



Debates

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Tuesday, 14 May 2013

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

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee Scrutiny report 7

MR DOSZPOT (Molonglo): I present the following report:

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee (Legislative Scrutiny Role)—Scrutiny Report 7, dated 13 May 2013, together with the relevant minutes of proceedings.

I seek leave to make a brief statement.

Leave granted.

MR DOSZPOT: Scrutiny report 7 contains the committee's comments on 14 pieces of subordinate legislation. The report was circulated to members when the Assembly was not sitting. I commend the report to the Assembly.

Economy—trade mission Ministerial statement

MR BARR (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Sport and Recreation, Minister for Tourism and Events and Minister for Community Services) (10.00): I ask leave to make a ministerial statement concerning the Indonesia-Singapore economic development mission.

Leave granted.

MR BARR: I would like to make a brief statement on my recent six-day visit to Indonesia and Singapore, which commenced on 21 April in Jakarta.

Madam Speaker, the two legs of the mission had quite different objectives. Jakarta was a traditional trade development mission, while the two-day visit to Singapore was focused on tourism and in-bound investment. The trade mission to Indonesia—which I believe is the first ACT government-led mission of its type—was themed around the ACT's significant competitive strengths in areas of international education, knowledge-intensive business services, ICT services and expertise in public administration.

Twelve ACT companies participated in the mission, along with the University of Canberra, the Australian National University, the Australian Catholic University Canberra campus and the Canberra Institute of Technology. The mission provided an opportunity for ACT businesses to build new markets for their products and services

and for educational institutions to reaffirm their relationships with existing clients and to explore and generate new activity.

Australia and Indonesia are major players in the region and have growing political, security, commercial, environmental, cultural and people-to-people connections. As respective national capitals, the cities of Jakarta and Canberra are well placed to nurture both the country-to-country relationship and also the people-to-people connections.

The ACT business community has for some time been a strong proponent of sending a delegation to Indonesia, so it was particularly pleasing to have the support and direct involvement of the international business task force of the Canberra Business Council, the ACT branch of the Australia Indonesian Business Council and the ACT Exporters Network. All of these organisations played an important role in preparing our companies and in sharing and establishing contacts for delegates. At this point I would also like to acknowledge the Indonesian embassy in Canberra, and particularly Ambassador Kesoema, for hosting a pre-departure briefing for the delegation and for the enthusiasm and support the embassy showed for the mission.

The Australian Trade Commission, through Austrade, was engaged as a mission partner to provide in-market support and a business-matching program for mission participants. The Australian embassy in Jakarta provided support and facilitation to my program, which consisted of briefings and various meetings with government of Jakarta officials in support of specific business objectives.

The feedback from the business delegates certainly suggests that the outcomes of this mission will be strong. However, it is early days and missions are more about carefully managed introductions and road testing “to market” strategies rather than doing on-the-spot deals. Nevertheless, I am confident that some deals will emerge quite quickly. A formal debrief of mission participants will be conducted by the Economic Development Directorate and Austrade later this month and further advice on outcomes will be provided to the Assembly in due course.

International engagement through trade missions and investment outreach is an important component of the government’s strategy to grow and diversify the territory economy. The evidence is clear that companies that export strategically also grow faster, they create jobs more quickly, they pay higher wages and they embrace and embody innovation. Missions and international engagement will also be an important plank of the ACT government’s response to the issues and opportunities identified in the Asian century white paper released by the Prime Minister last year.

Madam Speaker, I now turn to the Singapore leg of the mission. Singapore is, of course, a potentially important development partner for Canberra, and it is important that we establish relationships in this part of the region and also create greater visibility of the opportunities for investors in Canberra.

The Gallagher government has committed to two major projects that will transform our city and enhance its status as a model for best practice urban development in the Asia-Pacific region. These two projects—capital metro and city to the lake—have the

vision, scale and technical sophistication to attract international development partners and there is already growing knowledge of the projects in financial hubs like Singapore.

Capital metro will transform Canberra by increasing the transport capacity of existing corridors, stimulating our economy through private and public investment, diversifying residential centres, promoting new employment and increasing the wellbeing of residents through more efficient transport and exemplary urban development.

