



# Debates

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Legislative Assembly for the ACT

**EIGHTH ASSEMBLY**

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**Tuesday, 26 February 2013**

**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.

**Construction industry inquiry report—government response  
Paper and statement by minister**

**MR CORBELL** (Molonglo—Attorney-General, Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations and Minister for the Environment and Sustainable Development): Madam Speaker, for the information of members, I present the following paper:

“Getting Home Safely”—Inquiry into compliance with work health and safety requirements in the ACT’s construction industry—Government response.

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

Leave granted.

**MR CORBELL:** Today I am tabling the government response to the inquiry into compliance with work health and safety requirements in the ACT’s construction industry. As the Assembly knows, this government is committed to ensuring the safety of all workers in the ACT. This report sets out the challenges that we all face. The report paints a disturbing picture of workplace safety on territory construction sites, with an injury rate that is 31 per cent higher than the national average. The industry’s long-term injury performance is 50 per cent worse than most other jurisdictions and it is double the national average. These figures are unacceptable.

The report also found little in the way of industry confidence that this situation can be improved, and this is also unacceptable. The government acknowledge that construction is a high-risk industry. What we do not accept is that there is no room for improvement in terms of safety. The government will not stand by and allow the continuation of a culture that is complacent about workplace injury.

Injury at work not only affects the person being injured. It affects their family, their friends, their workmates and the broader community. No-one enjoys going to funerals. No-one enjoys visiting a family member or a friend in hospital. No-one should fear that they, or a loved one, will be injured at work. The report highlights the need for a cultural shift in the construction industry, one that encourages everyone on a construction site to look after their colleagues, themselves and their mates, and to ensure that everyone can go home safely.

Madam Speaker, I hope that those opposite will support the government in this important area. We must do better and we must strive to have the best safety record possible. In tabling the response, the government has indicated that it agrees with all of the 28 recommendations in the report. As I have indicated when I have spoken previously on the report, the government will take the lead on matters it is responsible for.

In response to the report, the government has already developed a package of measures designed to give effect to the recommendations and advance worker safety in the territory. The government has agreed to establish a senior executive level steering committee made up of deputy directors-general from all directorates which have capital works programs to ensure that those recommendations in the report are implemented.

The government will ensure that its own procurement processes are robust and will ensure that, when contracts are being considered, a tenderer's safety record is an important consideration. The government has already commenced consultation with industry on its model of proactive assurance for capital works projects.

I have already indicated that in the coming weeks the government will work to introduce legislation that will establish an industrial magistrates court in the ACT, and a review of the Building Act is underway. The government will be considering the most appropriate way of requiring the registration of engineers involved in the construction industry. In the interim, companies involved in civil construction projects will be required to ensure that any engineers they engage are appropriately qualified.

Additional WorkSafe inspectors will be available to provide education and advice and to assist business to improve the safety of construction sites. To ensure the sustainability of the territory's workers compensation and workplace health and safety schemes, the government has decided it will progressively transfer the cost of regulating workers compensation and work health and safety legislation to workers compensation insurers and self-insurers by way of a levy. The levy will be subject to a cap and should not increase premiums by more than 0.015 per cent per year. This measure will help to protect the integrity and the sustainable financing of these schemes into the future.

I anticipate introducing the enabling legislation to apportion work health and safety costs later this year. As can be seen, Madam Speaker, the government is already moving quickly to implement these recommendations. But, as I have said before and I stress again today, the government cannot do this alone. The majority of the recommendations in the *Getting home safely* report require a commitment from industries and unions to work together to implement positive change. I am pleased to see that there is already work in this regard underway.

An advisory committee established by the ACT Work Safety Council, with representatives from the building industry unions and employers, has already met on two occasions. This body will facilitate cooperation by industry participants in implementing the recommendations in the report. The MBA have taken a positive step in convening their own reference group to see how they can respond to the recommendations in the report. I look forward to this being the way forward.

I know that the MBA has commissioned its own report into issues surrounding safety in the building industry. I trust that that report is a report about implementation, about how to improve outcomes when it comes to work health and safety, and not a report designed to downplay the seriousness of the situation. That said, I welcome the

reassurances from the MBA on ABC radio this morning. It has indicated its intention to cooperate and to work towards improving work health safety in the territory.

The facts are, though, that more needs to be done. It is essential that everyone involved in the construction industry commits to improving safety, to making a real safety culture a reality, and to ensuring that every worker can come home safely at the end of the day. Many businesses who accept safety as part of their core business, rather than consider it a burden, I am confident will welcome this report and the government response. I hope that it was seen as a vindication for the safety culture that they have developed in their own businesses.

Those companies that are not willing to embrace change will soon learn that their business opportunities in the territory are limited, particularly when it comes to government contracts. The Canberra community is entitled to nothing less than the highest standard of workplace safety. The implementation of these recommendations, as set out in this report and in this government response, will help to set the construction industry on the road to achieving a better safety culture.

Construction workers and their families and friends need to feel more secure in knowing that the government, industry and unions are doing all they can to ensure that workers get home safely. The government are committed to this task, and we look forward to working with unions and employers to achieve it.

In conclusion, Madam Speaker, I have outlined in the government's response its commitment to providing the Assembly with six-monthly updates on the implementation of recommendations. This, I think, will provide a high level of visibility to the government's work and commitment to realising these recommendations. I commend the government response to the Assembly.

**MR RATTENBURY** (Molonglo), by leave: Madam Speaker, I would like to put on record the ACT Greens' strong support for reforms to safety in the ACT's construction industry. I think that the title of the inquiry "Getting home safely" sums it up perfectly. Everyone should have the right to go to work and to come home safely again. For ACT construction workers, that right has been at risk.

On average, every day a construction worker will sustain an injury in the ACT. Our serious injury rate is almost a third higher than the national average. The ACT construction sector's fatality rate was almost three times the rate of fatalities of all other industries. We are all aware of the tragic deaths that have occurred on ACT worksites over the last 18 months.

The Greens have actively pursued reform in work safety. Our recent election commitments focused on construction safety and reform of the construction industry. I am very pleased to see that some of the report's recommendations cover the same policy areas, such as an increase in the number of WorkSafe inspectors, a new focus on proactive inspections, and reform of the ACT's procurement system. In the coming months we will see the ACT move to a new system called "active certification".

The government has accepted all of the recommendations in the inquiry report, and I was very pleased to see that that was the case when Minister Corbell brought forward

the government response. The reforms will cover all stakeholders involved in the sector—government, workers, trainers and educators, and the private companies in the industry itself.

The Greens will be following the implementation of the recommendations with interest. In my view, one of the most challenging areas will be the ongoing engagement and compliance of the private sector. I think that the government's response of convening the working group, consisting of key private sector representatives, is a good approach and I believe that all members are participating in that in good faith.

I would also like to put on record the Greens' support for Ms Lynelle Briggs, who chaired the inquiry panel, and Mr McCabe, the Work Safety Commissioner. I think that the work they have done is excellent and was long needed. Mr McCabe's recent proactive "blitzes" on worksites, identifying safety issues, are welcome and I think essential to changing the culture in the sector to have a greater focus on safety.

I hope that this is the beginning of a major turnaround in the ACT construction sector, and I share the report's longer term goal of the ACT growing to be a leader in construction safety.

### **Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee Scrutiny report 3**

**MR HANSON** (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition): I present the following report:

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee (Legislative Scrutiny Role)—Scrutiny Report 3, dated 25 February 2013, together with the relevant minutes of proceedings

I seek leave to make a brief statement.

Leave granted.

**MR HANSON:** Scrutiny report 3 contains the committee's comments on three bills, 51 pieces of subordinate legislation and three government responses. The report was circulated to members when the Assembly was not sitting. I commend the report to the Assembly.

Madam Speaker, I apologise for my tardiness this morning. I note that the next item of business is removing me from the committee, so I hope the two issues are not connected!

I will take this opportunity to thank the committee members and secretariat for what has been for me a very interesting and informative process. So Max, thank you, and thanks also to the deputy chair, Mr Gentleman, Yvette Berry and Giulia Jones. I think we all have learned a lot more about the legislative process, the scrutiny process and the Human Rights Act by being on the committee, and I thank the members. I look forward to enjoying the future work of the committee; I will miss it.

## Membership

Motion (by **Mr Coe**) proposed:

That Mr Hanson be discharged from the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety and Mr Doszpot be appointed in his place.

**MR CORBELL** (Molonglo—Attorney-General, Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations and Minister for the Environment and Sustainable Development) (10.14): The government will support this motion this morning, but we do so with some reservation. The reservation is not the suitability of Mr Doszpot replacing Mr Hanson on the committee; the issue of some concern to the government is where Mr Seselja is in terms of his removal, his discharge from the public accounts committee.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mr Corbell, sit down, please. The motion before us today is that Mr Hanson be discharged from the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety and that Mr Doszpot be appointed in his place. It would be appropriate to address your comments to Mr Hanson's discharge and Mr Doszpot's replacement on the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety.

**MR CORBELL:** I am arguing, Madam Speaker, that it should be a wider remit, and that is entirely appropriate. I may need to consider an amendment. There really is some unfinished business—dare I say a rump of unfinished business—yet to be dealt with. The issue before us is that, clearly, the Liberal Party are going through some changes in relation to their membership of committees, as is outlined in the motion this morning, and the government's position is that this business is unfinished and that this motion should also encompass the issue of the discharge of Mr Seselja as chair of the public accounts committee. We know Mr Seselja has been successful in securing preselection to be the Liberal Party's candidate for senator here in the ACT. Clearly the question now before the Liberal Party is when they are properly going to—

**Mr Coe:** Point of order.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mr Corbell, thank you. Mr Coe, on a point of order.

**Mr Coe:** Madam Speaker, you have already called him to order on relevance. I ask you to reassess Mr Corbell's statements and whether they are, in fact, consistent with the motion I just moved.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I have already drawn your attention, Mr Corbell, to the terms of the motion. It is not appropriate for you to stray onto what you or anyone else might think about the membership of another committee. I ask you to be relevant to the matter at hand.

**MR CORBELL:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am simply indicating that it is appropriate for me, in speaking to the motion, to canvas what other matters I believe the motion should be addressing.

**Mr Coe:** On a point of order.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** There is a point of order. Thank you, Mr Coe.

**Mr Coe:** Madam Speaker, if the minister would like to canvass other issues then he should move an amendment. He has not done so, therefore his comments should be restricted to the motion I moved involving the JACS committee, Mr Hanson and Mr Doszpot.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I uphold the point of order. Mr Coe is correct. Minister, I ask you to confine your comments in relation to the composition of the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety. If you cannot do that, I will ask you to conclude your comments.

**MR CORBELL:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I, of course, accept your ruling. Clearly those opposite are a little touchy on this issue. Clearly the decision to discharge Mr Hanson is part of the transition in the Liberal Party, and there is clearly still unfinished business. We look forward to Mr Hanson as leader taking the necessary steps to make sure that the transition is complete and that there is no outstanding rump of matters still to be addressed.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

## **National disability insurance scheme**

### **Statement by minister**

**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) (10.19), by leave: In December last year the ACT, along with four states, agreed with the commonwealth government to become launch sites for the NDIS, the national disability insurance scheme. The ACT government welcomes the opportunity to work collaboratively with the commonwealth government to establish a launch site in the ACT for the most significant social reform in this country since the introduction of Medicare.

The NDIS is a national insurance scheme for people with a disability. In addition to people who have an intellectual or developmental disability, the NDIS will be available to those born with a physical disability; it will be available to those who acquire a disability from an accident; and it will be available to people with a psychosocial disability.

The NDIS changes the current provision of support for people with a disability. The NDIS may double the national funding average for people with a disability and put their needs at the centre.

This is a national reform that will help smooth out inequities that people with a disability may now experience—inequities based on age, based on where and how



they acquired their disability or based on where they live. The NDIS provides equity so that people with disability will receive the care and support they need over their lifetime regardless of where they live.

The NDIS will not only support those in our community who most need our support; it will contribute very positively to the whole community by assisting those people with a disability who can work to enter or get back into the workforce. It will also help the carers of people with a disability by providing funding for support services.

From July 2014 eligible ACT residents will begin to transfer to the NDIS. We expect 2,500 Canberrans with disability and enduring psychosocial disability to begin to receive this support during 2014-15. The number of people supported by the NDIS is likely to increase to approximately 5,000 by June 2016. In the meantime, from July this year, the ACT and Australian governments will invest \$10.6 million to respond to the demand for disability services that we know exists today. Our government is committed to working with the sector to improve the choice and control that people with disabilities, their families and carers have over the care and support they need.

In preparing eligible Canberrans for choice and control under the NDIS, one of the key groups that were initially focused on was young people aged 18 to 25 with high and complex needs who have left school and are transitioning to adult lives. These young people will receive additional supports for their engagement in meaningful daytime activities, such as vocational, recreational and social activities, in accordance with their whole of life goals and ambitions. We will assist these young people and their families to make use of flexible disability support services that aim to provide meaningful activities for the young people and certainty for their families.

Our enhanced service offer in the ACT will enable eligible people to have access to a broad range of support which will seek to improve quality of life and independence while also providing a break for their families and carers. The types of supports and services to which people may have access will include aids and equipment, modifications which increase their independence, access to daytime activities to enhance community inclusion, and respite services.

The NDIS is a significant change to the way support services are funded and provided and will impact on people with a disability, their families and carers. It will require a transition for those who provide services and for governments as well. Transition programs are being developed with all of these groups to ensure that they are ready for the NDIS.

We do not walk down this path alone. The commonwealth government will contribute to enhanced disability service delivered in the ACT from July this year while we prepare for the transition in July next year when the first client comes through the entry gateway of the NDIS transition agency. The commonwealth has committed to investing \$12 million in the ACT in sector preparation and workforce development. Nationally there is \$122.6 million for this important preparation and strengthening of the community sector.

The scope of the transition for community and government services supporting people with disability and psychosocial disabilities should not be understated. Current service providers will move from being fully block funded by government to operating in an open market in which the person with a disability has been provided with funding for reasonable and necessary supports and can choose who will provide their services. Government will also need to consider its role as a service provider in this new environment.

To help community sector service providers through the transition period, Disability ACT and mental health providers have been advised that their funding agreements will be extended for one year to June of next year to align with the commencement of clients transitioning to the NDIS.

The ACT NDIS Taskforce is working closely with the Health Directorate in developing a consistent approach to changes for funding for disability and mental health services during the one-year extension and helping providers with NDIS readiness during the transition period, which begins now and goes through to July 2016.

The NDIS Taskforce will be working with the community sector this year to map the programs that will be in scope for the NDIS. This mapping will explore the interface with mainstream services. Some services will continue to be provided as mainstream services, such as clinical health services, education, public housing and so on. Funding for other supports will transition to the NDIS. For example, hospitals will continue to be mainstream, but early intervention programs for children with a disability and the provision of equipment will be considered to be in the scope of the NDIS.

The home and community care program supports younger people with a moderate, severe or profound disability. There will be a need to transition HACC funding arrangements for some of these clients with a disability.

Looking ahead, we see the need for supports for those who need assistance to genuinely engage to their fullest potential through the control and choice offered through an NDIS. To help with this, we have provided \$50,000 in grants for two providers of individual advocacy services. These grants will support the sector through these major reforms.

Advocacy for Inclusion was funded to undertake research on self-advocacy models for people with disabilities. AFI is exploring how much choice and control people with disabilities have in their lives, particularly over their support, and the factors that help them maximise their choice and control. The purpose of this is to identify what supports people with disabilities may need in order to have choice and control when the NDIS is introduced. It is a qualitative research project involving direct semi-structured interviews with people with disabilities.

The supported decision-making research project focused on empowering people to assert more control over their lives through self-directed funding. Many people who

will qualify for funding under the NDIS have not had the opportunity to make basic decisions in their lives and, as a result, lack decision-making skills and experience. This research project is trialling formal decision-making based on a recently developed South Australian supported decision-making model, within the legislative environment of the ACT.

In this phase of development it is important that we work collaboratively across government and non-government. There is still work to do before advice can be given about exactly what will happen to every individual, every organisation, every carer and every family—which, of course, is what everybody does want to hear. The scheme requires coordination between the ACT and commonwealth governments and with our community partners.

As I said, the scheme requires coordination between the ACT and commonwealth governments and with our community partners. To this end we have established the NDIS Expert Panel, which is providing expert advice to the NDIS Taskforce and to me as minister. I had the pleasure of joining the expert panel last week to hear firsthand their advice on how we can ensure that the voices of all people with a disability are heard. The NDIS Expert Panel is made up of members drawn from across the community sector. It includes business leaders, advocacy groups, mental health experts and people from culturally diverse backgrounds as well as carers and people with a disability. It is a key consultative forum which provides strategic advice on issues affecting people with a disability, their families, carers, natural supports and funded service providers. The panel first met in September of last year and has met monthly to discuss the design and implementation of the NDIS in the ACT.

In addition to the expert panel, the NDIS Taskforce held two public forums last year and is engaging with our partners in the community sector through a number of forums, both large and small, about the detail of how the NDIS will affect their organisation and how we can work together to make the transition a positive one. This consultation and engagement will continue as we prepare for the launch of the NDIS here in the ACT.

From July 2013 the ACT will be offering enhanced disability services. That day will not be the end of the journey. There is still much work to do, but we have started to put in place a fundamental part of the social safety network, not just for those with a disability but for our whole community.

Madam Speaker, I look forward to providing further updates to the Assembly as we move through these most significant changes. I present the following paper:

National Disability Insurance Scheme—Ministerial statement, 26 February 2013.

I move:

That the Assembly takes note of the paper.

**MS GALLAGHER** (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Health and Minister for Higher Education) (10.30): I will make a few

comments on the national disability insurance scheme, because this is going to be one of the most significant changes there have been in how we provide support to people with disability living in our community. It will completely transform the service system as it has existed, certainly in my time in working in the disability sector, which is where I spent many years before coming into this place.

As members would know, it has been in some sense the luck of the draw as to what kind of support you receive in the disability sector, particularly once you leave school. I think we have got a very good education system for supporting people who have a disability. But once you leave school, with the closure of the sheltered workshops and the kind of supported employment that used to exist, it has been very difficult for people with a disability to maintain individual decision-making and choices about their adult life.

This also, of course, has a significant impact on families and carers. Probably one of the most heart-wrenching kinds of meetings that I have had in my time in this place has been listening to elderly parents, 85 years and over, talk about their wish for their children to be taken care of after they pass away and the concern and pressure that that puts on family units.

I do not know that the national disability insurance scheme has got the recognition it deserves in terms of trying to deal with some fundamental inequities that exist in the disability sector. It is probably because of how the disability sector has developed over time rather than any ill decision-making designed to not meet people's needs. It is a combination of the way the system has developed and the pressure for resources. And then there has also been the quite strong advocacy—advocacy that I welcome—around individual choice and people not being forced into models of care that do not suit them or do not meet their needs as an individual.

That is why the ACT government has been at the table, being led by Minister Burch but also by the Treasurer and, indeed, by me at COAG. That is why we have been so keen to participate. It does come with some risk; it comes potentially with a very large risk to our budget. But these are the reforms that government should be involved in. We should be paving the way for a new way of doing things. We should genuinely believe that if you are born into this world with a disability, you have the right to be cared for and supported in the decisions that will make your life valuable to you. I do not think that has always been the case.

