



Debates

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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.

Standing orders—suspension

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

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent notice No. 3, Assembly business, relating to the rejection of Variation No. 306 to the Territory Plan being called on and debated forthwith.

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

MR WALL (Brindabella) (10.02): I move:

That this Assembly, in accordance with subsection 80(2) of the *Planning and Development Act 2007*, rejects 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.

It is no surprise that the Canberra Liberals are required to go in to defend the Canberra community yet again. This Labor government, after 11 years in office, has monumentally lost touch with the needs and wants of the wider ACT community. It is clearly evident when the detail of draft variation 306 is examined that this draft variation is wide reaching and contains significant changes to the way residential planning may be carried out in the ACT into the future.

It is becoming evident that there is wide disparity between the desired policy outcomes of DV306 and the actual built reality. Whilst some of the elements of DV306 are sound planning policy and achieve positive outcomes for the community, there are many elements that simply fail to achieve their intended aims and, in the case of DV306, the poor outcomes far outweigh the positive aspects.

Given the nature of this block of changes and the complexity of this document, the opposition is moving to disallow DV306 in its entirety. I understand that it is the nature of public consultations that those in the community with an objection tend to mobilise and argue their perspective more effectively than those who are ambivalent or supportive.

In reviewing the public submissions, there has been significant criticism of DV306. There has been objection or criticism to almost every aspect. There are numerous residents associations who fear it will not deliver appropriate outcomes that are in

tune with the current neighbourhood. There were submissions from the MBA and the HIA, and the Planning Institute of Australia have made numerous criticisms. Landscape Architects expressed their concerns, as have also a number of architects who have demonstrated that DV306 places significant restrictions on achieving good, practical design outcomes.

You have to begin to ask the question: who actually believes that DV306, as it stands, is going to improve the quality of built outcomes in Canberra's residential areas? The scope of many of the submissions and the inquiry itself, through the consultation process, concentrated on the interim provisions aspect to DV306—that is, the immediate implementation of this variation in the Molonglo valley.

The other sections that are highly featured are the changes to the multi-unit development code relating to sites zoned in RZ2 areas. I believe that these aspects of DV306 have been significantly scrutinised and have uncovered a number of serious concerns. However, I feel much of the impact of DV306 has not properly been measured.

DV306, once implemented, will dramatically change the planning rules surrounding the established housing stock in the ACT. This has been poorly scrutinised and poorly articulated to industry. The true implications are widely unknown by the community at large and will remain this way until they are faced with dealing with these changes.

DV306 allows some improved flexibility. The changes are made through the relaxing of the building setback provisions, particularly in relation to second storeys. However, the introduction of the sun angle building envelope places greater restriction on the options available for good design to be implemented.

In the Molonglo valley there is evidence of the impact that the sun angle building envelope is having and it has seen relatively level blocks being significantly excavated. They have been cut to lower the finished floor level of the house to below natural ground level. It has also seen the positioning of homes towards the northern boundary and relegates much of the usable open space to the southern or shaded side of the property. This change also restricts the built form of a second storey, resulting in a long, narrow design outcome with a significant portion weighted towards the rear zone of the block.

In reality, this means these changes not only increase the environmental impact of construction but promote cold, unusable backyards, a high tendency for overlooking of neighbouring blocks and also significantly drives up the cost of construction. The local construction industry rightly has major concerns at how these provisions will restrict design options and potentially deliver poor housing outcomes as the more undulating sections of the Molonglo valley are released for development. When these changes are applied as a blanket to all established homes across the ACT, many home owners will discover that their aspirations of extending or renovating their home are significantly restricted.

Much of the established housing stock in the ACT was built with little, if any, consideration of solar orientation. Whilst it is widely accepted that the planning outcomes of much of Canberra's housing stock leave a lot to be desired, forcing all

additions or alterations to these properties to comply with the rules as set out in DV306 will significantly restrict the freedom of ACT home owners to improve their properties.

In the single dwelling housing development code, rule 43 relates to water tanks. It outlines the size that must be installed in relation to the size of the block when building a house or extending an established property. It requires a tank to be connected to at least one toilet, the laundry, cold water tap and all external taps. There has been no change to the tank requirements in DV306 but there has been a change to the definition of “minor extensions”. Previously an extension was considered minor if the increase in roof area was less than 50 per cent of the existing roof area. DV306 now defines a minor extension as—and I quote from the variation:

... an extension where the increase in the combined roof plan area, driveway, car manoeuvring areas and car parking areas is less than 25 per cent of the total of the areas of these components at the date of lodgement of the development application or building application.

In reality, what this means, for example, is that the owner of a modest, 120 square metre home that wanted to build a double carport, typically a 36 square metre addition, would be required to install a water tank and re-plumb their bathroom, laundry and the external taps to the property in order to comply with this provision. The cost of installing the tank and carrying out the required plumbing work would cost potentially as much as, if not exceed, the cost of the carport. These kinds of regulations impact significantly on local business as owners simply cannot afford the onerous add-on costs and will inevitably result in a larger number of structures being built illegally.

Another of the significant issues of DV306 is the significant use of ambiguous language. Many of the criteria that are detailed within 306 are ambiguously written and are open to various interpretations. This was an issue that was raised in the submission provided by the Planning Institute of Australia. The use of ambiguous terms such as “buildings are consistent with the desired character” or “efficient use of site” often fail to clearly articulate the intent of the criteria and often result in an unnecessary number of development applications not being approved as the interpretation of the applicant differs from that of ACTPLA.

This has seen cases being sent to ACAT for resolution. This not only erodes the confidence of the industry and the community but also comes at a cost to the ratepayers of the ACT. To put it simply, the use of more descriptive language would provide clarity and confidence to the planning system in the ACT. A simple rule of thumb is: if it cannot be drawn, it should not be included.

I have outlined today that draft variation 306 leaves a lot to be desired. It falls significantly short of what could be described as sound planning policy. The Canberra community are once again left to suffer the consequences while this ACT Labor government impose their ideological aspirations upon the Canberra community without a proper appreciation of the outcomes their policy will have at the grassroots level. Therefore I urge this Assembly to support this motion.

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) (10.10): After extensive public consultation and an inquiry by the Standing Committee on Planning, Public Works and Territory and Municipal Services, I approved variation 306 on 22 February this year. I presented it to the Assembly on 26 February.

We now have before us a motion seeking to reject this variation in its entirety. To reject this variation would be to reject effective and workable solar performance policies that would ensure that residential blocks were properly configured and limit the overshadowing of their neighbours; to reject provisions to protect the neighbourhood character of RZ2 zones, while allowing for multi-unit housing redevelopment in these core areas, which has been a significant cause of concern for many residents; to reject the prospect of providing accommodation in a small, secondary residence associated with a single house, which so many Canberrans are asking for; to reject new rules for residential estates that will ensure improved solar performance for residential subdivisions, meaning people moving into new homes have to pay less for their heating and their cooling; to reject clearer provisions for estate development in the ACT.

Variation 306 was prepared as part of a review of the territory plan. Following the introduction of the restructured territory plan in 2008, the policy content was reviewed and updated as a result of a range of changing economic, social and environmental circumstances. This review related to all forms of development in residential zones and for the subdivision of land.

Variation 306 introduces amended residential objectives, development tables and codes, an amended estate development code and a new lease variation general code. The variation incorporates some significant policy changes as well as many refinements to current residential policies. Rejecting variation 306 will set aside all of these improvements and will be a setback to good planning policy.

The residential zones 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 and underpin the critical importance of good solar access. The residential zones development tables have been refined to expand the list of development under the code track and to amend the terms in the merit track.

The proposed residential zones development code is the overarching code for all development in residential zones. It contains provisions transferred from other codes, in particular part D of the current residential zones multi-unit housing development code, with minor adjustments to clarify policy intent. It includes provisions for demolition and block subdivision as well as introducing a provision for limiting block consolidation for RZ2 residential redevelopment. This is an issue of significant concern to residents in existing suburban areas.

The new residential zones code also introduces secondary residences to replace the current relocatable units and habitable suites. This is highly anticipated policy that

will increase housing options in the ACT. It will help improve affordability and it will encourage ageing in place. Rejecting this variation will mean the flexibility of secondary residences in respect of who is allowed to occupy them will be lost and the policy will revert back to only permitting occupants that either require care or provide care to the primary residents.

The development of the single dwelling housing code includes a review of the existing rules and criteria. As well as specific policy changes, many provisions were reworded for clarity and consistency. The code brings consistency to upper floor level front boundary setbacks in established areas, reduces upper floor level side and rear setbacks in the rear building zone and introduces a zero side boundary setback for garages on large blocks. These changes provide greater flexibility in building design.

The provisions for courtyard walls, vehicle access, parking and private open space have been clarified as well as being broadened for compact and mid-sized blocks. A specific requirement for principal private open space has been introduced that is determined by the zone and the dwelling size. This means that dwellings have an outdoor living area that is an extension of the indoor living spaces and is of a usable size. It means they do not just have a little corner poked away out the back, not connected to the living areas. It must be part of the main living area and it must have good solar access.

Variation 306 also deletes some provisions from the current single dwelling code, such as the restriction on white, off-white or unpainted metal sheeting, and the requirement for garages and carports close to the front boundary to be the same material as the residence.

Variation 306 also includes a new multi-unit housing development code, which incorporates many of the same changes as the single-dwelling housing development code. In response to strong community concern about multi-unit redevelopment in RZ2 suburban core zones, new rules were formulated and given interim effect from June 2011. The new rules put in place restrictions on block consolidation and limit the site density to not more than one dwelling for each 350 square metres of site area.

In addition, the new rules limit the number of dwellings in any one building to four. This is designed to reduce the bulk of buildings in an effort to ensure consistency with the existing neighbourhood character. This policy has very strong community support.

Variation 306 proposes a new housing replacement policy that requires at least one three-bedroom dwelling to be provided for each block in a proposed multi-unit redevelopment. This provision will ensure that housing choice is maintained in residential redevelopment in areas such as the inner north and allows families with children to remain in the area. This policy was prompted by public submissions.

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 the new block compliance tables designed to achieve improved solar performance for residential subdivision. Compliance with these tables will ensure that a reasonable dwelling can be constructed on the block that complies

with the rules of the single dwelling code. Blocks that do not comply with the compliance tables are required to be identified in the precinct code to alert prospective purchasers that the block has limited development potential, particularly if a two-storey building is proposed.

Variation 306 contains a significant number of changes, both minor and major. One of the most important changes is the solar fence provision. This adjusts the current building envelope requirements to better protect the solar amenity of neighbouring blocks. The current single dwelling and multi-unit codes already contain building envelope provisions that control the bulk and scale of the development as well as reducing overshadowing. These were introduced in the territory plan with variation 200, the garden city variation, in 2003.

The building envelope and solar access provisions in variation 306 further refine the existing building envelope to enable more development in the rear zone whilst affording better protection to southern neighbours. They were developed as part of the sustainable futures program that included a review of planning policy to identify proposed changes to complement the government's sustainability initiatives.

The territory plan solar access review identified possible changes to the territory plan to ensure better solar access at the subdivision and development stages. Maintaining acceptable block yields and ensuring housing affordability were key considerations during this review. There was also the context of a review of current solar access policies in the ACT. The application of sound planning principles to new subdivisions ensures that every block has the potential for good solar access, while protecting solar access of their neighbours. The development of the solar access provisions was not a policy on the run, as has been asserted by some. Suitable research was undertaken.

Madam Speaker, I ask leave to continue my comments at a later point. I am having a bit of difficulty at the moment.

Leave granted.

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella) (10.20): If this motion to reject variation 306 is carried, many worthy initiatives will be shelved. I will focus on some of the key initiatives and why there should be no further delay in their adoption.

The community strongly supports the introduction of secondary residences. "Secondary residences" are a new form of residential development replacing the current "relocatable units" and "habitable suites". A secondary residence can only be associated with an existing single dwelling. It is restricted to a gross floor area of 75 square metres, to blocks over 500 square metres, cannot be further subdivided and must be adaptable.

There is no restriction on the type of occupant of a secondary residence. A resident does not need to be a relative of the residents of the principal dwelling, nor does the resident need to be under any particular type of care. Based on the number of inquiries received by the Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate, a significant number of development applications for secondary residences are ready to be lodged when variation 306 commences.

This motion for rejection, if passed, will disappoint many intending applicants and, in the broader planning context, limit housing diversity and housing choice. In established areas, secondary residences will help to stem population decline and take advantage of existing infrastructure and facilities to the benefit of residents and the wider community. Secondary residences will also play a part in delivering a more sustainable, compact city.

The rejection of variation 306 will also disappoint many who rely on this variation to ensure that multi-unit housing redevelopment in the suburban core zone is in keeping with the existing neighbourhood character.

In response to community concern about multi-unit housing redevelopment, variation 306 introduced new controls that apply to the RZ2 suburban core zone. These concerns related particularly to the bulk and scale of development and its effect on the neighbourhood character. New rules have been in place since June 2011 under the interim effect provisions of the Planning and Development Act 2007.

There has been criticism by the housing industry of the application of interim effect, and that it was imposed without warning in June 2011. Interim effect is applied where notice of proposed changes would risk a rush of development applications under the old rules. It should be noted that advanced proposals and development applications that were in the system before June 2011 could be determined under the old rules.

Under the old rules an unlimited number of dwellings were permitted on parcels over 1,400 square metres, provided that the overall plot ratio did not exceed 50 per cent. In many cases this led to the consolidation of blocks and redevelopment proposals comprising numerous single bedroom units in buildings that were, because of their bulk and scale, not in keeping with the neighbourhood character.

The new rules imposed restrictions on block consolidation and limited the density to not more than one dwelling for each 350 square metres of site area. Slightly higher density is available where all dwellings are designed to be adaptable under the relevant Australian standard. In addition the new rules limit the number of dwellings in any one building to four. This is designed to reduce the bulk of buildings in an effort to ensure consistency with neighbourhood character. The rule restricting multi-unit housing redevelopment with three or more dwellings to parcels with a frontage of more than 20 metres is retained.

The rejection of variation 306 will effectively reinstate the old rules, with the inevitable conflicts between proponents and the community that often lead to appeals before the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal. This would be a poor outcome for our core suburban areas.

This motion, if not rejected, will shelve the proposed estate development code. Under variation 306 the residential subdivision development code is replaced by 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 residential subdivisions.

In a departure from the draft estate development code publicly released in 2010 as part of DV301, the provisions relating to entity endorsement are now in a separate part of the code, namely, part D. Parts A, B and C now contain only estate planning provisions. “Entities” in this context are government agencies such as TAMS or service providers such as ActewAGL. This was done to simplify the structure of the code applying to new estates.

For each component of an estate development plan that requires entity endorsement there is a specific rule. It simply states that endorsement by the relevant entity is a mandatory requirement and there is no associated criterion. A note associated with the rule contains details of the actual endorsement. This gives a measure of certainty to the applicant by indicating that endorsement will be given if certain published standards are met. It also allows for departures to be considered through negotiation between the proponent and the relevant entity.

Under this approach it is possible for an entity to endorse a particular component under part D, but for ACTPLA to refuse the EDP on the grounds that the component does not meet planning requirements under the relevant rule and criteria in parts A, B or C. The reverse is also possible.

The ACT government is committed to improving the energy efficiency of homes and, by doing so, minimise energy consumption and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Houses that integrate sound environmental design such as proper insulation, northerly orientation and shading of windows and walls in summer are more likely to achieve this target.

Canberra, of course, has hot summers and cool winters. Houses designed with environmental design principles in mind provide comfortable living conditions throughout the year and reduce energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions. Energy efficient options cost little to implement at the design and construction stage, yet offer significant long-term benefits both to the home owner and to the environment. It is a very sound principle that residential blocks be orientated and proportioned so that the house can have daytime living areas facing north and have sunlight into private open space, while limiting the overshadowing, of course, of adjoining residential blocks.

Certain combinations of block size, slope and orientation are more likely to achieve solar efficient house design. Accordingly the new code contains block compliance tables that are based on the principle that solar efficiency decreases as blocks narrow, tend towards an orientation 45 degrees to the north-south axis, and slope towards the south.

Other factors also influenced the formulation of these tables, in addition to size, shape and orientation. Consideration was given to the likely upper-level floor space yield taking account of building envelopes and boundary setbacks. A bias against blocks orientated at 45 degrees to the north-south axis is evident because of the difficulty of properly orientating the house towards the sun, particularly on small blocks. Block compliance tables and associated code provisions have had interim effect since June 2011.

This brings me to the solar policies that are intended to apply in residential areas under variation 306 but that are now at risk under this motion. To protect the solar access of neighbours, variation 306 proposes to limit overshadowing of neighbourhood blocks to not more than the shadow cast by a 1.8-metre fence. In response to submissions by sections of the housing industry on the new rules as they have been applied in Wright, variation 306 makes a significant concession by allowing the solar fence to be raised for a specified 10 metre section of a block's southern boundary to 2.4 metres. In many cases this will allow part of the dwelling, ordinarily the garage, to be erected close to the southern boundary.

These provisions apply to all large blocks greater than 500 square metres, all blocks in the Molonglo valley, all mid-sized blocks approved on or after the commencement date of this variation and all compact blocks approved on or after the commencement date of this variation, but in relation only to the sun angle provisions.

Current provisions applying to mid-sized blocks approved before the commencement date are retained. No building envelopes currently apply to compact blocks. This policy is retained in the new code except that the sun angle plane component of the building envelope will apply to compact blocks approved after the commencement date. This means that the owners of new compact blocks will have the same protection from overshadowing as mid-sized and large blocks.

On other side and rear boundaries the building envelope is defined by planes at 45 degrees from a line 3.5 metres above the boundary. In a departure from the current code, this approach does not distinguish between principal building zone and rear building zone, although this distinction remains for the purposes of boundary setbacks.

The changed policy effectively allows for additional building bulk in the rear of the block. This concession will, for many two-storey proposals, offset any possible loss of floor area under the new solar provisions.

I refer to some recent newspaper articles and advise that some of those describing blocks in Wright and Coombs were actually about the precinct codes and not draft variation 306. (*Time expired.*)

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (10.30): I rise to speak on Mr Wall's motion to disallow draft variation 306. When the Planning and Development Act was created in 2007 after an ACT legislation reform process, there was a staged process which involved, firstly, putting into place the legislation and territory plan framework, incorporating as many relevant existing codes and guidelines as possible, and then beginning the process of reviewing the policy or codes for the various zoning types. This staged process was to attempt to make the reform process policy neutral, and thus the code reviews became the pointy end of the reform process and have been ongoing for four years since.

The review of the community codes was the first to be completed and was finalised in 2010 as draft variation 302. The review of the residential and estate development

codes has been underway since 2008, and we have that before us today in the form of draft variation 306, and the review of the commercial codes is currently in progress and exists as draft variation 304.

The revision process for draft variation 306, as I said, has been underway for over four years, including a number of rounds of community consultation in various forms—the estate development code review was once DV301 and the residential code review DV303. I do not think there is any debate at all that our residential codes need to be updated. As you can see by the long title of Mr Wall’s motion, there are many elements to the codes in this draft variation. There are five residential zones from RZ1, the least dense, to RZ5, the highest density, and rules and descriptions of what kinds of developments are allowed in these zones. There are codes for single dwelling developments and for multi-unit housing development; and there is also the residential estate development code. Altogether, these papers total over 300 pages or so.

It has been a long process for ACTPLA to put this variation together, long enough that I do not want to take too much time explaining the details today. However, it is certainly important to note that there have been quite a few rounds of public consultation, a territory plan code review expert reference group comprising community and industry stakeholders in 2010 and an inquiry by the planning committee of the previous Assembly last year which all happened over the past four years before we got to the variation we have before us today.

Mr Coe, who I believe put together the proposal for Mr Wall’s motion, was on this planning committee. He heard the range of stakeholders’ feedback last year and would be fully aware of just how complex these issues are. He would also be aware of the large number of significant improvements to the existing codes in this variation, and there is a raft of positive changes contained in DV306.

There are a number of distinct improvements to the residential codes that come with this variation, such as the solar fence requirements to protect neighbours on the south side of a development from being overshadowed by their northern neighbour, and the solar orientation of blocks where block size and aspect requirements better ensure solar access for individual houses—although I note this will be hard to deliver on the southern slopes of new Gungahlin suburbs and may require some further consideration. Another improvement includes removing restrictions on who can live in secondary residences. These would be better known as granny flats to most people. And I imagine that many people would not have even realised that they have not been legal for quite some time. But draft variation 306 will allow them again so people will not have to suddenly remove the kitchen out of their back flat when an elderly relative dies.

Another improvement is increased diversity of dwelling sizes in multi-unit developments, which is not necessarily something in demand now but will be important into the future. There is better protection of neighbourhood character in RZ2 developments, an increased dwelling allowance for adaptable dwellings, ensuring that consolidated block developments are only allowed with adequate street frontage, and restricting the overall scale and distribution. This will ensure that local neighbours are happier with the developments, as well as creating more efficient dwellings.

There are also improvements to the estate development code, and these include: facilitating passive solar by better block orientation; an improved focus on active and sustainable transport by better allowing for public transport infrastructure and shared path networks; improved minimum requirements for common areas like parks, paths, landscaping and parking—for example, making verge widths wider to better allow for street trees; an improved infrastructure development agreement process with government agencies; and the introduction of an integrated development parcel to better ensure residential amenity and solar access.

I would like to focus a little more on the solar aspects I mentioned. There was an item in the previous Labor-Greens parliamentary agreement of 2008 to mandate passive solar orientation for all new residential homes and subdivisions and to legislate for improved solar access rights. These were incorporated into the agreement, and that, in part, reflected community expectation of action on climate change as well as a general acknowledgement that these sorts of things make for both better quality and more comfortable homes. We now have climate change targets which were legislated in 2010, but these changes to planning codes were complex and thus have taken much longer to develop. In fact, there is still more work to be done to legislate for solar rights in situations which do not involve new houses.

This variation thus includes these key provisions around mandatory passive solar orientation and increased solar rights for residential homes and subdivision solar access, which stem from the 2008 parliamentary agreement. Of course, the Greens are pleased that solar considerations will be embedded in our planning laws. We need to design our homes in a way that makes sense in their environmental context to maximise solar gain in winter and reduce our energy use. There are now great examples of builders that have been doing this successfully, and as we proceed the industry is learning how to do this better.

I also note that a review of the territory plan to take into account greenhouse gas reduction targets, as stipulated in the 2012 parliamentary agreement, is still to come, and is necessary to better ensure that we can meet our reduction targets in years to come.

Coming back to DV306 and the decisions for today, we now find ourselves in a very interesting situation. The legislation around draft variations is such that at this stage there are only three things the Assembly can do today: reject the whole variation and all the work that has been done over the past four years; propose deleting individual clauses, specifically rules and criteria; or let the variation go through to commence on 27 May.

Given the significant improvements to the current residential codes and rules which I have just outlined, I am loath to send the whole lot back to the drawing board, given that there is unlikely to be consensus on exactly what changes need to be made, and that without this variation being approved today we lose any improvements in sustainability and building for our future energy and transport needs. On balance, it is clear that there are probably only around five to 10 pages of concern from a 300-page document that overall has a huge range of positive outcomes across the codes.

My office has had discussions with Minister Corbell's office and ACTPLA about issues relating to the implementation of DV306, and we have received extensive community and industry feedback since aspects of the draft variation came into interim effect in 2010, and particularly since the final variation has been presented. It is clear there have been a number of unintended outcomes that need reviewing.

The Assembly has the capacity to delete specific clauses of concern, but given that we cannot amend clauses, only remove them, this may lead to other unintended outcomes further down the track. To be honest, I am not convinced that this level of detail is best done on the floor of the Assembly, as planning laws, especially at the rules and criteria level, are complex.

It seems that most of the specific concerns that have been raised with me appear to be along the lines of unintended consequences, not substantial policy disagreement. Generally, conversations I have had with stakeholders have suggested that rejecting the variation completely is not the answer. They certainly want changes to some of the rules and criteria, but it is important to note that if we reject this today we are holding the ACT residential planning codes back in the last century.

Over the past two years implementation of the parts of the draft variation which were given interim effect have given the industry an opportunity to identify some of the problems with the on-ground effects of constructing to meet the rules and criteria. We now need to learn from this experience about any problems so that we can adjust accordingly.

My office has spoken and met with a broad range of stakeholders, including the Master Builders Association, the Australian Institute of Architects, the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects, the Property Council, and a range of other industry and community members. I have passed on the feedback I have received from these groups to Minister Corbell's office as the government has committed to taking further feedback on specific areas of concern with a view to further technical amendments. There are some concerns that will be more difficult to fix, as there appear to be differing community views on them and no singular view on what the right outcome actually is.

I understand ACTPLA has already agreed to make some suggested adjustments based on industry feedback—for example, removing the inconsistency between the 10-metre front zone for the solar fence and the 12-metre primary building zone so they are both the same. They have also committed to looking into introducing a sliding scale for plot ratios so that the proportion of a block that can be used for a house is less on larger blocks.

A quick list of some of the other concerns—they have obviously been given an airing already today to some extent—include complying with solar access provisions will lead to wedding-cake-type tiers on houses; drainage issues; excessive excavation and retaining walls; too many rules which overlap and confuse; and a lack of policy intent and very specific rules instead.

In light of the situation I described and the options that are available to us, I have formed the view that, rather than rejecting the variation, I will move an amendment, and I now move the amendment circulated in my name:

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

“(1) notes:

- (a) the tabling 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;
- (b) that Variation 306 includes a range of valuable planning reforms that will improve sustainability in areas such as solar orientation and solar access rights, allowing secondary residences, transport planning and increasing the diversity of dwelling types; and
- (c) that, given the volume and complexity of the variation, the ACT Government has committed to make any necessary technical amendments to the revised residential codes to address community and industry feedback from the implementation of the codes, including the possibility of staged commencement; and

(2) calls on the ACT Government to:

- (a) invite community feedback on specific clauses of concern that might be addressed through technical variations; and
- (b) report to the Assembly on the progress of any technical variations related to Variation 306 by the last sitting day in October 2013.”.

Rather than dismissing the entire variation and abandoning all improvements, I am moving this amendment to reflect the government’s commitment to further refining the ACT’s residential and estate development codes through a technical amendment process and to investigate the best way to stage commencement of the assorted parts of the variation to best incorporate the implementation of these amendments.

I am asking the government to invite further community and industry feedback on specific areas of concern to ensure these are evaluated before proceeding with any technical amendments. I am also asking for a progress report on these technical amendments in October this year, as I imagine that, by then, ACTPLA will have amended some of the simple rules and will have a good idea of which other ones still need revision or to keep a watchful eye on. It is highly likely that amendments will need to be made when further consequences become clear over coming years. I will be following this up with the government to ensure that we learn from the experience of implementing the new codes and adjust the rules to iron out problems in early stages.

Overall, I think if we want to get our urban infill policy and levers right, what is probably next required is a review of exactly where RZ2 and RZ3 areas occur, to ensure that we are increasing density in just the right places to better align with transport corridors and distance to town centres. This would then need to go hand in hand with better differentiating between what can be built in those zones. At present there is not really sufficient difference in density between RZ2 and RZ3, meaning that there are probably quite a few areas which should have more dwellings built in them now rather than creating a situation whereby buildings will need to be redeveloped in 10 or 15 years to meet future demand.

In conclusion, there are still improvements to be made to the territory plan, but, overall, I think this variation is a very solid step forward on the path to sustainability and better neighbourhoods. For Canberrans, these changes will mean new areas of our city are better designed, with attention given to issues such as solar orientation and sustainable transport. They will benefit people who are building or purchasing homes, as well as helping to minimise Canberra's environmental footprint.

Too many of Canberra's existing suburbs were built without consideration of modern design principles, making it harder to build energy efficient homes and provide public transport. The Canberra of the future has to be designed in a smart and sustainable way with an awareness of the challenges we face from our changing environment.

Accepting the variation with technical amendments to come is a much better outcome than rejecting the entire variation and starting over. I urge other members to support the variation and my amendment, as I believe the changes as a result of DV306 are a good start towards making Canberra a more sustainable city. I think we all acknowledge there are areas in the variation that warrant some further work, but, as I have stressed, the proposal I have put forward is a way through that enables us to harvest the benefits of work that have been done but gives us the scope and a commitment from the government to continue to make the improvements that various people and organisations in the community are suggesting that are needed. I commend my amendment to the Assembly.

Mr Coe: A point of order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: A point of order, Mr Coe.

Mr Coe: Madam Speaker, I draw your attention to the amendment that Mr Rattenbury has just moved and I ask for your ruling on whether you believe it adequately deals with the original motion which Mr Wall moved. This is a unique issue whereby if the Assembly does not deal with it then the draft variation is deemed to be invalid. Given that we have an amendment that seeks to omit all words, does that adequately deal with the proposal put forward by Mr Wall? I seek your ruling.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Coe, I have had some notice that this may become an issue, and I have sought some advice from the Clerk. You might have seen the sort of to-ing and fro-ing in the production of the minutes of proceedings. I have had some time to

reflect on this. I would say to members that there is not a clear precedent that I have or that I have been able to find, or that the Clerk's office has been able to find, for this course of action.

I am concerned as the Speaker because the Speaker has responsibilities in relation to disallowance. If the matter is disallowed, the Speaker has particular responsibilities. I am concerned that I would need to fulfil my responsibilities in accordance with the Legislation Act and the standing orders.

I am unclear as to whether, and the advice is unclear to me as to whether, dealing with this amendment in its form properly disposes of a disallowance motion. While I am prepared to consider opinions of members in this place, the proposal that I am thinking of is that, whilst not wanting to prohibit Mr Rattenbury from moving the content of his amendment, a better way forward might be to deal with the disallowance and then perhaps consider a motion from Mr Rattenbury to deal with this matter.

I actually think that there are important issues here and I do not have time to properly research it all. I would like the opportunity, outside this debate, to come back and make a sort of formal ruling about how we should deal with these matters. I would come back perhaps in the next sitting to deal with it then. Mr Corbell.

Mr Corbell: Thank you, Madam Speaker. On the point of order, if I may, I understand the issues that you are raising and the matter that Mr Coe is raising. The government certainly has no objection to proceeding with a series of votes that make clear the Assembly's position in relation to disallowance of this variation or otherwise.

But I would like to make the observation that I would have thought it was appropriate for you as the Speaker to have regard to the views members expressed in the debate as to whether or not the variation should proceed and how that would be reflected in the ultimate vote—that is, members of the Labor Party and Mr Rattenbury have already indicated that they wish to see the variation proceed, albeit with a range of further actions flowing from that. I would have thought that would be relevant to any decision you made in relation to whether or not the variation was disallowed.

The fact that the Assembly, for example, if it agrees to Mr Rattenbury's amendment, explicitly removes Mr Wall's proposal to reject the variation, I would have thought also was material to these issues. But I have no objection to embarking on some procedural course to put that question beyond doubt, if that is a concern to other members or to yourself, Madam Speaker.

Mr Coe: On the point of order, Madam Speaker, I think the minister does make a good point. However, I think the concern that you flagged, whereby this could be a precedent, is probably the greater concern going forward. Whilst for this particular issue I think the minister is probably correct, the concern would be the precedent which is created and how much further this could extend down the track.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Rattenbury, on the point of order?

Mr Rattenbury: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I think the observation you make is a fair one in terms of wanting maximum certainty. In light of that, I am agreeable, if other members are happy to provide leave, that we perhaps vote on Mr Wall's motion. I am then happy to move my amendment as a subsequent motion, if that is an agreeable way forward. I might suggest to you, Madam Speaker, with your indulgence, that this might be a matter for a ruling on which you may come back to the Assembly at a later point in time for the sake of clarity for the future.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you. I take the points that all members have made. In response to Mr Corbell, I do not feel that I should be in a position where I have to discern, short of a formal vote in this circumstance, because the formal vote could result in me having to notify the parliamentary counsel that this matter has been disallowed. I do not feel that I should have to discern that from this case.

The only precedent I can find at this stage is the matter that Ms Le Couteur moved in the last Assembly to disallow the regulations in relation to Kingston foreshore. There was an amendment that changed a definition within that subordinate legislation rather than an amendment which, while it relates to this draft variation, does not amend it. It actually does other things.

I have made it very clear that I would like the opportunity to look at the precedents and come back with a more formal and longstanding ruling. But I think in this instance I would rather that we go down the path that I rule this amendment out of order in this circumstance, but that we agree that we will entertain, by leave, Mr Rattenbury moving this as a motion at the end of the debate. On that basis, the amendment is out of order and the question now is that the motion be agreed to. Mr Corbell, to conclude your comments.