City to the lake is no less important to the future of our city. In addition to the extensive leisure activities, it is envisaged that this new precinct will be home for 20,000 Canberrans, provide a state-of-the-art convention and exhibition centre, a 30,000-seat stadium, hotels and multi-use car parks for major events and commuter use.

Talking about these projects in Singapore to an investor community provided an important frame of reference for the government's thinking around more targeted investment facilitation and activities. We recognise that attracting investment requires government representation and facilitation. Canberra has been a natural attractor of investment for much of its history, courtesy of the pulling power of Australian government agencies and the sheer scale of its procurement spending. But as Canberra has grown, and as we see our private sector now taking a leading role in the economic future of our city, we understand the need to proactively shape and project our investment offering to global capital markets and investors.

In growth, diversification and jobs—a business development strategy for the ACT, I indicated that the government would establish a more concerted program approach to investment facilitation and in the 2012-13 territory budget new funding was provided for this initiative. The brief stopover in Singapore was a great opportunity to introduce this new program approach to a relevant audience.

I am pleased to report to the Legislative Assembly that “invest in Canberra” is the external branding for this new program, which will reside in the Economic Development Directorate. While the government has always been diligent in its engagement with potential investors, what “invest in Canberra” will do is ensure that we have a single and easily recognised point of investment facilitation. Importantly, the program service will bring together capabilities across key government agencies to respond quickly to investment leads generated by expanded marketing and outreach activities. It boosts our capability to respond and engage with investment partners, including Austrade, and to generate and case manage foreign investment leads. “Invest in Canberra” is also an important externally focused statement that demonstrates our commitment to working with investors.

The key point of difference between past and future approaches is focus, Madam Speaker. To date we have been reasonably good at talking about the general opportunity in Canberra and its broad investment credentials, but less prepared to project information and engagement strategies around specific opportunities. With this thinking in mind, I used my time in Singapore to conduct a round table on tourism

accommodation investment opportunities in Canberra. Supported by Austrade and the Australian High Commission, the round table attracted a number of Singapore-based hotel investors for a focused conversation on specific opportunities.

Aviation opportunities were another focus of my trip to Singapore. As the Assembly is well aware, the Canberra Airport is undergoing a remarkable transformation. The \$420 million airvolution project has and will continue to change Canberra and how it is perceived as our nation's capital for all time. The government applauds the vision of the airport for the investment they are making to the number one gateway to Canberra and to the region, and the economic and business hub that the airport has become in recent years. The government is working closely with airport management to secure direct international flights in and out of Canberra. That is why in the past 12 months I have formed an aviation task force and the Gallagher government has committed \$1.8 million over the coming forward years for the establishment of direct international flights.

To date, our efforts have been focused on trans-Tasman flights and discussions are at an advanced stage with airlines and the relevant New Zealand authorities, including airports and tourism bodies on the other side of the Tasman. During my trip to Singapore I began the conversation at an appropriate level regarding flights from Changi Airport. Changi Airport is one of the world's most important airline and aviation hubs and a direct link to Canberra is a significant opportunity. I am pleased to report that the ACT's representations were met with enthusiasm and encouragement. I think that if Singaporeans know anything, they know the business of aviation, airports and establishing new services to new destinations. Meetings with senior executives at both the Singapore Tourism Board and Changi Airport have laid the foundation and commitment for a cooperative working partnership to progress the government's vision for international flights.

I also had a very warm meeting with Minister Iswaran of the Singapore government, Minister, Prime Minister's Office, and also Second Minister for Home Affairs and Trade and Industry with specific responsibility for tourism. Our discussions were broad ranging. He was particularly interested in the Canberra Airport development, the city to the lake project and capital metro. Securing the interest and support of a figure of such influence is a win for Canberra and one of the highlights of what was a very successful international mission.

These meetings resulted in important tasks for my officials and they will also support the Canberra Airport management team who will be making a follow-up visit to Singapore in coming months. This visit will help organise the nuts and bolts of the business case to be put to the various airlines at the earliest opportunity. I hope that they will consider this. I hope they will jump at the chance to capitalise on being the first to connect Canberra with our neighbours to the north and then on to the rest of the world.