This gives us the opportunity to get that right. I think it is fantastic that the federal government has led the way in making this the number one priority. How many other governments have put intellectual and physical disability as one of their major priorities? It has taken the Gillard government to do that. Tony Abbott has said that he will continue to support the NDIS, which is very important. But for us here, as members of this place, it gives us an opportunity to think about our role in making sure that we shape our system to be the best that it can be. I will be very interested to hear what Mr Hanson thinks about the NDIS; I think he is the disability shadow.

Canberra has not had a proud history in this area. We only have to go back and read the Gallop board of inquiry report to see some of the issues that existed in the

disability system here. We have come a long way. We have invested heavily in the disability sector to make sure that we are going much further in meeting people's needs, but there are still areas of pressure. There will be areas of pressure under the NDIS—I am not going to pretend that it is going to be the ideal system for everybody—but we have to measure the justness of our society by how we look after those that need an extra hand.

You and I sitting in this place are only a burst blood vessel away from needing a scheme like the NDIS to care for us should we require it. It is incumbent upon us to lead the way, to be at the table, to make the budget allocations where we need to, to make sure that we are meeting the needs of people with a disability, their families and their carers.

I look forward to being a part of the work that will shape the system. I acknowledge the work of my ministerial colleague, in many ways leading the country, sitting around the table and not saying how this is not going to work but actually asking how this is going to work and saying let us be a part of the decision-making that gets it in place.

**MR HANSON** (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (10.35): I would like to put some comments on the record; I have done so previously in the media but not, at this stage, in this place.

The opposition will be providing bipartisan support for the NDIS. It is an important initiative. It does provide an opportunity to break the cycle and to empower individuals—provide individuals with disabilities and their carers with increased choice and empowerment, which is so important. It does actually match a Liberal philosophy, which is both enabling the individual and also caring for those in our society who most need our care. That is a very important thing to do.

I would like to indicate that we will happily work with the government to make this scheme work. We do not want to see this fail; we want to see that it lives up to its potential. But, as is often the case with some of these schemes, the grand rhetoric around things like NDIS is the easy bit; the difficult bit will be the delivery on the ground—to provide the funding for it and to make sure that, when there are winners, we do not end up with a situation where there are losers also.

It does provide an opportunity; we offer our bipartisan support for this. But that does not mean to say that we will necessarily agree with everything the government does in relation to the NDIS. It remains our role to make sure that, as the NDIS gets rolled out, it is done in an effective and efficient manner. If, in our view, it is not living up to the expectations, we will have no hesitation in saying so. That will not be with a view to scoring political points or providing an alternative program; it will simply be a matter of making sure that the promise is matched by the reality on the ground.

All of us as MLAs will have come into contact with either people who are profoundly disabled or, as the Chief Minister said, the carers of those individuals. Many people find that when their children leave school they cannot find post-school options. As the Chief Minister said, many people who are elderly and who are caring for a disabled

child are now at the point where they can no longer do that. I have a very close family member from my previous marriage who is profoundly disabled. I have seen at first hand the impact of that on a family and what it means. We need to make sure that as a society we do as much as we can to give those carers as much power, as much individual scope, as possible to choose the right pathway for those people with a disability, be it the carers or be it the individuals.

I hope that provides the Chief Minister and members with some clarity as to where the opposition stands. It is not a blank cheque, but we certainly want to see the outcome that the government does—and I imagine the Greens do, and the whole society. That is that the people who need caring for in our society the most—disabled people—are provided with the support that we should be providing them with and that they feel empowered as individuals.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

## **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body Amendment Bill 2012 (No 2)**

Debate resumed from 29 November 2012, on motion by **Mr Rattenbury**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

**MR WALL** (Brindabella) (10.39): The bill before us today I understand was previously presented in the Seventh Assembly by Dr Bourke and has only been changed slightly before being presented in this current Assembly by the minister. I say from the outset that the opposition will support the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body Amendment Bill 2012 (No 2) and the changes that it makes to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body Act 2008.

I have only held the shadow responsibility for Indigenous affairs for the last few months, but I am taking great delight in speaking with various members of the local Indigenous community and hearing and learning about their histories, their culture and their values. Through this I am gaining a better understanding of some of the challenges our local Indigenous community face.

Despite there being substantial funds targeted at programs specifically for Indigenous people in the ACT, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples residing in the ACT continue to be overrepresented on the negative side of the health, education and corrections statistics, not to mention the difficulties that are often faced in seeking housing or accessing employment. I suggest the reason our Indigenous community is all too often overrepresented in these figures is as a result of generational poverty and not necessarily race.

I was pleased to learn in the course of discussions with stakeholders that the ACT is the only jurisdiction in Australia that has an elected body. I was further pleased to hear that in the four years it has been in operation the body has been responsible for a number of significant pieces of work. This includes the justice agreement, which is

soon to be renewed, and the recently reported outcomes of the ACT elected body hearings from 2011.

The elected body has an important role in ensuring that programs and services across the whole of the ACT government are effective as well as accessible for the majority of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT. I look forward to working collaboratively with the elected body to achieve better outcomes for the territory's Indigenous people.

I also note that the role of the elected body is challenging at the best of times. Therefore, any improvements that can be made to the capacity of the body should be at least considered by government. The changes proposed in this amendment bill are intended to strengthen the position of the elected body. This is to be achieved by improving the level of participation in elections and increasing the awareness of the body within the wider community. It is sensible to have the election process coincide with NAIDOC Week, a time when the Indigenous community is more active and the wider community is more attentive to Indigenous issues in the local community.

I also note that the amendments are strongly supported by the elected body and are also recommended by Elections ACT as it addresses some of the inconsistencies between the act as it currently stands and the Electoral Act 1992.

The Canberra Liberals will support the bill before us today, and I look forward to engaging in meaningful dialogue with the elected body and other Indigenous organisations over the coming years.

**DR BOURKE** (Ginninderra) (10.42): I too rise to support this bill. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body has an essential role in Canberra as part of the first nation's community, gathering views and consulting and then presenting the interests of the community to government.

The elected body was a driving force in the creation of the ACT employment strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People, which was launched in 2011. As my colleague Mr Wall has noted, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body also championed the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander justice agreement signed by the Attorney-General and the chair of the elected body in September 2010.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body Amendment Bill (No 2) is another result of elected body advice. Members said that having the election in NAIDOC Week when the community comes together to celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture would give community members the best chance to meet candidates and to vote. The members also supported a longer campaign period to give candidates a better opportunity to share their message, engage with the community and address concerns. These are sensible improvements incorporated in the bill so that the three-yearly elections will coincide with NAIDOC week in July.

The last Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body election was held between 11 April and 18 May 2011. With the passing of this bill, the next election voting period will run through NAIDOC Week in July 2014. Holding the ballot when

the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community is already out in force will strengthen the mandate of the elected members to represent their community.

The bill increases to four weeks the period between the close of nominations and the start of polling. Elections ACT suggested that this increase of the campaign period for candidates would allow candidates more time to reach eligible electors. The ACT government is committed to working with Canberra's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and their elected body to achieve the goals, both individual and collective, that they hold.

I look forward to continuing the work of this government and the elected body to improve the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community's educational, employment and business opportunities. I see the pride and enthusiasm of the next generation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kids, and I want to ensure that they are not held back by low expectations.

The government is entrusting the community through the elected body to advise on community-driven solutions to issues and to advise on the aspirations of the community. By working together in partnership we can ensure a better future for all Canberrans.

**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) (10.45): I thank members for their contribution to the debate today and their support of the proposed bill. When the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body Act 2008 was introduced, it was the first legislation of its kind, a recognition of the importance of self-determination to strengthening and promoting our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. It was the necessary next step in the ongoing journey of reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

Since the formation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body a number of significant policies and programs have been developed. On 16 January 2013 the elected body launched their third report on the outcomes of their hearings from 2011. This document made 24 recommendations to improve the lives of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. That report is currently being assessed by the government, and a response will be tabled in the Assembly at a later time.

The elected body was a major stakeholder and driving force in the creation of the ACT employment strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, which was launched in 2011. This was the crystallisation of the elected body's vision and the ACT government's commitment to providing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with the opportunity to participate fully in the ACT community through economic freedom.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body also championed the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander justice agreement, which was a landmark



example of citizen-centric government and was signed by the Attorney-General and the chair of the elected body on 28 September 2010.

The elected body continues to challenge the ACT government to continually evaluate and improve our service provision. After the last elected body election, which concluded on 18 May 2011, feedback was received from stakeholders, including the elected body itself, which included recommendations for the growth and improvement of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body Act 2008 and the election process itself.

The elected body met with ministers on 2 August 2011 and discussed amendments to the act. These amendments, recommended to us by the very people the act serves, include an increase in the campaign period available for nominees for positions on the elected body. Elected body members stated that they wanted an opportunity to fully engage with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities during the campaign period in the ACT so that they could share their message about why they should be elected but also be able to listen to the message of the community about what matters most to them. That, as I think all members in this place would agree, is the essence of what true community representation is.

Members of the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities also suggested the elected body elections could be moved to capitalise on NAIDOC Week celebrations each year. It was suggested that, as NAIDOC Week is a time when the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples come together to celebrate their cultures and recognise the contribution of Indigenous Australians in various fields, it would be a good opportunity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to also think about who would best represent them and promote the issues that affect them. It was also recognised that capitalising on NAIDOC Week would be an efficient way of promoting the elected body, the elections and, in fact, NAIDOC Week itself, as well as more effectively reaching the target community and building sustained community engagement.

Elections ACT also made some technical recommendations on the effectiveness of the election process which further supported the recommendations we received from the elected body and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Elections ACT suggested that the increase of the campaign period for candidates would build engagement for the elections by allowing candidates more time to access the community and reach eligible electors who may otherwise not be exposed to the elections through existing communications channels. This same rationale also supported the move to coincide with having the elections in NAIDOC Week.

Elections ACT also made a number of technical amendments that will bring clarity and consistency to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body Act 2008. The clarification of definitions and finetuning of terminology has been recommended to ensure that the act displays continual growth and relevance to the ACT context and the communities it serves. These proposed changes recognise the expertise of our elected body and of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and also reflect the growth and improvement in the legislation that is designed to help communities to progress towards achievement and success. Under the changes

contained in the bill, it is proposed that the next election for the body will occur during NAIDOC Week in 2014.

I look forward to the passage of this bill being another step in improvement. I am certainly very keen for the government to have a strong, ongoing and active engagement with the elected body. It presents an excellent opportunity to improve the lives of Indigenous community members in the ACT. Certainly the recommendations that have come through to government out of the most recent report are a very good reflection of the issues affecting the community. The government is very seriously looking at those recommendations now as they represent the priorities of the community. I am pleased to commend this legislation to the Assembly today and look forward to its implementation.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Leave granted to dispense with the detail stage.

Bill agreed to.

## **Justice and Community Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2013**

Debate resumed from 14 February 2013, on motion by **Mr Corbell**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

**MR SESELJA** (Brindabella) (10.52): The Canberra Liberals will be supporting this bill today. This bill amends a number of acts consequential to passing the Retirement Villages Act 2012 and makes amendments to the Retirement Villages Act itself. Today's bill is being rushed through because the Retirement Villages Act comes into operation on Monday and this legislation has been a mess from the beginning.

Ms Porter in her first bill cut and pasted bits and pieces of legislation from other jurisdictions. This made the bill unworkable because it was inconsistent. There was such widespread condemnation from the industry that Mr Corbell was forced to write to the Chief Minister raising concerns that, although it was a private member's bill, the passage of this bill would lead to criticism of the government.

The industry said:

The proposed adoption in the ACT of yet another distinct style of regulation, which contains onerous obligations is going to increase this cost on us and on the industry. If Lend Lease had been aware of those onerous obligations proposed in the bill at the time of lodging its tender for Isabella Plains, we would have viewed the ACT retirement living market differently and we most probably would not have proceeded with the acquisition.

There had been years of consultation on this bill, but a number of questions could not be answered to clarify the bill at the time. This was said by a resident of a

St Andrew's townhouse: "I found the Retirement Villages Bill 2011 difficult to interpret easily and too long. It could also be argued that it was too prescriptive in places."

Even ACT public servants were critical of the consultation, or lack thereof. A JACS officer had this to say: "We proposed consulting industry and the community more generally, as in initial discussion it appears that there is very little knowledge of the bill and contents. The bill will have significant impact on industry and people buying into retirement villages."

Now the mess is continuing, as we have to make a number of amendments before it comes into force. We believe the retirement village industry is too important for the Assembly to have unclear and rushed-through legislation. Madam Speaker, we raised this issue at the time. We raised this issue when it came back—that it was in fact being rushed through. At the time I said, "I suspect that we will have to revisit this legislation at some point in the future once it is passed. I think the second part of this process has been somewhat rushed."

Today is the example and the confirmation that that was true. It was rushed through. It was rushed through in order to give Ms Porter a win before the election. I think that is unfortunate for legislation. I certainly hope that we will not have to be coming back in three months, six months or 12 months to make further amendments in order to fix this legislation. We would seek some assurances from the government that they have now thoroughly looked at the legislation again to ensure that it is workable for industry and that there will not be any hidden surprises.

That said, Madam Speaker, we will be supporting it because we acknowledge that this legislation that was passed does need some fixing. We accept the government's arguments on that and we will therefore support the bill.

**MR RATTENBURY** (Molonglo) (10.55): The Justice and Community Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2013 makes several minor, but necessary, amendments across a number of acts to support the commencement of the new Retirement Villages Act. The original legislation was passed in August 2012. It was a labour of love for Ms Porter; there is no doubt about that.

The ACT Greens supported the passage of that bill as a step forward in providing surety to the retirement village industry and increased rights for residents. With the bill set to commence in March this year, these consequential amendments are needed to ensure its proper operation and implementation. On that basis, we have had a look at the various amendments. I believe they are all minor and consistent with the Retirement Villages Bill and the intent of it as it was originally passed by the Assembly. We believe that passing this bill will help to ensure an effective transition to the new regulations governing retirement villages.

**MS PORTER** (Ginninderra) (10.57): As has been said by other members, while technical, the Justice and Community Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2013 we are debating today is a necessary step in the implementation of the new retirement village scheme. The bill makes minor and uncontroversial amendments—I

address that to the attention of Mr Seselja—to ensure the smooth commencement of the scheme. Other changes provide for necessary funding and enforcement arrangements, in line with funding and enforcement arrangements in New South Wales.

I would have preferred to introduce these consequential amendments in 2012, together with the introduction of the Retirement Villages Bill 2012. However, at the time work had not concluded on identifying all these necessary minor amendments. In any case, the additional time has been well spent. A number of minor and uncontroversial amendments that improve the Retirement Villages Act 2012 itself have been identified, in addition to the consequential amendments.

These further amendments have been included in this JACS bill. Like the consequential amendments, they are largely technical amendments, which include correcting cross-references in the act, omitting superfluous provisions and improving terminology used in the act.

The bill also inserts a new section 15A which, like its New South Wales equivalent, deals with the closure of a retirement village where a resident remains in the premises or still has the rights and liabilities under a resident contract. This provision was initially going to be dealt with by way of a transitional regulation. However, as it could also apply to future closures, new section 15A has been prepared to deal with those circumstances.

This bill, importantly, makes some minor and uncontroversial amendments to part 20 of the act. These include ensuring that the existing service contracts are saved. The bill also omits a reference to two years for the expiry of the transitional regulations which modify part 20 so that they will expire after five years, consistent with the remainder of existing part 20.

Madam Speaker, this is an important bill. It ensures that amendments of a consequential nature and minor and uncontroversial amendments to the Retirement Villages Act will be made that will then coincide with the commencement of the scheme on 4 March. I am very excited about the commencement of this scheme and I am sure a lot of other people in the community, contrary to what Mr Seselja is saying, are certainly excited. That is the feedback that I have been getting, both from industry and also from residents, as I visit retirement villages and have the opportunity to discuss this with older people in whatever circumstances I meet them.

I believe it will bring significant benefits to retirement village residents, prospective residents and operators, who now have a level playing field between us and New South Wales and who welcome this opportunity to come and invest here.

Once again, I thank everyone who has worked so hard to bring this bill to this stage. I especially recognise Jack Simpson here. He has recently left my office to take up a legal office position in line with his studies. I take this opportunity at the same time to welcome Zara Davis, who joined us through that same cadetship. I also would like to thank my colleagues, particularly the attorney, for their support of this bill.

It is a pity that Mr Seselja is behind the times with his dialogue about the support of the industry and the residents. He dismissed the great deal of consultation—in fact, intensive consultation—that went on for many years. I did not need the support of this bill to get myself elected, as Mr Seselja believes I did. It was evident to the community why I should be elected to this position. I look forward very much to working with all of the people in this chamber for the next four years.

**MR CORBELL** (Molonglo—Attorney-General, Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations and Minister for the Environment and Sustainable Development) (11.01), in reply: I thank members for the support of this bill and I commend Ms Porter for her ongoing support of those in our community who reside in retirement villages.

Ms Porter has demonstrated a very keen and consistent interest in making sure that those older residents in our community who choose retirement villages as their choice for living are given appropriate protection under the law. It is to her credit that she has continued to advocate for the interests of those who are not in well-established or well-recognised arrangements for their living choice and who have not always had the same level of statutory or legal protection that others have.

When you recognise the very significant and considerable amounts of money that people who live in retirement villages often invest in that choice as to where they reside, the level of statutory legal protection now available to them as a result of the Retirement Villages Act is a very important safeguard for that big financial investment that so many people make when they choose to move into a retirement village. It is down to Mary Porter that we now have this scheme. She is to be commended wholeheartedly for the consumer protection that she has advocated for people living in retirement villages.

The JACS bill that we are debating today makes amendments across legislation administered by the Justice and Community Safety Portfolio. In particular, it deals with those issues relating to the passage and commencement of the Retirement Villages Act 2012. Most of these are consequential amendments and the remainder will make minor improvements to the act itself. As members would know, the act was passed in August last year and commences on 4 March this year. The act has an effect on a number of other laws within the justice portfolio which do require consequential amendment.

Commencement of the act also requires steps to be taken to ensure that it can commence smoothly. One of these steps is to ensure that funding arrangements, consistent with the funding arrangements in New South Wales, are in place to ensure that the costs of administering the act, including the costs of educational and advisory services for residents and prospective residents, can be met. In addition, the bill amends the fair trading legislation to ensure an enforcement scheme that is in line with the New South Wales scheme. The government is currently finalising a regulation under the Magistrates Court Act to allow some offences under the Retirement Villages Act to be enforced in the same way as they are in New South Wales.

As part of ensuring harmonisation of the ACT scheme with that in New South Wales, regulations based on the regulations in that state are currently being finalised. These regulations have been the subject of community consultation with residents, industry representatives and individual retirement village operators.

In this regard, it was pleasing to see a joint submission from the ACT Retirement Village Residents Association, the Property Council of Australia and the Aged and Community Services Association of NSW and ACT. To see a joint submission from those three groups, groups that represent residents, groups that represent the owners, groups that represent the broader industry association, is I think a credit to the work done by Ms Porter in engaging with all of those groups and ultimately securing their support for a scheme that improves the consumer protections for those who choose to live in retirement villages.

