted.

I think that we need to have late sittings on a Wednesday, because we have already given ourselves longer lunches and we are having fewer sittings. This Assembly, through its majority of the government and the Greens, is curtailing debate. Again, we are seeing a lack on the part of this government with the correlation between their rhetoric about open, accountable government and being open to scrutiny, and the reality, which is that at every step they have done everything they can to muzzle debate and to reduce scrutiny.

Question put:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 7

Noes 7

Mr Barr
Ms Berry
Dr Bourke
Ms Burch

Ms Gallagher
Mr Gentleman
Ms Porter

Mr Coe
Mr Doszpot
Mrs Dunne
Mr Hanson

Mrs Jones
Mr Smyth
Mr Wall

Question so resolved in the negative.

Waste—management

MR COE (Ginninderra) (7.02): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) effective waste management and reduction is vital to a well-managed city;
- (b) garden waste is often improperly disposed of and ends up in landfill;
- (c) the Canberra Liberals announced plans to:
 - (i) provide Canberrans with a third bin for garden waste;
 - (ii) test the market to identify a suitable public-private partnership model to deliver this initiative;
 - (iii) talk to our regional counterparts to explore collaborative models to collect and process other forms of organic waste; and
 - (iv) provide a capital grant of \$10 million for the construction of a garden waste processing facility or the upgrade of an existing facility; and

(2) calls on the ACT Government to improve waste management by implementing the Canberra Liberals' policy to provide a third garden bin.

What a pleasure it is to have a second bite at the cherry today and continue the important work of private members. The opposition have long been advocates of Wednesdays being an opportunity to represent the views of our electorates or our constituencies. There are 11 non-executive members in this place who have an opportunity on Wednesdays to bring forward issues of extreme importance to their electorates, to their community, and it is disappointing that issues such as giving Canberra households a garden bin have been guillotined by this government.

It is interesting that the very power, the muscles the government wanted to flex to guillotine this motion, is indeed the very strategy which has led the government to not having the confidence of the floor of the Assembly to be able to get their motions up. As it stands, at present in this chamber the government do not have confidence. It is up to the government to maintain a majority on the floor, and the fact that they are unable to do that today is a bit worrying.

With regard to a third bin for garden waste, this is something which the Canberra Liberals have believed passionately about for many years. In fact we took this to the election in 2008 and of course it was received extremely well. I think seven of the eight of us on this side of the chamber fought that election in 2008, and I think all seven of us would remember how well received it was. You can rest assured that, when you are out doorknocking, you are at shopping centres or you are letterboxing, the issues of garden waste, of green bins and core municipal services are issues that regularly and repeatedly come up.

This year the opposition was proud once again to take the issue of a third bin for Canberrans to the electorate for the October election and it was once again well received. It is interesting that the one person that is absent from this chamber, the one person who missed a division on this, is of course the Greens member. The Greens' position on a green bin is actually quite interesting because they got sold a pup by the government. Remember when the government said it was going to cost tens of millions of dollars, it was impractical, it could not be done, it could not be budgeted for? Well, Treasury said otherwise: in actual fact, rather than being the tens of millions of dollars that the government said, it actually was only \$7 million.

So there is a large discrepancy in the figures put out as political spin by the Labor Party versus the costed policy prepared by the Treasury, and of course it was the Labor Party that sold this pup to the Greens. The Greens trusted them, like the Greens did on so many issues. The Greens took it on face value and then they, just like the Labor Party, were embarrassed when Treasury came back and said that the costing that the Liberal Party put forward was indeed accurate.

While we are talking about green waste, let us talk about the Greens' electoral performance. They have gone from four members down to one; Mr Rattenbury's vote halves, yet somehow they see themselves as an authority on all and sundry. On issues like this I believe the real authority lies with the voters, and the voters treat issues such as a third bin for garden waste as a high priority. They do not necessarily want an ACT government to talk about saving the world. They want an ACT government that is going to deliver the basics. They want a government that is going to deliver on rubbish. They want a government that is going to deliver on improving footpaths. They want a government that is going to deliver on road infrastructure. They want a government that is going to cut grass. They want a government to do all the essential services. And perhaps they also want ministers to be in the chamber. They also expect people to do their job. They also expect the Assembly to sit more than 13 weeks a year. They expect the Assembly to actually discuss private members' business. They expect the Assembly to debate late into the night if that is the will of this place.

Instead, Mr Rattenbury's absence is indicative of the fact that they are treating this as a majority government. They are treating this Assembly with disrespect and disdain and we on this side of the chamber will not support it.

Mr Smyth: On a point of order perhaps, Madam Speaker, I am aware that the staff need to go for an evening meal so it might be appropriate to call a break now for dinner.

MADAM SPEAKER: Is it the will of the Assembly to suspend for dinner?

Mr Gentleman: On the point of order, Madam Speaker, if I could, in our admin and procedures committee yesterday we outlined the need for staff to have a break after five hours, so the commencement time for question time was 14.30.

MADAM SPEAKER: I understand that. I am in a position that, if I ask whether it is the will of the Assembly to suspend for dinner and it is seven all, we cannot suspend for dinner and we cannot comply with the enterprise bargain. I am in a position where I think that we have to suspend for dinner. Is it the will of the Assembly to suspend for dinner?

Mr Barr: No, is it not

MADAM SPEAKER: If you force me to put it to a vote, Mr Barr, I predict that we will be in a situation where we—

Mr Barr: I predict we won't.

MADAM SPEAKER: You predict we will not, okay. Is it the will of the Assembly to suspend for dinner?

Mr Barr: No.

MADAM SPEAKER: The Clerk has refreshed my memory. You have essentially removed leave for me to suspend the sitting. Therefore you have put me in an invidious position where I will have to vacate the chair until the ringing of the bells, because we cannot adjourn and I have to suspend the sitting. So what is it going to be? The Assembly will be suspended until the ringing of the bells while we sort this out.

At 7.10 pm the sitting was suspended until the ringing of the bells.

The bells having been rung, Madam Speaker resumed the chair at 7.18 pm.

MADAM SPEAKER: I will begin where I left off before. Is it the wish of the Assembly that we should suspend for dinner?

Motion (by **Mr Barr**) put:

That debate be adjourned.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 8

Noes 7

Mr Barr
Ms Berry
Dr Bourke
Ms Burch

Ms Gallagher
Mr Gentleman
Ms Porter
Mr Rattenbury

Mr Coe
Mr Doszpot
Mrs Dunne
Mr Hanson

Mrs Jones
Mr Smyth
Mr Wall

Question so resolved in the affirmative

Debate adjourned to the next sitting

Adjournment

Motion (by **Ms Gallagher**) proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

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

That the question be now put.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Assembly adjourned at 7.21 pm.