Clearly, international flights are a commercial decision for individual airlines. However, I am confident that the relationships I have forged in Singapore will see our efforts benefit from the full support of the appropriate Singaporean authorities as we go about the business, in partnership with the Canberra Airport and our business and

tourism industries, of seeking to establish direct international flights to and from Canberra.

In closing, I would like to thank all of the local businesses and officials involved for their hard work and dedication to make the trip to Jakarta and Singapore a success. The mission will reap significant rewards for the ACT economy and demonstrate to our Asian neighbours that Canberra is indeed open for business.

I present the following paper:

Indonesia/Singapore Economic Development Mission, April 2013—Ministerial statement, 14 May 2013.

I move:

That the Assembly takes note of the paper.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Community Housing Providers National Law (ACT) Bill 2013

Debate resumed from 11 April 2013, on motion by **Mr Rattenbury**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (10.14): I rise today in support of this bill. The Canberra Liberals have previously advocated, and will continue to advocate, for community housing. Community housing plays an important role in providing affordable and well-managed accommodation for low-income earners in Canberra. The sector also diversifies the provision of affordable accommodation, reducing pressure on the public housing system.

As this bill acts to reduce the regulatory burden on the sector, today we are supporting its passage, along with the consequential amendments to the Housing Assistance Act 2007 and the Land Rent Act 2008.

The Community Housing Providers National Law (ACT) Bill 2013 provides a national approach to the regulation and assessment of and engagement with community housing providers. The current ACT regulatory system will be replaced with a nationally consistent one, reducing the burden on providers operating in multiple jurisdictions. The bill establishes the role of a registrar in approving, assessing and monitoring the compliance of organisations that provide community housing.

The scrutiny of bills committee raised a number of concerns regarding this bill in report 6, and recommended to the minister that he respond to five specific areas. The areas highlighted by the committee included the delegation of legislative power to another jurisdiction, delegating powers which appear to have a legislative quality, the protection of the common law privileges against self-incrimination and of legal

professional privilege, territory liability to compensate, and the depth of details in the explanatory statement. The minister has responded to all of these recommendations, and the opposition is of the view that these concerns have been addressed.

I would, though, like to draw attention to the committee's comments on the delegation of legislative power to another jurisdiction. Clause 7 of the bill establishes that the appendix set out in the Community Housing Providers National Law, as passed by New South Wales in 2012, applies to the territory as law. In turn, the bill requires that any amendment to the national law by New South Wales must be presented to the Legislative Assembly no later than six sitting days after it is passed and may be disallowed.

The committee has suggested that an amendment by the New South Wales parliament to the national law should not be merely disallowable, but come into force only after a positive resolution of the Assembly. While we are supporting this bill today, we will be monitoring this process closely to ensure that there are no adverse impacts on the community housing sector in the ACT as a result of any New South Wales amendments.

In considering this bill we did seek feedback from the community housing sector. Discussions, particularly with Havelock House and ACT Shelter, have indicated that the sector welcomes these reforms and that there has been significant consultation throughout the development of the bill.

Before I finish, I would like to thank the minister's office for circulating the response to the scrutiny of bills committee before the debate today and also for providing my office with a briefing on the bill. As foreshadowed, the opposition will be supporting this bill.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo—Minister for Territory and Municipal Services, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Housing, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs and Minister for Ageing) (10.17), in reply: I presented the Community Housing Providers National Law (ACT) Bill 2013 on 11 April and today I present a revised explanatory statement to the bill following feedback from the scrutiny committee.

This bill will repeal part 4A of the Housing Assistance Act 2007 and apply the Community Housing Providers National Law. Today I would like to talk about the need for this legislation, what it means for our social housing stock and the regulations this bill includes that will provide for a thorough monitoring of the community housing sector.

I would also like to note that nationally consistent legislation requires each jurisdiction to balance a need to account for the local context and need for local oversight with the achievement of universal implementation. This brings additional complexity to the task of introducing this legislation.