On behalf of the government, I would like to thank all those involved for their feedback and for working closely with the government to ensure workable solutions for the retirement village market. Their contribution has been invaluable.

When I introduced this bill I took members through what it does, so I do not propose to do so again. While the amendments it contains are important, they are largely technical. They will also ensure that there are no unintended effects on other legislation arising from the commencement of this act. The bill and its amendments will allow for the smooth commencement of the Retirement Villages Act next month. Many people, including Ms Porter, have worked extremely hard both on the bill itself, these amendments and the other consequential regulations that are required. I would like to thank them all, particularly the officials in my directorate.

This bill has involved significant negotiation with stakeholders who have given freely of their time and expertise. Once again, I thank them for their willingness to contribute to this process. The commencement of the new retirement villages scheme is an important step forward in consumer protection for older people in the ACT. I commend this bill to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Leave granted to dispense with the detail stage.

Bill agreed to.

**Sitting suspended from 11.07 am to 2.30 pm.**

### **Questions without notice**

#### **Health—general practitioners**

**MR HANSON:** My question is to the Minister for Health. In today's *Canberra Times* classified section, there is a "notice of practice closure" for the Spence Medical Centre. It states the reason for the closure as follows:

We are sorry that we have not been able to find new doctors for the practice.

The latest *Report on government services* shows that we have the lowest number of GPs per capita in Australia. Minister, how are residents of outer suburbs like Spence meant to access GPs when local medical centres continue to close?

**MS GALLAGHER:** I thank Mr Hanson for the question. It is interesting that Mr Hanson again is having a selective look at the GP landscape at the moment. Yes, there is a closure being foreshadowed for the Scullin medical practice. I understand that that has been owned and operated by husband and wife GPs who have been unable to recruit doctors to that particular practice to assist them. But I would also point out that there have been a number of practices that have opened in the last year. In the last two that I have attended I have not seen other members of the Assembly there, but there are plenty of practices opening in this town and there are also, I think, at least an additional 30 GPs that have started work. If you actually talk to the GPs in this town now, the question has shifted from one of supply to one of quality. They are the issues they are raising with me now.

*Members interjecting—*

**MS GALLAGHER:** If I could just finish before you start going on another track, the issue of quality is around concerns from people who have traditionally enjoyed family practice—small family practice models—and are concerned at the rise of the medium to large corporate models which are becoming more prevalent across Australia. We have seen that changing landscape here in the ACT as well.

They are the issues that the Medicare Local will raise with members when they talk about them, but in terms of the support that we have provided to general practice, this government have a very proud record. We had a \$12 million GP fund. We are continuing our support for general practice. And if you look around the city you will see a number of GP clinics that have been supported with infrastructure funding from this government to assist them to attract and retain staff.

In relation to the Scullin medical practice, I understand that—

**Mr Coe:** Spence.

**MS GALLAGHER:** Sorry, Spence. I understand that patient records are being referred to the west Belconnen co-op practice. Ochre Health are starting their superclinic in Belconnen; they are also going to have an outpost of that one in northern Canberra as part of the spoke and hub model that includes the practice in Calwell, the practice in northern Canberra and the superclinic when it is open.

So, yes, there is still more work to be done in relation to ensuring that we have got more GPs, but part of the answer is also the support that is provided to students to consider life as a general practitioner, and that work is underway in the territory as well.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** A supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

**MR HANSON:** Minister, why do medical centres continue to close due to a lack of doctors, especially in outer suburbs like Spence, despite the rationale given in your previous answer?

**MS GALLAGHER:** Because doctors make business decisions. They are small businesses. Again, if you talk to family practice GPs, they will tell you that, with respect to running a business when there are models coming in where the corporate overheads in particular are being managed under a different model, there are challenges. There are challenges in that patients want pathology done, they want imaging done, they want bulk-billing, they want nurses to provide a whole range of other services there. These are the models that are emerging across the city and it is what patients want as well. If you go and look, I think this has been well understood. Medicare Local is undertaking a current needs analysis of general practice, at my request, that the government has funded, to get an exact snapshot of what the GP landscape is like now, because two years ago you could not get an appointment. Now I think almost every general practice has its books open—

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**MS GALLAGHER:** I thought you might have been interested in the answer, but the answer is that the books are open for general practice. General practitioners are advertising in the paper. That is not something you have seen in the last three years or so. There is capacity in the GP workforce to see patients. But, yes, the model is changing and the old days of having a general practice at your local shop is changing, and it is changing because the way we deliver health care is changing and the needs of patients are changing.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** A supplementary question, Mr Coe.

**MR COE:** Minister, why are we so far behind other jurisdictions in relation to access to GPs?

**MS GALLAGHER:** I think that is a very naive view of what is happening across Australia.

*Mr Hanson interjecting—*

**MS GALLAGHER:** In large metropolitan areas like Sydney and Melbourne you will find an oversupply of general practice, but you go to any regional place in Australia and start saying they are all doing better than Canberra in relation to general practice. You do not even have to travel an hour outside of Canberra to hear from local councils about the troubles of recruiting and retaining a medical workforce. It is extremely naive and it is having a hopeless pot shot at Canberra when our health system is actually a very good one. Yes, there are challenges, but to think that we are lagging behind everyone else in GP land is just simply incorrect.



**MADAM SPEAKER:** A supplementary question, Ms Porter.

**MS PORTER:** Minister, is it not true that the West Belconnen Health Co-op has had no difficulty attracting GPs to its practices in the Ginninderra electorate?

**MS GALLAGHER:** The west Belconnen co-op have done very well, and we have been very pleased to provide quite a lot of support to that practice and that model in order to allow them to undertake the recruitment work that they have sought to do. As I said, the models of general practice that are going to become more prevalent are the ones like the west Belconnen co-op where you are wrapping other services around the provision of primary care, and that is where a family GP practice faces challenges compared to some of the more medium to large corporate models.

But the GP landscape has changed considerably in the last three years or so, whether Mr Hanson likes to accept it or not. Yes, there will be closures, just like there are closures in other areas of the private sector, for a whole range of reasons. You also have to acknowledge that in the last 18 months there have been more openings of general practice and more doctors coming to town to work than there have been closings. It would not be so bad if you were able to acknowledge that as well.

### **Water—prices**

**MR GENTLEMAN:** My question is to the Treasurer. Can the minister advise what are the key decisions recommended in the draft report released today by the ICRC?

**MR BARR:** I thank Mr Gentleman for the question. Members would be aware that the ICRC has released a draft report determining water and waste water prices for the period from 1 July 2013. I am sure members are also aware that prices for water and sewerage are regulated by the ICRC, the independent regulator, which, of course, operates at arm's length from government. The ICRC bases its findings on efficient costs of providing water and sewerage services to the territory.

The report proposes changes to the variable charges for water and also to the fixed sewerage charges. I think it is important to say, and this has certainly been the case in the media commentary to date, that there is recognition that this is a draft report, that there will be the opportunity to comment, and that the ICRC's final determination may vary from what has been published today.

However, I believe the commission has made a number of very important recommendations, including rejecting the proposed revenue catch-up in the coming pricing period, to spread the costs of major water security projects over a greater period so that that burden falls not only on the current generation of Canberrans but also on future Canberrans. The commission has also recommended retaining the current two-tier pricing structure and to adopt a more conservative water consumption forecast.

The government will, of course, examine these recommendations in detail in the coming weeks and months. It is particularly pertinent to note that the ICRC proposes

decreases in the costs of water and sewerage services. We will need to examine the detail and impacts of this in detail but we are very pleased to see that the ICRC has not recommended any increases in water and sewerage prices.

The ICRC has also recommended moving to a six-year regulatory period with biennial assessments. This is a common-sense and very practical recommendation. This enhanced flexibility in pricing is something that the government has been advocating for. There is considerable detail within the ICRC's recommendations. So it is premature at this moment to comment at length or in detail about them until we have had the opportunity to consider them and discuss them with stakeholders.

Separate from pricing, the ICRC has also made recommendations about the governance of ACTEW. The government will also consider these recommendations after receiving the ICRC's final report later in the year.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** A supplementary question, Mr Gentleman.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Minister, what impact will the draft recommendations have on consumers of water and sewerage and on the government's dividend from ACTEW?

**MR BARR:** The draft recommendations do propose changes to the price of water and sewerage. The draft decision as proposed would likely reduce dividend payments in the current regulatory period via reduced revenues and tax equivalent payments. The government is currently reviewing the specific impacts of the ICRC's proposal and what those impacts will be on the dividend received from ACTEW. I can say that preliminary advice suggests ACTEW's revenues could be impacted in the order of \$80 million per annum. This is of course something that will need to be considered in the detail of our submission to the ICRC and, indeed, in the submission of community members and stakeholders.

It is important to state here that the government needs to strike a balance between ACTEW's contribution to government revenues and to the broader community—most importantly, the interests of consumers within the territory and the interests of the environment.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** A supplementary question, Mr Seselja.

**MR SESELJA:** Minister, will you follow the recommendations of the ICRC to reduce prices by 16.9 per cent or will you allow Canberrans to continue to pay the highest water prices in the country?

**MR BARR:** The government will, of course, participate in this consultation process. We certainly support a reduction in prices—the extent of which needs to be considered in the context of the range of issues that I have just touched on. In my opening remarks I did indicate we were very pleased that there was not an increase in price. We are also very pleased with a number of the recommendations in relation to spreading the cost of some of the important water security projects over a longer period of time and the pricing path, a six-year model with biannual advice and determinations. We think there is a lot of common sense in those recommendations. I

think it is pre-emptive to date, and the commission has itself said that it may well be revising its recommendations when it comes to its final report, but it would appear it has put on the public record that its recommendation will be for some level of price decrease. The government will support that.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** A supplementary question, Ms Porter.

**MS PORTER:** Minister, what are the arrangements for consultation with the community?

**MR BARR:** The report was obviously released today, at 11 am, for public consultation. I can advise the Assembly and, through the Assembly, the broader community that submissions can be made until 12 April this year. After these consultations are received and examined, a final report will be delivered in June 2013. The process is open for stakeholders, members of the community and Assembly members to have their say on water pricing. I certainly encourage everyone to contribute to the ICRC's public consultation process.

### **Schools—Blue Gum School**

**MR SESELJA:** My question is to the Minister for Territory and Municipal Services. The Blue Gum School in Hackett have been in contact for many months with officers from the ACT Property Group, seeking to lease unoccupied space adjacent to their school and they lodged their application to lease that space in February 2012. In January 2013, they were advised that the space was unavailable. Minister, why is the space unavailable?

**MR RATTENBURY:** The Blue Gum School has requested additional space be made available at Hackett Primary School. There is a space there that is unleased at the moment. Property Group are considering this request. They are considering it in the context of a significant list of requests for community space, particularly in the inner north of Canberra. This comes in the context of the fact that the current Downer hub will shortly be demolished or is scheduled to be demolished to make way for a new development on that site.

There are a number of tenants in that site, community and commercial tenants, who are looking for relocation. So in that context, Property Group are currently trying to balance the very significant demand for space in government assets amongst the various stakeholders and are weighing up the best use of space across government assets in both the inner north and in Canberra generally. Other groups such as Barnardos, Inanna and a range of other groups are currently also seeking space in the area.

I went last week to visit Blue Gum School to have a look at their request for space and also to have a better understanding of the school. I had a very interesting visit. I think they have an excellent educational facility there, and I have indicated to them that I have asked Property Group to have a further look at the request, particularly in light of the fact that, obviously, it is desirable for the school to not be split across different sites and there is an advantage for Blue Gum to access that particular space right next

door to their current facilities in Hackett. So the situation is currently being looked at by Property Group, and I have asked them to get back to me with a brief or to keep me informed of the progress of the request.

**MR SESELJA:** Minister, why has this process taken so long? Blue Gum made their application in February 2012 and were only advised in January 2013 that the space was unavailable. Why such a delay and why the confused communications?

**MR RATTENBURY:** I am not aware that that is the only communication that took place between Blue Gum and the Property Group within Territory and Municipal Services. The nature of these things is that there is usually a level of ongoing conversation. I would have to check, but I should imagine that there have probably been some informal telephone conversations. The way these things work is that there is a process of trying to find the right fit for the organisation that is seeking space within the available portfolio. There are conversations and efforts going on all the time to mix and match both the demands and the available space.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Minister, why was the school asked to accept a commercial operation in a common area that the school shares when their own requests for additional space are denied?

**MR RATTENBURY:** I am not exactly sure of what you are getting at there, Mr Doszpot. Certainly there has been a discussion about seeking to have a pharmacy facility made available. As members may know, there has been a considerable community desire to have a pharmacy established at the Hackett shops. Due to national pharmacy guidelines, they are unable to establish there, and there has been a community push to use some of the space at Hackett, at the old Hackett primary school site, to house the pharmacy.

Certainly, in my conversations with the principal at Blue Gum last week, I was left with the impression that it is perhaps possible to accommodate that. Also, as you can imagine, there would be some issues of security that would need to be thought about in having a pharmacy co-located with a school. The impression I was left with was that it was possible to work through those sorts of issues. That is the only commercial operation at the Hackett site that I can think of. I think that is where your question was going.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Minister, what action has been taken to assist the school with their now urgent accommodation needs that have been on the boil since February 2012?

**MR RATTENBURY:** As I indicated in my earlier response to Mr Seselja, this matter has now come to my attention in recent weeks. I have both visited the school site and had a discussion with them about their specific needs. I have also asked the Property Group to have another look at whether a solution can be found. I have asked them to come back to me with further details on that.

## Higher education—policy

**MS BERRY:** Chief Minister, you went to the 2012 election with a clear policy and commitment in relation to health, regional development and a vision for diversifying our economy through the continuing development of our higher education sector. Can you outline some of the main points of that policy?

**MS GALLAGHER:** I thank Ms Berry for the question. Yes, indeed, the central themes of the commitments that we outlined to the community in 2012 did focus on our role in the region, around our views and our vision in higher education and also in looking at how we diversify our economy. These are important planks of the work that we will be undertaking over the next four years; indeed we have started and have hit the ground running.

I spoke in the last sitting week around our role as a regional centre in the hub of south-east New South Wales. I firmly believe that our own economic prosperity and growth are intrinsically linked to that of the surrounding region. There is a lot of support from the local region for better links, closer working links, and planning and discussions around services between the ACT, New South Wales and the local councils. I think issues like planning adequate infrastructure and services to accommodate population growth are critical. There is and has been acknowledgement of this by the New South Wales government.

The area of health is perhaps where we have developed the best linkages to date, but there are obviously other opportunities, including being a regional education hub. Increasingly, as the population grows alongside our borders, we are seeing more and more New South Wales students come and use the ACT education system. There are other opportunities in terms of our regional role. Hopefully these will be explored. If the Assembly makes a decision around the establishment of a select committee on Thursday, there will be an opportunity for Assembly involvement in this.

The MOU with the New South Wales government that we have signed looks at three areas—economic opportunities, land use and planning and infrastructure and cross-border service delivery. Those are the three main areas for intergovernmental cooperation to focus on. But higher education and our role in the region are also critical if we are to plan our regional future.

The ability of the sector to attract tens of thousands of students from around the region I think was well outlined in the work that the Learning Capital Council provided the government in 2012. It certainly focused on some of our commitments that we made around studyCanberra. It will be great to roll out the commitments of studyCanberra and make sure that we are doing what we can to support our local university and vocational education and training system.

I had a good meeting with the Catholic University. I have ongoing meetings with the University of Canberra and with the vice-chancellor of ANU in his role as chair of the Learning Capital Council. There is much more work to be done, but I think there is a

lot of focus going into higher education and our role as a regional centre in New South Wales.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Supplementary question, Ms Berry.

**MS BERRY:** Chief Minister, you have indicated that there is support for this vision. Can you inform the Assembly what other support there is for this vision?

**MS GALLAGHER:** I thank Ms Berry for the question. There has been some very broad-based support for the focus on regional development and higher education. We have had it from not just across the community, reflected in the Labor Party winning an extra seat at the last election, but also in the response from the business community, which of course works across state borders and indeed sees some of the economic opportunities that lie outside the ACT and also how that can drive economic growth within the ACT. There has also been very positive reaction from the local councils, who I meet with quite frequently now as a member of SEROC, and, of course, the education sector. Again, in this competitive environment our education providers are having to think differently about how they provide their services.

Interestingly, also for last week, we got a bit of our first insight into the issues that the new Leader of the Opposition thinks are important for his leadership. I was a bit surprised to see—

**Mr Smyth:** Point of order, Madam Speaker.

**MS GALLAGHER:** Oh, dear, just as I was getting close!

**Mr Smyth:** I am not aware that the Chief Minister is responsible for the things that the Leader of the Opposition does and I would ask her to be relevant to the question.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** The question was about what other support there was for the vision, so unless the Chief Minister is going on to say that Mr Hanson supports the vision, she may be not being directly relevant to the question. I ask you to be directly relevant to the question.

**MS GALLAGHER:** The question was about support for this vision for Canberra. As I said, I was perusing that famous site RiotACT. All members in this place obviously enjoyed it—some more than others; I think some participate more than others. (*Time expired.*)

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Supplementary question, Mr Gentleman.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Minister, are you aware of any other areas of support for Labor's policy commitments?

**MS GALLAGHER:** Yes, I am aware of support for—

**Mr Hanson:** Are you getting your vision from me, Katy?

**MS GALLAGHER:** We are flattered, Jeremy. We really are. Mr Hanson said that it is very important to take on a more substantive role as a regional centre. Tick. That sounds like regional partnerships to me. Then it goes on about things we do such as high tech and tertiary education and looks at how we make those sectors grow. Tick. That sounds a little like study Canberra. There you go. It even went on to say—this one is a good one: make it more attractive for business to do business in Canberra through deregulation. So that sounds a little bit like the red tape reduction task force and micro-economic reform, which I think is the Liberals’ way of saying “tax reform”.

So there we have it. We have got tax reform. We have got cutting red tape. We have got regional partnerships. We have got higher education. And we all know how Mr Hanson copied the health policy at the last election. So I will add health in there as well. So there we have it. We have all of those areas as priorities for this government and—shock, horror!—priorities for Mr Hanson as well. We are terribly flattered.

I would just finish by saying that most of us in this place know that we do not always believe what we read on RiotACT. But this time it appears they have got it just right.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

**DR BOURKE:** Chief Minister, could you tell us why economic diversification is so important for Canberra’s economy?

**Mr Smyth:** Given that you have ignored it for a decade.

**MS GALLAGHER:** The interjection from the great diversifier himself! We have been hearing it from you for many more than 10 years, Mr Smyth.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Would you like to get to the question, Ms Gallagher?

**MS GALLAGHER:** I will. This is an important question, particularly as we face the challenges that are going to eventuate here in this city, particularly under a federal Liberal government and the decisions that they will make to cut thousands and thousands of jobs. I am sure senator-elect Seselja will stand up strongly for Canberra—and have a lot of influence, no doubt, when Tony Abbott will not even take a call. Tony Abbott will not take his call but I am sure he will have a big say in that federal government—a big one! The issues of diversifying Canberra’s economy have been—

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Order, members! Mr Hanson and Mr Coe!