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), by leave: I thank you, Madam Speaker, and I thank members for their indulgence. To conclude my comments, the development of the solar access provisions was not policy on the run, as has been asserted by some sections of industry. Considerable research was undertaken with consideration given to the impact changes would have on the building industry.

It is not denied that the introduction of the new solar envelope will result in changes to the design of homes, particularly in greenfield areas. But this is not an unintended consequence; it is a deliberate decision so that we can improve the solar access of residences to address serious issues of energy consumption, greenhouse gas emissions, climate change, and the cost of heating and cooling residences.

In future greenfield estates the solar envelope provision will work alongside the compliance tables to ensure new compact and mid-sized blocks are of sufficient size with an orientation to enable a suitably sized dwelling to be constructed on it and one that does not adversely impact the solar access of the neighbouring blocks. It is worth noting that the new solar fence provision does not apply to existing compact or mid-sized blocks, except for those in the new Molonglo division.

Recommendation 4 of the standing committee's report 15 on draft variation 306 recommended that ESDD consider changes that would make development to one edge of the block more feasible. In response to this recommendation as well as to industry concerns regarding wasted space on the southern side of blocks, the solar envelope provision was amended to allow more flexibility in relation to building close to the side boundary. The solar fence has been extended from 1.8 metres to 2.4 metres over a specified 10-metre section of the southern boundary. This change allows a building, ordinarily a garage, to be located closer to the side boundary in the forward portion of the block.

Sections of the housing industry cite houses in the new Molonglo suburb of Wright as examples of the poor outcome the solar access provisions will have on the built form. The Coombs and Wright precinct code contains similar solar provisions to those found in variation 306; so development there does provide an insight into the application of the solar fence rules.

Opponents of the variation have suggested that blocks must be excavated to ensure compliance with the solar fence provisions. If so, significant site cuts would be widespread across Wright. But this is not the case. It is the choice of the builder to sink the house into the ground. This can be for a variety of reasons, including the dictates of the stock design which they are unwilling to change on a sloping block or for a two-storey or split-level design where the garage is below living areas. But these cases are very much in the minority.

Variation 306 does not require garages or any other part of the home to be excavated. This is especially the case now that the proposed solar fence is raised to a height of 2.4 metres over a 10-metre section of the southern boundary. In its report, the standing committee found that it was a reasonable expectation that all landowners should expect solar access on their land. The committee supported the proposed solar access provisions.

The reaction to the new solar access provisions is reminiscent of the discussion in 2002 on the proposed garden city variation which introduced building envelopes for the first time. It was suggested then that building costs would rise and that the new restrictions unnecessarily restricted design freedom. Despite the criticisms, housing designs adapted. Building construction continued and the solar access of neighbouring blocks was significantly improved. Now with the issues of energy efficiency and greenhouse gas emissions and the consequences of a change in climate even more pressing, there is a need for further changes in relation to the solar access provisions.

The standing committee made 21 recommendations in its report, which was released in September last year. The government agreed to 13 of them, noted one and agreed in principle to the remainder. The first recommendation was to proceed with the variation, subject to the recommendations set out in the committee's report. Accordingly, the final variation 306 document was amended and approved in February this year. Dissenting comments by Mr Coe were included in the standing committee's report on the draft variation.

Mr Coe chose to highlight the negative and largely unsubstantiated comments made to the standing committee by some in the housing industry. He failed to acknowledge that there is strong community support for all of the key initiatives proposed by the variation. Mr Coe suggested that the draft variation was inconsistent with the government's objectives of increasing density around local centres and transport corridors. Although the proposed RZ2 provisions will limit the number of multi-unit dwellings permitted on a site, other changes will enable other forms of infill development in established areas. These include reducing the minimum block size for dual occupancy from 800 square metres to 700 square metres and the new secondary residence provisions that have already been discussed.

In summary, variation 306 introduces many worthy planning initiatives, not the least being significantly improved solar access policies at both the subdivision and building stages. These must be embraced as vital components in the quest for a more sustainable pattern of development. There is still more work to be done. Other major policy changes to the territory plan may follow, such as possible changes to the disposition of residential zones throughout the city in line with the ACT planning strategy. This strategy seeks to focus urban intensification on town centres, around group centres and along major public transport routes.

Unless it is rejected, this variation will play a key role in ensuring the nature and scale of future development is appropriate to the needs of the community and for a more sustainable pattern of development. Variation 306 aims to improve the built form in the ACT and enable it to respond to the challenges of the future. Planning provisions are, by their very nature, amended from time to time to address changing needs and expectations. Therefore, I have asked the Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate to closely monitor the implementation of this variation, should it proceed. If difficulties are identified, amendments can be made to the territory plan, either substantively or through the technical amendment process.

However, any change to planning provisions will require a period of adjustment, and new policies should not be quickly abandoned. The government is committed to a more sustainable city and to reducing our greenhouse gas emissions profile. We are also committed to making sure that Canberrans that move into new homes do not have to pay as much for their heating and their cooling. We are committed to those Canberrans having better access to sunlight, particularly during winter, and to prevent their homes from being overshadowed by their neighbours.

These are all expectations that I think would be reasonably shared by the community. It is for these reasons that variation 306 should proceed, because it makes a significant contribution to all of these goals. The government does not support the motion put forward by Mr Wall.

MR COE (Ginninderra) (11.00): The Canberra Liberals believe that, on balance, draft variation 306 is bad for Canberra, and Mr Wall put the case very well on behalf of the opposition. I thank him for moving this motion on behalf of the opposition when I was away during the March sitting. Andrew, of course, has a keen interest in the building industry in Canberra—that being, of course, his personal history and his

family's business. And it is small business in particular that will be the losers as a result of DV306. For a long time in Canberra we have seen the demise of small and independent builders. The renovation and add-on market is, of course, the key component of the sector for independent builders, and it is those renovations and add-ons that will be quite unfairly hit by DV306.

It is important to note that the opposition is not in a position to be able to amend the variation. That is unfortunate, but the fact is all we can do is delete words or disallow the whole thing. Whilst we looked at options of deleting different criteria or different rules, the fact is that it would have been too difficult, and doing so without the ability to add words would make it a very risky process.

I think draft variation 306 is a missed opportunity. Michael Reeves from the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects summed up the opportunity well in a submission to the planning committee last year:

The preparation of DV306 represented an opportunity for the Planning Authority and other government agencies to create a transparent and flexible regulatory framework for the delivery of key government policies in housing affordability, sustainability of future city, social equity and economic stability.

The fact is DV306 does not meet that expectation. The planning committee heard from witness after witness saying that they had serious problems with draft variation 306. We heard Mr Rattenbury say there had been plenty of opportunities for the community to give input to draft variation 306 and he mentioned the consultative committee, the expert reference group and the planning committee. And it is true; there has been opportunity after opportunity. In fact, industry and the community have taken every one of those opportunities to give feedback to the government, yet it seems none of those opportunities actually resulted in a genuine commitment to react to what the experts were telling them. It seems the decision was a done deal.

DV306 has received widespread criticism. I think most people would say there is a lot of good in DV306, but a lot of people are saying, on balance, DV306 is bad for Canberra. How many times do groups such as the Master Builders Association, the Housing Industry Association, the Institute of Architects, the Institute of Landscape Architects, the Planning Institute, the Property Council and numerous community councils all join force in opposition? We are not talking about one or two planning activists here. We are not talking about a vocal minority. We are talking about a majority. Yet this government and Mr Rattenbury are so ideologically driven that they will not listen to the community on this issue.

Mr Hamish Sinclair from the Planning Institute summarised it well last year when he said:

... in many respects we did find ourselves in the position of recommending this variation be withdrawn and recommenced from the start, mainly because it does not achieve good planning outcomes. It is drafted in a manner that will not deliver the expected outcomes that are talked about.

ACTPLA and the government do not have a good track record. In fact, there are many people in ACTPLA who do not understand DV306. We have heard of examples whereby people have sought clarification of DV306 from ACTPLA and it has taken weeks and weeks to get a response and, even then, there was doubt about the response. In fact, we have also had elements of ACTPLA who have criticised DV306 and have not been complimentary. There have been people in ACTPLA who have said, "If we can't explain it, how do we expect the community to know what it is?" The territory plan is rapidly becoming, if it has not already, an inaccessible document which is so complex that almost any structure can be deemed to be noncompliant if ACTPLA so choose.

The president of the HIA told the committee:

I was part of the committee that went through the DV 306 talkfests that we had prior to its implementation. Quite honestly, it was a talkfest. It was a decision made, I think, on a political basis where the opportunity was given to community and industry to comment, but the decision had been made before we went through that process. We were just paid lip-service. At the end of the day, it was done and dusted and DV 306 was implemented by those who had made decisions prior to us even saying anything.

It is all very well for Mr Rattenbury to move for another review. It is all very well for him to say there have been plenty of opportunities, but the government has not listened and has not taken on board the advice which so many different organisations gave.

Mr Wall and others have canvassed some of the issues in DV306, and it is worth going over just a couple of them. Of course, the solar access provisions are probably the ones that have drawn the most criticism. While some are complimentary about the aspiration of the solar access provisions, in practice, I do not think they will achieve the said outcomes. Firstly, solar aspect is not the be-all and end-all of energy efficiency. Yes, it is important, but there are lots of other things at stake as well. We need to give architects and builders some credit in being able to be innovative about how they deliver energy efficiency. DV306 stifles innovation.

As a result of DV306 we are likely to see more houses move to the north-east of blocks. In fact, one prominent architect said east-west blocks that should be the most desirable for solar access are now the most compromised and difficult to build on. These blocks will need to be much wider to fit an average size house on them, which will decrease density and increase the price of land. Of course, that goes against the stated outcomes of this government.

We are going to have big aspects of the house peering into backyards. We are going to have gardens and open space in the shade. We are going to have quirky houses with the wedding cake effect. Potentially nobody is going to win. It is an ideology where things are measured on inputs and not reality, and the suburb of Wright is a demonstration of that. It is going to be even more difficult when you get sloped terrain. As we go further into Molonglo some blocks will be near to being undevelopable. It will be interesting to see whether there will be requests for call-in powers to be used on some of these residential blocks. I would not be at all surprised if that happens.

The estate development code has many issues, and yield and quality of these future estates have been brought into question. The Institute of Landscape Architects have raised serious concerns about the treescapes on these streets. In fact, there are now only three or four types of trees—they think—which are going to be able to be planted on the nature strips. These trees are species that will not grow to a reasonable height such that they go beyond the roof line. Therefore, some estates will be condemned forever to having poor treescapes and roof lines dominating the landscape.

The question of yield is going to come up tomorrow when Denman Prospect is auctioned. Now, \$100 million was touted as being the figure the government might get for Denman Prospect. It will be very interesting to see what they do get tomorrow. I think we might see a tangible impact to the territory's bottom line for taxpayers tomorrow when Denman Prospect is auctioned. That will not have anything to do with the quality of land or the quality of marketing; it will be because of the reduced yield that DV306 will generate.

Mr Wall spoke well about the water features and the change from 50 per cent down to 25 per cent when it comes to roof area. There are lots of issues, and time does not permit me to go into all the different issues which have been raised with me. However, it is important to state that our economy and the building sector are already doing it tough, and this could be the final straw for some businesses. This is not good for Canberra.

I opposed DV306 in the committee stage, and the opposition oppose it in this Assembly stage because it is bad policy. It does not do what it espouses to and, therefore, should be rejected.

MR WALL (Brindabella) (11.10), in reply: In closing I will touch on a few points. We have spoken about the consultation process, and this government always touts itself as a government that is open and accountable and properly consults the community. Yet time and time again its opinion takes priority over that of the community's. The minister spoke about private open space in residential areas being accessible directly from a living room as part of the changes to 306. That is how it used to be, minister. DV306 allows now for the private open space to be accessible off a habitable part of the home, not directly off a living area as it currently is. That slight change has been made because of the restrictions due to the solar access constraints.

We have heard of the secondary residences, one of the few gems that are a part of DV306. These finally allow the option for families to create a second residence on their properties—somewhere where their children can live while trying to get into the housing market or an opportunity for rental income. That has previously been impossible in the ACT.

To say the Canberra Liberals are against the solar access provisions as they stand is true. Everyone should have the right to preserve sunlight access on their block. The difficulty with what is proposed in DV306 is the restrictive nature placed on design outcomes to allow people to build a home properly and orientate it well.

It is only going to be a matter of time before we see the changes that are implemented as part of this draft variation needing to be readdressed. Industry simply will not be able to survive it and home owners will not be able to accommodate the restrictions when they choose to make improvements to their properties.

It is a case we often see with this government, and it is becoming a bit of a tradition—they are anti-development. We have the lease variation charges, we have commence and complete fees, and now we have these onerous provisions as part of this draft variation. They simply do not want building to occur in Canberra. They do not want to support the jobs. They do not want to support the businesses that employ the people. They simply do not care. I urge the Assembly to disallow this draft variation.

Question put:

That the motion be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 8

Noes 9

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

Question so resolved in the negative.

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

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo)(11.15), by leave: I move:

(1) notes:

- (a) the tabling 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;
- (b) that Variation 306 includes a range of valuable planning reforms that will improve sustainability in areas such as solar orientation and solar access rights, allowing secondary residences, transport planning and increasing the diversity of dwelling types; and
- (c) that, given the volume and complexity of the variation, the ACT Government has committed to make any necessary technical amendments to the revised residential codes to address community and industry feedback from the implementation of the codes, including the possibility

of staged commencement; and

(2) calls on the ACT Government to:

- (a) invite community feedback on specific clauses of concern that might be addressed through technical variations; and
- (b) report to the Assembly on the progress of any technical variations related to Variation 306 by the last sitting day in October 2013.

I will not speak any further to this other than to refer to the earlier advice from the Speaker, and I now move this motion as a follow-up to the previous discussion.

MR COE (Ginninderra) (11.17): Whilst we will support the passing of this motion, we do not have any confidence whatsoever that, after the government has failed to listen to the consultative committee, the expert reference group and the views espoused at the planning committee, suddenly ACTPLA and the minister are going to start listening to community concerns. All the issues Mr Rattenbury talked about—that is, an undertaking that ACTPLA and/or the minister are going to look into—were raised years ago; they were raised with DV301 and DV303 and all those iterations of the consultation process. I think this motion is far more about Mr Rattenbury being able to say he did something when, in actual fact, he is in lock-step with the government on this issue.

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) (11.18): The government will support Mr Rattenbury's motion. I make the observation that if you listened to Mr Coe and took him at his word, you would assume that everyone was in uniform dissent with this variation, and that is simply not the case. Even with those groups Mr Coe seeks to meld together, like residents groups and industry groups, yes, they all have some concern with some parts of the variation, but they are not the same concerns. Some residents groups support provisions that industry groups oppose, and some industry groups support provisions that residents groups oppose, and some support uniformly all provisions. It is simply false for Mr Coe to suggest that there is somehow this uniform dissent on all the issues. It is misleading to the community, and it is a simplistic debate in this place.

What is very clear is that, like all major variations to the territory plan, there is not uniformity of view. The obligation on this place is to decide whether or not, on balance, the reform is a worthy one. I am pleased that today the Assembly has endorsed the variation. I am pleased today that the Assembly has said this variation should proceed. That is a good thing for our community. It is a good thing for improving the standard of residential subdivision. It is a good thing for making sure that people can live in homes that are not overshadowed by their neighbours. It is a good thing to make sure that the intensity of redevelopment in existing suburban areas is consistent with the character of those areas. These are all the outcomes that community wants, supports and will see as a result of this variation proceeding.

Motion agreed to.

Supreme Court (Appointment of Resident Judges) Amendment Bill 2013

Mr Seselja, pursuant to notice, presented the bill and its explanatory statement.

Title read by Clerk.

MR SESELJA (Brindabella) (11.20): I move:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

Yesterday morning I received an email from a local businessman who has been dealing with the part-sale of his business for the last two years. Unfortunately, this sale has not gone smoothly and has entered the judicial system. The dispute first arose in December 2011, and the first court date was set for mid-December 2012. The hearing did not go ahead due to the judge being unavailable; nor did the hearing set for two weeks later, once again due to the judge not being available. Almost five months later, a new date has still not been set and his business still sits under a cloud of uncertainty. There is ongoing stress on him and his colleagues and mounting legal bills for all sides.

Stories like this are all too common and are the reason why I am introducing this bill in the Assembly today. The Supreme Court (Appointment of Resident Judges) Amendment Bill 2013 will make a simple but effective amendment to the Supreme Court Act 1933. The bill today will provide that the executive must, by commission, appoint as resident judges a chief justice of the court and at least four other judges of the court.

The Canberra Liberals had hoped that we would not have needed to have legislation to call for the appointment of an additional judge. It would have been hoped that the government would have listened to the community affected by long delays, key stakeholders on this issue like the Law Society, and victims of crime, who have all called for long-term and sustained action to ensure that residents in the ACT receive timely access to justice.

In March, I introduced a motion calling on the government to appoint a fifth judge. Unfortunately, the government, including the Greens, did not vote in favour of the motion, further condemning the many Canberrans negatively affected by the long delays in our court system to further uncertainty and instability. I hope that the government and the Greens will be open to discussion and negotiation on this bill. I look forward to discussing with my colleagues across the chamber how we can work together to ensure a fifth judge is appointed.

It would be timely to revisit the latest statistics regarding access to justice in the ACT. According to the latest report on government services we have 3.4 judges per 100,000 people. This is the lowest number of judges per capita in the country. It is relevant to compare similar jurisdictions, such as the Northern Territory, which has 11 judges per 100,000, and Tasmania, which has 4.1 judges per 100,000. Importantly, we are also well below the national average of 4.8 judges per 100,000 people.

It is also timely that I introduce this bill today as there have been reports in the *Canberra Times* just this week further highlighting the issues facing our justice system despite the short-term measures that the government argues it is putting in place. The *Canberra Times* states that the outstanding caseload of a particular judge includes a number of decisions that have been reserved for longer than 18 months, with one more than four years old. Obviously allowing this judge time away from the bench to address these cases will provide some short-term relief to the pressures on this particular judge. However, in the long term taking one judge away from the bench increases the delays for the cases still to be heard and increases the pressure on the remaining judges.

The delays to judgements are well known, and they continue to get longer year after year. The Attorney-General is only prepared to take short-term measures that take off some of the pressure for a few months, and then the delays continue.

It is with interest that I note the statements Mr Corbell has made against the introduction of an additional judge and the statements he has made in regard to the establishment of an industrial magistrates court. His continuing rhetoric seems to indicate that he is willing to speak about the importance of access to justice and, in the case of the industrial magistrate, the importance of access to justice for industrial matters, but is unwilling to take any real action to back this rhetoric up.

The introduction yesterday of the exposure draft legislation seems to indicate, as expressed by the Law Society, that this does nothing to increase the resources available to hear cases but just rebrands current resources. In the case of addressing the delays in regard to the fifth judge, Mr Corbell produces the same result. He is not willing to provide any additional resources to the Supreme Court, but he is happy to shuffle things around, like removing a judge from a bench for a couple of months, for it to appear as if something is happening.

I return to the important point I made in my speech to the Assembly in March: justice delayed is justice denied. The delays we are currently experiencing do not serve to benefit anyone. Many Canberrans have had their lives turned upside down by court cases, and the continued delays in addressing them have meant that their suffering is exacerbated. Having businesses caught up in long litigation, as I stated at the beginning, is putting their livelihoods at risk and causing untold stress. The accused awaiting trial are often detained on remand at the AMC only to be released soon after trial as they are deemed to have served their sentence. Their classification in the prison, of being held on remand rather than sentenced, means that they often cannot participate in rehabilitation programs.

And the pressure continues to mount on the judges themselves. Judges need time to pay due diligence to the case at hand. We do not want them overburdened in delivering decisions and, as a result, not being able to properly consider all of the arguments. Furthermore, a number of cases that have been run in the past year have cited these very court delays as a reason to challenge refusal of bail or to seek dismissal of cases, thereby further adding to the judicial workload.

I do not take lightly the decision to introduce a fifth judge to our system. It is a financial burden for the ACT, and any decision to spend taxpayers' money must be carefully considered. However, I am in no doubt that the financial and non-financial costs on Canberrans that are currently incurred because of the delays in justice outcomes are significantly higher than the cost of providing an additional judge.

The ACT Law Society recently expressed its support in a letter to me, the Attorney-General and Mr Rattenbury. The ACT Bar Association have stated that they are in strong support of this legislation, which they state will "undoubtedly alleviate the pressures and delays currently experienced by the court".

In this morning's *Canberra Times*, in an article titled "Murder victim's family backs fifth judge", we heard more from victims of crime affected by long delays. They stated that the delays in the resolution of their court cases were a constant aggravation of their grief and horror. Ms Williams, whose closest friend, Julie Tattersall, was tragically murdered five years ago, is quoted in the article about Mr Corbell's views on this bill. She says:

My first thought—and it's a terrible, terrible thing to say—was if he could wear my shoes for a day, and it was somebody in his family ... he would have as many judges as it would take to clear up the system.

This bill has the support of the people who work within the system every day. It has the support of the victims of crime affected by the system. And it has the support of people trying to resolve disputes through the system. I commend this bill to the Assembly.

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

Education—funding

MR DOSZPOT (Molonglo) (11.29): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes

- (a) that education funding reforms proposed by the Gonski Committee were the subject of discussions at a COAG meeting in Canberra on 19 April 2013;
- (b) that at that meeting no jurisdiction, including the ACT, was prepared to agree to the multi-billion dollar joint funding agreement and since then only one State has signed up;
- (c) the Prime Minister has given States and Territories until 30 June 2013 to agree to the reforms; and

(2) calls on the Chief Minister to:

- (a) release the details of the funding offer or offers provided to ACT schools;
- (b) advise the Assembly what financial and any other implications acceptance of the offer will have for all schools in the ACT;
- (c) table the financial modeling that was required to determine the ACT Government's position, including the cost implications for the ACT Government in the forward years;
- (d) outline where the funding across the forward estimates will come from;
- (e) give a guarantee that indexation is included in any forward estimates, so that no school in the ACT, government or non-government, will lose a dollar in real terms as a result of these reforms; and
- (f) ensure that the ACT is not disadvantaged, comparative to other States.

Funding for schools in Australia has been a complex and at times illogical exercise going back over decades. From the original need for non-government schools to be provided some federal funds so that they could continue to exist, it has become a vexed and passionately argued issue developing like Topsy and creating more social divide than sound policy.

Since 2007 and, indeed, even before they won government, the federal Labor Party have been promising to change school funding and deliver a new system that was transparent and equitable. But like so much of what Labor talks about, the execution is never quite what it seems and the promises never quite reflect the reality. And so it is with the Gonski school reforms.

There has been much hype around what is simply referred to as the Gonski review and report, and there has been some frankly ignorant commentary from groups like the Australian Education Union, federally and in the ACT, with their mischievous and potentially misleading "give a Gonski" campaign.

We have had years of federal Labor government promises. We then had a committee that sat for two years, commissioned several major research papers and finally delivered its report to government in December 2011. And then what? Nothing, or at least not much. We had an official government response in February 2012 which gave every indication they planned to just park it. In fact there was a refusal by both the Prime Minister and the education minister at the time to commit to any of the \$5 billion required.

For the past year, there has been little of substance from the federal government, and in the public domain, in the absence of any real debate, we have had the campaign whipped up by unions urging everyone to "give a Gonski". The campaign was no replacement for sound argument, with states urged to just sign up, irrespective of funding implications and without any real understanding of what it included and what it involved. The lack of commentary and explanation from the government, and the

implication within the “give a Gonski” campaign that funding must go only to government schools, led the non-government school sector to become increasingly concerned that they would be cannibalised to pay for it all.

In the absence of any policy direction from Labor, we saw, week after week, media headlines that did little to inform the public and little to allay the fears of parents of students in either government or non-government schools—headlines like “Gillard’s dissembling response undoes much of Gonski’s backbreaking work”, “Sad day for public education”, “States step up funding revolt” and “Funds block: for better or worse anger grows over schools cash review”.

We had list after list of schools that would lose money, assurances from the Prime Minister that no private school would lose money, renewed campaigns about saving public schools and letters about school fees rising and parents demanding to know what it all meant for them. The federal government saw this happening and just let it run. The federal government could have stopped this and shown leadership, but they did not.

Here in the ACT, we had to be satisfied with a minister originally denying he had been given any lists of funding implications for ACT schools. Later we had assurances that ACT officials were attending key briefings and that it had been acknowledged that the ACT had already made significant injections to the education system above the national average.

What it would mean for ACT schools, government and non-government, remained a mystery and did so all through the ACT election campaign. ACT Labor’s education platform said that ACT Labor did not need election policies that tied funding to the electoral cycle. ACT Labor said it was already working with the federal government to transition to a federal needs-based funding system. Now, seven months after that was said, and four months away from a federal election, we still have no detail and no agreement and, instead, frantic COAG discussions about what we must do, collectively as a nation, and what individual states and territories must also agree to.

What do we know and where are we at? We know that the Gonski review was the first major review of school funding since 1973. So by any standard, it was a monumental task. It was, in committee chair David Gonski’s own words, “tasked with developing a funding system for schools that was transparent, fair, financially sustainable and effective in promoting excellent educational outcomes for all Australian students”.

Emma Macdonald, writing in the *Canberra Times* last year, described the existing system as “a tangled web of financial intrigue involving ancient deals negotiated between the commonwealth, states and territories and underpinned by a dizzying array of financial incentives, anomalies, bribes, threats and add-ons that attached themselves during the political cycle”.

The task of the Gonski committee was never a simple one, and they approached it on the basis of throwing out the existing model and devising a new one that worked effectively and fairly across all schools and for all students. And contrary to what some chose to interpret as the outcome, Gonski wanted all of the nation’s 3.5 million

school students enrolled in 6,750 government schools and 2,720 non-government schools to receive a simple, minimum schooling resource standard, topped up by loadings for children from disadvantaged or Indigenous backgrounds and for those who have a disability.

Under this new approach, students, not schools, would be at the centre of the new system. The report suggested that an amount of about \$5 billion extra per year would be needed. Gonski went further and suggested that because nationally government schools had not been well funded by state governments, they should receive 75 per cent of the resource standard and that non-government schools should receive a public contribution of no less than 20 to 25 per cent.

I stress that was the proposal nationally because, as we know, circumstances in the ACT are different. The ACT government has funded government schools above the national average for some years and so it makes negotiation for a fair share of the cake on offer somewhat different.

Let me say at the start that I have no argument with the work that David Gonski and his committee have done but what we currently have does have its flaws. The report was never going to please everyone, and the committee knew that not everything they proposed could or would be adopted. But was it really necessary for the federal government to wait until nine months before the existing funding model expires, and four months before a federal election is due, to start to put something on the table? And why do we also learn, at one minute to midnight, that the federal government has decided that the only way it can fund its share is to slug universities?

For the ACT, that was a serious hit. We have several universities located here—the ANU, the University of Canberra, the Australian Catholic University and the University of New South Wales campus at ADFA. ANU's Acting Vice-Chancellor was quick to point out that the cuts would hit front-line support services for his students and staff. That could mean less work for Canberra residents. Students are concerned that some lower enrolment courses could be dropped, reducing the range of quality education on offer and meaning fewer students studying and living here.

So the ACT faces a number of challenges. On offer, we believe, originally was a total of \$100 million additional funding over the next six years, of which 65 per cent was to be paid for by the commonwealth. From there the debate, we assume, gets a little more complex and it is appropriate that given the appalling way that federal Labor is managing the process, the ACT is probably best served to wait.

But where does that leave ACT schools? We know the vast majority, if not all, of ACT schools are above the national resource standard. But it is also important that any agreement does not leave ACT schools worse off at the end of the six years. And that is clearly an unknown.

We have a further dilemma in the ACT, in that we have lower than national average funding for non-government schools. How does the funding get allocated? If we use the 75 to 25 government to non-government formula, we will see, over time, real disadvantage between the two sectors. ACT non-government schools want to feel

confident that, at the very least, they will retain current funding levels in real dollar terms. The ACT also should not be penalised by the federal government for having higher than national average funding for public schools.

To further complicate the issue, the Chief Minister in question time yesterday, when outlining the principles underpinning the school resource standard, said:

... the base amount in non-government schools would be discounted by parents' capacity to pay non-government school fees.

I repeat:

... the base amount in non-government schools would be discounted by parents' capacity to pay non-government school fees.

Is that the essence of Gonski, a descriptor so loved by the former education minister? That sort of language is enough to justifiably set alarm bells going in the minds of the over 40 per cent of parents in the ACT who choose non-government schools. What does that mean for them? And how does a government, with a chief minister who has been on the public record as not supporting non-government schools earlier in her career, now demonstrate fairness and balance and acknowledge that adjustments will need to be made to the non-government sector if the philosophy of Gonski is to be delivered?

What of the other conditions being imposed by this arrangement? There are several attachments to the new funding model. And what implications will they have for the ACT? The new money is linked to a national plan for school improvement and a national education reform agreement. Interestingly, we have a federal government, which does not run one school in Australia, dictating how schools in the states and territories should run.

Under the national plan for school improvement, we must have higher entry standards for teachers, more individual support for students, empowerment of school principals, more information for parents, teacher appraisals, science testing through NAPLAN, and Asian languages taught in every school. "Higher entry standards for teachers", in principle, sounds good but what does it mean? What impact will changed standards or entry level requirements have on our current teacher training? And when must they be implemented? What does more individual support for students mean? More teachers? Smaller classes? More homework?

Empowerment of school principals should not be an issue for ACT schools. Increased autonomy has been supported by both ACT Labor and Liberals, but one group that opposes autonomy is the ACT Education Union, the same group demanding we sign a blank cheque for Gonski immediately. Does that mean they will abandon their anti-autonomy campaign?

An extension of NAPLAN testing to science assumes that NAPLAN delivers better educational outcomes. I suspect that is debatable. But more importantly, what curriculum do we use for teaching and testing science at the primary school level?

Again, does it require more teachers, in this case science teachers? What additional training will be required to equip current primary school teachers?

Where do we find the additional teachers we will need for schools to all offer an Asian language? We have a very strong network of community language skills in the ACT. Where will their work fit into this new requirement? And how will we fund all this additional work?

Labor first pitch government against non-government schools. Then they move to ensure it is state against state in a scramble for funds. And now we have primary and secondary education against tertiary education and a whole heap of additional requirements that must be met. There has been little in the media about where the ACT government is at, other than the Chief Minister acknowledging on talkback radio that it is very complex and that there will be virtually no extra funding for ACT schools. We have no doubt that it is complex for the Chief Minister, both philosophically and financially, but what does “virtually nothing” mean?

A new funding model has been promised by federal Labor for six years and has been supported by ACT Labor for probably as long, and no-one yet knows what it will mean for our schools and the ACT education system and what, indeed, it will mean if there is no extra funding but increased obligations to reform. ACT schools and ACT families deserve to know, because in seven months time existing funding arrangements will expire and as at today we have nothing in place.

We have had three education ministers since the Gonski review began. We have repeatedly been urged to embrace the essence of Gonski, but what is it we are embracing? And does this government understand what it is? Gonski said it was a student-centred philosophy. The Chief Minister made it clear yesterday it was a sector-based divide.

This motion asks the Chief Minister to tell us what she means, to tell us and all Canberra families what she is doing and what we face financially. We need to be assured that the ACT will not be disadvantaged for providing more than the national average in funding for government schools, and our non-government schools need to be assured they will not continue to fall behind the rest of Australia in financial support from this government. (*Time expired.*)

MS GALLAGHER (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Health and Minister for Higher Education) (11.44): I thank Mr Doszpot for moving this motion. The government will not be supporting the opposition’s motion without amendments which have been circulated to members. There are three of them, circulated in my name. I seek leave to move those amendments together.

Leave granted.

MS GALLAGHER: I move:

- (1) Omit subparagraph (1)(b), substitute:

“(b) that, at that meeting, COAG affirmed its commitment to ongoing negotiations on the Commonwealth’s proposed reforms that would provide Australian students and families with an education system that would place Australia in the top five countries in reading, numeracy and science by 2025, as well as making Australia a high quality and high equity schooling system by international standards by 2025;”.