Strengthening and growing the community housing sector is a clear objective of our affordable housing action plan. It is also an explicit objective of the reforms agreed to

by COAG, which are being delivered by housing ministers under the national affordable housing agreement. Housing ministers have agreed that up to 75 per cent of housing stock constructed under stage 2 of the \$5.64 billion nation building and jobs plan will be transferred to the community housing providers by 30 July 2014, and that jurisdictions and the commonwealth will develop, over time, a large-scale not-for-profit sector in Australia comprising up to 35 per cent of social housing.

The aim of national reforms is to develop a strong and vibrant community housing sector that can increase choice for tenants, drive improved performance through greater competition—including competition for capital funding—among social housing providers, and support growth in social housing stock through leveraging the \$80 billion in social housing assets nationally. They also make it easier for providers to move within jurisdictions, another fillip for the sector.

New organisations that have expertise in other forms of social support and other types of supportive housing are expanding into community housing provision. The commonwealth's national rental affordability scheme has attracted several large welfare and church organisations for whom social housing has not, to date, been a core part of their business. These organisations bring considerable capability and substantial assets, including land holdings, which could accelerate growth across the sector.

There are now a number of “growth providers” in community housing that have been growing steadily over the past four years and have received a significant boost through the national rental affordability scheme and the transfer of stock funded under the social housing initiative of the nation building economic stimulus plan.

However, the objective of creating a diverse and growing community housing sector will need to be carefully balanced against the risks of transferring title for potentially up to \$20 billion of public housing assets to community housing providers nationally. Substantially greater tenancy and asset management responsibility will need to be underpinned by a strong regulatory framework operating in each jurisdiction. The ACT is one of the first jurisdictions in Australia to pass legislation for a regulatory framework, preceded only by Victoria and New South Wales.

The ACT, like other jurisdictions, has grown the community housing sector under the nation building economic stimulus plan. Control of 122 newly constructed units on community facilities land has passed to the community housing sector.

Preceding that period of growth, the ACT transferred \$40 million in stock to CHC Affordable Housing, as well as extending a \$50 million, and later extended to \$70 million, line of credit to that organisation for the express purpose of increasing social housing stock in the ACT. New national providers such as the Salvation Army and Argyle Community Housing have entered the ACT market, resulting in enhanced sector capacity. The sector in the ACT currently manages over 1,000 tenancies.

There is considerable work still to be undertaken both within the ACT and nationally to ensure that the quality of community housing is adequate and that it operates as a viable sector, not reliant on government funding alone to deliver additional properties.

The ACT has a strong legislative regulatory framework which can only be enhanced by participation in a national regulatory system—for example, through helping to increase economies of scale, reducing the regulatory burden and sharing resources. A national approach to regulation seeks to overcome the barriers, gaps and inconsistencies that have arisen through each state and territory regulating community housing providers in a different way.

Registrars will have formal mechanisms for regular communication and will work together for national consistency, while the responsive nature of regulatory implementation will ensure that local contexts inform regulatory interaction and decision making.

As I said on presenting the bill, the Community Housing Providers National Law (ACT) Bill 2013 will safeguard the interests of vulnerable tenants, including women, older people and young people, as well as government and other investment in community housing.

It will achieve this by encouraging the development of social and affordable housing, by providing for the registration of housing agencies, and the regulation and monitoring of registered housing agencies against standards known as the regulatory code.

The national regulatory system includes a minimum set of rules, requirements and powers necessary to appropriately manage risks, a clear separation between regulatory activities and policy and funding activities, and staged, proportionate step-in provisions for the regulator sufficient to ensure that government and finance partners can protect their interest in tenants and assets in the event of provider distress, default or failure.

The national regulatory system has three tiers of registration. It operates using a risk management approach, resulting in the level of regulatory oversight being proportionate to the level of risk relevant to the operations of providers.

The Community Housing Providers National Law empowers the registrar to register, monitor the activities of and deregister housing providers and undertake enforcement actions. The consequence of deregistration would be the loss of any tied government assistance and publicly funded assets.