**MS GALLAGHER:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I refer to the work being done by the Economic Development Directorate in relation to growth, diversification and jobs in terms of driving other sectors of the economy. The education economy is a large component of the Canberra economy but it can be bigger. We have our role as the national capital; we have our role as a region. We have to drive other sectors of our

economy, particularly at a time when it looks like essentially the bread and butter of our economy, the federal government's spend, is going to be reduced. And it is going to present challenges. I look forward to Mr Hanson supporting this government's vision for the diversification of our economy and our key priorities. Maybe one day we will hear something that has not come from the Labor Party come out of Mr Hanson's mouth.

*Mr Barr interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mr Barr!

*Mr Coe interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mr Coe, you are of no assistance at all.

### **Electricity—feed-in tariff**

**MR COE:** My question is to the Treasurer. On 13 February this year, you advised that the first project under the government's large-scale solar feed-in tariff in Royalla will provide ongoing employment opportunities in the territory. Treasurer, can you outline how many direct, non-contract, full-time jobs will be created in order to operate this facility?

**MR BARR:** I will have to take that on notice.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** A supplementary question, Mr Coe.

**MR COE:** I should think you will take this on notice as well but, Treasurer, what will be the nature of these roles?

**MR BARR:** I will take that on notice.

**MR SMYTH:** Supplementary question?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Yes, Mr Smyth.

**MR SMYTH:** Minister, how much extra will Canberrans have to pay in their power bills to support these jobs?

**MR BARR:** I think that is a—

*Members interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mr Barr, would you like to answer the question?

**MR BARR:** It would be my pleasure, Madam Speaker, if I were given the opportunity. I know Mr Smyth does not have a particularly strong view in relation to climate change and he is not particularly supportive of new industries in the territory.



**Mr Doszpot:** He was the first minister in the country to put in a greenhouse gas strategy—

**Ms Gallagher:** And then run a mile from it.

**MR BARR:** And then run a mile from it, indeed. I know that the Canberra Liberals are now running away from their commitments—

**Mr Hanson:** Point of order, Madam Speaker.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Point of order, Mr Hanson.

**Mr Hanson:** The point of order is on relevance. The question was directly about the cost of this project, not about the ideology resting behind it. I would ask that the minister come to the nub of the question: how much does it cost?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mr Barr, I was just about to remind you of the provisions of standing order 118(a), that you “shall be concise and directly relevant to the subject matter of the question”. The question was about whether there would be a cost on electricity bills, if I recall correctly.

**MR BARR:** \$13 a year, falling to \$9 a year.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** A supplementary question, Mr Gentleman.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Minister, how important is it to invest in these areas of renewable energy for the future?

**Mr Hanson:** The feed-in tariff went well for you, Mick!

**MR BARR:** The cheap interjections that come from those opposite do indeed reflect on the clear choices and the distinctions that there are between this side of politics and those opposite. In hearing those sorts of comments and observations, it is amazing to think that it was only—

*Ms Gallagher interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Order! Chief Minister, you are talking over your colleague.

**MR BARR:** It was only 18 to 24 months ago that we had a debate in this place where a 30 per cent greenhouse reduction target was put forward by the former Leader of the Opposition, the now endorsed candidate for the Senate.

**Mr Coe:** A slight distinction from the Chief Minister!

**MR BARR:** Thank you, I will adopt the—

*Members interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Order, members! Mr Gentleman has asked a question, and Mr Barr has not been able to actually get around to answering the question. There has been a bit of around the world for sixpence. You might like to answer the question.

**MR BARR:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Yes, it is important to invest in renewable technologies. The government has put in place a robust policy framework that is nation leading, and we are very pleased with the outcomes to date.

### **Budget—lease variation charge**

**MR SMYTH:** My question is to the Treasurer. The budget review on page 9 states:

Conveyance duty revenue has been revised downwards across the budget and forward estimates predominantly reflecting the ongoing moderation in the property market ...

Treasurer, over the four-year estimates, gross revenue from land sales is forecast to decrease by \$287.4 million compared to the estimates provided in the 2012-13 budget. Revenue from the duty is forecast to fall by \$47.2 million in the same period. Treasurer, can you please explain to the Assembly why the government supports the lease variation charge when the negative impacts on the property market are clear?

**MR BARR:** Because it is an excellent tax. It taxes windfall gains that are achieved when development rights are extended. Under our leasehold system you are granted, when you purchase a lease, a certain level of development right. And if there is a policy change that significantly increases the development rights for that particular site, it is only fair and reasonable for some of that uplift in value to be returned to the community via a lease variation charge. The principle of a betterment tax has been in place in this territory for some time—

**Mr Corbell:** A very long time.

**MR BARR:** A very long time indeed.

**Mr Corbell:** Supported by governments of both persuasions.

**MR BARR:** Yes, as my colleague indicates, supported by governments of both persuasions. So if it is now the position of the Liberal Party that they do not support any form of betterment tax, let us hear that. That is not the position that they took to the last election but if there is a new policy shift, even though with Mr Hanson it is pretty much Zed-lite; the only thing that is different is the style—

**Mr Hanson:** I will give you some policies on RiotACT, Andrew; you can pop in like Katy did.

**MR BARR:** I always look forward to your contributions on RiotACT, Mr Hanson. But if this is the policy change from the Liberal Party, this is probably about the 10th time you have asked me this question across the last few question times and the public accounts hearings.

**Mr Smyth:** Why won't you answer it?

**MR BARR:** I have indicated that we support—

**Mr Smyth:** A point of order, Madam Speaker. The question is: why does the government support the LVC when the negative impacts on the property market are clear? The minister has not addressed the question at all and I would ask you to bring him to the point.

**MR BARR:** In my opening remarks I addressed the question.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mr Barr, I would like you to address the question.

**MR BARR:** If the question was why do we support the lease variation charge, it is because it is sound public policy.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** No, actually, that was not the question. Supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

**MR SMYTH:** Treasurer, can you outline how the lease variation charge is affecting the property market and how it is contributing to these decreases?

**MR BARR:** It is having very little impact. In fact, what we are seeing is a moderation in the market as the result of a significant increase in supply in previous years. So it is not unexpected that, following a significant boost in supply, you would see a period when you would return to more long run levels of supply and demand in the market place.

We are, of course, in a market circumstance where a lot of Canberrans are anticipating a change of government at the end of this year and have factored into their expectations what that change of government will mean to the territory economy. You hear that in the business community and you hear it from Canberrans who are concerned in relation to the stated policies of the alternate government at a national level.

The intervention in the debate by the Senate candidate last week is interesting. He put the position of 4,000 job losses in Canberra and he was almost immediately contradicted by the shadow treasurer, Mr Hockey, who confirmed 12,000, and Mr Abbott, who has talked about 20,000.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Treasurer, can you please advise the Assembly if any property developments were delayed or cancelled because of the LVC changes?

**MR BARR:** I understand that some developments have in fact proceeded as a result of LVC changes. In relation to codification and rectification, it has provided certainty in the marketplace and has allowed many developments to proceed. I note that, in

spite of all of the doom and gloom that is portrayed by those opposite, we continue to receive applications that attract the lease variation charge. At last count, there are nearly 100 applications that have been determined and are waiting assessment in commercial, residential and mixed use developments. We will see a continuation of development in the city and a continuation of revenue from the lease variation charge that the government is putting into urban improvement. Again, if it is the Liberal Party's position that this charge should not apply, let them state that and let them also indicate that they do not support the investment in urban improvement in Canberra.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

**DR BOURKE:** Treasurer, could you tell us more about these changes in the Canberra property market and when they might have occurred before?

**MR BARR:** Thank you, Dr Bourke.

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**MR BARR:** I am pleased that those opposite are so interested. It may be news to some, but there are fluctuations in markets. There are periods of increased supply and increased demand. These things tend to be impacted upon by a variety of different public policy settings at both a territory and a federal government level. In fact, they can also be impacted upon by global trends.

We have seen in the past periods of increased supply in housing and periods of lesser supply. We have seen periods when there have been significant increases in demand that have been fuelled by particular policy settings and other periods when we have seen lower demand. There is certainly a very strong correlation in demand in the housing market in the ACT with employment levels in the commonwealth public service. I think that, tracked over the long run, it shows a very close correlation there. The level of interest rates also impacts on demand and on supply. The attractiveness of other forms of investment will also impact on a market.

We also need to recognise the extent to which an economy of this size and a market of this size can absorb large volumes of new supply. We certainly had a period in the last three or four years where there has been way above long-run trend levels of investment and new supply of both residential and commercial stock in the city. That is not sustainable forever. You would always anticipate a return to more long-run average levels, and that is what we are seeing at the moment.

### **Roads—car sharing**

**MR DOSZPOT:** My question is to the Minister for the Environment and Sustainable Development. In the parliamentary agreement for the Eighth Legislative Assembly signed by ACT Labor and the ACT Greens, an initiative that ACT Labor agrees to support or implement is to:

Introduce a 'car sharing' policy by the end of 2013 and complementary changes to planning and parking regulation to support and encourage 'car sharing' in Canberra.

Minister, can you please provide an update as to exactly what is intended with this initiative and when and how it is intended to be introduced?

**MR CORBELL:** I thank Mr Doszpot for his interesting transport policy. The government is currently developing options for the implementation of this particular agreement item.

Members would be interested to know that already there is interest from developers in Canberra who are seeking to offset their obligations to provide a certain level of car parking as part of development proposals with car sharing as an alternative. A number of very prominent Canberra developers have already put to the government their view that there should be an option to be able to offset at least some of their private car parking obligations with the alternative of a car sharing scheme available to residents of certain proposed developments.

This type of innovative thinking is worth testing further, and we will be taking those sorts of approaches into account as we develop options for policy implementation.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Minister, what changes to planning and parking regulations will be made to encourage this car sharing?

**MR CORBELL:** I am not yet in a position to announce government policy.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Supplementary question, Mr Wall.

**MR WALL:** Minister, will you be advocating change to the Barry Drive bus lane into a T2 lane to encourage and reward car sharing?

**MR CORBELL:** The government has outlined its position in relation to T2 lanes and how they should be managed. I would refer Mr Wall to previous answers from the Chief Minister and myself during the previous Assembly.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Supplementary question, Mr Wall.

**MR WALL:** Minister, what car sharing policy extends to the ministerial car fleet?

**MR CORBELL:** It depends who I have to share it with, Mr Wall.

### **Disability services—children**

**DR BOURKE:** My question is to the minister for disability. Minister, could you update the Assembly on the therapy assistant program and its operation?

**MS BURCH:** I thank Dr Bourke for his interest in the therapy assistant program. In 2011-12 the government trialled the innovative therapy assistant program across five Canberra schools—Caroline Chisholm school, Florey primary, Gowrie primary, Harrison, Mother Teresa Catholic primary school and two of our special schools, Cranleigh and Malkara.

The program has proved a great success following its implementation and continues to be staffed by therapy assistants, including a part-time clinical leader, a part-time speech pathologist, an occupational therapist, a physiotherapist and four therapy assistants. The program was designed to improve and enhance access to therapy services for students with developmental delays and developmental disabilities and to provide support to teachers to implement strategies within the classroom to support their students' learning outcomes.

The use of therapy assistants within schools enables students to access therapy programs and support during their school day. The program offers an holistic approach to intervention and includes individual intervention, group work and collaboration with teaching staff to support therapy goals in aspects of the classroom program.

The therapy assistant program pilot looked at improving functional outcomes for individual students based on their own therapy goals, increasing the number of children who were able to access these services, enhancing the opportunities for students to practise therapy goals, and providing teachers with information and skill development.

The therapy assistant program works with schools to put into place whole class team teaching with health professional, individual or group client programs delivered by the therapy assistant or learning support assistant, and professional development for teachers.

Evaluation of the program indicated success across these areas. In fact the pilot evaluation report showed results obtained against all project goals exceeded expectations. Feedback from the surveys conducted was positive with regard to the effects for individual children, classrooms and families. Constructive suggestions for improvement to communication processes were received during the first evaluation process and were incorporated into the second six months of the project. The changes resulted in an improvement to communication between all stakeholders during the final phase of the pilot. The program has been well received and well regarded by students, families and schools.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

**DR BOURKE:** Minister, how is the therapy assistant program meeting the needs of those who are accessing the program?

**MS BURCH:** The therapy assistant program is a valuable service and continues to meet the needs of those students who are accessing the program. The evaluation of the

pilot showed a good uptake, with positive student outcomes. These included group and individual programs that were conducted with 123 clients new to Therapy ACT and 147 students who were existing Therapy ACT clients. Eighty per cent of children involved in individual programs met or exceeded their goals and 78 per cent of children who were retested at the end of the pilot program improved on standardised tests after group intervention.

The 2011-12 therapy assistant program has provided enhanced or new services to 270 students across schools. Of these students, 45 per cent were not currently accessing services at Therapy ACT and approximately 80 per cent were not known to Therapy ACT.

Children who were not known to Therapy ACT were identified by the class teacher using a checklist developed by the speech pathologist, occupational therapist and physiotherapist in the therapy assistant project team. They were then assessed by the therapist in the program, who writes a program inclusive of individual learning goals.

Children who were already working with a therapist at Therapy ACT received a program written by that therapist and implemented by the therapy assistant in their school setting. This increases the number of opportunities for our current clients to practise specific skills. Once identified, students participate in either an individual or group therapy program developed by a health professional and delivered by the therapy assistant. Classroom teachers are also supported to implement strategies within the classroom which support a student's learning outcomes and desired goals.

Programs such as these not only provide a positive outcome on a therapy basis but also appear to have an impact on—(*Time expired.*)

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Supplementary question, Ms Berry.

**MS BERRY:** Minister, can you inform the Assembly if the government has made any commitments to support this program in the longer term?

**MS BURCH:** I thank Ms Berry for her interest in this program. I have been very pleased with the results and the benefits of the therapy assistant program pilot to date. To this end, the ACT government has committed a further \$1 million over two years in the 2012-13 budget to continue the program.

Further to that, in the lead-up to the 2012 election we made a commitment of \$1.67 million over four years to continue the therapy assistant program. This valuable service, and our commitment to continue supporting it, is only one way in which the government supports children with developmental delays and disabilities.

In addition to the therapy assistant program, Therapy ACT provides families with access to free allied health assessments and interventions in a range of areas. Speech pathology and physiotherapy drop-in clinics allow parents to directly access information and advice from health professionals without a referral. These drop-in clinics are held regularly and in numerous locations across Canberra and provide an important referral process for families to access therapy support.

In 2012 more than 1,200 children were seen through drop-in clinics, with around half of these children being referred to Therapy ACT for further assessment or intervention. The government is committed to continuing to work with schools, teachers and families to provide enhanced services and improved support for students who need access to allied health carers and therapy services.

I look forward to further updating the Assembly on the outcomes of the therapy assistant program.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** A supplementary question, Ms Porter.

**MS PORTER:** Minister, could you inform the Assembly of any other measures the government is taking to improve services for children with disabilities?

**MS BURCH:** I thank Ms Porter for her interest in that question. Very clearly, this government, Disability ACT and Therapy ACT have a range of programs to support young people and children with a disability and developmental delays. They run that through one-on-one clinical therapy services, group work, family support and a whole range of programs.

Just this morning I think I articulated, when I updated the Assembly on the national disability insurance scheme, our commitment to support young people as they transition out of specialist schools, and we have put on the table an additional \$5,000 that will go to those children, with a focus on supporting them as they transition out of school into adult life and with a focus on access to vocational opportunities, recreational opportunities, enhancing engagement with community services and just being part and parcel more broadly of our community.

That has started. We will start to work with children, as I have said, that left school last year. We will go back and capture those. That is in preparedness for 2014, when the NDIS will be in its formal transition stage here in the ACT.

### **Health—drug rehabilitation facility**

**MR WALL:** My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, in the 2012-13 budget review released on 12 February the capital funding for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residential alcohol and other drug rehabilitation facility has been reprofiled to include financing of \$1.9 million in the 2014-15 year, when previously financing concluded in the 2013-14 year. Minister, what is the reason for this reprofiling?

**MS GALLAGHER:** This has been due to delays with the development application proceeding. There was a briefing on Monday—

**Mr Smyth:** How many years is that?

**MS GALLAGHER:** The delays with the development application—and I know it is unparliamentary to respond to interjections, but Mr Smyth insists—



**MADAM SPEAKER:** No, he does not insist. You insist on replying.

**MS GALLAGHER:** Let us just remember the Liberal Party has never supported this project. Remember how you made all that fuss about a winery being close to it and all the issues around it.

*Mr Hanson interjecting—*

**MS GALLAGHER:** Yes, we can go through this; absolutely. But the government have been committed to this project. We have been working with the rural lessees and the Indigenous community here to get the model right. Yes, it has been delayed. It has been delayed longer than I would have liked, but there have been complexities in the arguments around the design of this building. There is not unanimous support from the rural lessees around having the building out there. There still is not. I was hoping to have agreement on that and there is not. There have been delays with finalising the technical aspects of the development application. My understanding is that is in its final stages and it will be going out for community consultation soon. This is for the long haul. This is to actually build a bush healing farm for the Indigenous community who have way too—

*Mr Smyth interjecting—*

**MS GALLAGHER:** This is the only government that has prioritised a service like this, Mr Smyth. It is the only one that has stood up and said that it wants to provide a different type of care for Indigenous people who are going through alcohol and drug addiction and provide them with a connection to their country. That connection to their country does not come without some concern from rural lessees. We are trying to work through that. We have been trying to work through that. My hope is that this project could be unanimously supported in the Assembly and in the community. I am not sure we will be able to deliver that, but this government is committed to the project. The development application will proceed. The building of this building will proceed.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** A supplementary question, Mr Wall.

**MR WALL:** Minister, what is the physical completion date for this facility, and can you guarantee that it will be delivered on time?

**MS GALLAGHER:** It is subject to the planning processes, which are independent of government. There is a process to go through. The development application will be notified—that is my understanding—in the next few weeks. Then it will kick off a planning process which I do not preside over. But what I can say is that, at the conclusion of that, the design is done, the consultations are done and we will get on with building this facility. And we are the only government that would do so.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** A supplementary question, Mrs Jones.

**MRS JONES:** What ongoing consultations, minister, have been undertaken with surrounding property owners during this process?

**MS GALLAGHER:** Lots, over years.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

**DR BOURKE:** Minister, could you tell us what benefits will accrue when the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm is up and operational?

**MS GALLAGHER:** I thank Dr Bourke for the question. The hope is that the service, once established, will be run in the first stages by Health. But it is the desire of the service to provide an alternative healing service with a connection to country for Indigenous people to come together and care for each other while they are going through treatment and counselling for substance abuse issues.

My hope in the end is that it will be an Indigenous controlled organisation. In the early days the Health Directorate will provide the support and services to the people who go and stay there. I think the work that has been done to try to find the appropriate location with the right connection to country has been at the centre of this project.

That has not come easily. So the glib interjections from across the chamber are, “When is it going to be done? When is it going to be opened?” I know you are probably unlikely to ever sit on this bench and actually deal with a project and to actually see it through to completion and, when hurdles come in the way, find ways of getting over those hurdles and look at ways of dealing with them.