(2) Insert new subparagraphs (1)(d) and (e):

“(d) the unique opportunity afforded by the Commonwealth’s National Schools Reform to improve our national education system; and

(e) the opportunity presented by the current negotiations to achieve the best outcome for all ACT schools and all ACT students; and”.

(3) Omit paragraph (2), substitute:

“(2) calls on the Chief Minister to:

(a) ensure that the ACT is not disadvantaged, comparative to other States; and

(b) report back to the Assembly by 8 August 2013 on the options that have been examined, the finalisation of negotiations and the outcomes for all ACT schools.”.

I will be speaking on elements of this motion that relate to negotiations around COAG; then the Minister for Education and Training, Ms Burch, will speak around other aspects of the education agreement.

There is no doubt that the education reforms currently before state and territory and federal governments are a very significant advancement in discussions and negotiations around education funding across the country. The amendments to Mr Doszpot’s motion that I have circulated essentially outline the importance of the negotiations under the national education reform agreement. The negotiations are continuing. We are negotiating in the best interests of all ACT schools and all ACT students and will include a report back to the Assembly by 8 August 2013.

I must say, in listening to Mr Doszpot, that it still remains unclear to me whether the opposition supports needs-based funding, which Barry O’Farrell has endorsed. It was not clear to me from your speech. There are a lot of questions and criticisms that you have raised, but at the heart of this debate is this: should every single child—regardless of where they live, whether they live in Canberra, Adelaide or the Northern Territory, or whether they attend a Catholic school, an independent school or a government school—be entitled to a base level of funding that is equal across the country? That is at the heart of the negotiations before first ministers at this point in time.

This government believes that that is a principle which we should endorse. No matter where you go to school, what your background is or whether you are in a remote or

regional location—and yes, at times this does require us to rise above our local interests and care about children that are educated in remote locations in, say, Adelaide, for example, because I think that my child who goes to school in the ACT deserves a certain level of funding, but I also believe that a child her age in kindergarten in a school in Adelaide deserves the same amount of funding. I think that is good for the country—that every single child gets a level of resourcing. And that is what these negotiations are about.

The ACT is in the extremely fortunate position—unlike other jurisdictions such as Victoria, New South Wales and, indeed, I think, every other jurisdiction with perhaps the exception of WA—that we resource our schools very well, whether that be in the non-government system or the government system. On any measure—and this was acknowledged around the table by first ministers—the ACT resources its education system now.

This debate cannot degenerate into “What slice of the pie is mine?” It cannot. That is not what the debate around national education funding is about. It is about equality across the system and equality for all children. That is what this debate is about, and that is the debate that the opposition continues to avoid.

Do you think that is good? Your education policy going into the last election says it all. You did not support needs-based funding in the election campaign. You went with a policy that, if you were elected and it was implemented, would give significant increases to schools that are already operating above the school resourcing standard as outlined in the discussions, without care or consideration as to whether it was fair to do that for all school students in the ACT. We did not go with that.

I attended a number of meetings in education—and a number of difficult meetings, particularly with the non-government school sector. As is their right, they were seeking further contributions over and above current contributions from the ACT government. I attended those meetings and said that we would make increases to the non-government school sector but that they would be targeted, and they would be targeted around issues of socioeconomic status, additional educational requirements, Indigenous status and disability status. I said that would be how we would target the extra dollars going into education. We find ourselves here negotiating with the commonwealth when the vast majority of our schools—I think 70 per cent or more of our schools—are operating at above the school resourcing standard.

As I said yesterday in question time, there are three categories here in terms of funding going forward should we reach agreement with the commonwealth—and we have not reached agreement with the commonwealth. There are those schools that are operating below the school resourcing standard. My understanding is that the majority of those are in the Catholic systemic system, the primary schools. There is a handful, less than one handful, of government schools operating in that space. There are those schools that are operating at the school resourcing standard now. And then there are the vast majority, 70 per cent of our schools, in the government and non-government sector who are operating above.

I was clear with what the offer on the table from the commonwealth means for those schools. What it means is that those schools operating above the school resourcing standard would be indexed at three per cent per annum. I have been clear with the information that we have got. If you cannot process what that means, go back and talk to the stakeholders. I have met with the stakeholders. I have met with the AEU. I have met with the non-government schools association. I have spoken with them about this. For non-government schools operating above the school resourcing standard, what this means is that their indexation would be less than what they had planned to receive. At the moment they are receiving, I think, 4.7. If you are operating above the school resourcing standard as the base level, aside from loadings that may be put on particular students, if agreement is reached the index arrangement is three per cent.

I think that answers the majority of your questions. The non-government sector, the independent sector—within the non-government school sector I separate out the independent schools—are unhappy about that, because it is less growth funding. There are no cuts to education funding, but it is less than what they had anticipated. The Catholic system is another issue. They are negotiating separately with the commonwealth, as I understand it, as they are around the country. And then there are the impacts on government schools.

When I sit around the table at COAG, yes, I am sitting there for every single child in a Canberra school and every single child in those systems—in the three systems: the systemic schools, the independent sector and the government sector. There is a chance that they are in one of those three categories, whether they are operating below, at or above. In the government and the independent sector, a significant majority of them are being resourced at above the school resourcing standard.

I have never, ever avoided a question I have been asked around school funding. I have answered every single one of them with the information that I have available, and I will continue to do so. We are hopeful of reaching an agreement by 30 June. I say that not because it is what the Prime Minister wants, but because it is what the schools want.

Schools need certainty. They will be accepting enrolments. In fact, enrolments for next year are open now, so they are making decisions about their classes and their resourcing needs now. I think it is realistic to say that by 30 June we should be in a position where we can let schools in the ACT know what impact, if any, a change will have going forward.

The approach to do nothing is not an option. As I said yesterday, the education agreement expires, as do some of the national partnership agreements. So this is not a matter where you can just say, “If we do not reach agreement by 30 June, no matter.” It does matter. It will matter to those schools that are making decisions now. Enrolments are open now. People are enrolling their kids in schools, and principals and executives of schools are making decisions now. This is not just a time frame that is being imposed by the commonwealth; it is a time frame that I think is reasonable in terms of having to provide information to parents and schools about what it means.

I have been clear from the beginning that this is not going to ensure that a lot of additional commonwealth money comes to the ACT. The most significant reason for that is that we have made the investments in education that the Victorian government, the Queensland government and the New South Wales government, to take the three large states, have not made. In order to bring their kids up to a resourcing standard that our kids are currently enjoying, it requires a greater effort by the Commonwealth of Australia's government to invest in those systems. Is that unfair to the ACT—that we are not getting the same amount that New South Wales is getting? The easy answer to that is yes. But what about children in the country all receiving a fair allocation of education funding?

Too often these debates disintegrate into what slice of the pie I got for mine. This opportunity before us in terms of reaching agreement on this is about what is the best outcome for education across the country. That is, at the heart, what we are trying to negotiate here. Is it right that a child in the Northern Territory, Far North Queensland or western Sydney gets half of what a kid gets in a government school or a non-government school here? I do not agree with that. I do not think that is fair.

We are wanting to be part of this national approach. There is an opportunity, and it is probably a once in a lifetime opportunity, to get agreement on national funding for all students in all schools. For once, it takes away the non-government/government debate around funding which has plagued education funding and frustrated education funding changes for years.

There have been, as Mr Doszpot outlined, a number of studies on education funding. We had one here in 2001 that looked at the issue of education funding. The fact is that when you divide it into what is right for the non-government schools and what is right for the government schools, you never reach agreement. This is about saying that regardless of what school you attend, this is the money you should get—just over \$9,000 if you are a primary school student and just over \$12,000 if you are a student in the secondary system. That is what it says. It does not matter whether you go to the local Catholic school or the local public school; it just does not matter anymore. That is the opportunity that is afforded us here.

Yes, it will mean that we get less funding from the commonwealth than other jurisdictions. It will. And any requirement to argue for more takes away from the school resourcing standard, which is the agreement that this is what it should be as a base level of funding for all students regardless of where they live in Australia.

I note the opportunity for the opposition to make hay with this, to point the finger and fight for the ACT, fight for rights and all this sort of stuff. But when you drill down, you actually have to answer the question: "Do you support needs-based funding in education?" If you do not, say it. Say it so that everyone can hear that you, the Liberal Party, do not support needs-based funding for education. That is what you are saying without saying the words directly, and that is not something this government supports. We are negotiating for all students across the ACT, but we are also in a position where we are already resourcing our schools very well in comparison to other jurisdictions.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (11.58): I would like to start by acknowledging Mr Doszpot's genuine interest in this matter. I understand that he, like many in this place, has been watching the national and local debate on the issue of schools funding with considerable interest. We have all been approached by the various stakeholders who also have a deep and genuine stake in the outcomes. We all care about the educational needs of the territory's children, regardless of which school they attend. It is an issue that should quite rightly elicit real debate, discussion and dialogue due to its importance. The original Gonski report was considered a watershed moment in Australia's history of funding for schools. Eighteen months in the making, thousands of submissions and consultations, 41 recommendations and 26 findings later and the landscape of the education sector may never be the same again, and for good reason.

One of the key findings of that report into school funding that we all agreed to was that Australia lacks a logical, consistent and publicly transparent approach to school funding. So that was then, 2011. This is the information that we all know and agree on, but we can also agree that things have changed quite a lot since then. Here in 2013 the Gonski report has evolved to become the better schools legislation. Some of the more system-wide recommendations have been reduced in size or scope and school improvement plans now place a greater emphasis on individual schools and principals. We also have a much clearer idea of what will be done to support teacher learning.

The debate has turned to mostly focus, somewhat understandably, on who is going to pay rather than just how much it will cost. Just on that point, I would like to take a moment to express my concern and disappointment that it seems that universities will be facing cuts to fund the better schools program. I share the view of my federal Greens colleagues when it comes to this issue. I believe there are many other more sustainable ways to fund all of the nation's schools to achieve great academic outcomes and prioritise education, the way it so clearly needs.

There is something particularly redundant and strange, in its simplest terms, to talk of cutting education funding to pay for education funding. I just hope that by the time the children of this generation have benefited from the proposed reforms there will be a strong and world-class higher education system waiting for them. No-one will argue about the importance of schools' funding needs, but it is indeed a shame that it may come from another education sector instead of, for example, the mining industry super profits tax. But I digress.

Today's motion is not explicitly aimed at the commonwealth negotiations, nor at the many substantive issues relating to school autonomy, teaching, learning or areas of identified disadvantage. These issues will no doubt be discussed when the outcomes of the negotiations are clear. The motion before the Assembly is instead a call for the apparent financial consideration of the ACT government's negotiations to date and asks further for commitments and guarantees of what impact this will have on the ACT budget and the schools community.

As I said earlier, I do understand the intense interest that a discussion of this nature can create. This is one of the most complex and important areas of reform facing us at the moment. Many stakeholders are justifiably keen to explore what this will mean for

them, their students, their families and their communities. The ACT Greens have had many positive meetings with these stakeholders over the years and we continue to enjoy an honest, robust and productive relationship with both the government and the non-government sector.

In the course of those meetings, and particularly in more recent conversations, I have been given to understand that the level of dialogue between all players has been increasing and is considered to be generally constructive. The problem facing many people, however, including the government, is that the state of play is still changing. That is why I cannot support Mr Doszpot's motion as it currently stands.

Having recently attended two different standing councils with my interstate colleagues in the commonwealth, I have a growing respect for the difficulties inherent in reaching consensus across different jurisdictions and differing sides of politics. I also have a real respect for the need for this consensus to be reached on viable reforms such as this, as noted by Minister Burch yesterday, and DisabilityCare Australia, previously known as the NDIS.

The problem with the motion before us is that, according to the advice I have received, not all of the details requested in the motion are still relevant, may not be available due to the commonwealth's position or are subject to change as the negotiations continue. The Australian government has repeatedly said that it will not implement a model which leaves any school worse off and will work to ensure that any model is adjusted or transition arrangements are in place so that no school loses a dollar per student as a result of any changes. The Chief Minister has also echoed this by recently stating she will not be doing anything that will disadvantage the ACT and will be looking for the best results.

The Greens believe that the better schools reforms are vitally important to the future of the nation. I would not be supporting the reforms if I believed the ACT would be unfairly disadvantaged comparative to other states. As members will be aware, the parliamentary agreement outlines broad support for this legislation and calls for a needs-based funding model. We must address the educational achievement gap that is so clearly identified in the Gonski report and our own inquiry into this issue from 2010.

I believe the needs-based loadings approach is the best step we as a society can take to achieve this. We support the concept of the school resource standard and the need for a much more transparent system. We support the calls of the non-government sector in particular for greater certainty in relation to indexation, which is again being addressed in the negotiations currently underway. I think that due to the changing nature of the negotiations the information requested may actually confuse the issue and has the potential to damage the current process.

We saw a good example of this last year when tabloid newspapers leaked the outcomes of what would happen to each school in the country if the full Gonski recommendations were implemented. The figures were raw and quite shocking, selling many papers, no doubt. They also created great anxiety, confusion and distress. But the figures were also quite out of date, relying on 2009 financial data and were

effectively useless in painting the real picture. The figures did not take into account the issue of indexation properly, nor the room for each state and territory to embark on bilateral discussions. Ultimately, the figures were never meant to represent the finished product and the publication did more harm than good in the national debate.

In closing, I am broadly supportive of a full assessment of the ACT's considerations of the reforms as we get closer to the end and for the financial impacts to be tabled once we actually know what they may be. For example, it is impossible for the government to make ironclad commitments about the forward estimates when we have not signed any agreement and do not have all the details of what, if any, agreement may be worked out.

For that reason, I will be supporting the amendments to this motion that Ms Gallagher has tabled and that will see the information presented to the Assembly when the information is fully available. I will be supporting the calls for the government to recommit to ensuring the ACT is not disadvantaged. I will be supporting the need for a full assessment of the options, negotiations and outcomes to be presented to the Assembly by 8 August this year. This will allow time for the government and the Chief Minister to continue to work through all of the details in the first sitting week calendared after the 30 June deadline set by the commonwealth. I would expect, however, that if there was any breakthrough or decisions made prior to that debate the Chief Minister would, of course, make that information publicly available at the conclusion of those discussions.

Mr Gonski himself said repeatedly that there was a lot more work to do to achieve a fairer, more equitable system. That work is nearly, but not quite, completed now. While we are still in the negotiation phase, it is clear that things will be somewhat fluid. That is why I think the proposed amendment is the more appropriate response. I think the information that Mr Doszpot is seeking is not available, given that fluidity, but I believe it is entirely appropriate that the Chief Minister come to the Assembly when the process is completed and give a full account of what the ACT has signed up to so that members may be involved in an informed debate on that.

MS BURCH (Brindabella—Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Disability, Children and Young People, Minister for the Arts, Minister for Women, Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Minister for Racing and Gaming) (12.08): As the Chief Minister has indicated, the government is not supporting the motion as presented today. She has already tabled and circulated amendments. Again, as has been outlined, the release of the information Mr Doszpot is asking for during a live negotiation with the commonwealth would indeed prejudice the bargaining position and would be an irresponsible action taken by any government. I think Mr Rattenbury has made comment on that as well.

The fact of the matter is that those opposite clearly do not understand what this reform agenda means. It is obvious, given the interjections yesterday during question time, that those opposite are having trouble following this discussion. After months of very little interest in these reforms and no public commentary on their position on these reforms, they have found a new interest, but with little understanding. I put the call to the Canberra Liberals to be very clear today. They will have an opportunity in their

closing statement to be very clear with the Canberra community on their commitment to the position as outlined in Gonski and their position on needs-based funding. This is a chance for them to make that commitment and to make a clear public statement that the principles of Gonski are right—and that is, to make sure that there is a minimum standard applied to every student, regardless of where they live or what school they go to.

As the Chief Minister has also indicated, by all their actions and commentary, they are not supporters of equitable and needs-based funding. I ask Mr Doszpot, as the shadow minister for education, to make a very clear statement today on their position on the Gonski review. Are they supportive of it and all of its intent or are they not supportive of it? The Premier of New South Wales is clearly a supporter of the Gonski principles, and he has signed up for it. There is a chance today for either Mr Hanson, when he stands, or for Mr Doszpot, when he closes the debate, to make their position very clear.

What the Canberra Liberals fail to understand or would admit, it would seem, is that the ACT is already a high performing jurisdiction—indeed, performing by some measures in the top five or 10 in the world. We are so high performing because we have continually invested in education funding. Mr Doszpot made comment on funding. Recurrent funding for public school education over the last 11 years has increased by \$223 million, or around 83 per cent per capita. Over the same period, recurrent funding for non-government schools federally and in the ACT was over \$111 million, or an increase of over 80 per cent per capita. We have invested significantly and strongly in our education system here in the ACT. Unlike the Liberal state colleagues of those opposite, we have continued to invest in our system. This means that we have a very high starting point for these negotiations because, as a responsible government, we have not sabotaged our education system.

Mr Hanson interjected yesterday about the great deals of New South Wales, but I think he needs to think about what that means. Personally, I find it disappointing that the commonwealth funding is, indeed, replacing the funding and resources that Barry O'Farrell has ripped out of the public education system since they took government in New South Wales. But that is not the case here in the ACT. It is no coincidence that we have had a stable Labor government here for more than a decade. It says a lot about the difference between Labor and Liberal values.

However, this reform is much larger than simply funding; this reform is about making some fundamental changes nationally about how we as a country improve all schools to provide a world-leading education for every Australian, regardless of where they live or who they are. The national education reform is underpinned by the national plan for school improvement. As the ACT reaches agreement on participating in the reform, the national plan will become a central plank in the government's ongoing efforts to improve student outcomes and continue to deliver an excellent education system.

The national plan will focus efforts on reforms that build upon areas of existing investment in the ACT, including quality teaching, quality learning, empowered school leadership, meeting student need and transparency and accountability. This

national reform matches and complements initiatives which the ACT government is already implementing in these areas, including the work to strengthen the quality of ACT teachers and the teaching profession through ensuring that all ACT teachers are registered through the Teacher Quality Institute. This recognises teachers are our single greatest in-school influence on student engagement and achievement.

We are ensuring a world-class curriculum is provided in all ACT schools by working to develop and adopt the Australian curriculum as our own. This will ensure that all children and young people in the ACT learn, thrive and are equipped with the skills to lead fulfilling and productive lives. Further, we will develop and implement a new needs-based funding model which will recognise disadvantage and provide funding where it is needed most, because the ACT community has high expectations for its children and young people.

Finally, the ACT is committed to providing transparent, accessible and accountable information on school performance to strengthen the opportunities for all our stakeholders to contribute. We continue to provide school level information for the My School website and are collaborating with other jurisdictions to improve data quality and sharing our best practice.

As has been shown time and time again in this place, the ACT consistently performs strongly at a national level on the outcomes achieved by our students. ACT results from the 2012 NAPLAN test show that our students are among the best in the country. The mean scores of ACT students were top or equal top across 16 of the 20 areas tested. In year 3, in numeracy the ACT had the highest mean score of 410, similar to Victoria but statistically higher than the national mean of 396. The ACT had a greater percentage of students achieving in the top performance bands in reading and numeracy. Higher percentages of ACT students achieved at or above the national minimum standard for reading and numeracy than other jurisdictions.

We have the evidence that shows that our education system is serving to equip our students for the future. Indeed, we know that of the students who graduated with a year 12 certificate in 2011, 94 per cent were employed or doing further study in 2012. Fifty-seven per cent of graduates were studying in 2012 and 76 per cent of those who were not studying at the time of the survey intended to study in the next year. Overall, an impressive 90 per cent of our graduates were studying or intending to study in the next two years.

This shows the strength of our education system, a system that has been built over time by a Labor government who understands the life-changing qualities of a good education. I will continue, as I have, to meet with stakeholders and families, including the AEU, the Catholic system and the independent schools network. I look forward to working with the commonwealth to continue this focus to get a good result for all ACT students as we move as a nation to introduce a better and fairer education system.

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (12.16): At the outset, I commend Mr Doszpot for bringing this motion before the Assembly today. I commend your passion for the education sector and your enthusiasm to make sure that we get to the bottom of what is going on with Gonski. You are right to be suspicious, Mr Doszpot. It is disappointing, I think—

Ms Burch interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, Ms Burch! You were heard in silence.

MR HANSON: It is disappointing that although the current minister is making a lot of noise, we do not have the last minister here, Madam Speaker. If you remember, we had Dr Bourke's grasp of what is going on with Gonski, the essence of Gonski. It is a shame that Dr Bourke's involvement with Gonski seemed to have got him sacked. Where is he today? Where is Dr Bourke, the man that stood here and proclaimed a great knowledge of Gonski, the essence of Gonski? He has been sacked by the Chief Minister so she could bring a Green on to her frontbench.

No doubt, Dr Bourke is a little bit embarrassed today as someone that was championing Gonski in this place. He was going to various COAG meetings and no doubt talking about Gonski. He has been sacked so that someone else from another party can take his position. It is just worth alluding to—

Mr Rattenbury: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: A point of order.

Mr HANSON: I have no doubt you are sensitive about it, Shane.

Mr Rattenbury: I would ask you to rule on the relevance of Mr Hanson's current text. He is simply in here, frankly, personally denigrating Dr Bourke. I am unclear how that is relevant to the motion that Mr Doszpot put forward. If Mr Hanson wants to make a personal attack on Dr Bourke, he should move a motion to that effect.

MADAM SPEAKER: Stop the clock, please.

MR HANSON: On the point of order, the debate was focused around the complexity of Gonski, myriad issues including engagement with other state and federal jurisdictions. I am making the point that we had a minister who was involved, who was passionate about it, who talked about Gonski a lot in this chamber. I am making the point that that minister was sacked simply to make room for a Green in the cabinet. I am asking whether that really demonstrates a true commitment by this government to Gonski reforms. I think that that is relevant to the debate, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: I think that all of the issues that Mr Hanson raised were directly relevant. There was substantial mention of Gonski in the comments that he made. I do advise the member to be very careful not to reflect personally on the character of members of this place. I think that the point has probably already been made and that the member might move on to other points that he might like to make in relation to Gonski.

MR HANSON: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I note Mr Rattenbury's sensitivity about this issue, and rightly so. But let me—

Mr Rattenbury: No, it's just that you're grubby.

MR HANSON: I would ask that the—

MADAM SPEAKER: Sit down. Mr Rattenbury, you will withdraw the word “grubby”.

Mr Rattenbury: I withdraw the reference to Mr Hanson being grubby, as I understand it is unparliamentary, if not accurate.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Rattenbury, I will ask you to withdraw in an unequivocal way according to the standing orders.

Mr Rattenbury: Yes, Madam Speaker. Of course, it should have been unequivocal. I withdraw.

MR HANSON: We might be getting under their skin, I think. It just shows the ridiculous nature of what this government—

MADAM SPEAKER: Perhaps stick to the question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate that. Fundamentally, that last point I think goes to why, from our side of the chamber, we are right not to trust this government. We are right not to trust what they bring forward. We know that from the Greens, from the Labor left, from the union that supports this government, there is an ideological dislike for certain sections of the school community. We know that there is a Labor left motion that referred to non-public schools as divisive in our community. We know that that was something that the Labor left, from which the Chief Minister comes, was pushing forward.

Ms Burch: A point of order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Stop the clock, please, Clerk.

Ms Burch: Can I ask what the relevance of what goes on in a Labor conference is to this debate?

MADAM SPEAKER: On the point of order, the issue of the views of members of the government benches in relation to non-government schools has been exercised in this place on a number of occasions in relation to education debates. This is a debate about education funding. I think that the comments are in order.

MR HANSON: I refer to the Chief Minister's comments in her speech. She said words to the effect that we will get less than other jurisdictions. There is no debate about that. She is saying quite clearly that, in relative terms, in per capita terms, we are going to get less than other jurisdictions. I am not surprised that other jurisdictions are signing up, because Premier O'Farrell is getting a good deal—certainly, relative to us.

If I were the Premier of New South Wales, I would sign up to this because it gives a good deal for New South Wales. If I were the premier of some other states, I would sign up, because I would be getting a good deal. But why is the Chief Minister signing, knowing that this is not a good deal for the ACT?

Based on what we see so far, this is a dud for the ACT in relative terms to other jurisdictions. But she is gleefully doing that. She is leaving the debate. She does not want to stay here and face the music, because she knows that the points that I am making are an accurate reflection of what she is doing, which is essentially doing what the Prime Minister wants her to do.

I can assure you, Madam Speaker, that if this was Tony Abbott proposing this, if this was a coalition government, she would be making the points that she should be making—that is, that the ACT gets duded. The ACT gets duded and other jurisdictions do well out of this. She would be coming back here and saying what she should be saying, which is, “I’m going to fight for every cent for ACT students.”

We excel in the ACT. I recognise that. Joy Burch was making some comments about relativities. We have got a great non-public and public school system. We support it. There are problems in it, but when you look at the stats, compared to other jurisdictions we get good results. What the government is saying is, “We don’t think that we should excel in the ACT. What we want to do is bring ourselves back to the other states. We want to bring ourselves back to the field.”

We dispute that. What we want to do is see the ACT excel. That is what we want. We want students here to do better than the national average. You cannot stand here, minister, and say, “Look at these stats. We do better here, we do better there.” This is the case for many reasons, including the fact that we have a good socio-demographic base. You cannot say, “Let’s laud that,” but then say, “Let’s get rid of that. Let’s bring ours in funding terms back to the rest of the field.”

That might be what you want—mediocrity. Maybe what you want are the national averages. That is basically what you are saying out of Gonski, that you want to be at the national average. We want to exceed it. We want to excel. That is the Liberal philosophy here in the ACT.

What the Chief Minister is proposing by her amendment essentially is refusing to provide the sort of answers that Mr Doszpot is asking for. Let me point out a couple of those. What he wants is a guarantee that schools are not going to lose money in real terms. The Chief Minister scrubbed that out. Not only may we have the example where we are brought back to an average with the rest of the nation, which cannot be a good thing, but also we have what Mr Doszpot is raising. It is a concern about schools losing money in real terms. Through indexation, where schools are expecting more than three per cent, they are going to be losing out in real terms.

Why cannot the Chief Minister make that guarantee? When you look at what is happening relative to other jurisdictions, this is going to effectively result in cuts in real terms. In relative terms over other jurisdictions, this ends up in cuts for school

funding. The Chief Minister should not be so gleefully signing up to this. We saw this mistake made before when Kevin Rudd brought in his health reforms, which were essentially refinancing.

The ACT was the first jurisdiction to sign up. Jon Stanhope said, “We’re going to sign up,” and he had Katy Gallagher standing beside him. History repeats itself. Jon Stanhope was quoted as saying, “Let’s sign up so we can get to the bar.” Remember that one, Madam Speaker? “We’ll sign up and let’s go to the bar.” So he did not put in the rigour. He did not put in the work that needed to be done to analyse whether this was good for the ACT. He did not do the due diligence. He did not fight for the ACT. No, he wanted to appease the federal Labor government and say, “Let’s sign up to these reforms and let’s go to the bar.”

That is what we are seeing here from Minister Burch and Minister Gallagher. They are saying, “We don’t care that we’re not going to get what the ACT deserves. We don’t care that we’re going to get in relative terms less than any other jurisdiction. We don’t care that this is going to bring us back to the pack. No, we don’t. So long as it keeps Julia happy in the context of a federal election, let’s sign on.”

Mr Doszpot is right: let us ask the hard questions. Let us get the facts. Let us make sure that our children are protected in terms of their relative advantage to make sure that we get what we all want, what we should all want as members of this place. What we should want is for our students in the ACT to excel, to be at the top of the ladder, not brought back to the middle or the bottom of the ladder, which seems to be the approach from the Greens and Labor. Let us continue to fight for that. That is what Mr Doszpot is saying here today: let us get the information; let us make sure that we have the answers.

What the minister and what the Chief Minister are saying to us is, “Do you support needs-based funding?” What I do not want to see happen in this place is that the needs of New South Wales students, the needs of South Australian students, the needs of Queensland students and the needs of Tasmanian students are prioritised over the needs of ACT students. That is what is happening here. In real funding terms, that is what is going to happen. What we are gradually going to see from Gonski, I fear—if we do not get all these facts and we do not advocate—is our coming back to the pack. We are going to see ourselves get back to that average figure, because that is what you are advocating for needs-based funding across the nation with the ACT reducing its funding.

I commend Mr Doszpot’s motion. I commend his advocacy for the school system here in the ACT, both non-government and government. I urge him to continue to ask the hard questions, because we know that we are not getting the answers from this government. What we are getting is a willingness simply to sign up to what Julia Gillard wants, because that suits their Labor left agenda. (*Time expired.*)

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

Sitting suspended from 12.28 to 2.30 pm.

Questions without notice

Cotter Dam—cost

MR HANSON: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, yesterday in the Assembly Mr Seselja asked you a question about the estimate of \$145 million for the Cotter Dam extension project which was used extensively by your predecessor, Mr Stanhope, in the lead-up to the 2008 election. Chief Minister, why did you allow the \$145 million figure to remain as the only cost mentioned in 2007 and 2008 as the cost of the expansion of the Cotter Dam?

MS GALLAGHER: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. These issues have been raised extensively—indeed, in committee inquiries that I believe Mr Seselja took part in, and I answered those questions then. They have all been reported, and reported publicly, dating back to 2010.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Chief Minister, what was the estimate for the total project cost of the Cotter Dam expansion in 2007-08 and why wasn't the community told that number at the time?

MS GALLAGHER: The total project cost for the enlarged Cotter Dam was \$363 million. The initial estimate for the dam is what Mr Hanson refers to as the \$145 million. I have been clear and on the record in 2010 when I said that we should have been clearer that this was an initial estimate and that that estimate would change once the total project costs became clear, in which case they were. That was and is on the record from 2010, Mr Hanson.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Seselja.

MR SESELJA: Minister, what advice was originally provided to the shareholders and the government about the cost of the Cotter Dam expansion? When was that advice provided?

MS GALLAGHER: What advice are you talking about, Mr Seselja? There was a range of steps in this project, as you well know. This has been the subject of detailed inquiry by relevant standing committees of the Assembly and by the ICRC. I refer the member back to those pieces of work.

Mr Hanson: Point of order, Madam Speaker. I ask your guidance on relevance in answering questions by ministers. Simply saying, "I have discussed this three years ago in a committee," does not seem to me like an adequate response to this Assembly. If the minister is going to answer the question and be directly relevant, simply saying, "I have talked about this before in a committee," would not to my mind be an adequate answer within the rules governing this place, particularly the standing orders.

MADAM SPEAKER: On the point of order, Mr Hanson, members are reminded that the standing orders say that the answer should be concise and directly relevant. But

that is as far as I can go in directing a minister on how the minister answers a question. If you are not satisfied with the answer to the question, you have means of pursuing that. A supplementary question, Ms Berry.

MS BERRY: Chief Minister, how important is it to provide this water service to the Canberra community through the dam expansion?

MADAM SPEAKER: Sorry, could you repeat the question please, Ms Berry?

MS BERRY: How important is it to provide this water service to the Canberra community through the dam expansion, the Canberra dam?

Mr Hanson: The Cotter Dam.

MS BERRY: Yes, the Cotter Dam.

MS GALLAGHER: This is a very important component of the ACT's water security projects. The enlarged Cotter Dam extended the existing Cotter Dam from four gegalitres to 78 gegalitres. It will secure water security for the Canberra region for the near future and has been a very important, if not, I would say, critical, part of the water expansion programs that this government has been undertaking over the past five to six years.

ACTEW Corporation Ltd—executive remuneration

MR COE: My question is to the Treasurer. I refer to the Auditor-General's report into the disclosure of remuneration of executives of ACTEW Corporation. The Auditor-General found:

ACTEW should be required to include information provided in remuneration tables in its annual report in its financial statements so that it is audited by the Auditor-General.

Deputy Chief Minister, why has ACTEW not included the information provided in its remuneration tables in its annual report in its financial statements so it can indeed be audited by the Auditor-General?

MR BARR: They are audited by the Auditor-General, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Deputy Chief Minister, what other information in addition to not including the remuneration in the financial statements has not been provided in the ACTEW annual report and has not been audited by the Auditor-General?

MR BARR: It is one of those questions that one is tempted to give a Donald Rumsfeld answer to—about “known knowns” and “known unknowns” and the like.

MADAM SPEAKER: But that may not be directly relevant, Mr Barr.

MR BARR: Madam Speaker, the question is largely hypothetical. It is entirely for the Auditor-General, who is the auditor for this organisation, to determine that information.