The national regulatory system will have a registrar of housing agencies in each state and territory. In the ACT the registrar will exercise the functions under the act subject to the control and direction of his or her minister. The ACT registrar will be the director-general responsible for administering the act.

The national regulatory code sets out the performance outcomes and requirements that must be met by registered community housing providers under the national regulatory system. The administration of the national regulatory system will be guided by a set of regulatory principles. I note that the powers of the registrar and the regulatory requirements are almost the same as those under the ACT's current regulatory system, established by part 4A of the Housing Assistance Act 2007, amended in 2008.

There is nothing in the bill to exclude or limit the operation of the Human Rights Act 2004, which will apply to both the operation and the interpretation of the bill and the national law in the ACT. Common law rights protecting against self-incrimination are not displaced by the national law.

One of the key objectives of the Community Housing Providers National Law is to ensure that regulatory requirements for community housing providers are consistent across Australia. The approach to making and amending the national law is intended to ensure that the national law is universally applied across all participating jurisdictions and that any future amendments are agreed by participating jurisdictions and adopted and implemented consistently.

Operation of the national community housing law will be overseen by a ministerial council for the national regulatory system for community housing, a ministerial advisory committee and a national regulatory council. The ministerial council for the national regulatory system for community housing is comprised of ministers nominated by each participating state and territory and the commonwealth.

Currently, this comprises ministers of participating jurisdictions within the COAG Select Council on Housing and Homelessness and is responsible for approving, and approving changes to, the national law, issuing policy directions for the national regulatory system, appointing members to the national regulatory council, approving protocols and operational guidelines, determining any disputes related to cross-jurisdictional issues that cannot be resolved by the ministerial advisory committee, and approving national regulatory system service standards.

The ministerial advisory committee consists of senior officers from all participating jurisdictions. Currently, this is the participating jurisdictions' representation on the Housing Ministers Advisory Committee. The ministerial advisory committee is responsible for advising the ministerial council on policy requirements for the national regulatory system to meet government priorities and objectives and any other matters referred to the ministerial advisory committee from time to time by the ministerial council. It is also responsible for establishing advisory committees as may be required from time to time, and resolving any cross-jurisdictional issues relating to the national law.

The national regulatory council is comprised of one representative nominated by each participating jurisdiction and nominated by the relevant minister but may not be a registrar, not more than two experts nominated by the ministerial council, and one member nominated by the ministerial council drawn from the community housing industry.

The purpose of the national regulatory council is to facilitate the provision of advice to the ministerial council about systemic issues that impact on the implementation and ongoing effectiveness of the national regulatory system. As an advisory body, all functions performed by the council are undertaken on the basis of supporting the decision-making role of the ministerial council. Any changes to the national law must first be agreed by the ministerial council.

The scrutiny of bills committee questioned whether the delegation of legislative power to the host jurisdiction is appropriate. To address the issue of delegation, a clause in this bill requires any change by the host jurisdiction to be brought to the Assembly as a disallowable instrument within six sitting days of its passing by the host jurisdiction, New South Wales. In effect, the current provisions of the bill, whilst ultimately ensuring that any change in the law is supported by the Assembly, does create the potential for an amendment to the law to be in force for a period before the Assembly can disallow the law.

There is a difficult balance between these competing issues. At this point it is considered that the ordinary disallowance provisions are appropriate and provide the right balance between local oversight and national consistency.

As I advised in my presentation speech the national regulatory system will be implemented in phases. Implementation will commence for participating jurisdictions on 1 July 2013 with six months of testing and evaluation of the registration processes and procedures to operate the system. That is phase 1. Registration under the national law will occur over an 18-month transition period from 1 January 2014. That is phase 2.

The legislation will be implemented with no additional cost to the territory. The Australian government will fund the one-off implementation cost, including a national information technology system, while ongoing costs will be met by the ACT in place of those of the current ACT regulatory system.

A triple bottom line assessment supports the introduction of this bill. The summary of impacts was positive in relation to all applicable categories, namely, social justice and rights, economic, productivity, investment and competition.