My hope is that this project, once it is established, will have the unanimous support of the community and that it will provide an alternative service that we do not have at this point in time to deal with the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who endure alcohol and drug addiction. They are more culturally, appropriately and respectfully treated in a service that they have designed and that they have had input to from day one, and one where their elders have a connection to that land. That is the important part of this. *(Time expired.)*

### **Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate—financial statements**

**MRS JONES:** My question is to the Minister for the Environment and Sustainable Development. The Auditor-General’s report on the 2011-12 financial audit of the directorate states:

The Audit Office issued a qualified audit report on the Directorate’s 2011-12 financial statements because the Directorate did not record all revenue ...

The audit report states that the fees owed cannot be collected in a timely manner because the directorate’s business systems do not have the information required.

Minister, why did the government allow for the financial statements to be released without reporting all the revenue?

**MR CORBELL:** As Mrs Jones should understand, the release of financial statements is done under the annual reporting arrangements by the relevant director-general, who has accountability for those measures. When there is a qualified audit in relation to the financial statements submitted as part of the annual report by the relevant director-general, those matters are addressed. The Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate is currently taking the appropriate steps to address those matters.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** A supplementary question, Mrs Jones.

**MRS JONES:** Minister, why does the directorate's business systems not have the information required to be able to collect in a timely manner?

**MR CORBELL:** Again, as these are matters that are the responsibility of the Director-General under the Financial Management Act and under the annual reporting requirements put in place by the Chief Minister, those steps are currently being taken.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

**MR SMYTH:** Minister, are there any other areas in your departments that have reported incorrect revenue figures?

**MR CORBELL:** Not to my knowledge.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

**MR SMYTH:** Minister, how was this allowed to happen?

**MR CORBELL:** The processing of a range of statistics and information and data held by my directorate is the responsibility of my director-general. Where discrepancies are identified, appropriate steps are taken to address them.

### **Tobacco—sale to minors**

**MS PORTER:** My question is to the Attorney-General. Attorney, can you please outline what the government is doing to police the sale of cigarettes to underage persons?

**MR CORBELL:** The government has commenced testing tobacco retailers' compliance with the requirement of ensuring that tobacco products are not sold to underage persons. I am sure that everyone in this place would agree that the sale of cigarettes to minors is a serious matter and a matter that needs to be addressed by government wherever possible. The aim of this new compliance testing regime is to reduce the supply of cigarettes to people under the age of 18 by ensuring that tobacco retailers comply with the cigarette sales to minors provisions of the Tobacco Act.

The new compliance testing program involves a trained purchase assistant under the age of 18 entering a tobacco retailer under the supervision of an authorised officer and attempting to purchase cigarettes or other tobacco products. There are strict conditions under which the purchase assistants operate. Purchase assistants undergo a comprehensive training program and are carefully supervised at all times during the inspections. In addition, all of the assistants must be non-smokers and have demonstrated a commitment to tackling and reducing the harmful effects of smoking on the population and of young people in particular.

The testing has, regrettably, identified that a substantial number of retailers are not complying with their obligations under the act. I should stress, of course, that these are not new or extra obligations being placed upon retailers. Retailers are already required to take appropriate steps to eliminate or attempt to prevent the sale of cigarettes to minors. Further action is being taken in relation to these identified alleged breaches of compliance as part of the work of the Office of Regulatory Services.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** A supplementary question, Ms Porter.

**MS PORTER:** Attorney, what were the results of the compliance testing in relation to the sale of cigarettes to underage persons?

**MR CORBELL:** The new compliance testing program was conducted at 24 locations over a three-stage period during the last two months. Of the 24 retailers who were inspected by the Office of Regulatory Services, nine were found to be noncompliant in that they sold tobacco products to an underage person. The Office of Regulatory Services is currently considering appropriate enforcement action in relation to these matters, and the prosecutions have not yet been undertaken.

The Office of Regulatory Services will refer the matters to the Director of Public Prosecutions who will determine whether or not to proceed with any individual matter and the time frame involved. Once matters have been referred for prosecution, that information will be provided publicly.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

**DR BOURKE:** Minister, how important is undertaking ongoing compliance activity in preventing the sale of cigarettes to underage persons?

**MR CORBELL:** I thank Dr Bourke for the supplementary. It is very important. We understand that smoking rates in the ACT amongst teenagers are particularly high. Seventeen per cent of teenagers aged 16 to 17 years report smoking regularly. This compliance program has demonstrated how important it is for ongoing compliance activity to be undertaken to prevent the sale of cigarettes to children and young people under the age of 18. It is designed to reduce the harmful effects of tobacco on the population and on young people in particular.

Teenage smoking is still a major public health concern and reducing smoking amongst teenagers is one of the government's key priorities. The Office of Regulatory Services has determined to continue to conduct compliance testing periodically as part of its rolling compliance program. I trust that the message will be sent loud and clear to tobacco retailers, to those licensees, to their staff, that they need to remain diligent in complying with their obligations under the act and to ensure that cigarettes are not being sold to people under the age of 18.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Supplementary question, Mr Gentleman.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Minister, is it your intention to keep up this important work on compliance matters for the whole term of the Assembly?

**MR CORBELL:** Since the Assembly has now, in the last term, adopted the necessary legislative changes, it is the government's intention to continue with the program. The program has already demonstrated its value in terms of identifying a significant level of noncompliance, and we will be following through with further compliance action until we see a level of compliance which is more what we would be expecting rather than the much higher rates that we have seen in the compliance program to date.

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

## Papers

**Madam Speaker** presented the following papers:

Standing order 191—Amendments to:

Directors Liability Legislation Amendment Bill 2012, dated 19 February 2013.

Financial Management Amendment Bill 2012 (No 2), dated 19 February 2013.

Health (National Health Funding Pool and Administration) Bill 2012 (No 2), dated 18 and 19 February 2013.

Public Unleased Land Bill 2012, dated 19 February 2013.

Racing Amendment Bill 2012, dated 18 and 19 February 2013.

## Paper

**Mr Corbell** presented the following paper:

Planning, Public Works and Territory and Municipal Services—Standing Committee (Seventh Assembly)—Report 15—*Draft variation to the Territory Plan No 306—Residential development, estate development and leasing codes*—Government response.

## **Planning and Development Act 2007—variation No 306 to the territory plan**

### **Papers and statement by minister**

**MR CORBELL** (Molonglo—Attorney-General, Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations and Minister for the Environment and Sustainable Development): For the information of members, I present the following papers:

Planning and Development Act, pursuant to subsection 79(1)—Approval of Variation No 306 to the Territory Plan—Residential development, estate development and leasing codes: Replacement of residential zones objectives, development tables, and housing development codes—Introduction of Residential Zones Development Code and Lease Variation General Code—Replacement of Residential Subdivision Development Code with Estate Development Code, dated February 2013, together with background papers, a copy of the summaries and reports, and a copy of any direction or report required.

In accordance with the provisions of the act, this variation is presented with the background papers and copies of the summaries and reports.

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

Leave granted.

**MR CORBELL:** Variation 306 has been undertaken as a part of the review of the territory plan. On 31 March 2008 a restructured territory plan was introduced to work in conjunction with the streamlined planning system, which was based on the best practice development assessment forum leading practice model.

When the restructured territory plan was introduced, the government gave a commitment that the policy content would be reviewed and updated as a result of changing economic, social and environmental circumstances to create a best practice and responsive development assessment framework. The first stage was completed in 2011 with the commencement of variation 302 which introduced new community facility zone objectives, a new zone development table and a new community facility zone development code.

Variation 306 is the second stage of the review and includes policy relating to all forms of development in residential zones and the subdivision of land. In keeping with the government's commitment to sustainability, a key focus of the review was improving solar performance of housing by ensuring that residential blocks are properly configured and to introducing a new solar fence provision to limit overshadowing of adjoining properties. The review of the territory plan continues with provisions relating to commercial and industrial development currently under consideration.

Variation 306 proposes to introduce amended residential objectives, development tables and codes, an amended estate development code and a new lease variation general code. Many of the initiatives included in the variation were initially presented to the public for comment through draft variations 301 and 303. These two draft variations were withdrawn and replaced by draft variation 306 on 3 June 2011.

The residential zone objectives have been revised to better differentiate between zones, to more fully describe the “desired character” of urban development in each zone and to recognise the importance of good solar access.

Changes are proposed to the residential zones development tables which include expanding the list of development under the code track to include certain types of lease variations, amending terms in the merit track list to reflect changes to definitions associated with this variation and transferring two items from the prohibited list to the impact track. Notes have been added to acknowledge the role of leases in the regulation of land use in the territory and clarify the codes that are relevant to a particular development proposal.

The variation introduces a new residential zones development code that is the overarching code for all development in residential zones. This code contains provisions transferred from other codes, in particular part D of the current residential zones multi-unit housing development code, without significantly altering the underlying policy.

The major policy change in the new residential zones development code is the introduction of secondary residences that replace the current “relocatable units” and “habitable suites”. An application for a secondary residence can be made only if it is associated with a single dwelling on a block over 500 square metres. While the floor area of the secondary residence is restricted to 75 square metres, there is no restriction on the type of occupant. This policy will increase housing options in the ACT and improve housing affordability, and has been strongly supported by the community

The current residential zones single residential housing development code is being replaced by a new single dwelling housing development code. All rules and criteria have been reviewed and many reworded for clarity and consistency. The major policy change is the introduction of solar access provisions that limit overshadowing of neighbouring residential properties. This is known as a solar fence. I will say more about this a little later.

Variation 306 also includes a new multi-unit housing development code. As well as incorporating many of the same changes as the single dwelling housing development code, including the new solar fence provisions, variation 306 introduces new restrictions on residential redevelopment in the RZ2 zone. In response to community concern about multi-unit development in the RZ2 areas, provisions have been introduced that limit the number of dwellings permitted on a site, limit consolidation and limit the number of dwellings in any building on the site to four. New provisions also apply to the configuration of car parking spaces. These provisions have had interim effect since June 2011.

The amended multi-unit housing development code includes a new housing replacement provision that requires at least one large dwelling to be provided for each block used for multi-unit redevelopment. This provision will ensure that housing choice is maintained in residential redevelopment in areas such as the inner north and allow families with children to remain in the area.

Other changes to the code include a plot ratio for multi-unit blocks in RZ1, allowing flexibility in the number of storeys in RZ3, RZ4 and RZ5 zones whilst strictly limiting overall building height. Amendments to principal private open space provisions and additional controls for multi-unit housing with four or more storeys are also included.

Variation 306 replaces the current residential subdivision development code with a new estate development code. It differs from the current code in format and some key policies, not least being new block compliance tables designed to achieve improved solar performance for new residential subdivisions. The block compliance tables have had interim effect since June 2011 and regulate the size, shape and orientation of blocks in new greenfield subdivisions. To achieve better solar outcomes they are biased against narrow blocks with an east-west orientation on land sloping to the south.

The new code requires blocks that do not comply with the compliance tables to be identified in the precinct code. This will alert prospective purchasers that they may be limited in the floor area of a house on such a block, particularly if a two-storey building is proposed. The new estate development code also makes changes to street networks and entity endorsements and introduces integrated housing development.

A new lease variation general code is introduced with variation 306. It includes specific matters for consideration for lease variations including the provision of car parking, traffic, waste management, and disposal and noise generation. It also provides rules by which some minor lease variations can be assessed under the code track.

The variation is consistent with the territory plan's statement of strategic directions in terms of environmental, economic and social sustainability principles. The draft variation was released for public comment in June 2011 and attracted 76 public submissions. The main issues raised related to RZ2 redevelopment provisions and solar access provisions. A report on consultation was prepared by the Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate in response to the issues raised in the submissions. A copy of that report is included with the documents I have tabled.

Under section 73(2) of the Planning and Development Act, I referred the proposed draft variation to the Standing Committee on Planning, Public Works and Territory and Municipal Services for its consideration. The committee made 21 recommendations in its report which was released in September 2012. The government agreed to 13 of the recommendations, noted one, and agreed in principle to the remainder. While some recommendations related directly to draft variation 306 as it then was, others related to territory plan variation processes and other associated issues. I directed the Planning and Land Authority within my directorate to revise the



draft variation in line with those recommendations of the committee relevant to the variation document.

I will now provide a brief outline of the government's response to that report of the committee. The full response is included in the documents I have tabled today. The government agrees with the first recommendation of the committee that the draft variation proceed, subject to the recommendations in the committee's report. The second recommendation of the committee—that the planning committee of this Legislative Assembly consider revisiting some or all of the issues raised during the inquiry—is noted by the government

The government agrees with recommendation 3 that the Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate will monitor the impact on solar access of structures that do not require approval and, if necessary, amend the requirements.

In response to the fourth recommendation—to eliminate wasted strips of land at both edges of blocks—the solar envelope provision has been amended to allow more flexibility in relation to building close to the side boundary. The solar fence provision has been extended from 1.8 metres to 2.4 metres over that part of the boundary between the minimum front setback and a point 10 metres to the rear. This change will allow a building, ordinarily a garage, to be located closer to the side boundary in the forward portion of the block. This addresses the concerns raised by representatives of the housing industry.

The Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate will monitor the provisions introduced for RZ2 to determine their impact on the goals of affordable housing and urban infill. The broader strategic approach to RZ2 zonings would be considered in the context of the planning strategy. Other provisions introduced with the variation address recommendation 5. These include new provisions for secondary residences and a reduction of the minimum block size for dual occupancies in the RZ2 zone from 800 square metres to 700.

Recommendations 6 and 7 relate to the content to be included in future variations. The government has agreed to these recommendations.

The government agrees in principle to recommendation 8 regarding publishing the territory plan electronically in a number of formats. The only authorised version of the territory plan is accessible on the ACT legislation register, and its format is restricted by the limitations of the register.

More flexibility in the parking requirements for secondary residences in the residential zones development code was introduced to implement the committee's recommendation 9. Changes to the secondary residences provisions were also made in response to suggestions made by the committee.

In response to recommendation 10, the government is considering remitting the lease variation charge for secondary residences when a lease variation is required. This will encourage the development of this new form of housing, ensure equity between

applicants and satisfy an increasing demand for affordable housing for people of all ages and states of health.

Recommendations 11, 12 and 13 relate to the development of precinct codes and the definition of “desired character”. Precinct codes were developed for every suburb in Canberra in December 2012 and incorporate the area-specific policies that were previously contained in other parts of the territory plan. The wording of residential zone objectives proposed by the draft variation is considered to be sufficient to differentiate between the five residential zones and establish a basis for describing “desired character”.

As the proposed definition of “desired character” implies a future state, it does not need to be expressed as “desired future character”. There will be opportunity to include more specific statements of desired character in suburb precinct codes. Some of these statements will be informed by previous neighbourhood planning processes. The ESDD website contains information regarding unit titling and dual occupancies. In response to the committee’s recommendation 14, the government will review the current unit titling restrictions on dual occupancies.

In response to recommendation 15, the government considers that draft variation 306 supports a fifty-fifty infill objective as well as housing affordability and the government’s greenhouse gas reduction targets. Although the proposed RZ2 provisions will effectively limit the number of multi-unit dwellings permitted on a site, other changes proposed in the variation will enable other forms of infill development in established areas. These include reducing the minimum block size for a dual occupancy from 800 to 700 square metres and the new secondary residence provisions.

Reducing the minimum block size to 700 square metres in RZ2 will increase the number of blocks available for dual occupancy development. In addition, the secondary residence provisions will significantly increase the potential for additional dwellings in residential areas. These two changes will help achieve greater diversity, increased density and improved housing affordability.

The solar access provisions included in the residential development codes aim to protect the solar access of neighbours. The codes also require a certain amount of sunlight to living areas on the winter solstice. These provisions, as well as the requirements of the building code, improve the energy efficiency of residences and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The estate development code requires new blocks to comply with the block compliance tables or meet the criterion that the orientation of the block facilitates a dwelling on the block to achieve passive solar energy efficiency. Ensuring that the size, slope and orientation of new blocks allow a solar passive residence to be constructed on it assists in achieving greenhouse gas reduction targets. Provisions in the estate development code promote alternate modes of transport to assist in reducing the dependence on motor vehicles, thereby also reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

It should be noted that this variation is but one of a number of government initiatives with implications for housing affordability and achieving our greenhouse gas reduction targets. This variation improves the framework for assessing higher density residential development and new estates, and updates and enhances the provisions related to solar access.

Other major policy changes, such as rezonings, will also have an impact in the future. The ACT planning strategy intends to focus urban intensification to town centres, around group centres and along public transport routes. This may involve the rezoning of land and/or the release of existing sites for urban redevelopment.

After monitoring the impact of this variation, my directorate will investigate a sliding scale for plot ratio for large single dwelling blocks, the interaction of plot ratio and plot size, and the prospect of increasing the minimum block size where integrated development is not required. This will address recommendations 16, 17 and 18.

The government agrees in principle to recommendation 19 regarding the flexibility of design for community title schemes. The provisions relating to community title schemes are important for community safety and amenity. Requiring a community title scheme to comply with the entity endorsement provisions in the estate development code will ensure that infrastructure will be comparable to that provided in a traditional estate.

The government considers the variation already addresses the issues raised in recommendations 20 and 21. Both the single dwelling and multi-unit housing development codes require a portion of the block to be retained as planted area. Territory and Municipal Services is currently reviewing its standards. If the provisions applying to street verge design and street trees are modified, the estate development code will be amended accordingly.

I thank the committee for its consideration and report on the variation, and I commend the variation to the Assembly.

## **Papers**

**Mr Corbell** presented the following paper:

National Environment Protection Council Act, pursuant to subsection 23(3)—  
National Environment Protection Council—Annual report 2011-2012.

**Ms Burch** presented the following paper:

Education and Care Services Ombudsman, National Education and Care Services  
Freedom of Information and Privacy Commissioners—Annual report (January to  
30 June 2012).

## **Performance in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education—annual report Paper and statement by minister**

**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): For the information of members, in accordance with the resolution of the Assembly of 24 May 2000, as amended on 16 February 2006, I present the following paper:

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education—Annual report 2011-2012

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

Leave granted.

**MS BURCH:** I am pleased to present to the Assembly the report on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education for the period July 2011 to June 2012.

This is the second report on *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education matters: strategic plan 2010-2013* and highlights the achievements of ACT public schools in improving learning outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

This report is structured around the four domains of the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education matters: strategic plan 2010-2013*. Highlighted in this report are achievements made in the delivery of quality curriculum, literacy and numeracy, engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, retention of students to year 12 and work done to continue to build the capacity of staff to work effectively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

In the learning and teaching domain, the directorate supported schools in developing culturally explicit cross-curriculum learning plans in the areas of English, mathematics, science and history. In this reporting period, funds totalling \$98,500 were allocated to schools to support the provision of targeted support for individual or small groups of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Also in this reporting period, funds totalling \$236,500 were allocated to high schools and colleges to enable the provision of subject-specific academic support to students. This initiative is one factor that contributed to 95 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students successfully completing school with a year 12 certificate.