MR SMYTH: Supplementary, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Minister, do other government agencies, statutory authorities or directorates exclude financial information from their annual reports, which therefore cannot be audited by the Auditor-General?

MR BARR: I am not sure that the premise of the question is accepted, but directorates provide information in their annual reports according to the guidelines and annual report directions that are issued by the Chief Minister.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Treasurer, what will you do to rectify the situation as pointed out by the Auditor-General?

MR BARR: I would anticipate that ACTEW will respond to the Auditor-General's requests.

ACTEW Corporation Ltd—executive remuneration

MR SMYTH: My question is to the Chief Minister as a shareholder in ACTEW. Chief Minister, I refer to the Auditor-General's report into executive remuneration disclosed in ACTEW's financial statements. The Auditor-General's report stated:

In preparing the Annual Report 2011, ACTEW changed its method of disclosing remuneration from a 'cash basis' to an 'accrual basis'.

Chief Minister, why was ACTEW reporting executive remuneration using a cash basis until 2011?

MS GALLAGHER: The government will be responding to the Auditor-General's report as we are required, and the government's position, both on the recommendations and on the content of the report, will be known at that point.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Chief Minister, were shareholders advised of bonuses received by the managing director of ACTEW before 2013? If so, why did you not ask questions about the circumstances of these payments? If not, why not?

MS GALLAGHER: Yes, we were aware of bonuses being paid to the managing director and we did ask questions.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Chief Minister, why would ACTEW disclose executive remuneration on a cash basis given that it understated the size of executive remuneration being paid?

MS GALLAGHER: As I understand it, some of the issues that ACTEW have spoken of in relation to the underreporting and the confusion, perhaps, of the remuneration over a certain period have to do with the timing of the payments of the bonuses, which do not necessarily align with an annual reporting period. We are dealing with the content both of the Auditor-General's report and the correspondence we have had with ACTEW and we will be providing a government response to the Auditor-General's report when it is due.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Chief Minister, what information is provided in the ACTEW annual report?

MS GALLAGHER: I refer members to the annual report. Like all annual reports, they provide a description of the activities, operations and functions of the relevant identity over a certain reporting period. There are always ways we can look to improve information to the community through the annual reports process. We are going to do that through the Chief Minister's directions in relation to government directorates and agencies, and we will be advising ACTEW of any changes we have been making to ensure that their reporting to the community remains as informative as possible.

Health—mental health

MS BERRY: My question is to the Chief Minister. Can the minister outline for the Assembly how the proposed secure mental health unit will benefit the people of the ACT.

MS GALLAGHER: The very important component of any mental health system is having the necessary facilities available to provide a range of care and support responses to people who have a mental health illness. In the ACT, we have been working hard to build up a number of our services over the last few years. The missing component within our mental health system now is the provision of a secure mental health facility. We have been doing some work around that.

The government has announced its decision to modify the project as it was outlined previously into a 25-bed facility as opposed to a 15-bed high security facility. We have taken the decision to have a 15-bed medium security facility and 10 low security beds within the new facility. The government's intention is to build this facility on the site of the former Quamby Youth Detention Centre in Symonston, but we believe that when it is fully operational, and we are doing some work on the design now, this will provide the best fit for the Canberra mental health system into the longer term. It is very difficult.

In providing a full suite of facilities for a small population like the ACT, it is difficult to get exactly the type of facility we want in place—the one that will best meet our community’s needs. But I am very confident that the 25-bed facility the government is now proceeding with will be the best fit for the future.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Ms Berry.

MS BERRY: Can the minister update the Assembly about the next stages in this important project?

MS GALLAGHER: Yes, a number of reviews have taken place since the initial proposal. These were commissioned at my request and were to inform up-to-date planning for the facility. They looked at the issue of increased capacity for secure beds coming on line in New South Wales, getting an understanding of the impact of the opening of the Alexander Maconochie Centre, changes in contemporary models of care and changes to codes and regulations. Cost estimates were part of it and also demand, based on what we knew over the last five years.

The reviews confirmed that a higher demand was predicted for medium secure beds and low demand for high secure beds. In fact, only two ACT residents have required high secure care in the last five years. That has certainly informed the government’s decision to proceed with a 25-bed facility.

We have just recently moved to call for expressions of interest from suitably qualified design consultants to design the new facility. We expect that preliminary design plans will be available late this year, with a view to having the project progress to the shovel-ready status for consideration for construction funding in next year’s budget.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Chief Minister, how many times have you, Mr Stanhope and Mr Corbell before you stood in this Assembly since 2004 and promised this facility? Why should we believe you about this latest version of this facility now?

MS GALLAGHER: I thank Mr Hanson for the question. It goes to the matter of trust and commitment to the mental health sector. And let me tell you: in 2001, what was the mental health budget and what was the level of services then? I think it was an operational budget of \$27 million, the lowest in the country. That was under Mr Smyth’s watch. And where are we now? We have an operational budget of just over \$100 million going into services.

Let us have a look at what we have built in that time. We have built the adult mental health assessment unit in the emergency department. The shame of the previous Liberal government, the psychiatric services unit, has been decommissioned and replaced with a state-of-the-art, Australian-leading adult acute mental health unit. We have a step-up, step-down facility for adults. We have a step-up, step-down facility for youth. We have a step-up, step-down facility for adolescents. We have a forensic service that works with the AMC. We have community initiatives that have gone into the non-government sector.

This is what we have been doing in the mental health system so that we have one of the best mental health systems in the country. You go and ask the experts about what they think has happened to the mental health system here under our watch and compare it to what happened when the Liberals were in power, and that is why we are on this side and that is why you are on that side, Mr Hanson.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Gentleman.

MR GENTLEMAN: Can the minister outline the other initiatives that the government has put in place to support people living with mental illness in the ACT?

MS GALLAGHER: Indeed, I just go on from the previous question where I outlined a number of new services, services that were not even on the drawing board before this government came in and actually showed an interest in people with mental illness and providing appropriate care to them. The community mental health sector, which we work closely with, has changed significantly over that time as well. We are now spending about 14.3 per cent of the mental health budget on the community mental health sector. We have the highest level of funding going into the community mental health sector than any other jurisdiction. I think over 50 per cent of that \$100 million goes into caring for people in the community where they live.

I have written today to Mr Rattenbury and Mr Hanson around a briefing on the very significant work that is being done on the review of the Mental Health (Treatment and Care) Act, which is now at its second exposure draft stage and open for consultation. As we have not had any interest from the Liberal Party in that process, I am now inviting them to come and show some interest in what is perhaps one of the most critical pieces of legislation that this Assembly will pass in relation to how we treat people who may have impaired decision making—how we treat them with respect and dignity and how we afford them the rights, as they can be afforded, within their mental capacity at a certain period in time.

We have had groups taking part in all the consultations. We have had over 40 different government and non-government groups taking part. Consumers, carers, have been at the table for probably the last four to five years. We will get this legislation right. Hopefully it will be introduced to the Assembly in late 2013.

Transport—bicycle storage

MR WALL: My question is to the Minister for Territory and Municipal Services. Minister, recently you provided an answer to a question on notice, No 91, relating to secure bicycle storage cages and lockers. You indicated in your answer that four cages and 69 lockers had been erected or installed across the city, at a total cost of \$572,500 plus maintenance costs which you were unable to quantify. You also stated the security systems for the cages did not collect occupancy data. You said that the cages had 127 registered users and the lockers had 34 registered users. Minister, what assessment have you made as to the cost versus the benefit of these facilities?

MR RATTENBURY: As my letter indicated to you, Mr Wall—and you touched on the fact—we are not able to give you specific maintenance costs; that is what the letter indicated. Just to clarify for the benefit of the chamber, that is because those costs are included in the general maintenance program; they are not delineated specifically. In terms of whether there has been any specific cost-benefit analysis, I would need to seek further advice on that, and I will give you a further response.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Minister, what are you doing to promote their better use and measure the effectiveness of these facilities?

MR RATTENBURY: Territory and Municipal Services and the government as a whole are undertaking a significant range of initiatives to enhance the use of these facilities by providing improved cycling facilities across the city. It is part of a general program about providing the infrastructure that is necessary to make it easier and more possible for people to cycle. That means providing a range of options. Whether that is the racks on the front of buses to enable people to ride to a bus stop and then complete their journey or whether it is perhaps leaving their bike at the bus stop and then jumping on a bus from there, I think there is a range of initiatives.

Mr Wall: A point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: A point of order, Mr Wall.

Mr Wall: The supplementary question was relating to the effectiveness and the benefit of those facilities. It did not talk about bike racks on buses.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Wall, according to my notes, did ask about the effectiveness of the facilities. Could you address that in your answer, Mr Rattenbury?

MR RATTENBURY: I am happy to answer that. The point I was trying to make regarding Mr Wall's question is that it is about providing a range of facilities. These are part of a suite of facilities that make cycling more possible for more people more often.

MR COE: Supplementary.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Minister, why is it that the security system for the cages cannot log access data, and will you change the system so that it does and therefore measure the effectiveness, or at least the usage?

MR RATTENBURY: I do not know the technical answer that I believe Mr Coe is seeking, so I will get some advice on that.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Minister, can you tell us why the secure bike facilities are so important, as opposed to the pole things that are on the side of the road?

MR RATTENBURY: I was not the minister at the time the lockers were installed, but I believe the rationale behind the provision of the more secure facilities is that some cyclists have quite valuable machines; they can run to many thousands of dollars. Clearly the thinking is that, in providing more secure facilities, some cyclists will feel that they can leave their bikes more safely than leaving them attached to the exterior poles that you described, Dr Bourke.

Schools—non-government

MR SESELJA: My question is to the minister for education. Minister, the ACT branch of the Australian Education Union and a Save Our Schools spokesman have criticised your approval of three new non-government schools in Canberra, suggesting secrecy. You are quoted as saying that there are limited grounds on which an application can be refused and invited the unions to make submissions to change the decision-making process. Minister, will you allow unions to dictate the processes for non-government schools being allowed to open in the ACT?

MS BURCH: I thank Mr Seselja for his question. There were concerns raised by the AEU and by Save our Schools in the approving of that process. They have termed it “secret business”. I have to clearly disagree with that. The process was fair and reasonable. It was enacted in accordance with the Education Act.

What I have said to them, but I have also said it to the independents, the Catholics and the non-government school council, is that if any of these stakeholders that have a clear interest in the process would like to make comment, I am happy to listen to them and we will think about how we can amend the act to make it clearer if they think there is lack of clarity.

As I have said this morning on radio, I am more than comfortable with my decision. We have a good quality public education system here. But Canberra families are also entitled to the choice to go into the non-government system. This is what these three schools will provide.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Seselja.

MR SESELJA: Minister, do you support new schools in the Belconnen area, or any area where a private operator can find space, or will unions be dictating where schools are opened in the ACT?

MS BURCH: The unions will not be dictating where schools are opened. There is a clear process for non-government schools to apply for in-principle approval, which is what the process is up to at this stage. Those three schools will need to go through the rest of the process, which is about securing land, building up their school, getting their education system in place and then coming forward to be registered as an educational facility.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, why do you believe Canberra families support non-government school education for their children in higher numbers per capita than any other jurisdiction in Australia?

MS BURCH: I thank Mr Doszpot for his question. He may have paid attention today to the fact that we released the school census data that shows that we have continued growth. We have two per cent growth in the public education system here in the ACT. We have 59.4 per cent of all students in the ACT sitting within the public school system. I think that reflects the investment that this government has put in place over the past decade in providing quality public education for Canberra families.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Gentleman.

MR GENTLEMAN: Minister, how important is it to work with the community and unions in developing new schools policy?

MS BURCH: I thank Mr Gentleman for his interest in this. It is quite clear, and I think both sides of the chamber this morning, whilst we disagreed on a number of things, agreed that the ACT has a good quality education system. The public system is of high quality, a high performance sector. So is the Catholic and independent network an important part of our system. In that, it is important that we work with the unions—whether it is the independent teachers union or the public education union, whether it is the non-government councils or whether it is the Catholic system—it is making sure that families here in Canberra get offered and provided with quality education and that they are provided with choice.

Economy—performance

DR BOURKE: My question is to the Minister for Economic Development. Minister, can you advise the Assembly on the release of any recent economic data and what the implications are for the ACT economy?

Opposition members interjecting—

MR BARR: I thank Dr Bourke for the question and the opposition for their interest in the territory economy. It is refreshing to see such interest. I can advise the Assembly that recent data on the ACT economy shows an economy performing very well and certainly, when compared with other non-mining jurisdictions in Australia, the territory economy in the last 12 months has performed very well. Our seasonally adjusted state final demand is up by 3.4 per cent and that is behind only the mining states of Western Australia and the Northern Territory.

Our labour market compares favourably with other jurisdictions. We recorded the equal second lowest trend unemployment rate of 4.5 per cent—that was equal with Western Australia and marginally behind the Northern Territory—in March this year but, of course, well below the national average of 5.6 per cent. We have maintained

our very high level of labour market participation. The trend participation rate, at 72.2 per cent, is the second highest in the country. In the six months to November 2012, the trend full-time adult average weekly earnings in the territory increased by 2.6 per cent. Investment has, of course, been strong and continues as the ratio of state final demand has been at a very high level.

We have seen within our housing market increased affordability, and that is a good thing for those looking to get into the market for the first time. There has been some come-down from the record levels in terms of residential construction, but residential building approvals remain at a relatively high level and certainly above long-run averages. Building approvals for the year ending March 2013 were above the five-year average level and remained above the combined trend number of approvals in the Northern Territory and Tasmania for the same period.

Members would be aware the Reserve Bank yesterday made a further move on the cash rate and that has come down by a cumulative 200 basis points since November 2011. So this impact, combined with ongoing solid population growth for the territory, will have a positive impact on housing market activity within the territory.

Following very strong growth earlier in the decade, commercial construction has eased off a little in the last two years. Although it is lower than the peak levels, activity remains at a high level. Inflationary pressures within the territory remain contained. The Canberra CPI increased by just 0.1 of one per cent in the March quarter of 2013, an annual increase of 2.2 per cent, which is lower than CPI growth nationally.

As I mentioned, population growth remains strong. Our population grew 0.5 of a per cent in the September quarter and is annualising at two per cent a year, so roughly 7½ to 8,000 new Canberrans every year. On current population trends, our population will reach 400,000 in 2016.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Minister, what actions is the ACT government taking to boost the economic performance of the ACT?

MR BARR: We have a wide range of programs and policies in place to ensure that the economy continues to grow, most importantly that we continue to create jobs in the territory. First and foremost, that is around establishing the right policy settings that will enable private sector jobs growth.

Through the business development strategy, which I launched in April of last year, the government is providing a range of targeted supports to the private sector. It is a comprehensive plan, backed up with resources in last year's budget and more to come in this year's budget, to help guide the future growth of the territory economy. The business development strategy sets out numerous initiatives to encourage economic growth, the diversification of the territory's economic base and to contribute to employment growth.

We are very pleased with the response of the private sector to the initiatives that are contained within the business development strategy, particularly with the engagement of small business and medium-sized business with our red tape reduction panel to identify regulations that impose unnecessary burdens on and costs and disadvantages to business activity in the ACT, and we are very pleased to be able to establish a single entry point for ACT businesses for all their interactions with the territory government that will make dealing with government simpler and easier.

Of course, we will continue our focus on tax reform, and I know those opposite are particularly interested in tax reform. We certainly look forward to instituting a further round of tax reforms in the coming budget. We have cut payroll tax, and we are the lowest taxing jurisdiction for businesses with a payroll of up to \$4.7 million.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Treasurer, what impact will DV306 have on the territory's economy and, in particular, the sale of Denman Prospect?

MR BARR: It is a hypothetical question, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Treasurer, what economic analysis has your department done on the impact of DV306 on employment, development, housing and land sales before it was approved by cabinet?

MR BARR: Cabinet undertakes a triple-bottom-line assessment of all proposals.

Sport—velodrome closure

MR DOSZPOT: My question is to the Minister for Sport and Recreation. The ACT's only velodrome at Narrabundah was recently closed for an indefinite period because of safety concerns highlighted in a report given to government earlier this year. Given that any concerns with the track have existed since its construction in 1972, and you have acknowledged that it is an important facility for the ACT cycling community, why did you see fit to close the facility for an indefinite period without any warning to the cycling fraternity?

MR BARR: The government was provided with advice that certainly would have left us in a position of significant liability in relation to that particular piece of infrastructure. So the alternative scenario, Mr Doszpot, is that you would be asking me why I did not act upon that report and that advice. I have. I have determined that the restoration of this facility is a priority. Design work has already begun to restore the facility. The government will make resources available to ensure that the facility is restored as soon as possible. My expectation is that this work will be able to be completed in this calendar year.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, when did you first learn of the inherent deficiencies in the track and why have you let the facility get to such a state?

MR BARR: I am aware that there have been concerns in relation to the track for a period of time. We commissioned some work, an engineering report, and sought advice in relation to that report. Once that advice was provided, I acted immediately.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Minister, will you release the Cardno consulting engineers' report into the facility in the Assembly or to the cycling fraternity?

MR BARR: I already have, Madam Speaker.

MS BERRY: Supplementary.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Ms Berry.

MS BERRY: Minister, what have you done to support the cycling sport in the ACT?

MADAM SPEAKER: Ms Berry, I am sorry; I really did not hear your question.

MS BERRY: What has the minister done to support the cycling sport in the ACT?

MR BARR: The ACT government has been one of the strongest supporters of cycling and a variety of cycling events within the territory. In fact, one would imagine that if we were to compare the ACT government's support for cycling in its various forms with that of other governments around the country, we would be the leading jurisdiction. We have invested heavily in infrastructure for major events, for example, Stromlo Forest Park. We have supported the world mountain bike championships. We have supported the construction of the criterium circuit at Stromlo Forest Park. We have supported a number of significant events within that precinct and elsewhere in the territory. And of course our investment in cycling infrastructure across the territory for recreational pursuits and also for the more elite end of the sport, be it road or other forms of cycling, is second to none.

Health—services

MRS JONES: My question is to the Minister for Health. Constituents have told me that there are ongoing issues around patients trying to access medical attention for illnesses after hours. It seems to have become a practice for patients presenting at emergency to then be referred to the nurse-led walk-in centre, and then to have to leave and attend the privately owned Phillip Medical Centre for treatment when a doctor's services are required. Does the minister consider it to be good practice for ACT Health that a patient has to attend three different services before being appropriately treated?

MS GALLAGHER: There are very strict protocols between the emergency department and referral to the walk-in centre. Then there are strict protocols for the walk-in centre as well, about their scope of practice and the services they can provide. So it is well within the walk-in centre's operational responsibilities to refer people to the most appropriate treating professional. The last data I saw was that about 20 per cent of people presenting to the walk-in centre were being referred to general practice as the most appropriate place for that health care. These protocols have been agreed to and consulted on extensively with the profession.

Mr Hanson: The AMA love it, don't they?

MS GALLAGHER: The AMA were part of it. The division of general practice or Medicare Local were others who have been part of the negotiations. I would say, as Mr Hanson's snide interjections continue through the day, that the walk-in centre is incredibly popular.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: Minister, can you present the information about the protocols that are strictly written and is it okay for parents, for example, seeking medical attention for their sick children to go through a round-robin medical experience?

MS GALLAGHER: I would be more than happy to look at any individual matter. I have not had a case brought to my attention where a parent of children has been referred to the walk in centre and then off to general practice. I imagine it will have occurred, but I have not had a complaint.

Mr Hanson: You said 20 per cent are.

MS GALLAGHER: No, I did not say that. It is very hard not to respond to your interjections.

MADAM SPEAKER: You will have to resist the temptation, Chief Minister.

MS GALLAGHER: Yes, I will resist the temptation but he should also be brought to order for continuous interjecting.

I am not aware of a complaint that has been brought to my attention about a round-robin referral process occurring. Even if people are referred from the emergency department to the walk in centre, "Look, the walk in centre can treat you"—and they cannot treat children under the age of two; so it would be only affecting children who are two and above who can even be referred to the walk in centre—if they are concerned, they can be seen and will be seen at the emergency department.

Anyone who presents to the emergency department can be seen, regardless of what category they are. If they are less urgent and they can be more appropriately treated through CALMS or the walk in centre—and CALMS operates from the Canberra Hospital site as well and is another place for people to be referred to—they will be seen but there may be a wait.

I am very happy to look at any individual matter. On the issue of referral, I do support health services being able to refer patients to the most appropriate health service.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Minister, how would the inclusion of doctors at the nurse-led walk-in centre improve treatment rates at the centre?

MS GALLAGHER: There are no plans to include doctors at the walk-in centre. The walk-in centre is a nurse-led model. It will remain a nurse-led model. The policy brought by the Canberra Liberals to the election—I am not implementing it. I am expanding the very, very popular nurse-led walk-in centre.

Mr Coe: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

MS GALLAGHER: It is not the ACT government's job to—

MADAM SPEAKER: Ms Gallagher!

MS GALLAGHER: employ general practitioners—

MADAM SPEAKER: Ms Gallagher, sit down! When there is a point of order, standing orders require that other people give way to the person making the point of order. I should not have to be in a situation where I have to speak over people to ask people to sit down. Mr Coe, you have a point of order?

Mr Coe: Yes, Madam Speaker. It is about relevance.

MADAM SPEAKER: Could you stop the clock, please, Clerk?

Mr Coe: The Leader of the Opposition's question was about what impact doctors would have at the centre, not whether she should be attacking the policy or not. It was simply about the impact it would have at the nurse-led centre.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr Coe. The question was, as my notes say: what impact would the inclusion of doctors have? Could I ask the minister to come to the point of the question?

Mr Corbell: On the point of order, Madam Speaker. There are no doctors at this nurse-led walk-in centre. Surely Mr Coe's question is therefore hypothetical.

MADAM SPEAKER: It was Mr Hanson's question.

Mr Corbell: I beg your pardon; Mr Hanson's question. It is hypothetical in that context.

Mr Coe: Madam Speaker, on the point of order by Mr Corbell, if that question was to be ruled out of order, I think many questions in this place would subsequently have to be ruled out of order because—

Members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order!

Mr Coe: there are many questions where we ask about scenarios and we ask about what options are open to the government. I think it would be a very dangerous precedent to say that Mr Hanson's question is out of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, could you repeat the question? My recollection is that you said, "What would be the implications of having doctors?"

MR HANSON: My question, Madam Speaker, was: Minister, how would the inclusion of doctors at the nurse-led walk-in centre improve treatment rates at the centre?"

MADAM SPEAKER: Okay. It is possible to argue, Mr Corbell, that that could be construed as a hypothetical question. However, the question was taken and the Chief Minister has begun her answer to it. If you are going to contest that the question is hypothetical, you need to do it at the time the question is asked. There is—

Mr Barr: That is alright. You make that ruling. It has to be straight away. It applies to everyone, then.

MADAM SPEAKER: I have no problem with that but the thing is that there are a number of questions that I hear across the chamber on both sides which, if I wanted to and if I was feeling particularly tough, I would rule out of order as being hypothetical every day of the week. But I usually wait for someone to raise it as a point of order because, quite frankly, there are lot of questions here that would be construed as out of order. The Chief Minister was answering the question. Mr Coe raised—

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, I am trying to make a ruling and you are not assisting. The Chief Minister was answering a question which nobody quibbled with. Mr Coe raised a point of order. My position is that if the Chief Minister has not concluded her answer, she should come to the point of the question, which no-one has asked be ruled out of order. Chief Minister.

MS GALLAGHER: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I did conclude my remarks. I was being spoken over. I have concluded my remarks.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Minister, what is the government doing to expand the walk-in facilities to the north and south of Canberra in support of after hours access for health consumers?

MS GALLAGHER: The government is proceeding with the commitments we made in the election campaign to expand the nurse-led walk-in centres to the Tuggeranong community health centre and the Belconnen community health centre.

Energy—renewable

MR GENTLEMAN: My question is to the Minister for the Environment and Sustainable Development. Minister, earlier this month you made an announcement about a second phase of the solar auction. Can you please tell the Assembly more about this auction and what it will achieve?

MR CORBELL: I thank Mr Gentleman for the question. Indeed, I can confirm that earlier this month I did make a further announcement about the second phase of the government's solar auction process to support the deployment of large scale renewable energy generation here in the ACT. This reverse auction process is a nation-leading process; it is the only one of its kind in the country. It is considered by many in the industry to be the first time that the market has been truly tested as to the price of renewable energy generation, at least in relation to photovoltaic generation, and it has received strong support from industry, nationally and internationally.

I can confirm that the second phase of the solar auction is now underway. The government has received 15 proposals from a range of proponents to bid for a further allocation of 20 megawatts of renewable energy generation. Members would be aware that the government has agreed to an initial release of 40 megawatts of renewable energy generation, and 20 megawatts of that 40 megawatts has already been allocated to the Spanish company FRV, who are currently going through the development assessment process for their 20-megawatt proposed facility on the Monaro Highway adjacent to the locality of Royalla. Of course, that facility is the largest large scale PV solar power plant planned in the country to date. It will certainly be the largest when it commences its construction, presuming that it achieves its development approval later this year. Under the two-stream process, regular stream proponents are competing for up to 20 megawatts remaining out of the 40 megawatts allocated.

It is important to stress what this achieves for the territory. Of course, we will see a significant abatement in our greenhouse gas emissions. When the 40 megawatts are fully allocated, we expect abatement to be achieved in the order of 1.12 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions over the 20-year feed-in tariff entitlement contract term.

This is just one part of this government's commitment to decarbonising the ACT electricity grid, to making sure that we reduce our greenhouse gas emissions consistent with our greenhouse gas reduction targets and at the same time help make our city a leader in the adoption of renewables and in making the shift to a low carbon future.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Gentleman.

MR GENTLEMAN: Minister, has any progress been made with the first stage of this solar auction process for which the tender was awarded some months ago?

MR CORBELL: As I indicated in my earlier answer, it is the case that the successful bidder at the first auction, FRV, are moving ahead with their necessary approvals so that they can commence construction of a 20-megawatt facility in the Royalla precinct later this year, contingent, of course, on the receipt of all the necessary approvals.

The company was awarded the tender for the first stage of the solar auction, delivering large-scale solar at a very competitive price—at 18c, the cheapest price yet bid for large-scale PV generation per kilowatt hour. That is a very exciting development and we look forward to further development on this front as FRV moves through the development assessment and approvals process.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Minister, how does the solar option contribute to the government's overall sustainable energy policy?

MR CORBELL: The second stage of the option will award that further 20 megawatts, as I have already indicated, in addition to the 20 megawatts that were awarded in 2012. It will result in the production of a further 37,000 megawatt hours of renewable energy each year. That is enough to power approximately 4½ thousand Canberra homes. That is what will be achieved by the Royalla facility. Of course, a further 20 megawatts is expected to deliver around the same number again, providing the equivalent of up to 10,000 Canberra homes being powered by renewable energy.

Of course, this is all part of the government's long-term strategy to deliver 90 per cent of our electricity supplies through renewables by the year 2020 and achieving our long-term carbon neutrality goals. Other cities are taking similar courses of action. I am proud that the ACT, under the leadership of this Labor government, is making this change and is carving out its space as a leader and an early adopter in the delivery of large-scale renewables for our city.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Berry.

MS BERRY: Does the minister intend to continue to pursue innovative sustainable energy policies such as these?

MR CORBELL: I thank Ms Berry. Yes, I do. The government has a strong program ahead of it as we continue to focus on reducing the carbon intensity of our energy use and at the same time help Canberrans to save money and help Canberrans to reduce their electricity and other energy use, so that they use electricity more efficiently. For example, the government has already indicated its intention to give further consideration to the rollout of the energy efficiency improvement scheme into the small business sector, recognising that there are many businesses in the small business sector that would benefit significantly from being assisted by their electricity retailers to reduce their electricity bills, to reduce their energy costs, to reduce their operating costs.

Of course, this is the scheme that was opposed by those opposite. They voted against this scheme that delivers savings to households. They voted against a scheme that cuts household electricity bills. They voted against a scheme that reduces greenhouse gas emissions. Unfortunately, it would appear that they are going to head towards voting against a scheme which will deliver the same savings to those in the small business sector.

This government will be pursuing that proactive agenda that saves small business money, that cuts their electricity bills, that reduces greenhouse gas emissions, while at the same time this government will continue with its program to support the deployment of renewables, to support the uptake of renewable energy, to create jobs in the renewable energy sector in our city, because that is the future for our city, a very important part of the future of our city, and it is this Labor government that is leading that change.

Schools—census

MS PORTER: Madam Speaker, my question, through you, is to the Minister for Education and Training. Minister, can you update the Assembly on the 2013 ACT school census and what enrolment trends it shows?

MS BURCH: I thank Ms Porter for her question. I am pleased to be able to update the Assembly on the release of the February census of ACT schools. The results of the school census show a great confidence in the ACT public education system, with public school enrolments continuing a five-year trend of growth, with 40,879 students for February of this year. This is a two per cent increase on the previous year.

The largest increase was in the public primary school sector, with a growth of three per cent, although the public high schools also showed a good growth of 1½ per cent. Since 2008, the public primary school enrolments have increased by 11 per cent. After a decline of high school enrolments from 2008 to 2011, enrolments have increased over the past two years.

It is pleasing to see the community support for our public schools reflected in strong enrolments in our two newest schools, the Franklin Early Childhood School and the Neville Bonner Primary School, new schools delivered on time and under budget. The Neville Bonner Primary School opened with 216 enrolments. It provides essential public preschool and primary school facilities for the north Gungahlin region, particularly for residential growth in the suburbs of Bonner and Forde. The school will eventually enrol up to 560 students.

In total, there are 68,825 students enrolled in ACT public and non-government schools, an increase of 1,289 students since February of last year. The public schools have accounted for 59.4 per cent of all enrolments. Enrolments in non-government schools have also grown, showing that ACT parents have an excellent selection of quality schools from which to choose. The total number of enrolments of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students has increased by six per cent in a year, up 40 per cent from 2008.

The ACT government continues to make record investment in education, at a rate well above the national average. In 2013 alone, our public school education system is being enhanced with additional facilities valued at approximately \$120 million. This data reflects great confidence on the part of ACT parents that their children can expect a quality education in the public school system, as they can in the non-government school system.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Minister, in the government sector what schools have shown particular growth and what are principals telling you about the reasons for this?

MS BURCH: Government schools with a strong growth include Lyons Early Childhood School, Mawson Primary School, Yarralumla Primary School, North Ainslie Primary School and Harrison School. Mount Rogers Primary School in Belconnen was another showing very strong enrolment growth for this year. The principal of the school has placed a high priority on ensuring that families can clearly see the pathways and learning outcomes for their children. In conjunction with this, there is also a strong focus on a curriculum that challenges students at every level and ability. Student support is regarded as essential in providing students with their best opportunity to succeed. Schools work closely with the community to ensure that the pastoral care program meets the needs of students.

Canberra High School has increased its enrolments by more than 17 per cent. The school has developed a strong plan for continuous improvement and raising the performance of all students. The plan involves setting high standards for achievement for students, being at the forefront of implementation of the Australian curriculum and applying a well-developed pastoral care program, which provides support for students and incorporates adherence to a school uniform.

These are just two examples of the successful approaches that many public schools offer. The public school system provides a diversity of programs catering for the individual needs of children and their families in the ACT. This includes childcare centres co-located with public schools and seamless transitions for children and young people from one level of schooling to the next.

Of course, not all schools increased their enrolments, and while demographic factors can explain much of this, as always we need to be looking to see whether other factors are at play where enrolment numbers have gone against the trend. Our public schools continue to develop and incorporate new technologies, developing specialist curriculum while still offering the more traditional courses of study. I am pleased to see the continuing level of public confidence in our system and the opportunities that public education offers our children.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Minister, what does the strength of enrolments in ACT government schools say about the confidence ACT parents have in our education system?

Opposition members interjecting—

MS BURCH: Madam Speaker, I find it offensive—that sniggering and nastiness that comes across from that side.

I am pleased to see the community embracing public education in the ACT, with a fifth straight year of increased enrolments. This shows that parents have strong confidence in our education system as a whole.

The ACT government recognises that educational choice is healthy and ACT parents are able to choose schools on the basis of family beliefs and values.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

Ms Gallagher interjecting—

MS BURCH: It is quite clear, Madam Speaker, that the Canberra Liberals have no interest in public education.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, members! Ms Burch, can you sit down please. Mr Hanson and Ms Gallagher, you will desist from exchanges and finger pointing across the chamber and interrupting other people speaking. Minister Burch has the floor. It is impossible to hear her over the two of you, so show some courtesy to the members of this place and do not interject like that. Ms Burch, I am sorry; I do not know whether you concluded or not. I could not hear what you were saying.