The ACT's focus for community housing is to ensure viability and capacity for growth which contributes to increased housing supply overall, underpinned by strong regulation. Participation in a national regulatory system for community housing will support that, and I commend this bill to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Leave granted to dispense with the detail stage.

Bill agreed to.

Mental Health (Treatment and Care) Amendment Bill 2013— Exposure draft Papers and statement by minister

MS GALLAGHER (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Health and Minister for Higher Education): For the information of members, I present the following papers:

Mental Health (Treatment and Care) Amendment Bill 2013—

Exposure draft.

Mental Health (Treatment and Care) Act 1994—Mock-up, incorporating proposed amendments set out in the exposure draft of the bill.

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

Leave granted.

MS GALLAGHER: I am pleased to table the second exposure draft of the amendment bill for the revised ACT Mental Health (Treatment and Care) Act 1994, and the mock-up of the revised act containing the proposed amendments. The review of the Mental Health Act, a joint initiative of ACT Health and the Justice and Community Safety Directorate, has benefited from several years work and the input of a wide range of community organisations, stakeholders and interest groups, including mental health consumers and carers.

I expect to introduce the amendment bill to the Legislative Assembly later in 2013. Consultation on the second exposure draft consultations began on 17 April and will continue until 28 May. The consultation documents can be viewed on the ACT government's time to talk community engagement website.

The government has consulted on two exposure drafts to ensure adequate opportunity for community input into the proposed changes, as this is an area which attracts considerable community interest. The review of the act has been overseen by the review advisory committee, which comprises over 40 stakeholders, including consumers, carers, clinicians, emergency services and community agencies.

To allow stakeholders to fully participate in the consultation process, the consultation documents include a mock-up of the legislation incorporating the current proposed changes. Having a compiled version of the amended act puts the new provisions into context and facilitates better understanding of the provisions.

The ACT Mental Health (Treatment and Care) Act, like that of several other jurisdictions, has been under review for several years, having needed to cater for significant changes in approach to treatment and care and major developments in human rights locally and internationally. The proposed amendments include a number of changes to increase the voice of people with mental illness in determining their own treatment. These provisions will put the ACT amongst the leaders of change in mental health law nationally and overseas.

The ACT Human Rights Act 2004 has had significant impact on mental health legislation, as it has on other ACT laws. Compliance with the Human Rights Act has involved a number of new measures to ensure that people with mental illness are given as much voice as possible in decisions about their treatment and care.

A proposed new set of principles and revised objective for the act have been informed by human rights changes and the recovery approach in mental health. They also

include internationally recognised principles on assessment of decision-making capacity and guidance for services to work collaboratively with mental health family carers who often have an important role.

People making decisions under the act must take these principles and objectives into account. The 2006 UN convention on the rights of people with a disability, which applies in mental health, was ratified by the Australian government in 2007. The convention sets out equal recognition of people with a disability before the law, and equal access to justice, including the right of a person who has capacity to make their own decisions. This right has been enshrined in several areas of the revised act.

In almost all circumstances, people who have decision-making capacity will make their own decisions about treatment and care. However, existing criteria for an involuntary treatment order, including those concerning risk of harm to self and others, have been retained, and will continue to be taken into account.

For the first time, the draft act acknowledges advance agreements. These are similar to advance directives in broader health, providing the opportunity for a person, when they are well and have capacity, to negotiate the treatment they want when they experience an episode of illness. By utilising this opportunity for forward planning, advance agreements will extend the person's say in their treatment to the time when they are unwell and help to promote a collaborative working relationship between consumers and services.

Under the proposed changes guardianship will have an expanded role because of the new emphasis on decision-making capacity. When a person wishes to accept treatment but is not able to give informed consent, guardians and attorneys will be able to provide that consent. This is preferable to the person receiving an involuntary mental health order when they are in fact willing to have treatment.

The proposed amendments include further limitations on electro-convulsive therapy, or ECT, which would be banned for children aged under 12. Between 12 and 18 ECT would require the approval of two psychiatrists, including one child and adolescent specialist, and an order by the tribunal. ECT for this age group is extremely rare but can be life saving. The new provisions are in line with changes in other jurisdictions.