The directorate continues to promote a deeper understanding of and commitment to reconciliation. The directorate supported the development of 15 reconciliation action plans at a local school level. The plans were developed either by individual schools or by a cluster of schools in partnership with their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. Supporting students at key transition points of their schooling becomes a focus of the 23 schools in the north Canberra and Gungahlin school network. Schools collaborated with each other and the parents and care givers of Aboriginal and Torres

Strait Islander students to develop structured transition plans to support students as they move from one educational setting to the next.

During this reporting period the directorate worked closely with key Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community groups to seek advice and input at all stages of the design and development of new schools across the ACT. A key example of this is the advice provided to guide the design of the school in Bonner. In the pathways and transitions domain, the directorate made a concentrated effort to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their families. Students from high schools and colleges were able to access employer groups, universities and the CIT to hear current information about the range of courses being offered and what the requirements are to enrol in those courses.

Student aspiration programs continued to support 128 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from year 5 to year 12. Sixty per cent of these students were regularly engaged in activities offered through the aspirations program, including university taster days, workshops delivered by the CSIRO and the ANU Medical School. Seventeen senior students visited universities in Melbourne, with one student being offered a full scholarship to the University of Melbourne, where he is enrolled in a Bachelor of Arts degree.

In addition to support through the student aspirations program, 43 Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander students were enrolled in a diverse range of Australian school-based apprenticeships in 2011.

In the leadership and corporate development domain, the directorate worked with school principals to embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education programs in school plans and delivered quality professional development activities to principals and other staff.

Five school leaders participated in the leadership in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education offered by the Stronger Smarter Institute at the Queensland University of Technology. There are now a total of 13 staff in school leadership positions across the ACT who have completed this program.

This report identifies the work being done in ACT public schools and throughout the central office to improve learning outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. The report also identifies how the directorate is providing students and staff with opportunities to learn about the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their cultures. As stated, this is the second report on *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education matters: strategic plan 2010-2013*. I look forward to providing additional reports as they come through.

## **Paper**

**Ms Burch** presented the following paper:

Canberra Institute of Technology Act, pursuant to subsection 6(4)—Canberra Institute of Technology Ministerial Direction Revocation 2013 (No 1)—Notifiable Instrument NI2013-43, dated 29 January 2013.

## Health, Community and Social Services—Standing Committee (Seventh Assembly)

### Report 8—government response

**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) (4.05): For the information of members, I present the following paper:

Health, Community and Social Services—Standing Committee (Seventh Assembly)—Report 8—*The Provision of Social Housing in the ACT*—Government response, dated February 2013.

I move:

That the Assembly takes note of the paper.

Today it is my pleasure to table the ACT government response to the Standing Committee on Health, Community and Social Services report *The provision of social housing in the ACT*. I would like to commend the standing committee for its consideration of complex issues and its recommendations to improve social housing in the ACT. I thank members of the committee for their hard work.

The ACT government input into the inquiry was provided through hearings with the then Minister for Community Services, Ms Joy Burch, and two submissions. Public hearings were also held with representatives from the Community Services Directorate. The ACT Human Rights Commission provided a submission to the inquiry and public hearings were held with officials. Twenty community submissions were made to the inquiry and 18 people attended public hearings. The standing committee produced report 8, *The provision of social housing in the ACT*, which was tabled in the Assembly on 23 August 2012. The usual convention requires the government's response to be tabled in 90 days; however, due to caretaker conventions and the election, the tabling of the government's response has been delayed.

The report contains 28 recommendations. This ACT government response deals with the standing committee's recommendations.

The government welcomes the standing committee's report and agrees to 16 of the standing committee's 28 recommendations. The 16 recommendations which have been agreed to broadly align with the key themes of the committee's findings which relate to the need for Housing ACT to continue to focus on improving its human service provisions and communications with its clients.

The government has disagreed with four of the report's recommendations in the following areas: the public housing asset management strategy, two recommendations relating to the point at which collection of client information occurs, and the assessment of priority housing and operations of the multidisciplinary panel.

The government disagreed with recommendation 27 that the public housing asset management strategy 2012-17 be considered as an interim document. The government

endorsed the public housing management strategy in December 2011. The strategy sets out the overarching strategies, principles and objectives that guide the management of the public housing portfolio. The strategy was released in January 2012. Taking the committee's point that there needed to be clearer understanding of the decision-making behind the strategy, Housing ACT will investigate options to utilise existing government processes, such as the annual infrastructure plan, to report annual work priorities and progress against the strategy.

Recommendations 3 and 13, which suggested that supporting evidence for Housing applications be supplied at the time of a property being identified rather than at the time of application, were disagreed to. These recommendations were disagreed because it was felt that they would lead to increased waiting times for public housing tenants. Also disagreed to was recommendation 5, that all applications determined as eligible for priority housing be provided to the multidisciplinary panel and that a comparative needs test be applied only after the multidisciplinary panel assessed the applications as eligible. This was disagreed to as this recommendation has misinterpreted the function of the panel, in that the panel determines the eligibility for priority housing and, as such, Housing ACT progresses all applications which are assessed as potentially meeting the priority housing category to the panel.

A key theme of the committee's report is to improve Housing ACT's communication with tenants. In order to do so, achieving efficiencies are necessary to increase the capacity of front-line staff so that they have increased capacity for client management and contacts. Housing ACT is considering policy changes which will increase front-line service capacity, including the streamlining of rebates, which is also recommended in the report, and a housing payment deduction scheme which will introduce automatic rental deductions from Centrelink benefits for those tenants in arrears or at risk of falling into arrears. There are 10 per cent of tenants who are in significant debt. These tenants require disproportionate effort by housing managers in managing their debt, and the scheme, if introduced, will increase housing manager capacity by an anticipated 40 per cent. The additional time would be better used to support and communicate with tenants. As no additional resources are available for implementation of the government's agreed responses, the implementation time frames have been developed accordingly, with actions to be delivered over the next 12 months.

I look forward to working with Housing ACT, the Community Services Directorate and all stakeholders to advance the recommendations of the report and continue to improve the services offered to clients of Housing ACT.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

## **Papers**

**Mr Corbell** presented the following papers:

**Subordinate legislation (including explanatory statements unless otherwise stated)**

Legislation Act, pursuant to section 64—

Environment Protection Act—Environment Protection Amendment Regulation 2013 (No 1)—Subordinate Law SL2013-2 (LR, 7 February 2013).

Public Place Names Act—Public Place Names (Casey) Determination 2013 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2013-8 (LR, 14 February 2013).

Road Transport (General) Act—Road Transport (General) Application of Road Transport Legislation Declaration 2013 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2013-9 (LR, 15 February 2013).

## **Parking—availability**

### **Discussion of matter of public importance**

**MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER** (Mr Doszpot): Madam Speaker has received letters from Ms Berry, Dr Bourke, Mr Coe, Mr Doszpot, Mr Gentleman, Mr Hanson, Mrs Jones, Ms Porter, Mr Seselja, Mr Smyth and Mr Wall proposing that matters of public importance be submitted to the Assembly. In accordance with standing order 79, Madam Speaker has determined that the matter proposed by Mr Hanson be submitted to the Assembly, namely:

Car parking in the ACT.

**MR HANSON** (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (4.11): This is a very important issue to discuss, because it has become apparent to me in the course of the last four years in this place that there is a clear difference of opinion, in ideology, between those on this side of the chamber and those on the other side of the chamber. It could be put that we are pro car, pro parking, whereas those on the other side have an ideological distaste for parking and for motor vehicles.

We just saw that in question time today with a question asked by Mr Doszpot about the government's proposed car sharing policy. The question was about "introducing a car sharing policy by the end of 2013 and complementary changes to planning and parking regulation". We know that that does not mean more parking. You can guarantee that is not going to be putting the price of parking down. This is a government that wants us all to be sharing our vehicles. We know that the impact on parking will only be a negative one for the people of Canberra.

It makes me recall when Mr Smyth and I were on the estimates committee of 2011-12 and we were discussing the issue of Manuka. Mr Assistant Speaker, you moved an excellent motion in the previous sitting week about the problems associated with Manuka. Mr Smyth and I wanted to introduce a parking plan for Manuka at that point. We made the point in estimates and as we were going through the report. The Greens committee members at that point—Ms Hunter and Ms Bresnan—refused to allow the word "parking" to appear in our recommendation.

We said, "If there is a problem with parking at Manuka Oval, let us come up with a plan to fix the parking." They refused to put the word "parking" in. I think we came up with some Sir Humphrey sort of term. It was all multi-modal transport options or something like that. But it became very clear to me then in the course of those



discussions and other discussions we have had that those opposite want to drive people out of their cars where they can. They want to make parking in this town as difficult as they can whereas the members on this side want to actually make parking easier for people, because we do use our cars in this town. I will get to that later.

We have got a range of policies quite at odds with those opposite. I commend Mr Coe, who at the last election put forward a number of very good policies aimed at making parking not just more available but easier to use. I refer members to our range of policies in the 2012 election that would have made life a lot easier for the people of the ACT. Ultimately, that is what we are here to do—to improve the lives of the people here in Canberra.

But there is no question that this is a government that has got too much ideology that is getting in the way of the practicalities. Car parking is just one of those issues. In fact, I was just discussing lease variation DV306, I think it is, with Mr Coe, and some of the unintended consequences of that that are just going to make people's lives harder in the long run.

In May last year we saw the fifth anniversary of the government's parking strategy. It is certainly one of the government's many unfinished projects. In 2007 it promised to strike a balance between parking supply, demand and pricing. It promised to increase parking over the next 15 to 20 years. Mr Assistant Speaker, a casual glance around the city will see that the static car parking supply is not meeting growing demand. We have been pushing hard on things like the Cooleman Court master plan. You just need to go to that place.

Certainly Mrs Jones, yourself, Mr Assistant Speaker Doszpot, and I are only too aware of the impact of a lack of parking on many people. It is not just people going to work. In many cases it is the mums trying to do the shopping with their kids or elderly people. We know what a lack of parking actually means in terms of the impact on people's lives.

Indeed, a casual glance at the government strategy will show that the plan, far from increasing car parking, actually means to reduce the number of car parks from eight to just five for every 10 city workers. A casual glance at parking prices will show that we are paying an increasing premium for that static supply.

After almost doubling under Labor, the 2030 budget saw parking charges leap by a further 12 per cent. That translates to an additional \$625 a year, taking the total cost of parking to a whopping \$5,625 a year. Under the ACT Labor and Greens coalition, it now costs \$5,625 a year for a Canberran to park their car to go to work, to go to the doctor, to do their shopping. This is under the guise of encouraging Canberrans into alternative modes of transport.

They say it is a positive way to drive commuters to public transport. But do not let me get started on the subject of public transport in this town. The reality is that this is a government monopoly and it is exploiting the pockets of consumers. It is a blatant, monopolistic exploitation with captive audience demand for a limited supply. It is for

no other reason than to prop up a budget, beyond the ideological aspects, that is under pressure because of uncontrolled spending on wrong priorities.

Why should Canberra's car commuters be penalised with fewer car parks and higher costs just to prop up a government that is inefficient and is poor at financial management? The government's five-year-old parking strategy is a furphy because it has not yielded any progress. It is just empty words on now yellowing pieces of paper.

Why is that, Mr Assistant Speaker? It is because the ACT Labor and Greens coalition ideology constantly gets in the way of practicalities. The ideology is that the government wants more people to use buses. The practicality is that buses do not serve the needs of Canberrans. The government is blind to the chasm that is the breach between the ideology and the practicality, but ignores it in the hope that it might go away.

Even the government's own parking supply options study of May 2010 tried to highlight this breach, this chasm, between ideology and practicality. That paper said:

It may be difficult for people who have childcare or other caring responsibilities and who must start later in the morning ... to find parking spaces within a reasonable distance of their work destinations.

The government simply ignores the chasm in the hope that the Canberra commuters might be beaten into submission, finally succumbing to an inefficient public transport system that does not meet their commuting needs. I reflect on an anecdote of my own, Mr Assistant Speaker. It is very much akin to the approach of the former ACT Labor Treasurer who said, "We will tax them until they bleed, but not until they die."

During the 2012 election campaign, as I mentioned before, the Canberra Liberals announced a number of initiatives to ease parking pressures on Canberra families. We promised to provide thousands more car parks across the territory. Around 500 would be provided in Belconnen town centre alone, with a further 100 provided at Calvary hospital. We promised to audit car parking facilities, costs and codes. We promised a better plan for park-and-ride facilities.

Just one example of the government's failure in this area is the secure bicycle shed at the Mawson park-and-ride facility. I am told by observers that just one bike has stood in that shed since it was built. That bike has remained untouched for the duration. The bike shed at the Curtin bus stop on Melrose Drive displays a similar level of usage. How is that a public transport solution?

In the 2012 election campaign the Canberra Liberals announced that credit card parking machines would be installed in all large ACT government car parks. We, the Canberra Liberals, were prepared to make it easier and more convenient for Canberra's car commuters, whereas the ACT Labor-Greens government is stuck in the past and seems to be trying to perpetuate the inefficiencies of the past. It is another method that it uses to beat commuters into submission, forcing them out of their cars into a public transport system that does not meet their needs.

Mr Assistant Speaker, when will this government actually start to back away from its ideology and get a grasp of the practicalities, the practicalities that are just making the lives of Canberrans more difficult day by day and costing the people of Canberra more day by day? When will it realise that Canberra was designed as a passenger car city? That does not mean that we do not encourage the use of public transport, but it is a city built for the motor vehicle, with wide boulevards and arterial road networks. When will it realise that Canberra families have more running around to do each day and most Canberra families—about 90 per cent—are not able to get a bus from home to work because of the practicalities of their lives?

As I said, I would like to cite an example from my own experience. In 2008 my youngest son was about two. My wife wanted to go on a holiday, a long-planned holiday, to Italy with her sister. It had been a long-term ambition. She had planned to go. That was a great thing. It left me in charge of the kids, which was good experience for me. But the reality was then that I needed to get the kids, particularly my youngest son, to child care, which did not open until about 8.30. That meant that I could not get to work until about nine. The reality was that in the location where I worked there were no car parks after about 8.30.

I had this position where, if I was going to be looking after the kids, it was therefore impossible for me to go to work because I could not get a bus. There was no bus that would go from where I worked, past the child care—with a two-year-old, I would like to add—and then on to work. What was I to do? It forced me into a situation where, ultimately, I decided that pretty much the only solution was to take some time off work so I could do that.

The point is that if you reduce the number of car parks, wherever it is, you reduce the options for our families. If you reduce the options for mothers and fathers, people with complex lives, ultimately what it does is increase the stress on those people. It increases the complexity of their lives and it increases the cost of their lives.

The ideology that the Greens and Labor are driving at is to try and get everybody out of their cars whilst they drive their Prius motor vehicles and park them in the car parks outside this building. While they are making their own lives very simple, out there Canberra families would kill for what we have here, which is the luxury of a car park in Civic. We have got to be very careful when we make regulations in here, when we come up with policies, when we are trying to drive some sort of environmental policy, trying to push people onto buses, that we understand the impact on the mums and dads, the grandmothers and people trying to get about their daily lives.

Go out there and talk to people—people in Belconnen, people in Tuggeranong, people in Woden and Weston Creek. I have not met one person in the whole time that I have been out there doing this that says, “You know, Jeremy, I think we have too many car parks. I would like less parking.” I would defy anybody to say to me that they know a constituent who would say to them, “I want less car parking. This is too convenient.”

I would challenge the minister to come along on a Saturday morning or come along on a busy weekday to places like Cooleman Court, to some of the local shopping centres, or instead of parking their car in their government-provided car park, 10 metres from this building, give that up to someone who is a citizen here and try and find a car park somewhere else. The reality is that then they will get a taste of what it means.

I would like to make it very clear on the record, and I think it is well understood, that the Canberra Liberals are a party that supports individual choice. That means the ability to drive your motor vehicle if you want to and use it in a variety of situations, particularly going to work, particularly going to the shops, because people live busy and complex lives.

That is in direct contrast, Mr Assistant Speaker, with those opposite, who want to control people's lives, who want to limit their options to achieve what will be a perverse effect, because it will not drive people onto buses. That is because the bus system just is not flexible enough, is not efficient enough, is not effective enough. All it is going to do is drive further complexity into people's lives and put up the cost of living.

As I said in my speech, that may be their desire—to reap more money for the budget. I am not sure which is their greater motive, whether it is the budgetary impact or their ideology. Regardless, the consequence on people's lives is a negative one. Let us be very clear that this is a clear ideological difference. I think over the next four years we will see this play out further in this place.

**MR CORBELL** (Molonglo—Attorney-General, Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations and Minister for the Environment and Sustainable Development) (4.26): I thank Mr Hanson for bringing this matter of public importance before the Assembly this afternoon. I am very happy to talk about the government's policy in relation to managing parking demand and the marked difference between those on the other side of this place and those on this side. It is a choice between demand management and predict and provide.

Let us talk about what the consequences are of predict and provide in the context of cost of living, the expenses it is placing on families and what the long-term consequences of policies like those outlined by Mr Hanson actually mean. Let us start at the beginning in terms of congestion. The key issue here is managing the growth of congestion in our city over time. None of us like to be caught in traffic jams. It is a drag on the economy and it is a waste of people's time. We can see the most severe effects of the impacts of congestion if you go to a place like western Sydney. Go to a place like western Sydney and ask people there about commuting times and congestion, and they will tell you it is their number one problem, their number one concern, because they have no choice. Even though they have got four or eight-lane freeways, they have no choice but to get stuck in traffic as they commute to and from work. They know the enormous impact of wasted time and wasted productivity as a result of the lack of transport choices.

Let us look at the Canberra context. The government has outlined in its transport for Canberra policy what business as usual will mean in terms of growth and congestion compared to alternative policies which the government has chosen to adopt. The assessment undertaken using the territory's transport model is that at the moment there are approximately 100 kilometres of roads that have a volume versus capacity ratio of more than 0.9—that is, traffic congestion—particularly during peak times. So at the moment during peak times we have around 100 kilometres of roads subject to serious congestion during peaks. By 2031 under a business-as-usual scenario, that will double to 200 kilometres of roads subject to congestion during peak time.

Is that the future we want? We know people now are unhappy with levels of congestion on some parts of our road network during peak time. If we continue with business as usual, it will double by 2031. Do you think Canberra families want to see a doubling of congestion, a doubling of the amount of time they spend in congested traffic trying to get to and from work? No, they do not. So it is the obligation of the government to put in place policies that seek to prevent that scenario from eventuating.

There are two important parts to this: one is managing demand and the other is giving people transport choice. Transport choice is around improving public transport choices and people's ability to cycle and walk to work as an alternative to having to rely on their private motor vehicles. We also know that by putting in place such policies we reduce costs for families over time because more households over time will be able to rely on having fewer motor vehicles, which means less money spent on registration charges, petrol and maintenance costs, all of which we know have a big impact on family budgets. It is in the city's interests to put in place over time policies that will save households money because they will not have to register and pay for two or three or four cars, which is a major cost in household budgets.

Let us talk about demand management. The government's policy in relation to parking is a demand management approach, recognising not that everyone has to use public transport—counter to the claims by those opposite—but that those who can should have sufficient options available to them to use public transport easily and efficiently.