MS BURCH: I will be very brief, Madam Speaker. It is this government's intention to deliver quality education through the best education system in the nation, an ambition that sets the ACT apart as the learning capital of Australia and a global leader in school education. This ambition relates to all phases of education, from our early childhood and primary schools, our high schools and our colleges, our specialist schools for students with disabilities, through to the ACT training and tertiary sectors.

The findings from the 2012 satisfaction survey for ACT public schools are positive, with a high proportion of parents, staff and students satisfied, highly satisfied, with the public education on offer here.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Gentleman.

MR GENTLEMAN: Minister, how important is it to continue to support ACT public school students, and in turn their families, into the future?

MS BURCH: I thank Mr Gentleman for his question. It is quite critical. This government is on record, for the past decade, for investing in education here in the ACT.

Mr Doszpot interjecting—

MS BURCH: It is quite clear that those opposite do not know how to take your advice and show courtesy and respect and not interject through an answer.

We here had a record investment across the sector in government and non-government schools. The census recognised that. This is the fifth year that we have seen positive growth in enrolments in our public education system here. We not only invest in new schools and the bricks and mortar upgrades to existing schools but we recognise that it is about the quality of the teachers. At the end of the day it is in the classroom where education counts; the effort we are putting in to supporting quality teachers is on record, and we will continue to do that.

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

Education—funding

Debate resumed.

MR DOSZPOT (Molonglo) (3.31): In addressing the Chief Minister's amendments to my motion I have to say that it is very disappointing that this government and their Green coalition partner are not prepared to deliver open and transparent government and accountability and explain to this Assembly and to the Canberra community on what basis they negotiated a better deal for Canberra schools. We know what additional imposts are contained in the Gonski package. We just do not know—

Mr Smyth: On a point of order, Mr Assistant Speaker, Ms Burch just talked about courtesy and paying attention. She has got her back turned and she is talking loudly and laughing. I ask you to bring her to attention.

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Gentleman): Thank you, Mr Smyth. I just did that. Mr Doszpot, you have the floor.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you, Mr Assistant Speaker. I thank Mr Smyth for his courtesy in bringing this to our attention. Minister, we were just pointing out that we know additional imposts are contained in the Gonski package but we just do not know what we are going to get from the federal government to help us meet those additional expenses. If we are to rely on the government to tell us, we will be waiting forever. Our task is to keep this government accountable, and that is what we are doing through this motion this afternoon.

Our motion notes in paragraph (2)(b) that at the COAG meeting in Canberra in April no jurisdiction, including the ACT, was prepared to agree to the multi-billion dollar joint funding agreement and since then only one state has signed up. Quite an innocent, normal statement of fact, Chief Minister. Yet this is the first point you do not agree with and want omitted from our motion.

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Mr Doszpot, direct your comments through the chair, please.

MR DOSZPOT: I apologise, Mr Assistant Speaker. I raise the point that the Chief Minister in the first part of her amendments just wants to rewrite history. My motion is not even talking about the specifics, just the fact of what occurred at the COAG meeting and that no jurisdiction, including the ACT, was prepared to agree to the multi-billion dollar joint funding agreement, and since then only one state has signed up. The Chief Minister does not like that. She wants that omitted. I do not know what part of it is wrong or inaccurate, and I would very much like to hear from the Chief Minister what is so objectionable about that point and why she wants it omitted.

Then our motion calls on the Chief Minister to: (a) release the details of the funding offer or offers provided to ACT schools; (b) advise the Assembly what financial and any other implications acceptance of the offer will have for ACT schools; (c) table the financial modelling that was required to determine the ACT government's position, including the cost implications for the ACT government in the forward years; (d) outline where the funding across the forward estimates will come from; (e) give a guarantee that indexation is included in any forward estimate so that no school in the ACT—government or non-government—will lose a dollar in real terms as a result of these reforms; and (f) ensure the ACT is not disadvantaged compared to the other states.

All of those are fairly standard and logical questions and issues that we want to put to the government to make the government accountable. Not one of those points is deemed acceptable by this Chief Minister or this government or the Green coalition partner. We used to think in the years of the previous Assembly that the Greens were here to keep the government accountable. They were the third-party insurance for the community, but that has totally disappeared. That is only a figment of someone's imagination these days. The fact that Labor have refused to support any parts of our motion suggests to me that they either do not know where the money is coming from or they are ashamed that they have been blindsided by their own side of politics.

Gonski wanted all of the nation's 3.5 million students in all Australian schools to receive a simple minimum schooling resource standard topped up by loadings for children from disadvantaged or Indigenous backgrounds and for those with a disability. We know the ACT government has funded government schools above the national average for some years while ACT non-government schools have been amongst the lowest funded jurisdiction. Our motion is trying to provide some clarity around the future. The government's amendments make sure we do not get that assurance. I guess we should be grateful to the Chief Minister that she is prepared to tell the Assembly, albeit well after the event, what will be agreed to, but I suspect we will read it in the media before then. But at least we have that commitment. On that basis, we cannot accept the government's amendments supported by the Greens because they are, quite simply, meaningless.

In closing the debate on this motion I thank all those who have contributed to the debate. I thank Mr Rattenbury for at least acknowledging our concerns about the impost universities will face to fund these changes, although he is not concerned enough to support our motion. It quite simply asks for open government, which

Mr Rattenbury has paid quite a bit of lip-service to in the past. When it comes down to the crunch—this happens every time—the third-party insurance for the government by the Greens is there in Green bundles.

I await with interest the agreement the Chief Minister comes to on behalf of Canberra schools. I note her assurances that she supports all schools in the ACT. However, those assurances fly in the face of her comments yesterday, from which she has not resiled:

... the base amount in non-government schools would be discounted by parents' capacity to pay non-government school fees.

That is not what Gonski was proposing, and the Chief Minister is well aware of that. I seek the support of this Assembly for my motion.

Question put:

That the amendments be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 9

Noes 8

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

Question so resolved in the affirmative

Amendments agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Parking—Erindale group centre

MR SESELJA (Brindabella) (3.43): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) the parking challenges surrounding the Erindale Group Centre;
- (b) the significant additional pressure put on this area on Sunday mornings when the Capital Edge Community Church holds their main service;
- (c) the concerns raised by Erindale Group Centre business owners and the Capital Edge Community Church about the lack of parking; and

(d) that the Capital Edge Community Church has expressed a desire to utilise the unleased territory land adjacent to their facility for parking; and

(2) calls on the ACT Government:

(a) to examine the options for use of the adjacent unleased territory land with the aim of providing more parking for people using the group centre and visiting the Church; and

(b) to report back to the Assembly by 8 August 2013 on the options that have been examined.

This motion I am moving today looks to take some of the pressure off parking on the northern side of Erindale centre, particularly on weekends. The issues of car parking and traffic have been long contested debates in the Assembly. Over a number of years we have seen a shift forced by the Labor Party and the Greens which has been nothing more than an attack on those who choose to utilise private transport in their daily lives. As a result of this shift, we have seen a reduction in car parking availability in town centres, along with increases in the costs associated with parking in these areas as a direct result of government policy, a policy which appears designed simply to cause inconvenience to the vast bulk of Canberrans in the vain hope of artificially boosting public transport patronage.

For the vast majority of people, bus transport is not viable to their circumstances, and neither is walking or cycling. It is sad that those who sit opposite are making uninformed policy decisions on this issue, forgetting that the majority of Canberrans utilise private transport to travel to work, to drop the kids off at school, sport and community and church functions and to do the shopping, amongst other things.

But this issue is not limited to the city centre; car park availability, or lack thereof, has been an ongoing issue for the Erindale group centre. This affects all users, including churches and community groups, which I will address in a moment. This is why the Canberra Liberals took a policy to the ACT election for an immediate increase in the number of car parks in the Erindale group centre as part of general improvements to the area. And while the government has been forced by the Assembly to undertake a master planning process, there are a number of simple improvements which can be made in the short term to deal with parking issues.

This motion calls for a simple change to take some short-term pressure off parking on the northern side of Erindale. Churches, such as the Capital Edge Community Church, provide places of worship and a community hub for a significant part of our community in Wanniasa and the surrounding areas. They bring vibrancy into local areas and work to bind the community together. Yet, in the case of the Capital Edge Community Church, its ability and potential to operate as a community hub is hindered by the parking situation around Erindale.

Importantly to the church community, the lack of available car parking places surrounding the church has also unfortunately meant that considerable pressure is being exerted upon the local area, including local businesses in the Erindale group

centre, during high-volume periods. But the issue is especially prevalent, for instance, on Sunday mornings when the church holds its main service. The church community and leadership through Pastor Jon Cathie want to have a minimal impact on surrounding traders, hence their suggestion of an additional temporary car park which would help the church but also be good for local shoppers and traders.

These car parking concerns have been expressed on numerous occasions by the church, which has contacted the ACT government in order to attempt to utilise the unleased territory land on block 48, section 132, which is adjacent to its building in the Erindale centre and currently marked as urban open space.

The church have expressed interest in either having the land released to them for purchase or to be utilised on a lease basis in order to alleviate the problems of car parking in the surrounding area. Unfortunately, they have not received a response to their request, aside from a phone call whereby they were told that the land had been allocated for other purposes. After additional inquiries, they were refused any disclosure as to what this allocation actually was.

It is worth noting that in July 2012 during the release of Infrastructure Australia's fourth review of infrastructure priorities, the Chairman of Infrastructure Australia, Sir Rod Eddington, stated:

Our communities deserve appropriate, well-functioning infrastructure and we need to examine ways to provide these assets at least cost to the community.

It is worth considering that, when we look for simple solutions like this where the government and the community can work together, we can deliver assets to the community which benefit all the community. In this case it would benefit this particular church, but it would also benefit traders, those who use the PCYC and local shoppers.

It is important to note, especially in this instance, that as a result of constructing additional car parking for the community, you grow the quality of life and you contribute to the ability for an organisation such as the Capital Edge Community Church to bring the community together and to grow and expand as more people move into Wanniassa and the surrounding areas. Of course, the Erindale group centre services Wanniassa, but it also services Gowrie, Monash, Fadden and Oxley in particular.

Taking into consideration the Erindale group centre master plan from September 2012, it indicates at several points the issues surrounding car parking in the area. Even in the very beginning of the first stage of the community consultation period, concerns had been expressed as to the existing car parking arrangements in the area. Proposed improvement to the car parking area were continually noted as a key issue throughout the report, and the overall lack of car parking places was included under "weaknesses" in the SWOT analysis.

These concerns were backed up in the SMEC report commissioned into traffic analysis in the area. The final report of the Erindale traffic plan notes that an increase

in parking supply to address such shortfalls in the area could be implemented to alleviate capacity problems during peak times. The SMEC report also recommends further decentralisation of car parking in the area, which indicates that it favours the construction of car parking spaces for a specific purpose—in this instance, the church.

It should be pointed out that the church has also offered to make arrangements to grade at their own expense the area they have requested to utilise in order to offset the issues currently being experienced in the area and ultimately provide additional parking spaces to parishioners and shoppers. At the very least, according to the Erindale group centre master plan, the utilisation of this adjacent land would not occur in development in the first stage, which spans five years. In the second stage, however, the plan indicates that this land will be turned into car parking space after this five-year period anyway.

I move this motion today because I believe it is important that we see these issues resolved. When we look at the issues around Erindale, there are much broader issues to deal with. As I noted earlier in my speech, that is why we put forward plans to improve the situation in other areas of Erindale, to immediately provide more car parking in the area but also to provide better amenity. Certainly the Canberra Liberals want to see that occur. While that is occurring—and there is no guarantee under this government that it will—we need to deal with issues as they arise. We should not be waiting for the completion of a master plan before we deal with traffic problems in various places in the group centre. We offer this as a solution, something that will take some of the pressure off parking spaces on the northern side of Erindale. I commend the motion to the Assembly.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo—Minister for Territory and Municipal Services, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Housing, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs and Minister for Ageing) (3.50): I thank Mr Seselja for raising this motion today. This is actually one of those interesting issues that cross over several government agencies. ESDD, for example, is managing the Erindale master plan, and I understand Mr Corbell is going to talk about that in a moment. Parking policy is primarily managed by JACS, and then TAMS is of course responsible for implementing physical parking changes and is involved in assessing areas for issues such as safety and appropriateness, from a technical and engineering point of view.

Mr Seselja's motion would require examining a piece of land and assessing whether it is appropriate for parking, which is an exercise that TAMS would undertake. So in responding to Mr Seselja's motion today I am happy to lead off and to state the government's position, but I will focus mostly on the TAMS issues. I am happy to support this motion, and to that end I have also indicated to Mr Seselja that I will suggest some minor amendments which go to just some timing and scope issues. The amendments change the language slightly so that it will reflect the nature of the investigation that the government will undertake. I do also propose extending the time allowed to conduct this investigation. That is simply a case of ensuring we can do it properly, which will require some time, and I would prefer to do it properly rather than rush the investigation.

I will also be proposing that the motion's text acknowledges that the government has been undertaking a fairly large process in developing the Erindale master plan, which Mr Seselja has referred to. That process involved considerable community consultation. It included an analysis of parking at Erindale, and it would be remiss in a discussion about parking at Erindale to fail to mention that considerable amount of work that has already been done. The Erindale centre master plan already allows for an extra 1,200 car parks by 2031, which would include surface, structured and underground car parks, and that is almost double the number of existing car parks in the area, which is currently around 1,500.

It is important to note that the Erindale master plan process has established some degree of priority for improvements in Erindale, given that it was based on a large community consultation. This included residents, community groups, lessees, traders, community reference groups, specialist consultants and expert reference groups.

We should be mindful of the impact it would have if we sidestepped this process and prioritised alternative improvements based on the views of a smaller section of the community, in this case some traders in the area and the attendees of the Capital Edge Community Church. In undertaking this investigation, it is important to use an evidence-based approach to examine the utilisation of the existing parking supply in the area, and that will include public and private areas, and to establish whether there is a demonstrated case to support the provision of more parking.

I should note, as I have said before during debates on other parking motions, I am not inclined to support ad hoc requests for parking increases around Canberra. All of these requests need to be looked at carefully and in a greater planning context. There is also a budget context to consider, in that not every request for a new car park can be funded. So we will need to be mindful of prioritising.

Nevertheless, I am quite happy for TAMS to undertake this investigation in consultation with ESDD and JACS and to report back to the Assembly. It is only through undertaking the investigation that we can have the correct answers to some of the questions I have just posed.

In terms of the process, TAMS will do some liaison with the church about their parking situation. I expect TAMS will also do a survey of parking in the area on the weekend and assess the demand. In line with the amendment I have proposed, however, TAMS will examine the parking situation around the broader Erindale group centre area and assess that. The parking near the church does need to be put in the overall context of the group centre, and it is important to consider where is the highest priority for parking.

I would also note some other interesting work happening in the Erindale area that is being led by my directorate and that has arisen through the parliamentary agreement between the Greens and the Labor Party. Erindale will soon have a park-and-ride facility, which is being planned in conjunction with a new major bus station for Erindale. My hope is that this is part of a progression towards improved bus services in the area. Certainly Erindale is flagged as a growing area for bus services in the

strategic public transport network that is guiding route development. People will still be driving to Erindale in the near future, but I also hope that some of these bus improvements will help alleviate parking pressure, as, clearly, if some people do move to using public transport instead, there will be less pressure on some areas of parking.

So having made those few remarks, as indicated overall I am happy to support the motion, and I seek leave to move the two amendments circulated in my name together.

Leave granted.

MR RATTENBURY: I move:

(1) Insert new subparagraph (1)(e):

“(e) that the Erindale Centre Master Plan proposes an additional 1200 car parks around the Erindale Group Centre by 2031; and”.

(2) Omit subparagraphs (2)(a) and (b), substitute:

“(a) to examine the parking situation around the Erindale Group Centre including options for using the adjacent land for additional parking; and

(b) to report back to the Assembly on the issue by 19 September 2013.”.

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) (3.55): The government will be supporting the amendments proposed by Mr Rattenbury today. The motion today relates to the parking challenges surrounding the Erindale group centre. These challenges are well known. This is not a new issue, and the government has already acted.

The Erindale master plan was adopted by the government in September last year. It went through a comprehensive community engagement and consultation process, which included engagement with the Capital Edge Community Church and Erindale group centre businesses. The master planning for the centre allowed the local community and stakeholders to let the government know what was important to them with respect to their centre. And it of course became apparent very early on in the master planning process that concerns with traffic congestion and parking were key areas of interest, in particular for the Capital Edge Community Church.

The Erindale master plan team, within the Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate, responded to this feedback by conducting a more detailed traffic study, the Erindale traffic plan, to explore the issue further and provide opportunities to start to resolve these issues. Territory and Municipal Services was also a key stakeholder in this work.

The master plan that has been produced is a result of the close collaboration with all the relevant government agencies, and there is common support across the

government for its outcomes. The master plan was also widely supported by key stakeholders, with most feedback being very positive on the master plan. So it is a good example of the government working with the community, business and other interested stakeholders collaboratively to identify issues and strategies to resolve those issues. That is why we did the master planning process. The ESD Directorate is now exploring more detailed feasibility for some of the actions identified in the master plan so that the master plan outcomes can be realised as soon as possible.

Implementing the master plan will improve the traffic and parking arrangements in Erindale. The Erindale traffic plan reported that the traffic issues were compounded by a lack of parking supply predominantly during the weekend and evening peak periods, particularly along Gartside Street; congestion at the main intersections within the centre; problems with vehicle circulation routes; and disconnected and unsafe pedestrian routes which prevented people from walking to where they needed to go.

We have heard that sufficient parking is important for the successful operation of the centre, and the Erindale traffic plan provided some immediate and short-term recommendations to alleviate traffic and parking issues around the centre. These include providing smaller parking areas around the centre to increase supply; better management of existing car parking, including the formalisation of some current informal car parking areas; and improving pedestrian linkages to other, underutilised parking areas in Erindale.

The master plan recommends a range of longer term solutions, including modifying intersections with traffic lights and pedestrian crossings; expanding the road network to allow more efficient traffic circulation, particularly the extension of Ricardo Street to Erindale Drive, and two new streets, new Gartside Street to the south, and new Wynne Street to the north, which would supply additional on-street parking; as well as reconfiguring the existing car park north of the shopping centre to increase parking spaces.

There are currently 1,554 parking spaces at Erindale. The master plan provides approximately 1,200 new spaces over the period of the plan, with the future total being approximately 2,700, and these would be provided as a mixture of surface, structured and underground parking. The master plan sets out what needs to be done, and the government is now working towards achieving the outcomes of the plan as adopted.

The government understands that the Capital Edge Community Church plan to increase their congregation and have a desire to utilise the unleased territory land adjacent to their church for additional parking. This unleased land is currently zoned for community facilities in part and is in part zoned urban open space. There are also concerns that it could be subject to some flooding. A car park for the church on this land will require flood investigation. The Erindale master plan has also identified a smaller piece of land south of the Capital Edge Community Church that may be suitable in the longer term.

So to allow some of the master plan outcomes to take effect, a precinct code is required to the territory plan variation process. ESDD have advised me that a draft of

that precinct code will soon be provided for my consideration. And after that, there will be a further opportunity for community and business input into the details of the precinct plan.

As Mr Rattenbury has mentioned, there is also work being undertaken in relation to bus station facilities at Erindale. A bus station feasibility study for Erindale is currently underway to identify options to locate a rapid transit stop within the group centre, increasing bus services during the week as well as on the weekend. Once completed, this will also assist in reducing congestion and associated traffic issues being experienced by the centre.

So what is clear is that we have a detailed master plan and we are working now to implement the recommendations of it. We are moving to the next important step of implementation and we will be continuing to tackle these issues, including the issues raised by Mr Seselja today. The government will be supporting the amendments.

MR WALL (Brindabella) (4.01): I am very pleased to speak to the motion brought to us today by Mr Seselja. The issue of parking at Erindale is not a new issue to this Assembly. We have heard of the many challenges that business owners are experiencing along Gartside Street, and today we are closely looking at what can be done to help utilise the northern end of the Erindale shopping precinct, specifically the need for additional parking in the vicinity of the Capital Edge Community Church. This is an important issue, and Mr Seselja, being the effective local member he is, continues to address issues that are important to the people of Tuggeranong.

As I mentioned, this is not a new problem. Members of congregations of the churches based at Erindale, customers of local shops and patients of the medical practices have suffered the inconvenience of poor parking provisions for years and years.

Over the last six months, since being elected to this place, I have spoken on a number of occasions about the importance of addressing the real concerns of the residents of the ACT, and in particular my electorate of Brindabella, when it comes to issues relating to car parking in our local suburbs. As a candidate in the lead-up to the 2012 election, at shopping centres and whilst door-knocking, the prevailing view expressed by the many hundreds of constituents I engaged with was that the community did not feel that ACT Labor was listening to them. This result was of course confirmed by the result of the election, particularly in my neck of the woods down south, which clearly favoured a Liberal government.

Parking was at that time and continues to be one of the real concerns. The parking at Erindale in particular is at breaking point. The Canberra Liberals were of course very quick to address concerns raised by Gartside Street businesses by coming up with an immediate policy solution which would have seen parking spaces created as a matter of urgency. A Canberra Liberal-led government would have ensured that businesses and patrons did not have to wait over 20 years to see an outcome. We would have acted swiftly and efficiently, something that this government never manages to achieve.

The worst aspect of the current parking situation at the Erindale centre is that it is not due to the lack of land or even a lack of will. The government itself acknowledges that there are challenges faced currently by users of the Erindale precinct. However, they stop short when it comes to solutions. I do today welcome Mr Rattenbury's amendments that will ensure that the needs of the Capital Edge Community Church are addressed.

While a master plan for the Erindale group centre is finally on the table, providing a long-term plan for the Erindale precinct, it is important to remember that even if the plan is fully realised, this will not happen until 2032. The government are all too quick to point out the master plan will solve many of the problems at Erindale. They are all too quick to claim they have a vision. However, this master plan is currently a plan of inaction.

The real question is: what will be done and what can be done in the short term? After 11 years in government, ACT Labor have no immediate solution for parking congestion. In fact, if the master plan is implemented, there are no guarantees that the situation will improve even if the entire master plan is implemented ahead of the 20-year time frame. In fact, in the time it took the ACT Labor-led government to develop the two draft master plans preceding the current version, more resources could have been better directed toward solving some of the immediate problems.

The frustration for users of the centre is that there is actually ample land available in the area which could be utilised not only by churchgoers but by anyone using the group centre. Use of this land as overflow car parking would alleviate some of the congestion experienced currently at the centre. However, this does not seem to be a priority.

Options must be investigated to alleviate the issues faced by those wanting to use the Erindale group centre, and much more attention paid to the things that matter the most to the electorate. And whilst I am quite biased, as a member of this Assembly representing the people of Brindabella, when it comes to the south of Canberra, it is quite apparent that this region of Canberra is often neglected. And it seems that the current Labor government and its lone Green colleague still do not see any electoral value in improving the quality of life in Tuggeranong, despite the overwhelming message sent to them at the last election.

I thank Mr Seselja for bringing this motion to the Assembly and thank Mr Rattenbury for his amendments which we will be supporting.

MR SESELJA (Brindabella) (4.06): I thank members for their contributions. I thank Mr Rattenbury for the constructive discussion. I do not think the amendments take anything away from the motion. They are simply changing some of the reporting dates. We are comfortable with that.

What we do want to see is an outcome here. And it is twofold. We acknowledge the master planning process is going on and we support that process continuing. We believe that it needs to be done well. Likewise, and as Mr Wall has pointed out, the

people in the areas surrounding Erindale and who use Erindale should not have to wait years and years for action. There are short-term things we can do all the while, while the broader master planning process goes on.

So I am pleased for the community, the surrounding community that utilises Erindale—the people of Wanniassa, Oxley, Fadden, Gowrie and Monash in particular who utilise the Erindale group centre—that we will get action. We look forward to getting a report back to the Assembly and seeing these options. These are very practical solutions that have been put forward. This particular practical solution, I think, would take pressure off. Traders would welcome it, shoppers would welcome it, and in this case, in particular, members of the Capital Edge Community Church would welcome it. So I think it would be a win-win situation and I look forward to seeing the results. I thank members for their support of the motion.

Amendments agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Australian public service

DR BOURKE (Ginninderra) (4.08): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) recent comments by the Leader of the Federal Opposition, Tony Abbott, that as many public service jobs as possible should be relocated outside of Canberra;
- (b) that Mr Abbott said it was important that service delivery agencies are located outside of Canberra “for them to be amongst the people they are seeking to help”;
- (c) that these comments reinforce previous commitments given by Mr Abbott and Mr Hockey, the Shadow Treasurer, that if elected they will abolish up to 20 000 public service jobs;
- (d) that the Commonwealth Government signed on 12 March 2012 a Statement of Commitment to Canberra including a commitment for Canberra remaining the heart of the Australian Public Service and the primary location of government departments and agencies; and
- (e) that the Statement of Commitment to Canberra included strong support to continue to build and grow the nation’s capital, its cultural institutions and its role as the focus of ceremonial, parliamentary and national leadership focus;

(2) calls on the Assembly to affirm our support for the Statement of Commitment to Canberra; and

(3) requests that the Speaker:

- (a) write to the Leader of the Opposition seeking his support for the Statement of Commitment to Canberra; and
- (b) ask that he respond in writing to the Assembly on his intentions on the Federal public service including any current plans to relocate departments, agencies or other Canberra based entities outside of the ACT.

In the lead-up to the 1996 federal election, the Liberals said they would cut 2,500 jobs out of the commonwealth. After winning office, more than 30,000 public servants lost their jobs. The 30,000 jobs cut was a king hit to Canberra. It affected not just public servants and their families. In 1996 I owned a business here in Canberra. I saw people with small businesses losing their jobs and I saw people going broke.

But it is not just my personal observations witnessing the pain and anguish of the people I met and talked with; the statistics also tell the story. \$25,000 was slashed from the price of the average Canberra home in an era when house prices were much lower than they are today. There was an increased ACT unemployment rate by one percentage point and increased personal bankruptcies in the ACT by around 100 bankruptcies per year.

The erosion of value of the family home—the primary financial nest egg for most Australian families—the loss of a job, difficulties in finding new employment in a depressed economy, and the shame and personal humiliation of bankruptcy were the fruit of this heartless policy. It took years for our local economy to recover but the pain and loss caused to Canberra families by the hardline ideologues of the Liberal Party have left deep scars. No Canberran who remembers those times would ever want the same treatment again.

Canberra eventually recovered from the Liberal's slash and burn in 1996, administered under the Howard regime Mr Abbott served in. The cuts Mr Abbott is now proposing to the public service in Canberra are much more extreme than the Liberal's cuts in 1996. It took 10 years of ACT Labor government to get our economy back in shape. Canberra now enjoys a vibrant forward-looking economy built on not only the hard work of commonwealth and ACT public servants, but also our innovative business sector—from major corporations to family-run businesses—and our education sector, with our high-performance schools and top universities.

Canberra people have the same hopes and aspirations as any other Australians: to enjoy their family life and friends, have a home and a job, see their kids grow up healthy, get a good education and have job opportunities. As much as Mr Abbott might like to demonise Canberra and see it as the magic pudding to plunder to sooth all his political woes, the real city of Canberra and the people who live here are not the Canberra of his, or the press gallery's, imagination.

The families who make up the city of Canberra are Australians who are here for many reasons, but mostly because it is a great Australian city and they love the place. Many

came here originally from the surrounding regions for work or came here to study. As Australia's largest inland city, it has a natural attraction for people from rural and regional areas.

Canberra's biggest growth spurt came in the 1960s as Prime Minister Sir Robert Menzies sought to realise the federation vision of a truly national capital for a new nation. Since then Canberra's only recorded population decline was in 1997 after the Howard government cuts. In the 1960s Menzies drew together in Canberra the commonwealth's departments that were then scattered mainly in Melbourne and Sydney. These public servants brought their families and greatly expanded the population. This required new housing, schools, suburbs and services.

Many in Sydney and Melbourne have always resented Canberra usurping what they see as the natural role of Sydney or Melbourne as the national capital. The founders of our Federation chose Canberra as capital to avoid the poisonous divisions that making either Melbourne or Sydney the national capital would have inevitably created. Australians sometimes ambivalent attitude to Canberra is mild compared to the dislike and competitiveness between Melbourne and Sydney. I am sure that, should Mr Abbott become Prime Minister and he dispatches government departments off to "be amongst the people they are seeking to help", interests in Melbourne and Sydney will be jealously watching to see which city gets the lion's share of the carve up.

But what can we believe of Mr Abbott's statements? He famously told Kerry O'Brien on the *7.30 Report*, "Don't believe what I say, only what's written down." Is Mr Abbott already planning, like his mentor John Howard, to become the king of Kirribilli, shunning the Lodge in Canberra? Will we see the Prime Minister's department relocated to Perth or perhaps to Mr Abbott's north shore electorate at seaside Manly? I can see Liberal backbenchers and real estate agents in their electorates vying for a share of the public service and putting the US system of pork-barrelling to shame.

Amongst the highlights of Mr Abbott's time as health minister was his "rock-solid, ironclad commitment" before the 2004 election to maintain the level of the Medibank safety net for vulnerable families. When happily back in office after the election, Mr Abbott threw out his promise and raised the threshold, cutting 400,000 people out of the scheme and raising medical costs for another 1.5 million people. Mr Abbott said that it was not a solid gold lie because he believed what he said at the time. He said he had no inkling of what he would do after the election.

It is risky, but let us take Mr Abbott and Mr Hockey's statements at face value, that if elected they will abolish up to 20,000 public service jobs. Where will the 20,000 men and women marked for termination on the Liberal hit list come from? They will come from nearly a quarter of the ACT's federal public service workforce. They will be living in every street in Canberra—our neighbours, our friends, our sons and daughters. And not just here in Canberra but in Queanbeyan, in Yass, in Goulburn, Bungendore, Braidwood and places in between. It will be a decimation of the Canberra and region employment base.

The roll-on effect to private enterprise will be catastrophic, with rising unemployment and more bankruptcies. It will be not just the builder, the baker and the policy maker. The whole economic box and dice in this town could be sacrificed for Liberal political tricks. What will be the effect on house prices, the value of the family home? The financial nest egg of many Canberra families will be scrambled.

Who will lose jobs? It will be people living on your street. Before your cafe or local shop goes bust, will they be laying off your teenage children from their weekend jobs? Cutting public service jobs by natural attrition has a disproportionate effect on young people. Retirees or people leaving for another job are not replaced. There is no hiring of young job seekers or new graduates. The next generation looking to establish a career or some financial security are just told, “Go away, you’re not wanted. We’re not hiring young people; just getting rid of people,” even if their jobs were once seen as essential.

Just last week a constituent told me he is very worried about the future of his job at the Australian National Museum under an Abbott government. We are yet to see any Liberal national cultural policy or commitments. I have no doubt that staff at other commonwealth-funded Canberra cultural institutions are feeling the jitters. Young people studying, say, materials preservation or curatorial studies—fields where they might be looking to join some of our great cultural institutions—would be feeling dispirited, to say the least.

Who could be on Mr Abbott’s commonwealth hit list in my electorate of Ginninderra? We have a large number of people working in commonwealth departments and agencies. There is the Australian Institute of Sport, the Sports Commission, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, the Department of Immigration and Citizenship, the Australian Bureau of Statistics and Comsuper. The people working in each of these organisations make a great contribution to our community, and it would be a shame to see them discarded, cut to the bone or transferred piecemeal to Sydney or Melbourne to satisfy Mr Abbott’s ideological whims. I call on the opposition to stand up for Canberrans now. Do not sing Mr Abbott’s sad song.

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (4.18): One thing we can say about a motion that is put forward by Dr Bourke is that it is always entertaining. It may not be factually correct, it may not be good policy, but it is always entertaining. I find it ironic that the bloke who recently lost his job with this government as a minister is the bloke who is concerned about job losses in Canberra. He should probably have a chat to his own Chief Minister about that issue.

What is happening in this place today is absolute hypocrisy. This is not about job cuts; this is about trying to make a political point. Let’s not try and pretend it is anything other than that from the Labor Party. It is hypocrisy. When they woke up this morning and saw the *Canberra Times*, and saw that today’s story in the *Canberra Times* and on the ABC is about 3,000 jobs that have gone in the public service recorded last year in the six months to December—that that was the main story in the *Canberra Times*—they must have thought, “Oops, we’re actually here to talk about mean Mr Abbott”, the bogeyman that they are trying to present, when in actual fact these hypocrites over here are having—

Dr Bourke: Point of order.

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Gentleman): Mr Hanson, withdraw.

MR HANSON: I withdraw. I have got enough that I do not need to—I think I have made the point pretty clearly; I do not need to say the word. When they read that in the *Canberra Times*, reported this morning, it would appear, wouldn't it, that what they are trying to accuse a government that may come in of, and they clearly fear the fact that the Liberals are going to win the election—something that they fear sometime in the future might occur is actually being done right now by their party. That was in the six months leading up to December.

Anybody who lives in this town would have friends in the public service, in the federal public service. They would know full well that the job cuts, the redundancies, the cutting off of contractors, having people on temporary employment—that is a hack and slash. That is absolute hack and slash going on by the federal government at the moment. It was 3,000 in the six months to December last year. I hate to think what it has been this year. Double that? Triple that? We should find out. We should find out what Gillard has been cutting. That is what we should do in this place. That is actually the government.

Why are we talking about something that may or may not occur down the track? Why aren't we in this place concerned about what is happening right now? The job cuts that are happening right now—that the union, Nadine Flood from the CPSU, is saying are happening right now—are hurting the public. The job cuts are hurting the public. They are affecting agencies right now. Why is it that those Labor Party members over there are not concerned about what is happening right now in reality via the federal Labor government but are trying to create this bogeyman about Tony Abbott? It is hypocrisy. We have a real contradiction between the facts of what is happening and the appearance that the Labor Party here is trying to create.

The best thing for employment in this jurisdiction, ironically, in the last few decades, has been a Liberal government. You can look at the facts. Under the Hawke-Keating years unemployment in Canberra averaged 6.2 per cent. When Howard took over it was about eight per cent. Howard got it down to 2.5 per cent unemployment. During his years—bear in mind that he started at that eight per cent—the average was 4.9 per cent. The best thing for unemployment in Canberra over the last few decades has been a federal Liberal government. Ironic, isn't it?

But let us not dispute the facts. They do not want to talk about the facts over here. They want to set up the bogeyman of Mr Abbott and ignore the reality of what is happening. The problem, though—the problem that they have—is that this constituency that they think they are talking to, the federal public servants that they think they are going to try and scare, are not stupid people. They are smart people. They are working in these departments right now. They have been subject to the efficiency dividends. They have been subject to the reduction. They know what is happening in reality. When they hear ACT Labor barking on about this—

Mr Smyth interjecting—

MR HANSON: They know. They know exactly what is going on. They know that they are being screwed right now by the federal Labor government as opposed to being concerned about what might happen in the future.

Mr Smyth: You're all hypocrites.

MR HANSON: Let us listen to some quotes from some erudite—

Mr Barr: Point of order, Mr Speaker.

MR HANSON: Can you stop the clock please, Mr Assistant Speaker?

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Mr Barr. Stop the clock.

Mr Barr: The shadow treasurer just interjected across the chamber using the word “hypocrites”. I understand—

Mr Smyth: No; I said, “You're all hypocrites.” You should quote me properly if you are going to—

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Mr Smyth, please.

Mr Smyth: He has to be accurate.

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Would you withdraw that comment, please, Mr Smyth. It is unparliamentary.

Mr Smyth: Which comment?

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: The comment you just repeated, Mr Smyth.

Mr Smyth: Normally you have to repeat the words and ask me to withdraw those words.

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Mr Smyth, I have asked you to withdraw.

Mr Smyth: I withdraw.

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Thank you.

MR HANSON: It is ironic, isn't it? I was not in this place back in 2007, but I do not recall from the *Hansard* or anyone when Kevin Rudd—remember Kevin? Remember Kevin? You guys are good at stabbing people. Let us have a look:

... it just strikes me as passing strange that this Government, which supposedly belongs to the conservative side of politics, has not systematically applied the meat axe ...

The meat axe! Where is the meat axe now? It is the Gillard meat axe, isn't it? We know what is going on in the federal public service right here and now. She is just doing what Kevvie was promising before, old Kevin Rudd—applying the meat axe to its own administrative bloating for the better part of the decade.

No squeals of dissent from Simon Corbell, Andrew Barr or Katy Gallagher then? No: they were in lock step with Kevin Rudd. And now you are in lock step with Julia Gillard as she is hacking and slashing the public service. You say nothing about it, but somehow you are worried about what might happen, potentially, if there is a change of government sometime in the future. Nonsense. It is an absolute nonsense.

But it is not just you mob that are the problem; it is your federal counterparts as well. Let us see what Andrew Leigh said in 2011:

The efficiency dividend has been in place for a long time and I'm confident that it shouldn't lead to job losses.

Rubbish. Rubbish, rubbish, rubbish. There is Andrew Leigh saying one thing: it will not lead to job losses. That is not true; we saw it on the front page of the *Canberra Times* today. And there is more to come: we know that it is happening right now; 3,000 is just a taster.

What about Gai Brodtmann, Andrew Leigh and Katy Gallagher: "Slashing public service jobs will affect the entire Canberra economy" Isn't that what Julia Gillard is doing? Let us rail against that in this place then; let us rail against that right now, Dr Bourke. No.

When you look at the list of where these jobs come from under Julia Gillard it is concerning. Defence shed 972 jobs. And we know that they have cut billions out of defence; they have got it down to the lowest amount of defence spending as a proportion of GDP since 1938. But that would suit those lefties opposite. There is the ATO. This mob do not really want to count figures—based on the way that they manage their budget, with a \$7.5 billion deficit going to a \$12 billion deficit to a \$17.5 billion deficit in the space of two weeks. So cut the ATO by 420 jobs. Human Services—1,000 jobs.

But here you go: Prime Minister and Cabinet—another 20 jobs. They have grown. The department of immigration—that has grown. Panic. Panic. There you go. Ridiculous.

There is a whole bunch of redundancies that are being announced. The Department of Finance and Deregulation and the department of broadband and communications—a call for 100 voluntary redundancies. CSIRO is slashing 200 jobs. Treasury announced 150 redundancies. The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations announced 500 redundancies. Wow! They have slashed entire departments.

And they have moved people interstate. Remember the climate change department—1,094 members working from offices in Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, and Samoa?

Mr Smyth: Where's NBN Co?

MR HANSON: NBN Co? Where is that? I know they have got a lovely building, because they spent \$32.5 million. Wouldn't that have been nice in the Canberra economy? Wouldn't that have been nice? That went to Melbourne. Where was your complaint then, Dr Bourke? Where was the complaint? Where was the squealing from Labor then about something that happened in reality, not just something that might happen in the future?

There was the newly created Telecommunications Universal Service Management Agency. And NDIS. I support that. It would be ridiculous to put all the NDIS offices in Canberra. They are being put out in the regions aren't they? No squealing about that. Lots of them have offices outside. There is ASIC in Sydney, the tax office in Gippsland, APRA in Sydney, the Productivity Commission in Melbourne, the Bureau of Meteorology in Melbourne, the Human Rights Commission in Sydney, and so on and so forth. Let us be clear about this.

Part of the motion today is also asking for a statement of commitment from Tony Abbott. The one thing about a statement of commitment from Tony Abbott is that you know that if he said it he meant it.

Mr Smyth: He would keep his word.

MR HANSON: He would keep his word, because he is honest, because what he is saying is what he is intending—very different from Julia Gillard. We have just had another broken promise today about the carbon tax, haven't we? We have had almost one a day of late. Look at the list. There is the carbon tax: "There will be no carbon tax." There was promising her loyalty to Kevin Rudd—that not so much. How many times did they say the budget was back in surplus? And it was not just a promise that they would get it back: the local members here, Gai Brodtmann and others, said they delivered it, they delivered the surplus. Not so much.

There was scrapping increases in family tax benefit, providing training centres, grocery watch, the office for children and young people, 35 GP super clinics, retaining health insurance rebates, establishing a fourth network for commercial TV, no changes to superannuation laws, mandatory pre-commitment technology and lowering the tax burden. Oh! Have they lowered the tax burden? What do you think? There was the carbon tax, mining tax, the superannuation tax-free contribution, alcopops, the LPG excise, an increased flood levy, a new tax on Australians working overseas—it goes on and on. Any commitment from Julia Gillard is not worth the paper it is written on—absolutely. I can understand why they would want Tony Abbott. You could actually count on it then, couldn't you? You can actually count on what Tony Abbott says, but not on anything that Julia Gillard says.

The reason we are in this state, the reason that Julia Gillard is cutting the public service right here and now, moving the public service interstate, is that they have wreaked havoc on the federal budget. In 2011-12, it was a \$43.7 billion deficit. In 2010-11 it was 47.7; in 2008-09, 54; and so on. I think it is something like 30 years

since federal Labor delivered a budget surplus. Based on the fact that this mob is going to lose government, you would expect—but even if they do not, even if there is a miracle and Gillard stays in, there is no chance that she is delivering a surplus.

That is the reason why whoever is the federal government is in a difficult position. The reality is that when you have a federal budget that is in such a perilous state as it is, Canberra does become low-hanging fruit. We are at risk. That is the problem. That is the problem, members. The federal Labor government has wrecked the federal budget and, no matter who is in government, difficult decisions are going to need to be made. That is the problem. It stems from Gillard's and Swan's abject mismanagement of our economy. I think that we all understand the blowout, the waste, the absolutely disgraceful management.

I have circulated an amendment. Rather than this nonsense that we are talking about, which is about some future government that might be there, let us just recognise the reality of what is happening. I am essentially asking for a replacement of the motion and I am saying that we should note some things. Labor promised Canberra they would not cut jobs. Well, that is true. The current Prime Minister is currently reducing the size of the public service in Canberra. Well, that is true. The public service—

Dr Bourke: On a point of order, Mr Assistant Speaker—

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Stop the clock, please.

Dr Bourke: The opposition leader has referred to an amendment that he has circulated. I have seen no amendment.

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: The amendment has been circulated.

MR HANSON: The amendment has been circulated; thank you very much. It says that the Public Service Commission reports that nearly 3,000 positions have been cut from the federal public service in the last six months of last year. That is true, isn't it? Further job cuts in the federal public service have occurred since last year and job cuts are continuing. We know that is going to be the case. Any commitment to Canberra signed by the Prime Minister cannot be trusted given her extensive record of breaking commitments. That is quite true; that is quite evident. I have just read out a whole bunch of things that are irrefutable truth about that.

So what should we do? What we should do, members, is this: let us write to the Prime Minister and find out how many jobs she has actually cut. Let us do that and get a comprehensive view, not just to December last year. And let us write to our local Labor members who seem to be all over the place on this: "We do want job cuts; we don't want job cuts." It depends who they are talking about at the time. Let us ask why they have failed to be open and accountable. You can talk about any number of things, like pretending to deliver a budget surplus, but in this case it is about federal public job cuts and why it is that they are pledging things like in this Labor campaign media release where there will be no arbitrary recruitment freeze that affects services, workloads and career opportunities. We see from the CPSU in the paper that that is exactly what they are doing.

I say to members: let us get rid of this political nonsense about what might happen in the future, this game playing, the scare tactic that Labor and probably the Greens are going to play out because it will suit Shane Rattenbury's colleague Mr Sheikh. Is he a member of the Labor Party or the Greens? I get confused, as I do sometimes with Mr Rattenbury, I must admit. Let us not have this nonsense. Let us actually do something constructive in this place and find out right now what is going on from the current Prime Minister—the current Prime Minister who is cutting jobs. So enough political nonsense; let us actually get something useful out of this motion. I move the amendment circulated in my name:

Omit all words after “notes”, substitute:

- “(a) Labor promised Canberra that they would not cut jobs;
 - (b) the current Prime Minister is currently reducing the size of the public service in Canberra;
 - (c) the Public Service Commission reports that nearly 3000 positions have been cut from the Federal public service in the last six months of last year;
 - (d) further job cuts in the Federal public service have occurred since last year and job cuts are continuing under Federal Labor; and
 - (e) any commitment to Canberra signed by the Prime Minister cannot be trusted given her extensive record of breaking commitments; and
- (2) requests that the Speaker:
- (a) write to the Prime Minister and request up to date figures on how many public service jobs have been cut under her term of Government; and
 - (b) write to Andrew Leigh MP, Gai Brodtmann MP, and Senator Kate Lundy asking them to explain:
 - (i) why they have failed to be open and accountable with Canberrans about the public service job cuts that are currently occurring under a federal Labor Government; and
 - (ii) why they pledged against recruitment freezes but continue to support cuts to public service jobs in the ACT.”.

MR BARR (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Sport and Recreation, Minister for Tourism and Events and Minister for Community Services) (4.33): It is always a pleasure to follow the Leader of the Opposition in a debate about economic matters, and in fact about anything to do with the federal Liberal Party, because he is always walking on both sides of the street; he is all over the place. One need only begin with the complete contradiction between the opposition leader's position and that of the federal shadow treasurer, Joe Hockey, only last week.

Mr Hanson is here arguing that the federal Labor government has apparently cut public service positions. Yet Mr Hockey was out in the media on 29 April, only the week before last, confirming that there were in fact 20,000 extra public servants in Canberra compared with the last year of the coalition in government. So who is right? Is Joe Hockey right? Is his assessment correct that there are, in fact, 20,000 more public service positions in the ACT since the election of the Rudd-Gillard government in 2007? Or is it the position that has been put by the opposition leader here locally today that, in fact, there are 3,000 fewer positions? What is the correct position?

Mr Hanson: They are both true.

MR BARR: They are both true?

Mr Hanson: There has been a growth in the public service and now they are slashing.

MR BARR: So even if they are both true—

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MR BARR: So it grew by 20,000 and then reduced by 3,000. Is that the position?

Mr Hanson interjecting—

Mr ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, would you please stop interjecting? Minister Barr might then be able to refer his discussion to the chair instead of—

Mr Hanson: Certainly, Mr Assistant Speaker.

MR BARR: Thank you, Mr Assistant Speaker. What we have now established from the Leader of the Opposition is, yes, there was a growth of 20,000 and there has been a 3,000 reduction in the last year. Is that an agreed position, Mr Hanson?

Mr Hanson: Mr Assistant Speaker, on a point of order, I have responded to Mr Barr previously—and I accept that it was wrong for me to do so—but under standing order 42, I believe, he is required to direct his comments through you. If he repeatedly asks me direct questions in the chamber, it does make it difficult for me not to respond. I would ask you to bring him to order.

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr Hanson. Mr Barr, if you can refer your comments through the chair.

MR BARR: Thank you, Mr Assistant Speaker. I know the Leader of the Opposition has no self-restraint at all and that is evident in that little performance. Let us be clear, Mr Assistant Speaker: even if you accept the position of the Liberal Party nationally and locally combined then we are talking about a net increase in public sector employment in the ACT of 17,000 positions over the last six years. Under no circumstance can it be argued that this federal Labor government has reduced the size of the federal public service in Canberra. But we do know what happens when—

Mr Seselja interjecting—

MR BARR: Mr Seselja is suggesting that 17,000 jobs are going, is he? The only party suggesting that 17,000 jobs should go is his party, the party that he will be seeking to be elected with—

Mr Smyth: That's not true. That's not what they've said.

MR BARR: That is exactly what Joe Hockey said. He said on 29 April 2013, "We can't afford to have around 20,000 extra public servants in Canberra compared with the last year of the coalition government." Joe Hockey, 2UE, 29 April 2013.

Mr Seselja: On a point of order—

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Clerk, if you can stop the clock.

Mr Seselja: I think it is under standing order 46 where I have been misrepresented, Mr Assistant Speaker. I am not exactly sure what Mr Barr claims to have heard across the chamber, but he heard nothing of the sort. If he claims that I said anything in relation to job numbers, he has misrepresented me and I would ask him to withdraw.

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Mr Seselja, I think it is probably better if you cease the interjections so you do not allow him to comment across the chamber.

Mr Seselja: Just on that, Mr Assistant Speaker, you are not suggesting that it is okay for Mr Barr to misrepresent me, are you?

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Not at all, no, Mr Seselja; I did not hear any misrepresentation.

Mr Seselja: And we can clarify that.

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Mr Barr.

MR BARR: Thank you, Mr Assistant Speaker. They are very sensitive about these matters, it would appear. When it comes to questions of public sector employment in the ACT, as I say, even if we accept the position of the federal Liberal Party, moderated by the position of the local Liberal Party, then we see a net increase of 17,000 jobs in Canberra over the last six years.

We can certainly say—and we seek no other more authoritative source than the Australian Bureau of Statistics—that there are 209,500 people in employment in the ACT at the moment. That is an all-time record level of employment in the Australian Capital Territory. We would not be achieving all-time record levels of employment if there was some massive slashing of public sector employment going on.

There is no doubt that employment levels in the territory will be reduced if there is a change of federal government. This we can view as the gospel truth coming from both

the Leader of the Opposition locally and the Leader of the Opposition nationally. This is not some in the heat of the moment discussion; this is the absolutely calm, considered, pre-prepared, pre-scripted version now coming from the federal Liberal Party and endorsed today by the Leader of the Opposition.

We have in this economy at this time solid growth, low unemployment, strong investment, strong public finances, contained inflation and the lowest interest rates for nearly 50 years—signs of a strong economy: record levels of employment within the ACT. Who wants to put this at risk, Mr Assistant Speaker? The Liberal Party, the one party that will go to the next election with a view to, firstly, cutting 20,000 jobs out of Canberra and, secondly, relocating jobs as much as possible out of this city. We saw this with Mr Abbott on Geelong radio only this week suggesting that what is needed is for more and more jobs to be relocated out of Canberra. That contrasts with the position that the Prime Minister put on Canberra Day, on our 100th birthday, to acknowledge the importance of Canberra—

Opposition members interjecting—

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Mr Barr, just take a seat for a moment. Clerk, could you stop the clock. Mr Seselja, I have asked you a number of times to cease interjecting. Mr Hanson, I have asked you to cease interjecting a number of times as well. Please cease interjecting or I will have to take some action. Mr Barr.

MR BARR: Thank you, Mr Assistant Speaker. That commitment to Canberra as the national capital was very clear, and it is an important commitment for this city. The national capital is here. It is not in Karratha, it is not in Townsville, it is not in Darwin, it is not in Geelong. We do not need jobs sent out to those regions that are already here in the ACT. That is a very clear commitment from the Prime Minister and one that we would hope would be bipartisan. I do not think it is unreasonable for both sides of politics, in Canberra's 100th year, to support the concept of the national capital—the reason this city was established and the reason that it continues to play the leading role in the nation's public affairs.

That is not an unreasonable thing, you would think. Even Mr Hanson and Mr Smyth could probably find themselves being able to agree with that. Yet their party nationally is adopting an entirely different approach. The former Leader of the Opposition is going to find himself in one of the most excruciatingly difficult positions over coming months, having convinced the Liberal Party that he is better than Gary Humphries at standing up for Canberra. We certainly look forward to seeing what he will do and what influence he can wield within his own party. A good start would be to sign up to this charter. What a good idea. You could do it as the Senate candidate, Mr Seselja, and then you could take it to your federal leader. That would be a really useful contribution. It would show your bona fides in relation to this city. That should not be too much to ask.

As we go back and look at the historical record and what occurred in 1996, we certainly see a trail of wreckage wreaked by the incoming government. There was an 8.1 per cent decrease in ongoing staffing levels, and that was from 3½ thousand jobs at that time. So a 20,000 job cut figure would be even more significant. In 1996-97,

those cuts saw the APS shrink to its smallest size since 1984. Those with a view to the long-running history of public service employment would note, though, that by the end of the Howard government in 2007 the numbers had, in fact, grown back. So it perhaps showed that those cuts were somewhat ideological in nature at the time and not based on good service or policy outcomes. Private sector employment in the ACT declined by 5.2 per cent, or nearly 5,000 people, in 1996-97. The unemployment rate rose to eight per cent—Mr Hanson was right—but that was as a result of those cuts in 1996-97. Population growth in the year ending December 1997 finished in decline. So for the first time in living memory the population of Canberra actually declined. It was a shameful period and should not be repeated. (*Time expired.*)

MR SESELJA (Brindabella) (4.44): I thank Mr Hanson for his amendment to this motion. When you are dealing with the Labor Party, the first thing you have to do is cut through the lies and misrepresentation that the Labor Party constantly put forward at a federal level and at a local level. We see it here again today even in their motion. We see it in every one of the Labor Party speeches today, in what all of their local members have had to say. At the same time as they are criticising the coalition, the Labor Party nationally is sacking Canberrans as we speak, having promised them that they would not. The thousands of jobs that are going from the public service right now under federal Labor are going even as they say that they are committed to Canberra and urge people to examine the opposition.

Let us examine the government and let us examine the Labor Party's record. The Labor Party is the party of recession. The Labor Party is the party of job cuts. Mr Hanson referred to the last time the Labor Party delivered a surplus. It was in 1989-90. They built up such levels of debt towards the end of the Hawke-Keating government that even they realised it was unsustainable. We saw massive job cuts from 1993 onwards, the last term of the Hawke-Keating government. In the last term of the Keating government, we saw job cuts. We saw 25,000 jobs cut in the last term of the Labor government because they had run out of money.

Those are the facts. The Labor Party always fails to manage the budget and eventually it is Canberrans who pay for it. Eventually it is Canberrans who pay for the budgetary mismanagement. We saw it at the back end of the Hawke-Keating years. We are seeing it at the back end of the Rudd-Gillard years as we see Canberrans being sacked to pay for the Labor Party's inability to manage finances. It is quite stark. The hypocrisy of the people on the other side is that they could not care less if the Labor Party is sacking people. We see it from the local Labor members who promised on numerous occasions that there would not be job cuts.

As we look at the motion from Dr Bourke, we need to look at what he is actually saying and what he is taking offence at. One of the things he is taking offence at is in paragraph (b), which notes:

- (b) that Mr Abbott said it was important that service delivery agencies are located outside of Canberra "for them to be amongst the people they are seeking to help"

Yet he seems to have no problem when Julia Gillard, in opening the Climate Change Authority, said, "Locating the new authority in Melbourne will enhance its ability to

engage with business and stakeholders.” When Julia Gillard says that locating an agency outside Canberra helps its ability to engage with stakeholders and serve the community, apparently that is a good thing, according to Dr Bourke. But when Tony Abbott says that it is important that service delivery agencies be located amongst the people they are seeking to help, that is somehow scandalous. That again demonstrates the kind of hypocrisy we are dealing with.

The Labor Party are the party of recession. They are the party of high unemployment.

Mr Barr: You are borrowing my line there.

MR SESELJA: The statistics bear it out.

Mr Barr: Trying to turn it around, are you?

MR SESELJA: Mr Barr, as Treasurer, could not even refer to any of the numbers. He could not refer to any of the numbers. Mr Barr is around my age. He might remember when youth unemployment in the early 90s in the ACT was over 30 per cent. He may remember when it was over 30 per cent under Hawke and Keating. He may remember that, because many Canberrans do. They remember how many jobs were lost under the last Labor government when they lost control of the finances. He may actually refer to the statistics. He did not want to refer to the statistics. But when we look at the actual numbers in terms of average employment during the Howard years in the ACT versus average employment during the Hawke-Keating years, we know that the average unemployment rate was higher.

In fact, when the Howard government left office, we know that our unemployment rate was at record low levels here in the ACT. People enjoyed real wage growth. They saw jobs growth. They saw their real net worth grow. That was the experience of Canberrans. The Labor Party’s hypocrisy is evident today. They criticise the Liberal Party at a time when they are sacking Canberrans. Everyone in Canberra who knows a commonwealth public servant—and that is all of us—knows about the chaos in our commonwealth government departments right now as they desperately scramble for savings. We know what is going on.

People would look in the various agencies. They would look at the Public Service Commission figures, the 716 jobs lost in the Department of Defence, 408 jobs in the Department of Human Services, 244 jobs in the Australian Taxation Office. These are just some examples of the thousands of jobs lost. What we are being asked to do today, given this record, is to believe Julia Gillard and to believe the Labor Party when they say they are committed to Canberra. How can we believe the Labor Party on anything? Does anyone in our community believe that when Julia Gillard and the Labor Party say they are going to do something, that they will do something if they are elected?

How many broken promises have we seen just in recent days? We have seen some months ago the broken surplus promise that they repeated time and time again. I well recall Julia Gillard saying that she would deliver it. It did not matter if economic circumstances changed. She would deliver it. We have seen just this week their

broken promise on family payments. They have walked away from that. They promised people tax cuts as a result of the carbon tax package, and they have walked away from them just today.

They sign a statement of support for Canberra—what is the wording of the statement? They sign a statement of commitment to Canberra whilst they are sacking commonwealth public servants in Canberra. Right then they would have been sacking commonwealth public servants, and Julia Gillard is saying we should believe her on this.

What we do know is that each of the local federal Labor members said there would not be job losses. In fact, we saw in 2011 Andrew Leigh say that the efficiency dividend would not lead to job losses. He was confident it would not lead to job losses. We had Penny Wong repeating that, that it was not going to be a cut to jobs. We had Kate Lundy saying that it would not come from job losses. Yet we have seen redundancies, both voluntary and involuntary, in this town. We have seen the number of public servants drop by 3,000. That is just what we know about at the moment. That will continue under Labor.

We have the hypocrisy of a party which promised no carbon tax and then turned around and broke that promise after the election saying to us that we should trust them when they say they are committed to Canberra, when they are doing the opposite. They have been the party of high unemployment in Canberra. Even in the time since the Howard government left office, we have seen that the unemployment rate in the ACT has tracked up far quicker than unemployment nationally. We have caught up, effectively, in our unemployment rate compared to the rest of the nation.

Mr Barr: No, we haven't.

MR SESELJA: Yes, we have.

Mr Barr: No, we haven't.

MR SESELJA: Yes, we have.

Mr Barr: No, we haven't.

MR SESELJA: Yes, we have.

Mr Barr: No, we haven't.

MR SESELJA: You do not think we have? What is the unemployment rate right now, Mr Barr? He is not interested in figures. Our unemployment rate was in the twos. It is now at 4½ per cent. It is now a little under one per cent below the national average. It was not one per cent below the national average when it was sitting at 2.9 per cent. It was not. So Mr Barr's interjection again is wrong. He does not bother with the facts. He spins this story. So let us—

Mr Barr: Record levels of employment, Mr Seselja.

MR SESELJA: The unemployment rate has tracked up quicker than the rest of the nation. Why is that? Could that be because they actually are cutting public servants? Or is it something else? We see the figures today. They put the lie. They highlight the hypocrisy of the Labor Party. The Labor Party cannot be trusted. They have not been good for our nation. They have not been good for Canberra. The Keating government started slashing jobs when they ran out of money. That is exactly what is happening under Gillard. And God forbid if they were re-elected. It would continue in earnest. The only difference is that they would never be able to fix it.

MS PORTER (Ginninderra) (4.54): I welcome the opportunity to speak on this most important topic. I thank my colleague Dr Bourke for bringing it to the attention of the Assembly. Recent comments by the federal Leader of the Opposition are a major concern not only for the ACT government but for every Canberran, and also those living in the region. The opposition leader was quoted in yesterday's *Canberra Times*, as we have been saying, as saying that "as many public service jobs as possible should be relocated outside of Canberra".

We are also aware that the shadow treasurer has on numerous occasions made statements to the effect that the federal coalition will abolish up to 20,000 public service jobs if elected. Let us pause and reflect on that for a moment: 20,000 jobs gone, just like that. Putting it another way, we are looking at 20,000 people out of employment. That is 20,000 men and women, 20,000 fathers and mothers, 20,000 brothers and sisters, 20,000 sons and daughters and, of course, for every unemployed person there is an impact on his or her family and, further, an impact on the ACT economy.

I believe that the public service deserves more respect than they are getting from the federal Liberal-National coalition. What I would like to know is whether the ACT Liberals share the same vision for Canberra as their federal counterparts. Who can forget the damage the Howard government wrought when they embarked on their vicious slash and burn attack on Canberra and the region in the 1990s.

I remind the Assembly what the ACT and region experienced over that period. The unemployment rate rose to 7.9 per cent. Private sector employment in the ACT declined by 5.2 per cent, the equivalent of around 4,700 persons. The number of businesses declined by eight per cent, the equivalent of 105 businesses. According to figures from the Real Estate Institute of Australia, median house prices decreased by four per cent, needless to say with serious consequences for tens of thousands of ACT home owners. The ACT also experienced negative population growth. We all know what this means to the ACT economy and its regional economies.

The job losses had a huge impact on the Canberra community. This resulted in a great deal of hardship for many. The anxiety and depression seen in many members of our community at this time was palpable. It was a sad episode that came about when the federal coalition won government in 1996. We all know that it was left to this ACT Labor government to pick up the pieces and transform the ACT to the strong economy it is today.

Just when our economy is one of the strongest economies in the nation, just when our unemployment rate is one of the lowest in the country, just when we have a strong housing sector, notwithstanding the adverse impact of the global financial crisis, and just when our retail sector is picking up, we are faced once again with a real threat of another coalition slash and burn attack on Canberra. We all know what will transpire should we see the election of a federal coalition government. This will effectively stifle economic growth in Canberra and the region. As I said, it will lead to higher unemployment and place immense pressure on local businesses and those around the region, not to mention the negative financial and emotional effect on every Canberran.

I believe my colleagues have already more than adequately outlined the extent of the threat we are facing. Needless to say, all of this prosperity and stability which we have worked so hard to achieve is in jeopardy. I dare say that the federal coalition's vision for Canberra could even have a more damaging force than a global financial crisis for the ACT. As a member for Ginninderra I am worried. I am worried because I know what this avowed slash and burn attack will do to my constituents and the local economy.

As you are well aware, Mr Assistant Speaker, there are several federal government departments and agencies in my electorate. As Dr Bourke said, Belconnen hosts the Australian Sports Commission, the Department of Immigration and Citizenship, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare and the Australian Bureau of Statistics, just to mention a few. However, going by the remarks of the Leader of the Opposition and his shadow treasurer, they are not exempt. A reputable independent research body, ANZ Research, whose research report was mentioned in yesterday's *Canberra Times*, states, "The possibility of a change in government is already hitting the territory's economy with the housing market slowing and business and households acting cautiously."

What this shows is that the community is rightly worried at the prospect that the ACT government will have to go through the 1996-97 hardships all over again in the event of a change in government federally. There is no doubt that for businesses in the ACT, the stability and certainty currently provided under this Labor government will be replaced with a period of turmoil, uncertainty and increasing challenges under a federal coalition government.

Mr Assistant Speaker, make no mistake. The concern that history will be repeated is generated directly from the reckless, disrespectful and thoughtless remarks from the federal opposition leader and those made by his shadow treasurer and other coalition members. It is stating the obvious to say that Canberra would not be the same place without the strong and stable federal public service that operates not only in Canberra but in the nation's capital. This is the nation's capital.

It would be very useful for those opposite to take into account the considered views of their colleague and the current ACT senator, Mr Gary Humphries. During the last election he distributed some material through Canberra suburbs in which he made the following statement, "If the federal government grows, Canberra benefits. If it contracts, Canberra suffers." I do not believe that I can put it any plainer than that: if

the federal government grows, Canberra benefits. If it contracts, Canberra suffers. For once, I wholeheartedly endorse Mr Humphries' sentiments and I strongly encourage those opposite to do the same.

Canberra is the nation's capital. It is the seat of federal government and the home of the Australian public service. We do not need the slash and burn approach of an Abbott-led government. We do not need Canberrans being out of work. We do not need the considerable stress that will be placed on families. We do not need Canberra businesses ruined and we do not need the housing market destabilised.

It is important to remember that the territory's strong economic performance has not just happened by luck. On the contrary, it has come about as a result of the hard work by this Labor government and its partnerships with Canberra community employees and businesses. We need certainty and stability for governments and for the community to work together to ensure continued growth in our economy. We need to provide opportunity for our children to stay in the region and raise their families. A federal coalition government, I fear, will see an exodus of our young people in large numbers. Mr Assistant Speaker, this Assembly should give its unequivocal support to the motion before it today.