The government's transport policies do not assume that everyone will stop using their cars—in fact, the government's transport policies assume that around 70 per cent of all journeys to work will continue to be undertaken by the private motor vehicle—but that a significant number of journeys do not need to be undertaken by the private motor vehicle in terms of journeys to work and that people should be given alternatives. That is what the government's transport policy is all about—supporting alternatives so that, whilst the overwhelming majority of journeys to work will still be by car, we can reduce congestion, reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and reduce the costs for people having to buy multiple cars in their household by providing them with transport choice.

How does managing demand in terms of parking come into the equation? By providing for a price signal and sending that signal to motorists who have other choices. Not every motorist has another choice; the government acknowledges there

are households who have multiple journeys—the childcare drop-off, the school pick-up, other journeys during the day—that make using public transport unviable. That is why our policies say that over 70 per cent of journeys to work will still be by private motor vehicle. But there are still a significant number of commuters whose only key commute is from home to the office and back. If we can get more of those people to use alternative transport modes then everybody wins. The people who drive win because there is less congestion. The people using public transport win because they may not need to pay for the second or third car in the driveway and all the costs that come with that. The people who need parking win because there will be more parking available for them because other people are using alternative modes.

That is this government's transport policy. It is a nuanced policy, and it is a policy that reflects contemporary practice around how to manage parking demand. We repeatedly hear from the Liberals that Canberra is a city designed for the car. Well, no, it is not. The development of the city and the metropolitan structure of the city with multiple centres is actually designed to reduce the number of long-distance commutes that people undertake. It is designed to ensure that people can move from their suburbs to their town centres where there is a broad range of employment choices, retail services and cultural facilities. The town centre concept is based on the concept developed post World War II which sought to reduce the need for multiple long-distance commutes.

What we saw in the 1950s and 1960s was a subsequent policy decision by the NCDC and others that imposed an American freeway model as the preference for transport provision in the city. But the fact is that having a distributed city centre with not just one CBD but multiple business centres means that people at least have the choice to undertake shorter journeys and to have a range of services and employment opportunities all located in multiple centres.

It is interesting that the statistics back up how people respond to that model. With the relocation of social security services to Tuggeranong in the 1980s, a very large proportion of people who work with that particular government department—Centrelink as it is now known—now live in Tuggeranong. They have chosen to live close to where they work for the convenience. The same is the case in Belconnen and other town centres, particularly Woden.

We know people make rational decisions to live close to where they work, and that reduces their need to travel long distances and increases their opportunities to undertake some of those journeys by walking, cycling or using public transport. So, no, Canberra is not designed for the car; not in its structure. The retrofitting of freeways after the event has presented challenges for the city, but the inherent metropolitan structure of the city does not mean we are a city designed for the car.

In terms of parking provision and the cost of car parking, the cost of car parking in the city is not higher than the cost of car parking in other centres around the country.  
(*Time expired.*)

**MR WALL** (Brindabella) (4.37): I am pleased to speak on the matter of public importance Mr Hanson has raised today, as it is an issue at the forefront of the minds of many of my constituents in Brindabella.

This government, including their lone ACT Greens colleague, would have us believe that Canberrans can do without their cars. While I am not advocating the asphaltting of every open space in the ACT or wanting to turn Canberra into one giant car park, I am advocating a greater emphasis on providing realistic solutions to the very real parking issues faced by most Canberrans on a daily basis.

In my view, the current government and the Labor governments before this one have failed to address the needs of Canberra commuters when it comes to parking. The fact is that the reality for most Canberrans who do not live in the inner urban areas is that they cannot rely solely on public transport or cycling to get around.

In recent years there has been an increase in the number of on-road cycleways, yet only experienced and competent riders feel comfortable using them. Yet I often hear from constituents who would like to occasionally ride to work as a means of getting in some regular exercise that they simply feel unsafe riding in such close proximity to traffic during peak times.

I take on board the challenges in providing a good public transport system that suits everyone. Yet in the planning of Canberra the concept was never to have the city centre as the morning destination for many of the city's workforce. Instead, the idea was to have each of the town centres act as a mini-city where people lived, shopped and worked locally. It seems that that vision has long gone out the window and that the current government is still of the mindset that, wherever possible, ACT government public servants should be housed under one roof here in the city centre. If this is the direction this government wants to take development in this city, it is only reasonable to assume that sufficient provision is made to allow residents the freedom and choice to decide how they commute. However, this is no excuse for trying to force people out of their cars by either increasing the cost of parking or reducing the amount of car parking available. It is unrealistic at this moment in time to assume that we can reduce the amount of car parking we have in anticipation of a better public transport system. It is simply putting the cart before the horse.

The government's own policy document outlining transport for Canberra states that one of the goals is to increase the public transport share of all work trips from a figure of 7.9 per cent in 2006 to 10.5 per cent by 2016 and further increase it to 16 per cent by 2026. This same policy aims to increase the number of cyclists travelling to work from 2½ per cent in 2006 to seven per cent in 2026. I believe it is an unrealistic goal, as census data tells us that 81 per cent of Canberrans travel to work by car. This is the second lowest usage rate of public transport in the country. This statistic is difficult to change in a city designed for the car.

The level of interest in parking shown by the previous Labor-Greens government can be illustrated in their parking strategy, which has remained in draft form since 2007, and in the sharp increases in parking fees seen over the years, particularly in our town centres.

I would like to focus some attention today on a number of areas in my electorate, Brindabella, that are particularly noteworthy as difficult places to park. One would be

Gartside Street in Erindale, where parking simply has not kept pace with the growing number of restaurants and businesses in the area. Anyone who has had the privilege of enjoying a Friday evening takeaway from one of the great eating establishments on Gartside Street will attest to the hazards of parking there.

The diabolical parking situation in Erindale is not because there is a lack of land available or because there is a lack of will by any of the business owners; it is simply a case of lack of interest and attention shown by a succession of Labor governments. In fact, the ineptitude that this government has shown in providing sufficient car parking facilities is causing local businesses to suffer.

The Canberra Liberals took a different view last year and committed to improving the situation at Erindale as well as at numerous other centres around town. We committed to adding dozens of car parks in areas and identifying further parking options in an effort to alleviate the current hazardous situation. My colleague Alistair Coe worked very hard on policies that were taken to the last election aimed at alleviating some of the burden placed on Canberra motorists. These policies committed to providing thousands more car parking spaces across the ACT, focusing on town centres and park-and-ride facilities; conducting an audit of all of our parking facilities; and reviewing parking provision rates and addressing regulatory obstacles which impede the ability to meet parking demand. Providing credit card parking machines was a simple and practical option giving more flexibility for motorists.

I also remind members in this place that a majority of Canberra residents, particularly in the electorate of Brindabella, voted for a government that would bring about these changes and provide a better focus on these issues and others that really matter.

Just last week Mr Barr stated: “There will be many hundreds of development opportunities in the city. There will be competition now amongst different areas of the city to attract that investment. If people do not want the investment and do not want the benefits that come from that, fair enough; they will go somewhere else.” Well, Mr Barr, residents of Brindabella clearly voted for the development of more car parks in Erindale. The question is: when will you and your government deliver?

Parking problems are not exclusive to the major town centres. There are a number of smaller suburban shopping centres around Canberra that are suffering from a shortage of parking. Many smaller shops are enjoying renewal, and with this renewal comes increased patronage. An example of this is the Carleton Street shops in Kambah. This vibrant little shopping centre has a cafe, gift store, second-hand store, takeaway, hairdresser and dance school. All of these services are in an area that is serviced by just under a dozen car parking spaces—not to mention that there is not a single space allocated for disabled parking. This situation does nothing to foster the growth of small businesses in local suburbs. Imagine the shopkeepers’ frustrations as they watch people drive past their businesses simply because there is not enough space for people to stop and park. I do not believe it is reasonable for business owners to be renting the front yards of surrounding residents in an attempt to provide for the shortfall of parking spaces that is this government’s legacy.



Put very simply, parking in Canberra is a necessity, not a luxury, and should not be treated as such. Canberra families should not be penalised for using their cars just because we have a public transport system that does not cope with the needs of our growing city. Our parking needs should be addressed, not ignored. Once again, I would like to thank Mr Hanson for raising an issue that is a true matter of public importance.

**MR RATTENBURY** (Molonglo) (4.44): I will keep my comments brief as I know other members still wish to speak during the time available. It is important, of course, in thinking about the matter of public importance today—car parking in the ACT—that we recognise that car parking is a key piece of the city’s transport puzzle. Currently lots of people rely on parking, and at times some residents in the ACT experience frustrations in finding parking or paying for parking. Like other members, I receive these representations from constituents. I should note, however, that I also receive comments from constituents about the good quality of parking and roads in the ACT and I also receive comments that we should revise our approach to transport in Canberra with more of a focus on sustainable transport and less of a focus on roads and parking.

One of the Greens’ particular concerns has been transport opportunities in Canberra for people with disabilities. Sometimes these people are dependent on car transport, and the car can be very important for their social inclusion and access to services. It is these kinds of car journeys that should receive priority. Acknowledging this, last year the Greens lobbied for a higher percentage of disability car spaces in the ACT. This motion was not supported by either the ALP or the Liberals, which I found particularly surprising at the time.

In general, however, the ACT is well serviced in terms of its car parking spaces, just as it is for roads. I think it is generally acknowledged in the community—it certainly is by visitors to the ACT, and it is backed up by the evidence—that city parking remains significantly cheaper than that in any other Australian capital city. We provide a high proportion of parking spaces to jobs. The 2012 parking survey has identified that there is a 25 to 30 per cent vacancy rate in car parking across Canberra’s town centres.

While we acknowledge that some commuters feel some frustrations, the ACT Greens do not support reacting to this by creating floods of new car parks or by supporting every ad hoc proposal for more car parking. This appears to be the wish of some members. I think that is best summed up by Mr Coe’s motion from a few weeks ago which called on the government to simply “provide thousands more parking spaces”. This is possibly the epitome of bad parking policy. It is an approach that would more than likely have a negative impact overall on our great city.

We have to approach the issue of car parking carefully and with a considered and long-term view of how it impacts and shapes the development of our city. These impacts are often hidden, and unfortunately they can be detrimental to the city.

Professor Donald Shoup, who is a well-known transport expert recruited to solve parking and traffic problems in cities struggling with congestion, such as Los Angeles, is blunt in his description of policies that demand a large amount of car parking. He says:

... parking requirements cause great harm: they subsidize cars, distort transportation choices, warp urban form, increase housing costs, burden low-income households, debase urban design, damage the economy, and degrade the environment.

They are interesting comments from Professor Shoup. They indicate that there are hidden costs of parking that we need to consider as we respond to car parking pressures and develop car parking policies. Professor Shoup says that his goal is to transform parking debates to save cities from misguided attempts to make parking free and plentiful—the kind the Liberals have called for in their motions. He calls it a poison prescribed as a cure.

The car parking debate highlights a bigger issue—that is, the issue of how we want our city to work over the next 10, 20, 50 or even 100 years. Do we want to build a city that continues to be dominated by the private motor car? We know that this is a system that will not work, especially as our city grows, as climate change progresses, and as pressures associated with peak oil impact on our transport modes and on lower income families. We only have to look to other cities to see the problems car dependency causes. Cities like Los Angeles are now desperately trying to undo their entrenched traffic and parking problems with more transit and with parking reform.

Canberra is still a young city with a great chance to create a transport system that is resilient and sustainable but that remains convenient. This is a system that is much more focused on public transport, on walking and cycling, and on an urban form that is not dominated by cars and car parking. The ACT Greens have always supported sensible policies that will help Canberra achieve this transport mode shift.

The proposed light rail corridor for Gungahlin to Civic, a project being progressed through the Greens-Labor parliamentary agreement, is a great example of how our city can develop sustainably and offset the need for car parking. As it develops, the light rail will carry more and more commuters who would otherwise drive. It can integrate with the bus system and park-and-rides so that its catchment is even larger. In addition, it can support increased sustainable development around its corridor. I hope that the light rail will support new development rules for adjacent developments so that they do not have to include so many car parks. This means a more efficient use of the land, more affordable accommodation and, of course, increased overall sustainability. It is a smarter way of developing.

Cities all over the world are experimenting with smarter approaches to car parking. Calgary in Canada, for example, is becoming well known as one of the more sustainable transport cities. It has utilised the concept of what it calls interceptor car parks. It has restricted car parking in the city and allowed new city developments to build with limited car parks. Some of the money saved by these developers is returned

to government. The government has then used this money to provide parking outside the city that is serviced by frequent and rapid buses. It is a bit like an advanced version of the park-and-rides we are starting to use here in Canberra. But it has also contributed to keeping their city centre less congested and more pedestrian friendly.

I would lastly like to note that developing a transit-oriented city in preference to a car-dominated city is important for social equity. There are a lot of members of our community who are not well serviced by cars. There are people who do not drive—the young, the elderly, some people with a disability. These communities can suffer from exclusion and social isolation when a transport system is designed for and congested with private cars.

Let me simply conclude by emphasising again how important it is that we get our car parking policy right so that our city develops sustainably and equitably as it grows. This is the focus of the ACT Greens. It is about providing our city with choice. It is about providing our city with a capacity to grow in a way that does not end up in gridlock. And it is about making sure that our city is one that balances all of the needs out there—those people who do need to drive, those people who wish to take public transport, those people who can take public transport—while also being mindful of ensuring that we preserve open space, have a clean environment and are doing our bit to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions.

**MS BERRY** (Ginninderra) (4.51): I think it is worth taking the time in this debate to highlight some of the ACT government's priorities in our transport and parking plans, as I believe it is worth considering parking within the broader context of our transport and planning policies. I also would like to dispute Mr Hanson's suggestion that the people on this side do not love their cars. I come from a family who are quite passionate about their vehicles. Indeed, I occasionally supervised my father's refurbishment of his 1936 roadster and 1950 custom Ford. I also have a shared passion, whilst the model and make might be slightly different.

It is simply not true that the government wants to force people out of their cars. That is why parking is an important element of the overall integrated planning and transport system. The government's policies such as the ACT planning strategy and transport for Canberra plan work together to present a sustainable future for the ACT by taking a holistic look at the way we live, work and move around our city.

One of the major areas that the government is tackling in terms of parking is the area of demand. The ACT government is being proactive in managing demand for parking in our city. Some of the programs that are being proposed in the transport for Canberra plan include the review and release of parking plans for the city and town centres, a parking offset fund for Civic, continued 30 per cent or more territory ownership of public parking, and reductions in parking requirements for areas adjacent to public transport corridors.

We believe that these proposals encourage more sustainable development and more sustainable transport options. Managing demand is only part of our plan. As I said earlier, it is worth talking about parking in the broader context of the ACT government's planning and transport policies. That is why you cannot talk about parking unless you also talk about our plan for public transport.

As you are aware, Mr Assistant Speaker, the ACT government is investing in a diverse transport system to provide Canberrans with access to a range of transport options, including a frequent network of buses running every 15 minutes or less through main corridors; an environmentally friendly transport fleet with modern ticketing and real-time passenger information; more bus stations; more priority lanes and traffic signal priority; a transport system that can be adapted to mass public transport, such as light rail; and making active transit travel, such as walking and cycling, easier by extending the network of paths and cycleways and providing bike-and-ride facilities.

Investing in a flexible and diverse transport system not only helps to put a lid on parking demand; it also encourages a more socially connected, healthier and environmentally sustainable community. Due to the unique nature of our territory, having some of our city sitting under the auspices of the NCA, there are a small number of inconsistencies when it comes to parking, pricing and policy.

The ACT government have raised the issue of pay parking in the parliamentary triangle with the commonwealth on a number of occasions over the past few years, including at a ministerial level and with the National Capital Authority. We believe that we need to achieve consistent parking policies across the territory in order to achieve a fully harmonised transport and parking system in the ACT.

It is particularly important that parking arrangements in the city centre are consistent with those in the parliamentary triangle, given the proximity of the two areas. We will continue to work with the NCA to seek consistent arrangements. This, however, does not stop us delivering good bus services into the parliamentary triangle, including the recently launched centenary bus loop, which will be a significant new addition to the public transport services offered for workers in the triangle.

The centenary loop offers 18 services a day running half-hourly between 9 am and 5.30 pm. It services Civic, Constitution Avenue, Russell, Kings Avenue, Parliament House and Commonwealth Avenue. The route offers visitors and workers a free and convenient way to get between local and national attractions and should assist with relieving parking pressures in the parliamentary triangle.

That is only a very brief insight into our comprehensive parking and transport plans for the ACT. Our plan is a holistic plan that delivers on our transport needs whilst improving the health and sustainability of our city. This stands in contrast to our friends from across the chamber whose only plan to improve parking in the ACT is to sack 20,000 public servants. I do not have time to go into how disastrous that policy would be to our economy right now and to the social fabric of the ACT, but I can tell you that it really is lousy transport and planning policy.

In conclusion, the ACT government has a cohesive plan for parking and transport in the ACT—a plan that will keep our city moving whilst improving our health and environment. The Canberra Liberals have no plan for our city except to cut.

*Discussion concluded.*

## Adjournment

Motion (by **Mr Corbell**) proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

## CAT awards

**MR COE** (Ginninderra) (4.57): On 16 February I was once again pleased to attend the ActewAGL Canberra area theatre awards. As in previous years, I would like to acknowledge the winners.

The best set designer for a play was Sam Lloyd; the best set designers for a musical were Wendy Glover and Mal, Donna and Amy Copeland. The best costume designer for a play award went to Judi Sando and Kylie Dolan; the best costume designer for a musical was Ritva Jokinen; the best costume designer for a school or youth production was Chelsea Wright.

The Blumers Lawyers best lighting designer was Cynthia Jolley-Rogers. The technical achievement award went to James McPherson. The John Thomson magic moment of theatre award went to the Canberra Youth Theatre. The Blumers Lawyers best original work for a school or youth production award went to Romko Hordynsky. The Blumers Lawyers best original work award went to the scriptwriting team of the ANU Med Revue. The John Barilaro MP best ensemble in a play award went to Chevalier College.

The Dalton Peace Real Estate best ensemble in a musical award went to Shevaun Brown, Christa Radley, Christie Green, Cath Adams and Belinda McGrath. The Patricia Kelson encouragement award went to Alexandra Davis. The Sarah Byrne best orchestra award went to Supa Productions. The Queanbeyan Players best orchestra for a school or youth production award went to the ACT Senior Concert Band.

The Ryleho best youth actor in a featured role in a play was Sam Williams; the Ryleho best youth actress in a featured role in a play was Hannah Lawson; the Ryleho best youth actor in a featured role in a musical was Emerson Garcia; the Ryleho best youth actress in a featured role in a musical was Arabella Jorgensen-Hull.

The Association of Community Theatre Inc best youth actor in a leading role in a play award went to Alex Richards and Bryson Grenfell; the Association of Community Theatre Inc best youth actress in a leading role in a play was Jill Greig; the Association of Community Theatre Inc best youth actor in a leading role in a musical awards went to Andrew Campbell and Jock Pryse Jones; the Association of Community Theatre Inc best youth actress in a leading role in a musical award went to Jessica Dunn and Steffanni Gardener.

The Co-op at the University of Canberra best variety performance by an individual or ensemble award went to Mark Oates and Sara Turner, Daniel Cotton and Zane Campbell. The Crowne Plaza best actor in a featured role in a play was Sam Hannan-Morrow. The Glass best actress in a featured role in a play was Andrea Close. The

AMB best actor in a featured role in a musical was Anthony Rule. The Caphs Restaurant best actress in a featured role in a musical was Stephanie Rodriguez.