MS BERRY (Ginninderra) (5.02): I rise in support of Dr Bourke's motion and I thank him for raising such an important matter with us in the Assembly today. Commonwealth public servants are hardworking people whom we depend on to ensure that our country keeps running. I cannot list the things that public servants do for Australia because to do so would cover every facet of our society. There is almost nothing that can happen in this country without the support, input and work of a public servant.

It is obvious to say that Canberra exists for the public service but I think it is important also to recognise the fact that it is the presence of public servants in our city that makes Canberra the smart, vibrant, cosmopolitan city that it is. In the blue collar areas where I live and which I represent, west Belconnen, residents tell me how much of their work is reliant on the public service and how concerned they are about the hurt that will come to Canberra should the Liberals cut between 12,000 and 20,000 jobs from the public service.

That figure is a bit rubbery because if Tony Abbott does get in to govern Australia, it could be far worse. Who knows, it could be up to 50,000 jobs should Tony Abbott follow the lead of his colleague in the Queensland parliament. Can the Liberals here promise that their mates on the hill will not do that? Can they promise that they will not cut thousands and thousands of jobs from the heart of this country, from our nation's capital?

They are talking about making promises and breaking promises. Let us hear a promise from our colleagues on the other side of the Assembly today that they will contact their mate on the hill and say, "Protect Canberra's jobs." I do not think we are going to hear that promise. I do not think we will hear that promise from these people today.

We know that for every commonwealth public service job that is cut from the economy we lose jobs in the private sector, and cuts to the commonwealth public service of the magnitude that Mr Hockey and Mr Abbott are promising will really hurt our local businesses and will put undue pressure on the community sector. If the Liberals get in and make these cuts, we will be losing jobs in construction, in retail, in hospitality and in services.

In the early childhood sector, a sector close to my heart, the cuts in 1996 saw enrolments plummet and caused the closure of many centres. I know parents who had their children in services, particularly in Narrabundah, and that service's enrolment declined by 50 per cent overnight. I remember when the early childhood centre at the Canberra Centre was forced to close because so many parents had lost their jobs and no longer needed to have their children in care, thus adding to even more people joining the unemployment queue.

When a government makes such large cuts to the public service, the cuts also hurt industries that rely on the public service for work, such as cleaning and security. Many of the people working in these industries work in multiple jobs on low pay. If demand diminishes due to a shrinking public service then these people will really struggle to make ends meet.

The Howard Liberal-National government cuts of 1996 had a horrendous impact on our community. And as the member for Canberra has stated in the commonwealth parliament, the sudden loss of 15,000 jobs from the ACT economy saw non-business bankruptcies rise by 17 per cent and business bankruptcies jump by 38 per cent. Dr Bourke already talked about the over 100 businesses that went into bankruptcy during the cuts in 1996. The ACT then went into recession.

There is a bizarre world view that dominates the thinking of conservatives right across the country and, indeed, the thinking of conservatives across the Western world. It is a world view that puts the economic value of a person's work or contribution to our society above the actual work or contribution that they make. This world view is most stark, I believe, when we see the contempt that conservatives like the federal conservatives show for public servants in our town.

When Mr Hockey appeared on the ABC *7.30 Report* program in March 2012 he showed the contempt that he has for the public service. I quote:

Well of course; if you wanna reduce the size of the government, if you wanna get rid of the waste, if you want to keep your commitments on track, you're gonna have to make hard decisions.

Hard decisions: putting people on welfare because you think that their work is wasted on the nation. It is a hard decision, is it not? It is pretty contemptible.

I want all members of the Assembly who are opposing this motion to go out today and look into the eyes of a commonwealth public servant, look into the eyes of our neighbours and look into the eyes of our brothers and our sisters and our mothers and

our fathers—and as Mr Hanson said, you will not have to go far, because these are the people that live on our streets—and I want you to tell them that you do not think that the contribution of their work to our society is worth anything. I want you to tell them that you believe that they are a drag on our city and that their families are a waste and not welcome to be part of the Canberra community.

As the federal opposition and their colleagues across the country rely so heavily on the work of public servants, especially commonwealth public servants, it is a gross hypocrisy to then treat them as contemptibly as they are promising to do by making these cuts. Mr Abbott is far worse than the bogeyman that Mr Hanson has referred to today. He is more like the devastator of Canberra families.

I wish to conclude my speech with a call to all public servants in this town. Tony Abbott will not protect your jobs and he will not protect your interests. If you want to protect your rights, if you want to ensure that your jobs are protected, I strongly urge you to support the cuts hurt campaign and fight for your jobs, fight to keep the heart of the Australian public service in the ACT where it belongs.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (5.09): We have had quite a discussion this afternoon and it has been quite broad ranging. And I think it has moved quite a long way from the motion that Dr Bourke originally moved. We have had a very extensive discussion about relative numbers in the public service under both federal Labor and coalition governments, and I think that there have been a lot of claims and counterclaims on both sides.

The element of the discussion I would like to focus on and that Dr Bourke's motion specifically focuses on is the comments that the federal Leader of the Opposition was reported to have made earlier this week in which, as I understand it, he observed that he felt that there would be great value in moving more commonwealth government departments outside the ACT and locating them in other parts of Australia.

I am concerned about those reported remarks. I think that they undermine the value of Canberra as the nation's capital and the value that is placed on having a range of federal government departments in the same city where collaboration and cross-fertilisation might take place. I think there is great value in having all of those institutions in one place, from a governance point of view, having regard to the ability of the ministers to have their departments in the same city where the federal parliament is operating, and also—and in one of my former lives I worked for an NGO that sought to engage the federal government—from a community organisation point of view. Having all of the agencies in one city, there is an efficiency on offer there for often poorly resourced community organisations to be able to engage with the federal government in one place at one time. So I think there are a range of reasons for having the federal government concentrated in one place.

Earlier this week I took a walk to the air disaster memorial, which commemorates the 1940 crash of an airplane on the outskirts of Canberra, between Canberra and Queanbeyan, in which three federal government ministers were killed. Interestingly, there is the plaque that was installed in 1960 and there is a subsequent one installed about a decade ago. And on that one it observes the fact that that crash in 1940 in

which three ministers were killed actually created some impetus for Canberra as the national capital to be developed, because what was happening was that the ministers were having to fly all over the country in order to keep up with their federal public service agencies which were spread between Canberra, Sydney and Melbourne. And apparently that crash, with those three ministers perishing, as well as the other seven people on the flight, actually, as I say, drove that debate.

Fortunately, air safety has improved considerably since 1940, but at a time when we are mindful of costs and of greenhouse emissions because of flying around the country all the time, I think in some ways that argument comes back in an interesting kind of way as we contemplate the question of whether agencies should be in Canberra or whether they should be in other places.

Of course, some agencies will necessarily always be outside Canberra. There will be strong geographic reasons for particular locations. One thinks of the issues around Northern Australia particularly and the geographic specificity of some particular tasks that public servants undertake.

In my mind, it is important that any kind of discussion about where an agency should be situated is not framed in the context of some sort of Canberra bashing exercise, some sense that Canberra gets it too good or that we want to appeal to marginal electorates somewhere else in the country, which is far too often how a debate about the federal public service is framed, but, rather, decisions to locate agencies are taken in a very strategic way that is focused very much on the merits of whether or not an agency should be in Canberra. And as I have outlined in my earlier comments, I think that those strategic decisions will often point to agencies being centrally located in a city where government is organised to take place. We, of course, see a similar approach in capital cities all around the world, and one can rattle them off and name the fact that governments do tend to concentrate in one place because of the obvious benefits that that brings about.

So I will not be supporting Mr Hanson's amendment as it is framed. I think that that amendment particularly plays into the way the discussion has taken place this afternoon where it has become quite a stoush between the Labor and Liberal parties about their respective attitudes to the federal public service and the numbers at various times that their governments have or have not supported. What I would rather do is focus on the original motion put forward by Dr Bourke, which does specifically, I believe, address this question of strategically where the public service should be located, in light of reported comments made by the leader of the federal opposition earlier this week. As I said, those comments do concern me.

I think that we should focus today on the principle that all members of this chamber can agree to, and that is the focus of the amendments which I have circulated. I obviously will have to move them a little later, given that Mr Hanson's amendment is now on the table. And I will be seeking leave to do that once we have voted on Mr Hanson's amendment.

But the endeavour in my amendments is to focus on the principle that this Assembly affirms its support for the commonwealth government making a commitment to the

role and significance of Canberra in the life of our nation. We support the commonwealth government maintaining the number of public service jobs in Canberra.

I think that we all know the importance of the federal public service to the economic and social fabric of the city. And as much as we might all talk about the need to diversify the Canberra economy and our various views on that, the bottom line is that this is still a town that relies heavily on the fortunes of the commonwealth public service for its economic prosperity.

My part (2)(c), “keeping Canberra as the central location of Commonwealth Government departments and agencies”, again is a principle that I believe all of us in the ACT Assembly would support, one that acknowledges the strategic values of having government in a single place, with those obvious exceptions where there is a geographically specific reason to put an agency outside the national capital. So I think it is a way forward in this debate.

I of course find myself in that position that is going to happen so often over the remaining 3½ years of this term where I have to endeavour to find some way between the two clashing arguments across the chamber. So I will be moving my amendments once we have dealt with Mr Hanson’s as a way of perhaps focusing on the principles of the matter and allowing the disputed facts to continue to be debated through the media and at other times, as I am sure they will be.

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella) (5.17): I rise today to congratulate Dr Bourke on his motion. I support the motion and will not be supporting Mr Hanson’s amendment. I rise as a direct witness of the slash and burn tactics employed by the Howard Liberal government in 1996-97. I saw the effects of the savage cuts by the Howard government. I worked for the APS at the time and I saw firsthand the terrible impact of these cuts. I saw the departure lounge for the Department of Administrative Services set up at the Government Printing Office. Later I witnessed what was known as death by PowerPoint at defence, where hundreds of public servants were taken into the new conference room at Building R1 where a PowerPoint was displayed showing around 280 job positions on the first slide and on the second slide about 110. If your job number was not on the second slide, you were no longer employed. Then there were the COMCAR interviews, where you were invited in as one of about 110 permanent COMCAR drivers. You were sat down, you were read three lines from a script, and then you were asked to leave without a job, but you were provided with a cab fare home.

I quote my federal parliamentary colleagues Senator Lundy, Dr Leigh and Ms Brodtmann, who, in a joint press release, stated that in 1996-97 federal ongoing staffing levels decreased by 8.1 per cent or approximately 3,000 persons in the ACT. And that was just the beginning. The *Canberra Times* on 3 April this year showed that between 1996 and 2000 the Howard Liberal government cut about 32,000 jobs from the APS. The impact of 20,000 immediate job cuts flagged by Tony Abbott would be far greater, and this is just the beginning.

Currently we have no idea how far an Abbott coalition government will go. For some idea, though, we just need to go back and have a look at the *Hansard* of this place for 27 August 1996. In answer to a question without notice, we have the former Chief Minister Kate Carnell saying:

... certainly comments about 30,000 and so on are way off the side of the graph and certainly not in line with the budget papers themselves.

That is exactly what we saw, Mr Assistant Speaker. Once again I refer to my federal parliamentary colleagues' press release: as a result of the Howard cuts in 1996-97 the APS in Canberra shrunk to its smallest size since 1984. In 1996-97 private sector employment in the ACT declined by 5.2 per cent, or another 4,700 of our ACT residents were out of work, the same residents who have elected us to serve them. This impact was much worse than what the territory experienced during the global financial crisis.

The ACT's unemployment rate rose to a record level of 7.9 per cent in 1996-97. The Real Estate Institute of Australia reported a price decrease in median house prices of four per cent while the average for capital cities and Australia as a whole grew by 17 and 15 per cent respectively. If we were to see this again, the median house price, which is currently about \$530,000, would drop significantly.

But we already know that Tony Abbott and Joe Hockey's plans are even more savage. In a more unstable economic time, who knows where Abbott's slash and burn management will take us? The question is, will Mr Seselja be right there behind him? I have some concerns, Mr Assistant Speaker, about the comments we have heard this morning from Mrs Jones. We heard support for this slash and burn campaign from the Liberals. Mrs Jones interjected earlier during the debate, "Better to have deep job cuts than debt." I find that astonishing, Mr Assistant Speaker, and I certainly hope that her colleagues in Brindabella do not have the same feelings as that.

Mrs Jones: Point of order.

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Doszpot): Stop the clock, please? Mrs Jones.

Mrs Jones: Under standing order 47, I am being misrepresented by Mr Gentleman. I do not know exactly what he is referring to. I have certainly interjected that when there is not enough money jobs cannot be paid for, but I did not interject in the way that he is asserting.

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Mr Gentleman, would you like to withdraw?

MR GENTLEMAN: Mr Assistant Speaker, I was in the chair at the time and I wrote the words down word for word. That is exactly the representation of Mrs Jones.

Mrs Jones: Point of order.

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Mrs Jones, resume your seat. You can bring this matter up after Mr Gentleman has finished his speech. Mr Gentleman, resume your speech. Start the clock.

MR GENTLEMAN: Thank you, Mr Assistant Speaker, I will continue. It is possible that tens of thousands of Canberra home owners will be worse off under an Abbott government. It was not only the working families, of course, who had a member in the public service that suffered. Once again I refer to my federal parliamentary colleagues' press release in that the number of businesses in the ACT declined by 105 in 1996-97. That was a similar drop to that seen during the global financial crisis. An Abbott government will hurt businesses.

The personal finance for debt consolidation as a share of total personal finance reached a record 8.7 per cent. This shows that Canberrans prioritised paying off debts during that period, likely due to job insecurity. If a similar trend occurred with 20,000 job cuts it would be devastating for our retail sector.

It is possible that on 14 September the ACT and 17,000 constituents of mine who currently work for the federal government will have their future prosperity jeopardised through the vicious slash and burn tactics we have seen from Liberal state and territory governments across the country and also from previous federal coalition governments and the publicly stated policies of the federal Liberals. As a member for Brindabella, I intend to fight day in and day out to ensure support for those that may be affected by these coalition government cuts.

In Tuggeranong, according to the census data 30 per cent of working people in Brindabella are in the federal public service. Any cut to the federal public service that comes with an Abbott Liberal government—whether it is 12,000, 20,000 or even more—will devastate Tuggeranong. Some 30 per cent of hardworking constituents of mine who bring home a wage will have their jobs placed in jeopardy. They will no longer be able to plan their finances over the long term because no public service job will be safe.

Census data shows that over 5,000 public servants are employed in Tuggeranong alone, and 16 per cent of workers in Tuggeranong will have their jobs at risk. These people are in Tuggeranong daily supporting small businesses around the area participating in the community. These people deserve a commitment to Canberra from someone who is hoping to become the federal leader come 14 September with the help of a Senate candidate who was introduced last night at Tuggeranong Community Council and who happens to be currently sitting in this chamber, even if it is his departure lounge.

The Brindabella community simply cannot take these severe cuts to the federal public service. Apart from the pure fact of a possible 20,000 jobs being cut, the services delivered by the public service every day to the Tuggeranong community are something people simply just cannot live without, with Centrelink and Medicare offices being just two parts of the services that will have to be cut due to this possible process. With the commitment to Canberra made by the Abbott Liberals, these services are being put on the line.

Cuts like this do not just hurt employees or their family, or their friends and neighbours; they devastate entire communities, and Tuggeranong is no different. The possibility of these cuts is currently looming over the Brindabella community. It needs to end, and it needs to end now. The ACT government, as representative of these workers, must stand up for them, and I am proud that they are. Without Tony Abbott's commitment to the statement of commitment to Canberra, this simply is not going to happen.

I believe this boils down to a lack of respect that the Liberal Party has for working families in Canberra and the lack of respect Zed and the Abbott Liberals have for the Tuggeranong community. It is no secret that Zed will be leaving this chamber in the next four months after promising Tuggeranong that he will look after them and fight for better local services. Though in saying that, we should not be surprised because he left the electorate of Molonglo for greener pastures beforehand.

Through my work I consult with the people of Tuggeranong every day—through shopping centre stalls, phone calls and surveys to name a few. And it is clear to me the electorate feel abandoned by Mr Seselja as he continues to sit in this chamber collecting a salary and waiting for 14 September to come around so he can start his new job.

I am proud members of this government are the ones standing up for Canberra and ensuring its safe and prosperous future. I urge all members to support the motion.

MS GALLAGHER (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Health and Minister for Higher Education) (5.27): I am pleased to speak to this motion this evening. It is an important motion because it is about respect for the men and women of the Australian public service, the depth of their experience, the integrity of their advice and their proven neutrality during 100 years of government. And it is also about respect for Canberra, the national capital, home to 360,000 people, a marketplace for 25,000 businesses whose outlook is weakened whenever there are adverse comments made about our city and our city's role into the future. We are already seeing weaker business sentiment as a result of some of the comments that have been made about future decisions that will be made if Mr Abbott is lucky enough to win the job of Prime Minister in September's election.

If an incoming Abbott government proceeded with APS job cuts of up to 20,000, it is likely the impacts would be far worse than those that followed the Howard government's cuts of 1996, where unemployment rose to 7.9 per cent and house values dropped by around \$25,000. We do not believe an Abbott victory will be a mandate for the coalition to put a wrecking ball through the families and businesses of Canberra. I think Mr Abbot needs to be clear on his commitment to Canberra, his commitment to the public service and any plans he has to move agencies and departments out of the ACT.

The editorial in today's *Canberra Times* suggests he should stop treating the public service like a pork barrel, bringing politics into decisions around the staffing and location of federal agencies rather than basing them on what serves the agency and

public best. The editorial goes on to say that Canberra is the centre of federal public administration for good reason. Basing the bureaucracy in the national capital offers the efficiency of a workforce in close proximity with the decision makers that guide it.

This is the city where our diplomats do business with 96 diplomatic missions, where national security and intelligence agencies work in specialist facilities, where world-class scientific and sporting advances are made, where national cultural collections are preserved and archived, where payments are made to people in hardship and where political leaders are advised on decisions that affect all Australians. This work is nationally significant, and the people who do it should not be reduced to political fodder.

Mr Abbott's claim that the public service has grown by 20,000 since 2007 is false, and his views that it can lose this number through natural attrition without any damage to the quality of the public service is mistaken. His agenda is ideological and is not based on evidence or policy needs. It is based on the belief that the private sector is better than the public and that the pursuit of profit motivates people more than the sense of public duty.

The agenda is also a political strategy to talk down the national capital and its people potentially for some light-hearted humour and some political point scoring around the country. I said yesterday when I was asked about his comments of wanting services to be delivered close to where people receive them that he almost implied that there are not people in Canberra who rely on the delivery of services by the Australian public service. His comments also demeaned the role public servants play in terms of treating their livelihoods and their future so flippantly off the cuff at a press conference.

The Prime Minister's commitment to Canberra made on our 99th birthday on 12 March 2012 was an important statement. It came after a number of representations were made to me by members of the local business community about getting a commitment from the Prime Minister around the role she sees the national capital playing and its role in relation to being the natural home of the Australian federal public service.

Now, that does not for a moment mean that there will not be changes or fluctuations in staffing numbers, priorities or agencies that move outside of the Canberra, and we are not saying that that should not be the case and that it should not continue. What we are asking for is some advice on what the plans are to devolve outside of the ACT to other places departments or agencies that are currently here. If there are such plans, what are they, and let us be up-front with the ACT community about what that means.

Similarly, we are not asking for there never to be any change in employment levels in the commonwealth public service. It would just be crazy to do that. There will be changes, and there will be changes in policy priorities. We understand that if there is a change of government there will be changes in policy priorities for a federal Liberal government. But we are asking to know what those plans are. We do not think natural attrition can meet the efficiency targets that Mr Abbott and Mr Hockey have talked

about. And if they cannot be met through natural attrition—because it is a very large number to be met by natural attrition—how else will they seek to find the efficiencies they so proudly talk of if and when they are elected to government.

As I said at the beginning of my comments, this motion is about respect. It is showing respect to the people who will enable him to govern if he is elected. The public service is a rich pool of expertise in the processes of government, and Canberra is seen as the centre of public administration excellence around the world.

The OECD makes the point that community confidence in government institutions and public administrations is one of the keys to a cohesive society. According to the OECD, 71 per cent of Australians trust their political institutions. This is well above the OECD average of 56 per cent and thanks largely to the stability and integrity provided by the public service.

The OECD has also made the point that the size of general government employment in Australia is much lower than in most comparable countries. Our public servants are committed to what they do, they are good at it, they are very adaptable, and they have been required to change and find efficiencies, as all of us have.

As a city, Canberra has grown strongly under the ACT government and our economic diversification agenda, driving the growth in higher education, ICT and other knowledge-intensive industries. However, the commonwealth still employs around 36 per cent of the Canberra workforce and indirectly supports many workers in the private sector, be it through consultancy, hospitality or retail.

The Canberra business community, certainly from all my meetings with them, is deeply concerned about the plans should an Abbott Liberal government be elected in September. They also are feeling the uncertainty caused by comments seemingly made off the cuff and what they mean to our long-term future.

Canberra is a progressive and caring community, and we are a progressive and caring government. We have great respect for the thousands of professionals who enable the federal government to function and who make up our community. I think it is appropriate that, in our centenary year, we are able as an Assembly to stand together, united, and ask for more information about what Mr Abbott's plans are for Canberra and also to seek to engage a level of respect in the discussion as it ramps up towards September and some confidence that Mr Abbott considers that the national capital, Canberra, should be the seat and natural home of the Australian public service and that he shows some commitment to the 360,000 people who live and work in our city.

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) (5.36): I am pleased to join with my colleagues this evening to speak on this very important motion about the future of our city, the future of jobs, the future of economic security for so many Canberrans. Of course, we understand that this is a time of great anxiety for people in our city. We hear the claims being made again and again with much pride and enthusiasm by the Canberra Liberals' federal counterparts, who boast about how they are going to get

stuck into Canberra and how they are going to cut tens of thousands of jobs from the Australian public service. They talk about the need almost willy-nilly to move federal departments out of Canberra, because this is not the real world and federal government departments should be closer, apparently, to the real people that they seek to serve.

Of course, this is grossly insulting to the people of the territory, particularly in a year where this city, the seat of the national government, the national capital of the commonwealth, celebrates its centenary. This is a time for pride in our national capital, pride in its achievements and pride in the function it performs as the seat of government for the commonwealth, a federation which is one of the most stable and longest lasting democracies in the world and which has performed in an outstanding manner to guide our country through times of trouble and travail, as well times of boom, to create a just, fair and equitable democracy for all Australians.

We hear the claims from those opposite that somehow there is no difference between measures which are designed to try and manage a budget and ups and downs in movement and what occurred in 1996. The real challenge and response to that is that there is no comparison. There is no comparison between changes in staffing that we might see in budgets from time to time and what occurred in 1996 and how that compares with what Tony Abbott is talking about today.

Let us look at what happened in 1996-97. In 1996-97, federal ongoing staffing levels decreased by 8.1 per cent, or approximately 3,300 persons. As a result of those cuts in 1996, the APS shrunk to its smallest size since 1984. Private sector employment declined by 5.2 per cent, or 4,700 people. The unemployment rate rose to a record level of 7.9 per cent and average house prices declined dramatically. Who can forget the stories that we heard time and again of Canberrans who had not only lost their job but also faced negative equity in their mortgage arrangements for their homes? Who can forget those stories? Who can forget the stories of small businesses going out of business again and again because of the collapse in confidence in the ACT economy, all as a result of the vicious cuts implemented by Howard and Costello in the 1996-97 budget?

Let us compare that with what Mr Abbott is talking about today for our city, which both he and Joe Hockey boast about repeatedly. They are not talking about the 3,300-odd persons that saw their jobs lost in 1996-97; they are talking about at least 10,000 to 12,000 jobs being lost—three times the order of the impact that we saw in 1996-97. There is no comparison between measures that might see some efficiency dividend implemented here and there and what Mr Abbott is talking about now; there is no comparison whatsoever. Those across this chamber should be ashamed if they think that they can defend this as a good thing for our city or a good thing for the communities that we seek to represent because the impact is already being seen. The impact of the prospect of these job cuts is already being seen on our local economy.

The most recent research from the ANZ indicated that the outlook for the Australian Capital Territory is weak due to the potential change of commonwealth government on 14 September this year. A change of government would likely lead to an estimated four per cent cut in employment in the ACT, with significant flow-on effects to

business and consumer sentiment. That is the assessment from one of Australia's leading banks when it comes to the prospects for our economy under a federal Liberal government.

These are real matters for concern. I do not like it when I see any politician from any side of the political fence bagging my city or having a go at my community and saying that in some way this is not a real place with real people, real problems, real jobs, real mortgages and real day-to-day concerns—because it is a real place. It is also the seat of government. It was established by all of us, by all Australians, through the compact that was established at the time of federation.

The challenge for us all is to stand up and say we do not accept attacks on our city, we do not accept attacks on the public service as though it is some easy mark when it comes to politicians outside of this place, and we certainly do not accept a plan which would be unimagined almost in the history of our federation when it comes to the impact on public sector employment.

It has been very interesting to see some of the assertions made by people like Mr Hanson's friend Mr Hockey, who talks about, "You know, there's been this terrible growth in the public service—20,000 more public service jobs than when the Liberals lost office back in 2007." Let us have a look at those figures and all those terrible, bludging public servants, according to Mr Hockey. Well, guess what? About half of those 20,000 positions—and Mr Hanson will be interested in this—are army reservists. Joe Hockey is counting army reservists in his 20,000 increase in the size of the public service. He is counting about 10,000 or so army reservists.

How does he justify that attack on people in the army reserve? I would have thought Mr Hanson would be absolutely outraged to see this criticism and so-called waste in the increase in army reservists as part of those 20,000 people. It is quite extraordinary, but it shows the duplicity of the Liberal Party. It shows the disingenuous position that they adopt in this debate when they make those sorts of claims. They know that half of that 20,000 figure includes army reservists, but they do not care. They are just interested in mounting some sort of flimsy argument that will allow them to get stuck into the public service and our city after the next election.

We know what is going to happen. If they are elected, they are probably going to commission some sort of audit. I can probably predict now what the outcome of that audit is going to be. "Oh, surprise, surprise, there is a problem. And, oh dear, we are going to have to cut many, many more jobs than we said we would." They have done it before. They did it in 1996-97 and they are going to do it again if they get re-elected. In 1996-97 they said, "Oh, there won't be many job cuts."

Members interjecting—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Corbell, sit down.

MR CORBELL: Could I ask you to stop the clock, please, Madam Deputy Speaker.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yes, I will. Stop the clock, please. Members, Mr Corbell has 34 seconds to go. Please pay him the respect of staying silent until he finishes. Mr Corbell.

MR CORBELL: It sounds like we might have belled the cat, Madam Deputy Speaker. They said they would not cut many jobs. Then there was the audit and, “Oh dear, so many more jobs have to go.” There was negative equity in homes, a mass loss of jobs and a massive increase in unemployment in our city. But that is okay because Canberra is not a real place. Well, Canberra is a real place. It is a real city with real people. This Labor government and this Labor Party are going to stand up for the people of this city.

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members, before I proceed, obviously you are very hard of hearing. I asked you to be silent while Mr Corbell finished. He only had 34 second to go, but you could not resist, could you? Ms Burch.

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) (5.46): I thank Dr Bourke for bringing this important motion to the Assembly today. I echo the concerns of my colleagues about the devastating effect a Tony Abbott government would have on the people of Canberra. The prospect of the sacking of 20,000 people in public service jobs in Canberra by a coalition government must be vocally denounced by the Canberra community. And it must be denounced by this Assembly, the elected representatives of the people of Canberra.

The coalition’s promise of mass job cuts represents a slap in the face for the people of Canberra. It should be condemned by the Canberra Liberals if they truly stand up for the people of Canberra. This morning we heard much from Mr Hanson about the need for us to stand up for Canberrans, but he is not prepared to stand up to Tony Abbott, nor is senator elect Mr Seselja prepared to stand up to Tony Abbott when it comes to the cutting of 20,000 jobs.

Mr Wall: A point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Stop the clock, please. Resume your seat, Ms Burch. Mr Wall, a point of order.

Mr Wall: Ms Burch has again referred to Mr Seselja as “senator elect”. I believe that it has been ruled previously by the Speaker of the Assembly that that is out of order.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Wall, I did not actually hear that statement, but Ms Burch I remind you that we will not refer to Mr Seselja by other than his proper name.

MS BURCH: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. As I said, this morning we heard many a call from those opposite, particularly Mr Hanson, about fighting the good fight for the people of Canberra. But he is not prepared to fight the fight against Tony Abbott. It should not come as any surprise that they are not supporting this motion today, because the Canberra Liberals have a track record of supporting public service job cuts in our own public service and abandoning the people of Canberra.

We only need to look to the lead-up to our own election last year. The Canberra Liberals—in fact, I think it was the Speaker of the house in her former role of shadow community services minister—pledged to outsource front-line government services, a policy that would have resulted in the loss of hundreds, if not thousands, of public service jobs across a range of government front-line services. I would like to remind the Assembly of Mrs Dunne’s comment at an ACTCOSS forum that I attended when she stated:

My vision is that we should actually as a government be a funder of services rather than ... a provider of services.

There, in her own words, she was already sharpening her pencil to cut ACT front-line services here in Canberra. With that ideology, it is no surprise that the Canberra Liberals are standing idly by while their federal colleagues plot to gut our city, our community and our economy.

Of course, there is another reason for their silence and their complicity on the coalition plans. We know that Mr Seselja is counting his days and counting the pay cheques till he can leave this Assembly in body—he has already left it in spirit, some time ago—and take Abbott’s plans to the streets as one of the coalition’s candidates in the next election. At a recent AHA gala dinner, Mr Hanson introduced Mr Seselja as the next Liberal senator and said that he would be an MLA for the next four months. He also told people in the room that if they had a local matter they could take it up with Mr Seselja. They did not, because they know he does not represent the local community.

No doubt Mr Seselja has been telling his Assembly colleagues to keep quiet on Mr Abbott’s plans to slash the public service here in case they make Mr Abbott more unpopular than he already is. Whilst Mr Hanson is happy to continue to be directed by his actions and words at the AHA dinner, this tells me one thing: Mr Hanson is happy to continue to be directed by the former leader of the Canberra Liberals, he accepts poor advocacy for the people of Brindabella and he accepts—

Mr Hanson: Point of order.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Ms Burch, resume your seat, please. Stop the clock.

Mr Hanson: Madam Deputy Speaker, fascinating as—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Have you got a point of order, Mr Hanson?

Mr Hanson: I do have a point of order; it is on relevance. I am just not sure about comments about the AHA and the sort of stuff that—

Mr Barr interjecting—

Mr Hanson: I am just not sure that it is really relevant to the debate. I ask you to bring it back to the focus of the motion rather than the tangent that she is going on, fascinating as it is.

Mr Corbell: On the point of order.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: On the point of order, Mr Corbell.

Mr Corbell: If you were to rule that Ms Burch is not being relevant, does that mean that Mr Seselja is no longer relevant?

Mr Hanson: Madam Deputy Speaker, I think there is an important point to make here. I have raised a serious point of order—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Is this on the point of order?

Mr Hanson: It is on the point of order. The members opposite think it is a big joke. They are saying, “Oh, Mr Seselja, apparently you’re not relevant.” It is a serious point of order. I ask you to bring them to order, as you would if the shoe was on the other foot, and rule on the point of order rather than accepting this nonsense from the other side.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, thank you for your advice, which I actually do not need, about the members opposite on my right. I have asked them to remain silent on numbers of occasions—as I have you. Ms Burch, please remain relevant to the motion that you have before you. You can continue.

MS BURCH: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. The motion is about a call to Mr Abbott around supporting jobs here in Canberra. I think all representatives here and at a federal level should have this in mind; hence I think the comments about Mr Seselja are relevant. But I will move on.

I remind people that in this place we accepted that Mr Seselja has abandoned the folk of Brindabella and does not provide good representation. A notice signed by Mrs Dunne herself, as Speaker, goes to a past motion in this place, saying that the Assembly notes that:

... the people of Lanyon Valley have a reasonable expectation that those elected to represent them will stay the course for their term ...

Mr Hanson: Madam Deputy Speaker—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Resume your seat, Ms Burch. Stop the clock, please.

Mr Hanson: My understanding is that you ruled on this. You called on the minister—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, have you got a point of order?

Mr Hanson: Yes, I do, on relevance. My understanding is that you ruled on this. You instructed the minister to be relevant to the debate. The motion is specifically about the public service and the federal Leader of the Opposition. Talking about other matters for political purposes is not relevant to the debate. I ask her to be relevant to the debate.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yes, Mr Hanson. It is also, I believe, about this Assembly making its representation to the federal government about the ACT and its position as the nation's capital et cetera. I am hoping that Ms Burch is coming to a point of relevance through what she is saying.

MS BURCH: Yes.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: I know you have not actually made your point yet, so I am not quite sure what you are saying, but could you make sure that you remain relevant in whatever you are about to say, please. Thank you.

MS BURCH: I will, Madam Deputy Speaker. I will just finish on this point. The motion also said that the plan to move Mr Seselja to the federal parliament "represents a betrayal of the trust placed in him by the voters of Lanyon".

Here we are on a motion asking this Assembly to stand together, to write to Tony Abbott and say that we need to make sure that the coalition's planned cuts of 20,000 jobs are not acceptable. I think it is very clear. Today's motion clearly puts the Canberra Liberals in a compromised position. How can they support this motion when one of their own will, when he finally decides to leave, be prosecuting the case for Tony Abbott on why gutting the public service is the right thing to do?

Madam Deputy Speaker, let me tell you why the Canberra Liberals should be supporting this motion. They should do it because it is the right thing to do for the people of Canberra. We need to put up a united front on behalf of the Canberra community and publicly condemn the coalition's plan to gut the Canberra public service. We need to stand up for the people of Canberra. This is a foreign concept to the Canberra Liberals and it is particularly a foreign concept to Mr Seselja as articulated and expressed in this motion passed by this Assembly.

Today Mr Hanson has an opportunity to show some leadership, to stand up to Tony Abbott—indeed, to stand up to Mr Seselja, the coalition Senate candidate for the seat of Canberra—and say that enough is enough. Mr Seselja might have abandoned the people of Tuggeranong, the people who voted him into this place, but, Mr Hanson, you, as current leader, now have a chance to show your leadership and stand up for the electorate, your community, and support this motion so that we send a clear message that the Canberra community does not want to see our jobs go, does not want to see our families and our neighbours who work in the public service lose their jobs.

I will also make reference, if I may, to an article published yesterday. I think it was in yesterday's *Canberra Times*. The Canberra member, Gai Brodtmann, accused the opposition leader of treating the public service of the capital with disdain. It quotes her as saying:

Remember 1996 when house prices fell, we lost 15,000 public servants ... local shops shut down, businesses and tradies went under and people left Canberra. And that's the future vision that the Coalition has for Canberra.

The article also says:

A report by ANZ Research warned the ACT could be "heavily negatively affected" by public service cuts under a Coalition government.

The Liberal-Nationals plan to cut around 20,000 jobs from the public service, a large proportion of which are likely to occur in Canberra as around 40 per cent of the workforce is either directly involved in public administration or the services that consult to it ...

We estimate there could be a direct 4 per cent cut to Canberra's workforce, which would have flow-on effects to other sectors in the ACT and nationally.

The article also says:

The ANZ Research report said the possibility of a change of government was already hitting the territory's economy, with the housing market slowing and business and households acting cautiously.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this motion—or the amendments, which I think Mr Rattenbury will get to shortly—is very clear. The amendments state:

... the Prime Minister made a commitment in her speech launching the Centenary celebrations on 12 March 2012 to Canberra remaining the heart of the Australian Public Service and the primary location of Commonwealth Government departments and agencies ...

They recognise:

... the importance of Canberra as the nation's capital and continuing to invest in Canberra, both as the home of our national institutions and the heart of the Australian Public Service ...

And they call on the Speaker—that would be you, Madam Speaker—to write to Mr Abbott. (*Time expired.*)

At 6 pm, in accordance with standing order 34, the debate was interrupted. The motion for the adjournment of the Assembly having been put and negatived, the debate was resumed.

Question put:

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

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 8

Noes 9

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

Question so resolved in the negative.

Amendment negatived.

MADAM SPEAKER: Before we go on, could I make some comments about order in this place. Ms Porter, Mr Gentleman and Mr Doszpot all struggled to keep order in this place during this debate. I know that it is a robust issue, but when the presiding officer calls you to order I expect that you will come to order, and when I call you to order I do not expect that members occupying the chair will have to speak over you at length. If it continues, I will start warning people and naming people.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (6.04): I seek leave to move my amendments together.

Leave granted.

MR RATTENBURY: I move the amendments circulated in my name together:

(1) Omit subparagraphs (1)(d) and (e), substitute:

“(d) that the Prime Minister made a commitment in her speech launching the Centenary celebrations on 12 March 2012 to Canberra remaining the heart of the Australian Public Service and the primary location of Commonwealth Government departments and agencies; and

(e) the importance to the nation and to Canberra residents of the Commonwealth Government recognising the importance of Canberra as the nation’s capital and continuing to invest in Canberra, both as the home of our national institutions and the heart of the Australian Public Service;”.

(2) Omit paragraph (2), substitute:

“(2) affirms its support for the Commonwealth Government:

- (a) making a commitment to the role and significance of Canberra in the life of our nation;
 - (b) maintaining the number of public service jobs in Canberra; and
 - (c) keeping Canberra as the central location of Commonwealth Government departments and agencies;”.
- (3) Omit paragraph (3), substitute:

“(3) calls on the Speaker to write to Mr Abbott:

- (a) expressing the Assembly’s support for the ACT retaining its role as the home of Australia’s national institutions and the Australian Public Service; and
- (b) asking that he respond in writing to the Assembly on his intentions for the Australian Public Service, including any current plans to relocate departments, agencies or other Canberra-based entities outside of the ACT.”.

Members, I do not intend to speak to this. I think the issues have been fully canvassed. I am happy for it to go straight to the vote.

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (6.05): The opposition will not be supporting these amendments. Again, they miss the point and I will go to it. This is a politically motivated motion. Mr Rattenbury is trying to create an impression that he is trying to play both sides, that he has considered the arguments and has balanced this and balanced that. As we see repeatedly, what we are seeing from Mr Rattenbury is that he is siding with the government and essentially supporting their endeavours.

This is so much the case that we saw Minister Burch’s enthusiasm for Mr Rattenbury’s amendment. She was quoting from it before it was even moved. She was reading from it with glee. She was saying that this is fantastic stuff—“I love this. I am going to ignore the original motion.” She said, “I am actually going to quote from Mr Rattenbury’s amendment, because I love that stuff. I love what he is doing.” We have certainly seen it from Mr Rattenbury. We have not just seen it today. We have seen it on other occasions when he said, “DV306—I am concerned that there are these problems, but I will vote with Labor; no worries, mate.” Remember Gonski this morning? Mr Doszpot will reflect that—

Mr Corbell: Point of order.

MR HANSON: You know, there is Gonski—

MADAM SPEAKER: Point of order, Mr Corbell.

Mr Corbell: Relevance.

Members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, members! We like to enjoy ourselves here, but we cannot enjoy ourselves too much.

Mr Corbell: As interesting as Mr Hanson's outburst is on Gonski and DV306, I do not think that these are matters really at the heart of Tony Abbott's terrible plan to cut 10,000 public service jobs.

MADAM SPEAKER: You are making a point of order, Mr Corbell; so can you keep it straight?

Mr Corbell: I would draw your attention, Madam Speaker, to the fact that Mr Hanson is straying into other areas such as draft variation 306 and Gonski, which are not relevant to the motion before the chair.

MR HANSON: Madam Speaker, this has been a very wide-ranging debate. I would argue that it is relevant in terms of the motivations for what has been proposed in the amendment. That is what it goes to, not to the technical issues or the policy of DV306, but simply the motivation of the member moving the amendment in this case.

Mr Corbell: The motivations are not relevant to this.

MR HANSON: Yes, they are.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Rattenbury has moved a set of amendments which you are speaking to which address a range of issues. I would ask you, Mr Hanson, to be relevant to the amendment.

MR HANSON: Certainly, Madam Speaker. By virtue of the fact that the government sought to close me down I think my point has been somewhat well made. The member that moved the amendment tends to do these sorts of things. We see him gnashing his teeth, gnashing his teeth, and then coming down here and voting with the government.

We will see it in the next motion, the memorial motion. He will say, "Oh dear, I feel sympathetic. I will say lots of words, lots of words. I am voting with the government." We have seen that quite regularly.

Mr Corbell: Point of order.

MR HANSON: All right, I am moving on. I am moving on.

Mr Corbell: He is ignoring your ruling, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: I do not consider that he is ignoring my ruling. Thank you for your assistance, Mr Corbell. But could you move on to—

MR HANSON: Yes, I understand that Mr Rattenbury has got a problem. He has got to try and support his Senate candidate colleague Simon Sheikh. That is what he is

trying to do. He wants to create some stir around it, just as the Labor Party is trying to do today, Madam Speaker. They are trying to create a lot of political noise. Maybe it was foreshadowed that something was going to appear in the *Canberra Times* today. Maybe they thought, “Quick, let’s move a motion to cover our embarrassment, our abject embarrassment, that it is actually federal Labor that is cutting these jobs.”

The problem I have with the amendment, as we have highlighted over here, and Mr Seselja made the point comprehensively in this speech, is that this is happening right now. The concerns being expressed are happening right now. I do not know whether they are not particularly bright on that side or whether they are just trying to ignore the fact. I think probably a bit of both. But let us remember that employment in the ACT was never better than under Howard. Any statement of commitment by Gillard is worthless. We have established that. The reason that this is an issue in the first place is that federal Labor has wrecked—has wrought havoc on—the federal budget. It gets worse day by day. I hate to think what the actual deficit is going to become by the budget next week.

As we saw, to December last year 3,000 jobs have gone, and God knows how many in the intervening period. But all of us who know people in the federal public service know that there will be a significant amount more. If this had been a genuine attempt by Mr Rattenbury to try and play the middle path, as he pretends he is doing, then this amendment would not have said, “Let us call on the Speaker to write to Mr Abbott.” It would not. It would say that it is an expression of support for the ACT or it would refer to writing to federal parliamentarians or even refer to writing to the Speaker of the federal parliament. It would have been along those lines.

But no, what he is doing is saying, “Let us kick Abbott. Let us have a go at Abbott.” That is what he is attempting to do. So we will not be supporting his amendment, because it is equally as disingenuous as the original motion. It is trying to score political points when the reality is that it is this mob, supported by the Greens federally and locally, who are giving the ACT a big kick right now.

As it would appear that this motion, as amended by Mr Rattenbury, is going to get through, this is the last point I make: if, Madam Speaker, you are inclined to write to Mr Abbott, I think it would be useful in that correspondence to highlight the fact that this was not supported by unanimous vote of the Assembly. Perhaps it would be useful to include the opposition’s amendment in that correspondence to reflect the somewhat disparate views that were expressed during the debate.

MR BARR (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Sport and Recreation, Minister for Tourism and Events and Minister for Community Services) (6.11): I might start by referring to those particular concluding comments from Mr Hanson. Obviously, it would not be within your purview to make such alterations. The Assembly will determine, of course, the content of such correspondence by way of the formal motion that is moved. The text that is required is, of course, what the Assembly will determine. So any suggestion, Madam Speaker, that there can be some alteration to that, as determined by the Leader of the Opposition, is absurd.

MADAM SPEAKER: And you would not be presuming to tell the Speaker how to do her job, would you, Mr Barr?

MR BARR: I am just making an observation on the observation that was made by the Leader of the Opposition, Madam Speaker. The government will, of course, support Mr Rattenbury's amendments, just to—

Opposition members interjecting—

MR BARR: It is common sense, really, is it not? The additional clauses I think are agreeable, and we are happy to support those. I would just like to make some observations, though, on Mr Hanson's comments in relation to employment. It is curious that when you look at the employment data for the territory and the record level of employment that we currently have—well above any level of employment we achieved under the Howard government—

Mr Seselja: That is incorrect. You are going to have to withdraw it.

MR BARR: There are 209,500 people in employment, Mr Seselja. How many were in employment when the Howard government was—

MADAM SPEAKER: Would you address your remarks through the chair, Mr Barr.

MR BARR: 209,500, Madam Speaker—a record level of employment in the Australian Capital Territory. We are talking absolute jobs, because that has been the context of this discussion. If the opposition are suggesting that the level of public sector employment in the ACT is somehow determined inversely by the population of the ACT, that is a curious correlation to draw. Therefore, public sector employment will continue to rise if the ACT population continues to rise? I am not sure that that correlation is quite there.

If the suggestion is that employment levels in the public service have reduced in the last six years, as is the assertion from the Leader of the Opposition, someone ought to tell Joe Hockey. Maybe you could do that, Mr Hanson. Then he might stop going around the country saying—

Mr Smyth: So there have been no jobs lost?

MR BARR: that there are 20,000 more people. According to Joe Hockey there are 20,000 more positions in the ACT. According to Joe Hockey, there are 20,000 more jobs in the ACT than there were six years ago, that there are—

Mrs Jones: 20,000 across the nation.

Mr Coe: So now you like Joe Hockey's figures?

MR BARR: Look, I am just taking him on face value. He is going around the country saying that there are 20,000 more jobs. He inserts the words "in Canberra". Mrs Jones

suggests that perhaps it is Australia-wide. He can clarify his statements. But when he says that there are 20,000 more jobs in Canberra, we will take him on face value. We will take him on face value because apparently that is where—

Members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, members!

MR BARR: Apparently that is where he intends to cut the 20,000 jobs, in Canberra, because he keeps on making that point about there being 20,000 more jobs in Canberra in the public service than there were six years ago.

I said in my earlier comments that if we were to believe both Mr Hockey's position and the position of those opposite, that there are 20,000 more in Canberra and that they believe there are 3,000 less than that today, then there has been a net increase of 17,000. Yes? You are not going to argue with that?

Mr Seselja: No. Well, what are your numbers?

MR BARR: No, you are not. Apparently you are not arguing. So—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Barr, you are supposed to be addressing your remarks to the chair.

MR BARR: Madam Speaker, I am not responsible for levels of employment in the commonwealth public service, but my observation is that there has been an increase in public sector employment in the Australian Capital Territory. That is evidenced by the fact that we have a record level of employment in the Australian Capital Territory at 209,500. Yes, there are more jobs in the commonwealth public sector than there were six years ago, undoubtedly. Undoubtedly, there are more jobs in the commonwealth public sector than there were six years ago. There are—

Mr Smyth interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, Mr Smyth!

MR BARR: We have 209,500 jobs in the ACT and that level has been steady for the last few months—

Mr Smyth interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, Mr Smyth!

MR BARR: and has increased over the last few years.

Mr Smyth interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Smyth!

MR BARR: It increased over the last few years. I know that the ACT government has been making a contribution to that increase in employment of, on average, about 200 positions per year. We have increased our employment particularly in the health sector, in education, in emergency services, in a range of areas of service delivery that are important for the people of Canberra.

But if you believe the shadow treasurer, in fact, there should have been no employment growth in the ACT—

Mr Smyth interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, Mr Smyth!

MR BARR: There should have been no employment growth in the ACT—

Mr Smyth interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, Mr Smyth! You can speak in this debate if you wish.

MR BARR: You can do that. If you had sat there silent, you would have the opportunity to speak, Mr Smyth. We would look forward to a contribution from you.

MADAM SPEAKER: You can address your remarks through the chair.

MR BARR: What we have seen, Madam Speaker, is employment growth in the territory of around one per cent. According to the interjections from Mr Smyth, none of that could have come in the commonwealth public sector; apparently not.

Mr Smyth interjecting—

MR BARR: You can get up and speak in a moment, Mr Smyth. Are you going to allow those continued interjections, Madam Speaker?

MADAM SPEAKER: I am listening to you, Mr Barr.

MR BARR: Thank you. I am pleased that one person in the chamber—

Mr Smyth interjecting—

MR BARR: on your side of politics is listening to me, Madam Speaker, as the interjections continue.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Smyth, could you cease interjection?

Mr Doszpot interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Doszpot! Mr Barr.

MR BARR: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As I was saying, employment in the territory has increased. We have record levels of employment. If the suggestion is that the commonwealth public sector has contracted then it would be hard to reconcile how we could have achieved such levels of employment growth. I know the ACT government is not responsible for that level of employment growth. The data would tend to suggest that the private sector alone and some areas making a modest contribution to increased employment are not making a one per cent contribution to increased employment.

It would appear that all three sectors, the ACT government, the commonwealth government and the private sector have contributed to employment growth in the territory in recent times. What has happened, though, is that our population rate has been growing at two per cent per annum and our employment growth at one, hence the slide up in unemployment in recent times.

That said, the territory government anticipated no employment growth. So it has been pleasing to see that in this fiscal year to date we have actually seen employment growth in the territory. That is testimony to the strength of the ACT economy, but that certainly would be at risk if 20,000 jobs in Canberra were cut should there be a change of government in September. That is the issue that this community confronts and that is the issue that this Assembly confronts today.

The amendment that Mr Rattenbury moves puts in place what you would think would be a reasonable approach, to seek information from the opposition leader as to his intentions for the Australian public service, including any current plans to relocate departments, agencies or other Canberra-based entities outside of the ACT. If Mr Smyth cannot today express the Assembly's support for the ACT retaining its role as the home of Australia's national institutions and the Australian public service then let him get up in 20 seconds, because he has been full of interjections for the last 10 minutes. Have the guts, Mr Smyth, to get up and support this.

Mr Smyth: Have the guts to write to the Prime Minister. Write to the Prime Minister, you goose.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, Mr Smyth!

MR BARR: The Prime Minister has already given the commitment, Mr Smyth. We do not need to; it has already been given.

Mr Smyth interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, Mr Smyth!

MR BARR: Your side of politics is the side that needs to give this commitment. You can do it in two seconds. But here comes the senator. *(Time expired.)*

MADAM SPEAKER: Before I call Mr Seselja, Mr Smyth, I have asked you to cease interjection. If you interject again, I shall warn you. Mr Seselja.

MR SESELJA (Brindabella) (6.22): You always know that Mr Barr is lacking facts when his voice goes high as he is trying to emphasise a point. Let us deal with what he just said very briefly because he has been spouting rubbish all afternoon. Let us go to some of what he said there and let us go to some actual numbers, which he did not want to point to.

We saw the report earlier this year that said the ACT's jobless rate has jumped to its highest level in more than 11 years as 3,000 more people were listed as unemployed in the territory in January. It paints a very different picture from what Mr Barr has just been telling this Assembly with a straight face. The report states:

... the capital's unemployment rate now sits at 4.5 per cent in trend terms ...

It actually has a quote from Mr Barr and what he puts it down to. It said:

The new data puts ACT behind the Northern Territory and Western Australia ...

ACT Treasurer Andrew Barr said the rise in the capital's jobless rate was expected on the back of spending cuts in the Australian Public Service

"That's not surprising given what was forecast in the Commonwealth budget.

So what he was just saying was absolute rubbish. He was not prepared to point to any of the numbers because he knew they did not back up what he was saying. He interjected when I was speaking earlier, saying that I said that the unemployment rate was growing more quickly under this Labor government in the ACT than it has in the rest of the country, and it has.

Let us have a brief look at the numbers just to emphasise what Labor governments do to the ACT. When the Howard government came into office, the ACT unemployment rate that they inherited was eight per cent. The national unemployment rate at that time was 8.4 per cent—so roughly around the same. That is why we remember youth unemployment being so high. That is why we remember it was so difficult to get a job under the Keating government.

Howard inherited eight per cent, with an 8.4 per cent national unemployment rate. When the Howard government left office, the unemployment rate in the ACT was 2.5 per cent, a record low. The national unemployment rate was 4.3 per cent. That was also around record lows. In fact, we saw the national rate dropping rapidly and the ACT rate dropping even more rapidly under the Howard government. It now sits at around 4.5 per cent versus the national rate of 5.6 per cent

Andrew Barr, like all his Labor colleagues, is full of it, Madam Speaker; he is full of it. He is not prepared to put numbers behind what he says. He speaks in generalities and he talks rubbish. He has just been found out to have spouted absolute nonsense all afternoon and for the last 10 minutes.

Question put:

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

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 9		Noes 8	
Mr Barr	Ms Gallagher	Mr Coe	Mr Seselja
Ms Berry	Mr Gentleman	Mr Doszpot	Mr Smyth
Dr Bourke	Ms Porter	Mrs Dunne	Mr Wall
Ms Burch	Mr Rattenbury	Mr Hanson	
Mr Corbell		Mrs Jones	

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Amendments agreed to.

DR BOURKE (Ginninderra) (6.26): I thank my Labor colleagues for their support on this motion this afternoon. I also thank Mr Rattenbury, whose historical perspective echoed the observations that I had already made about why we are here, why Canberra is here and the importance of balancing out those Sydney-Melbourne rivalries.

From the Canberra Liberals this afternoon we have heard a typical Hanson and Seselja performance. They fluffed, they huffed, they puffed. All we got was a bunch of irrelevancies which were repeated over and over again as if to give them more substance. They did not bother addressing the matter. They cannot even be bothered trying to defend the indefensible, because if Mr Smyth had actually bothered to read the *Canberra Times*—and he was waving the front page around so eloquently this afternoon—he would have read this afternoon that Mr Abbott said:

... because the public sector payroll in Canberra is about 20,000 more than it was in 2007 and the fact that under this Government, there's been a very slight reduction in numbers demonstrates that it can be done and it will be done much better and much more effectively under a Coalition government.

They want to do it better and they want to do it to us.

Question put:

That the motion, as amended, be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 9		Noes 8	
Mr Barr	Ms Gallagher	Mr Coe	Mr Seselja
Ms Berry	Mr Gentleman	Mr Doszpot	Mr Smyth
Dr Bourke	Ms Porter	Mrs Dunne	Mr Wall
Ms Burch	Mr Rattenbury	Mr Hanson	
Mr Corbell		Mrs Jones	

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

MADAM SPEAKER: Before I call Mr Corbell, Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES (Molonglo): Madam Speaker, I rise to make a personal explanation and seek leave to do so.

MADAM SPEAKER: Under standing order 46, leave is granted.

MRS JONES: I was misquoted today by Mr Gentleman in this debate. A gentleman never eavesdrops on a lady's private interjections. Is Mr Gentleman really a gentleman?

MADAM SPEAKER: It might be time we all went home. Mr Corbell.

Mr Corbell: It is unclear to me where Mrs Jones says she was misrepresented, Madam Speaker, but perhaps she can get some tips.

Adjournment

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

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

May Day

MS BERRY (Ginninderra) (6.30): I rise tonight to briefly talk about the celebration of May Day, a day recognising working people in Canberra. Again I congratulate Sarah Dinsmore and Robyn Quarmby, department of innovation delegates from the CPSU who were winners of this year's May Day award, the award recognising the significant contribution of union members in the workplace. This story is a good one and reflects the dedication and values of our union members across the ACT.

But before I tell that story, I wish to give a brief account of the May Day rally that was held on Saturday. On Saturday more than 300 members of the ACT community came out to Old Parliament House to rally for our jobs, our city and our future.

Members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, members! I cannot hear Ms Berry.

MS BERRY: I cannot hear me either!

MADAM SPEAKER: That is a problem. Ms Berry.

MS BERRY: At Old Parliament House there was a rally for our jobs, our city and our future, to support the values of unionism, something our friends across the chamber could learn a thing or two about.

It was a lovely day to see so many people celebrate the great things that working people as members of unions have achieved, achievements such as fair pay and conditions, work site health and safety and collective bargaining. This was the first May Day rally, I think, in about 10 years, and I congratulate the work of Unions ACT for making it such a great day.

Now I want to tell Sarah and Robyn's story. Towards the end of 2011, the federal government announced that it would move over 800 staff from DEEWR to the department of innovation. This change meant that significant negotiation had to take place over the agreement and conditions that the former DEEWR employees would work under. The innovation delegates quickly responded and ran a national campaign in their workplace. A team of delegates coordinated and led the campaign and represented members at the Fair Work Commission and in meetings with the department.

Sarah and Robyn were instrumental in what was a sustained campaign involving the collection of hundreds of signatures to an open letter, online surveys, mass bulletins and mass meetings that ultimately shaped the negotiation process. This enabled the employees to secure a range of important conditions. Sarah and Robyn stepped up to represent their colleagues.

Both were new to the workplace delegate role. One was a former graduate, and the other had not previously been a delegate. They developed organising skills and represented members over the course of their campaign, doing things like building support through the collection of hundreds of signatures from affected workers to an open letter to the employer and they represented members at meetings with the employer and at conciliations in the Fair Work Commission.

The workplace campaign went on for nine months and involved hundreds of workers and has positioned them for stronger outcomes in the next round of enterprise bargaining in 2014. Union density as a result of the campaign almost doubled, from 14 to 27 per cent. Sarah and Robyn are an example of what public servants are capable of achieving when they work together.

Greening Australia

MS PORTER (Ginninderra) (6.33): I would like to take the opportunity to talk about the work undertaken by Greening Australia, its staff and the thousands of volunteers in restoring the landscape of the Cotter catchment and also to highlight the celebrations that took place on Sunday. As Minister Corbell mentioned yesterday in answer to a question without notice in this place, about 300 people turned out on Sunday to celebrate the restoration work undertaken since the 2003 bushfires. These volunteers, ably assisted by the staff of Greening Australia, planted around 2,000 understorey plants on the day, but it was not all about hard work. Believe me, planting at the Cotter is often quite hard work, depending on the particular terrain, soil and the weather. I speak from long experience. However, it is not all about hard work. It is also about community building and celebration.

On this occasion, I could not join in the planting because I had a prior commitment—a mobile office, in fact. However, I was glad to be able to join Minister Corbell as he recognised the efforts of the community for so many years. The evidence of that stretched before our very eyes.

Those present to help the formalities were Aunty Agnes and Meredith Hatherly, a volunteer who spoke about her volunteering over many years. On the panel were Kirilly Dickson from ACTEW, Brett MacNamara from parks and conservation—and you may recall that at the time of the 2003 fires Brett lost his home adjacent to the national park—Jason Cummings, the CEO of Volunteering Australia, and me. All of us were volunteers.

The staff and others present were well fed, as usual, by the ACT scouts, supplied with water for the plantings by the ACT fire brigade and entertained by the Cashews, the Burley Griffins and the Lavers. Our wonderful poet Hal Judge was on hand to interpret the celebrations through verse.

Graffik Paint produced a wonderful mural of the landscape during the event and we all were somewhat taken aback to see that beautiful mural unfolding as the formal part of the celebrations were going on. And I would like to thank them in particular for their wonderful artwork.

In closing, I would like to thank all those who were involved in the past 10 years in restoring the Cotter landscape and also on that particular day celebrating such a great achievement. So many plants were planted. I think the minister said yesterday—and I have it here in writing from Greening Australia—that 7,000 Canberrans have volunteered over the past decade, and these volunteers have planted over 300,000 seedlings over 500 hectares.

May Day

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella) (6.37): I rise to join my Assembly colleague Ms Berry in celebrating May Day, which occurs on 1 May. It is a celebration of the international labour movement and reflects back to very early days in Australia and to labour marches on workplace rights and rights for workers.

The celebrations here in the ACT included, as Ms Berry reflected, the May Day toast. It was a fundraiser for APHEDA, the international Union Aid Abroad union support group. It was great to see recognised those CPSU delegates that Ms Berry mentioned at the toast.

The May Day rally occurred on Saturday. We had unions represented—the CPSU, United Voice, TWU, ANF, CFMEU, SDA and many more. There were about 400 attendees. This was the first May Day event, as I think Ms Berry mentioned, since the late 1990s. The theme was “standing up for our jobs, our city and our future”, and I think some of that feeling was reflected in our earlier debates today.

The rally is partly about taking a stand for secure work. Currently, there are about 40 per cent of workers nationwide in part-time or non-ongoing employment, and that affects both the private and public sectors.

The rally also encourages workers to stand up to threats from the federal coalition to cut public service jobs. We were told on the day that those cuts will have a knock-on effect for over 12,000 families, many within the ACT. The rally also denounced the use of Canberra bashing, towards the city and its workers, by politicians and those living outside the capital.

May Day is a significant and international trade union movement event and continues to remain very relevant in this day and age.

New fights are arising all the time. In Australia the new fights were junior wages, and the SDA has moved to remove junior wages from people aged 18 to 21, and penalty rates, which are always being challenged, currently by Mr Xenophon. And at the AHA awards the other night, we did hear penalty rates being challenged by some groups there.

As I said, I think it is a day that will always be relevant to anyone who cares about workers. It serves as a significant day to fight to achieve what we now have and will have, and I believe it to be very important for workers across Australia.

I would like to acknowledge a number of people: Humphrey McQueen for his really energetic speech at the May Day toast and his continuing support for May Day; and Ben Halliday from the CPSU for his organisation of the event. I am very pleased to be part of the labour movement and to be part of the rallies that encourage support for workers, saving jobs and helping them support their families.

Hospitality industry—awards

MR COE (Ginninderra) (6.40): On 22 April I was pleased to attend the 2013 AHA ACT hospitality awards at the Hotel Realm. The theme of this year's awards was 100 years of hospitality in Canberra. I would like to place on the record my congratulations to the award winners. The John Press award went to Mike Kadinski from Kremlin Bar. Member of the year was Matthew Shelton from the Hotel Realm. The centenary of Canberra award went to the Hyatt Hotel Canberra and King O'Malley's Irish Pub. Best tourism initiative went to the human brochure, Australian Capital Tourism.

Best restaurant service employee, accommodation division, went to Pablo Nicolas Caiafa from Hotel Realm. Best restaurant service employee, general division, went to Abel Bariller of Sage Dining Rooms. Best restaurant cookery employee, accommodation and general division, went to Nathan Bamford of Belconnen Premier Inn and Damian Grey from the Sage Dining Rooms. Best apprentice chef went to Amanda Polsen from the Hyatt Hotel Canberra. Best front of house employee, accommodation division, went to Dixie Addison-Rolfe from the Diamant Hotel and Maureen Ocampo from the Hyatt Hotel Canberra. Best bar service employee, accommodation and general division, went to Sam Carlini from the Kremlin Bar.

Best bar in a hotel, accommodation division, went to the Diamant Hotel. Best hotel restaurant, accommodation division, went to Promenade Cafe and Hyatt Hotel Canberra. Best cocktail bar, general division, went to Knightsbridge Penthouse. Best modern Australian went to Pistachio Dining at Torrens. Best wine list, accommodation and general division, went to Pulp Kitchen. Best restaurant, general division, went to Taze. Best prestigious restaurant, general division, went to Sage Dining Rooms. Best international cuisine, general division, went to Wild Duck Cuisine. Best cafe restaurant, general division, went to Caphs Restaurant, Bar and Cafe.

Best meetings and events hotel, accommodation division, went to Hotel Realm. Best bar presentation and service went to Knightsbridge Penthouse. Best first-class accommodation four-star went to Quality Hotel, Woden. Best new-redeveloped venue, general division, went to Brodburger. Best new-redeveloped venue, accommodation division, went to the East Hotel. Best marketed hotel, accommodation division, went to the Realm Hotel. Best suite-apartment hotel went to East Hotel. Best mid-range accommodation three to 3½ stars went to the Statesman Hotel. Best environmental practice went to East Hotel.

Best late night entertainment venue went to the Hippo Terrace Bar. Best live entertainment venue, accommodation and general division, went to Transit Bar. Best sporting entertainment venue, accommodation and general division, went to Mooseheads Pub and Nightclub. Best local, general division, went to Edgar's Inn. Best pub bistro, general division, went to Playground Martini and Tapas Bar. Best superior accommodation 4½ stars went to the East Hotel. And finally, best deluxe accommodation five stars went to the Hyatt Hotel Canberra.

I would like to congratulate all those involved in organising the awards, including the AHA ACT branch general manager, Brad Watts; the president, Michael Capezio; the community and management officer, Jasmine De Martin; accommodations division president, Mark Sproat; and industrial relations consultant, Alan Lees.

Finally I would like to place on the record my thanks to the AHA sponsors, and they are ActewAGL, APRA, Australian Capital Tourism, Canberra University of Technology, Capital Linen Service, Carlton United Brewers, Coca Cola Amatil, Coordinate, Fox Sports, HostPlus, Lion, Meyer Vandenberg Lawyers, Sanyo Data Systems, Schweppes Australia, TEMPlar Total Recruitment Services, TMV and Treasury Wine Estates.

Once again, congratulations to all the award winners and to all those who were nominated for awards. I commend the AHA for its important work and encourage all members to visit the association's website at www.actaha.org.au for more information.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 6.44 pm.