The National Capital Motors best actor in a leading role in a play was Jarrad West; the National Capital Motors best actress in a leading role in a play was Naone Carrel. The Teatro Vivaldi best actor in a leading role in a musical award went to Danny Condon and Pete Ricardo; the Teatro Vivaldi best actress in a leading role in a musical was Jenna Roberts.

The Richards Consulting best choreographer was Pauline Young. The Queanbeyan Players best musical director for a school or youth production was Naida Blackley. The Sarah Byrne best musical director was Leisa Keen. The TransACT best director of a school or youth play award went to Kate Price and Nathan Storen. The David Spicer Productions best director of a play was Duncan Ley. The TransACT best director of a school or youth musical award went to Tony Lazzarato and Clare Fealy.

The Stage Whispers best director of a musical or variety show was Wendy Glover. The AMB best production of a school or youth play award went to Chevalier College. The Capital Country Motel best production of a school or youth musical award went to Kinross Wolaroi School. The Shellharbour Village Motel best production of a variety show award went to the Albury Wodonga Theatre Company.

The Recruitment Systems best production of a play award went to *Pride and Prejudice* by Canberra Rep. The Recruitment Systems best production of a musical award went to *Crazy for You* by MoonGlow Productions. The John Barilaro MP “In the Spirit of the Community” award went to the Monaro Committee for Cancer Research for *Dancing with the Cooma Stars*. The Financial Index “Best Contribution (On or Off the Stage) by a Senior” award went to Wayne Shepherd. The ActewAGL gold CAT award went to Romko Hordynsky.

I would also like to acknowledge the winner of the professional development scholarship, generously donated by Mary Porter. The inaugural winner was Pete Ricardo.

I would also, as in previous years, like to acknowledge the board, Dennis Martin, Coralie Wood, Peter Brady, Ian de Landelles, Peter Gordon, Ray King and Don Whitbread; the judges, Edwin Briggs, Barry Casey, Dave Evans, Ian McLean, Chris Neal, Terry O’Connor, Charles Oliver, Stephen Pike, Oliver Raymond, Jacquelyn Richards, Norma Robertson, Rose Shorney, Anne Somes, Bronwyn Sullivan, David Whitbread, Don Whitbread and Coralie Wood; and, finally, the sponsors, ActewAGL, TransACT, the ACT government, National Capital Motors, Westpac, Recruitment Systems, Crowne Plaza Canberra, theglass.com.au, Lerida Estate, Mindfor Studios, Teatro Vivaldi, PWC, Caphs, the Co-op Bookshop, David Spicer Productions, Ryleho Home Solutions, QP, Richards Consulting, Stage Whispers, TAPS Dancewear, Thrifty, Toyota, Answer My Business and iVent.

### **Tuggeranong Vikings Club amateur sports night**

**MR WALL** (Brindabella) (5.01): On 15 February I had the pleasure of attending the Tuggeranong Vikings Club annual amateur sports awards night. Since 1984 the

number of clubs affiliated with the Tuggeranong Vikings has grown from 12 to 54, and now they have over 8,000 athletes participating in all levels of competition, including local, national and international. This year there were five categories in which local athletes and volunteers were recognised, and the awards are now highly regarded by the Tuggeranong community, as evidenced by the 300-plus people in attendance and the quality of the nominations received across the five categories.

I would like to put on the record the winners of each of this year's categories and make mention of some of their outstanding achievements. The Vikings Health and Fitness Centre award is presented to a non-paid official or volunteer who has given exceptional service to their sport. Steve Caldicott from the Tuggeranong Archery Club was this year's recipient of the award in recognition of his contribution to the club as a judge, coach and president. Steve's achievements include tripling the number of members of the archery club and successfully lobbying for an indoor archery facility in Tuggeranong.

Ashlee Tronerud from the Tuggeranong Netball Association was the winner of the Coca-Cola shield, an award presented for outstanding coaching or official's achievement. Ashlee has been a member of the Tuggeranong netball club since 1996 and is the head coach of the Tuggeranong netball academy, a role that assists junior players transition into the senior ranks. Ashlee has skills which will ensure the program continues to be a success into the future.

The Chronicle shield is presented for the best team performance, and the Tuggeranong Touch Association open women's team were recognised for the most successful season they have ever had in the ACT competition. They were undefeated in both the ACT and the New South Wales country championships and went on to win the grand final of the ACT elite super league competition. Nine of the team members have also been selected for representation of the ACT in the upcoming national league.

Andrew Robinson from the Tuggeranong Valley Vikings rugby union club received the ActewAGL shield for outstanding achievement in school junior sport in the valley. At 17 years of age he was too young to play in the colts competition, and instead of playing another year in juniors Andrew decided to test his ability by playing in the men's open competition. He was part of the premiership winning team last year for the Vikings and was also selected for the Australian schoolboys side, where he scored the match-winning try for Australia against New Zealand. This is only the second time an Australian schoolboys team has defeated New Zealand.

The HR Heher shield is presented for outstanding achievement by a senior sportsperson. Previous recipients include numerous international sports stars, and this year's winner is no different. Sue Powell from the Vikings Cycling Club has received international recognition for her achievements at the London Paralympics where she won gold in the C4 individual pursuit and silver in the time trial. Sue also finished second in both of these events at the Los Angeles world championships, not to mention being voted ACT athlete of the year for 2012.

In addition to recognising the success and contribution of local athletes, the Vikings Group offer scholarships to young athletes to assist them in meeting the costs of

training and equipment for their chosen sport. To date the Vikings Group has provided in excess of \$780,000 to assist local athletes.

This year the new scholarship recipients are: Bridget Reilly from the South Canberra Tuggeranong Athletics Club; Rebecca Beath, Tuggeranong Valley Touch Association; Jonathan Tammen, South Canberra Tuggeranong Athletics Club; Ashleigh Costello, Brindabella Calisthenics College; Erin Harriott, Kambah Pony Club; Eliza Tetley, Tuggeranong Vikings Swim Club; Samuel Hawksworth, Tuggeranong Valley Cricket Club; Sanoja Ramasundara, Tuggeranong Vikings Badminton Club; Jonathan Mossler, Tuggeranong Vikings Hockey Club; and Jackson Bruce, Tuggeranong Vikings Triathlon Club.

These recipients are just a sample of the immense talent that exists within Tuggeranong, and I offer my best wishes to everyone involved in competition during 2013.

### **St Mary MacKillop College opening mass**

**MR SESELJA** (Brindabella) (5.05): It was a great pleasure to attend the St Mary MacKillop College opening mass on 22 February 2013. I was joined by my colleague the shadow minister for education Mr Doszpot and many others, including parents and friends of the school. In fact, Mr Doszpot is often called the member for MacKillop by the principal, Michael Lee. I would like to put that on the record as well because he attends their events so often.

It is a wonderful opening mass that they have. It is massive. It is down at the Tuggeranong basketball stadium, and they fill the place. There are many people who contribute to making the mass a success and, of course, to making the school a success.

Father John Armstrong was the celebrant, along with Father Lachlan Coll and Deacon Vince Barclay. We had the students and teachers at St Mary MacKillop College in particular who contributed in the ceremony. Principal Michael Lee and, of course, Paul O'Callaghan, Sandra Darley, Michelle Da Roza, Lois White and Lachlan McNicol. We also had a number of students and teachers from Canberra schools and colleges, including the new college at Gungahlin, who were welcomed particularly at the mass.

Participants in the mass included Morgan Rosin, Nathan Backer, Grace Barclay, MaryAnne Schneider, Bethany Barclay, Sandy Sharman, Jayme Breitkopf, Grace Wilkinson, Rose Brassil, Taylah Shiel, Melanie Brooks, Olivia Ehlers, Claire Mackey, Kelsey Shakespeare, Kate Mueck, Jack Giles, Jack Davey, Morgan Margosis, Liam Gilmartin, Daniel White, Nathan Bizjak, Lewis Holland, Luke James, Ashleigh Maas, Brianna Cayirylys, Maddison Landon, Sarah Box and Bronwyn McKenzie.

Finally, it is always a great pleasure to be at events hosted at St Mary MacKillop. It is my old school. I am a proud graduate of St Mary MacKillop and I always receive a very warm welcome from Michael Lee and from all of the students and the staff. I



know that Mr Doszpot feels exactly the same way. Mr Doszpot is always given a wonderful welcome as, indeed, are all members across the political spectrum who attend St Mary MacKillop events.

I know, Mr Assistant Speaker Gentleman, that I have seen you there from time to time. So I know that whether one is representing the Liberal Party or other parties across the political spectrum, we are all given a warm welcome. There is no partisanship from the school but, certainly, can I say what a wonderful school community it is. It is a growing school. I think the fact that it is growing is a recognition of the fact that more and more parents are choosing to send their kids to St Mary MacKillop.

That is a tribute to Michael Lee, to all of the staff and to the culture that they have built up. I commend them for the wonderful contribution that they make to education, particularly in the Tuggeranong valley and across the ACT.

### **St Vincent de Paul doorknock appeal**

**MS BERRY** (Ginninderra) (5.08): Over the weekend I went out with a team of volunteers to take part in the St Vincent de Paul doorknock appeal. Saturday was not the best weather we have had this summer, but even in the rain there were plenty of smiles on the faces of both the doorknockers and the residents of Dunlop as we did the rounds.

The Vinnie's doorknock appeal is held each February to raise much-needed funds to support St Vincent de Paul's good works programs. Money raised supports people across the community. It funds programs to support young people, carers, the mentally ill, those struggling with drug and alcohol dependency, people experiencing financial difficulties or homelessness, the socially isolated and the elderly.

Of particular note is their street to home program, which follows an assertive outreach model to build the relationships and long-term trust necessary to support the most vulnerable members of our community into stable housing.

I thank St Vincent de Paul for these good works and also for giving me a great reminder of this city's commitment to social justice. I am not a person of faith, and I am not sure about the beliefs of the residents of Dunlop who donated, but, regardless, these people dug deep because, like me, they share the vision of social justice which underpins Vinnie's work.

St Vincent de Paul approach all of their programs with respect for human dignity, a focus on building capacity in the community and a commitment to a shared hope for a better future. It is these universal values that ensured that everyone we doorknocked gave what they could. I really enjoyed going out and doing my bit to support Vinnie's fundraising goals and was proud to see the enthusiasm my neighbours had for doing the same thing.

### **ActewAGL Royal Canberra Show St Mary MacKillop College opening mass**

**MR DOSZPOT** (Molonglo) (5.10): Last weekend was the annual ActewAGL Royal Canberra Show, and while much publicity is given to the sideshows and the

motorbikes, the show has much more importance than that. The annual show conducts one of the largest junior parader and junior judging competitions in Australia. For those who are not familiar with these events, their purpose is to teach young people how to handle livestock and how to judge them. They are enormously popular, and for the Canberra show these competitions attract nearly 500 students between the ages of 14 and 18 years. Each year over a dozen schools from around New South Wales and the ACT attend the show and enter steers, sheep, art, crafts and alpacas.

This year 37 students from Canberra Grammar School entered steers in the hoof and hook competition and competed in cattle parade competitions and also sheep and cattle judging. They were: Amro Aseeri, Andrew Kini, Andrew Wilder-Constantin, Benjamin Croker, Benjamin Cumming, Bradley Bolton, Brayden Sloan, Calum Taylor, Charlie Templeman, Damian Thomson, Elliot Tanaka, Ethan Barryman, Ewan Boyes, Harrison Seagelman, Isaac Hampton, Jackson Barry, Jacob West, James Goddard, Jimmy Binks, Joe Hall-Lomax, Jonathon Moore, Kieran Gosney, Mackenzie Davis, Mark Wilder-Constantin, Matthew Clearwater, Max Hood, Nat Harper, Oliver Farfield-Smith, Patrick Fisher, Phillip Burn, Reagan Vickers, Sean Chan, Thomas Pickard, Toby Nolan, Tom Killalea, and Zachary Martin.

In other years Kaleen High School has entered goats in the goat competition and for the first time Melrose high had a student—Michelle Fairall—in the beef parader and beef judging competitions. For the first time Queanbeyan High School won the prestigious hoof and hook championship, beating commercial breeders from around New South Wales.

I congratulate all the students who took part in those competitions. I also record my thanks to the schools that arranged for students to participate—to the teachers who take time out of school hours to train the students and bring their students to the show to ensure they get hands-on, value-added experience for their agriculture and science studies. We talk a lot about quality teachers, and that is the mark of a quality teacher—they are prepared to go a little bit further for their students. Well done to those schools and to their teachers. I hope more Canberra schools put entries in next year.

I would like to congratulate all the organisers of the livestock competition who do all this work voluntarily: Ian Barklamb, who heads a team of cattle section volunteers; Debbie Frater, who runs the junior competitions and is supported by Sue White from here in the Assembly and Stuart Glover and Geoff Bush from the Agricultural Societies Council; and Michael Corkhill and Ben Litchfield in the sheep and wool sections.

There are also dozens of other councillors who run the cooking competitions, the art and craft shows and demonstrations, horticultural produce competitions, the dog show, the horse show, alpaca competitions, yard dog displays, flyball competitions, the cat show, the cavy show, the farmyard nursery, the woodchop and special attractions in the main arena. I congratulate them all on the volunteer contribution they make to the annual enjoyment of Canberra families.

Last Friday, 22 February I had the pleasure of attending the St Mary MacKillop College 2013 opening mass. I always find this occasion a very inspirational event, and it once again exceeded expectations. Mr Michael Lee, the principal, welcomed the attendees—once again over the 2,000 mark—including Father John Armstrong, Father Lachlan Coll, Deacon Barclay, my colleague Zed Seselja, who has already spoken about the event, Gai Brodtmann MP and representatives of the Catholic Education Office as well as the Catholic University.

There was a wonderful presentation to Mrs Katherine Ray, principal of the new John Paul College in Gungahlin. The relationship between the two colleges obviously will carry on in future years.

I thank Mr Michael Lee and all his staff for once again inviting me to be part of the St Mary MacKillop College community on this, their special day. It is also worth putting on record that St Mary MacKillop College is a dynamic, welcoming community based on gospel values. It is a learning environment where excellence in education is valued. Members of the community are nurtured and empowered to face the future with faith and courage. Their mission, as stated on the school's website, is that the curriculum at St Mary MacKillop College is undertaken in an environment where each person is valued and respected as an individual whose personal growth is of paramount importance. I wish Mr Michael Lee, his staff and his students all the best for this coming school year.

### **Old Bus Depot Markets**

**DR BOURKE** (Ginninderra) (5.15): Tonight I highlight one of Canberra's cultural, tourism and arts icons, the Old Bus Depot Markets. For a business that is open just one day a week, they have built up a huge reputation and have been recognised through a range of awards. The Old Bus Depot Markets have won the Australian tourism award for tourism retailing three years in a row. As a result, they were inducted into the Australian tourism hall of fame in 2006, alongside the War Memorial.

The markets will celebrate their 20th birthday next year, and I pay tribute to the market's directors, Diane Hinds and Morna Whiting, who have steered the markets since they began and who have worked with hundreds of stallholders over that time. They have managed to keep the markets a dynamic business with constant renewal and new theme days.

The markets began in 1994 in the dilapidated old bus depot surrounded by similarly derelict, unwanted buildings in a then rundown and forgotten area next to the lake. The first depot buildings were built in the 1920s. Arguably, the heritage listed bus depot is still charmingly dilapidated. However, more work is planned to bring it up to scratch whilst maintaining its character. When the markets gain some permanency with a longer-term lease, there are innovations that they want to invest in as well.

From a once neglected part of Kingston, the markets are now at the centre of the Kingston arts precinct and the upmarket Kingston foreshore and harbour development.

The markets perfectly complement the Canberra Glassworks, opened in 2007 in the old powerhouse. They both add to the experience and draw visitors to each other on Sundays.

On average, there are over 200 stallholders at the markets each week, with a pre-Christmas peak of up to 270 stallholders. The markets add to the character of Canberra, providing a unique outlet for small business people, artists and crafts people to engage Canberrans as well as visitors.

Speaking of visitors, between 7,000 and 9,000 people visit the markets each Sunday. However, higher numbers are attracted to the monthly special events such as the international multicultural day which will be held on March 17 and during Christmas and holidays.

The markets conducted a survey of visitors over a couple of winter weekends in July and August last year. Visitor numbers ranged from 7,800 to 9,300 and they had a very high satisfaction rating. Interstate or overseas visitors made up 35 per cent of the survey respondents, showing the markets' significant impact on the tourism mix in Canberra.

Visitors often come to Canberra for the great events or the national institutions but also enjoy the hustle and bustle of the markets and the chance to mix with Canberrans, perhaps enjoying a coffee and a bite to eat or buying a unique memento of their time in the national capital.

Special events keep the markets constantly alive. On Sunday, March 10, the old 1949 Canberra bus Matilda will return to the bus depot. It is part of a centennial celebration of our public transport history. It is also a celebration of the Canberra transport workers who kept the wheels rolling out of the old quirky buildings that have found a new life as the markets go into Canberra's second century.

## **Yellow Van**

**MR GENTLEMAN** (Brindabella) (5.19): I rise tonight to talk to the Assembly about a special part of community work that occurs right across Canberra. That is the Yellow Van. No doubt, many of our members have heard about the work that the Yellow Van does. It is the only food rescue service in Canberra. It assists a range of agencies, including domestic violence refuges, disability support services, homeless shelters, youth drop-in centres, mental health support groups, people with drug and alcohol or gambling problems, refugee programs, school breakfast programs and other programs assisting those who have financial difficulties. I have quoted that information from their website.

The food rescue model of the Yellow Van is efficient and practical. Less than \$1 a meal is the cost of the rescue. Those meals are transported and delivered to Care and Share and 80 other charities across Canberra who ensure the most needy in our community are looked after.

Each month they rescue and deliver over 20 tonnes of good food, providing over 60,000 meals to disadvantaged people in the community. That is the equivalent of 2,000 meals a day. In doing so, they ensure that 16 million litres of water used to produce the food is not wasted and that the good food is saved from landfill.

I congratulate the work that Yellow Van does. I especially acknowledge Lynne Harwood, the CEO of Communities@Work. They involve themselves not just in that food rescue, but in other programs as well. I know Mr Wall was with me at the launch of Six Seeds just a couple of weeks ago out at Tuggeranong. It was launched by Gai Brodtmann, our federal member, and the Yellow Van was there supporting that program.

I just mention some of those details. There were 63,150 meals provided last November. The biggest pick up in November was 300 kilograms of food. The total meals provided to date is 2,027,791. They support 79 charities for, as I said before, \$1 a meal.

I acknowledge some of their key supporters and the sponsors. Of course, I have mentioned Communities@Work, Independent Property Group, the Rotary Club of Canberra north and the National Convention Centre. I think this is a fantastic initiative across Canberra led by a great community organisation.

**MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER** (Mr Doszpot): Mr Gentleman, you unfortunately stole my thunder. I was going to say “time, gentlemen, please” had you reached a certain point in time.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

**The Assembly adjourned at 5.22 pm.**