As has been the subject of some media attention, under the proposed amendments ambulance paramedics would be provided with the legal power to apprehend and transport a person to a hospital for assessment. This power now exists in almost all Australian jurisdictions and enables people with mental illness to be transported to hospital in the manner that a person with any other illness would expect. Ambulance transport is recommended by the national safe transport principles and the measure has been widely acclaimed by stakeholders. ACT ambulance officers receive regular training in mental health and they have received training on the current act and the proposed changes.

The amendments also recognise the need to provide for a specialist treatment order when a person's mental illness leads to offending behaviour and that behaviour involves a risk of serious harm to the community. This new order, called a forensic

mental health order, would enable increased oversight of treatment by providing a review by the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal, which decides all treatment orders under the act, if consideration is being given to moving the person's care from hospital to the community or discharging the person from care. Forensic mental health orders match the specialist mental health orders available for this group in other Australian jurisdictions.

Under the revised act, people affected by a serious offence when a person is found not guilty or not fit to plead due to their mental impairment would have similar rights to information to those a victim has when a person is convicted under the Crimes Act. This information includes whether a person has been placed on or taken off a treatment order and whether there are restrictions on where the offender can live or restrictions on whom they may approach. The affected person would also have the right to speak or be represented at a hearing where the treatment order is being considered.

Following the recommendation of the report of the inquiry into the operation of Bimberi Youth Justice Centre by the ACT Human Rights Commission in 2011, in cases where care is being shared between Child and Family Services and Health staff, or Corrections and Health staff, an information sharing agreement and protocol would be developed. This would mean that essential information about a person's state of mind that is vital to their safe and effective care could be shared appropriately between services. This provision would carefully balance the person's need for privacy with safety considerations when the person is considered to be at risk.

The second exposure draft includes the provision for working with carers. Several changes are included in the exposure draft to clarify the role of assessment of decision-making capacity, including a definition in the act of what constitutes capacity. Search powers for apprehending officers, who may be police, ambulance officers, a mental health officer appointed under the act or a doctor are set out. These are limited to circumstances where there is reason for concern that a person may be concealing something to harm themselves or another person or to aid their escape, and are limited to a search of external garments.

Madam Speaker, I commend the second exposure draft of proposed amendments to the ACT Mental Health Act to the Assembly. I welcome comments from members on these important changes to the legal framework for mental health services in the ACT.

Financial Management Act—consolidated financial report Paper and statement by minister

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

Financial Management Act, pursuant to section 26—Consolidated Financial Report—Financial quarter ending 31 March 2013.

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

Leave not granted.

Standing orders—suspension

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) (10.39): I move:

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent Mr Barr from making a statement in relation to the paper.

MR COE (Ginninderra) (10.39): We do not think this is good practice—to be tinkering with the usual routine of business in the way that the government are doing today. It has to be said that the reason they are doing this is that the daily program is pretty light on. For a government that went to the election saying that they are renewed, they have got fresh ideas, they have a got a fresh approach, they are moving forward, et cetera—today's daily program would not suggest that at all.

In actual fact, it is pretty embarrassing that the very government that is here saying that we need another minister, we need more resources, is the government that presents this daily program. In actual fact, if these presentations of papers and statements were listed as per the presentation of papers after question time, you would probably get the whole daily program quite easily onto one page. It seems to me that the government has moved the presentation of papers and statements to before question time to disguise the fact that we would otherwise have been done by about 20 past 10 on a sitting day, which has to be pretty embarrassing for a government given that it is executive business.

Our decision to not grant leave this morning should not be a surprise to the government, given that an hour and a half ago I wrote to the manager of government business asking for an explanation as to why the presentation of papers and statements would be taking place this morning as opposed to this afternoon. That was sent at 9.14 am, and here we are, an hour and a half later, with still no response. So this should not be a surprise for the government. I think it is quite straightforward that I should be able to write to the manager of government business saying, "Will you please advise why papers and statements are being presented in the morning rather than after question time?" It is a straightforward issue. This is in addition to the fact that we got the post-cabinet sitting program after 8 o'clock last night. So there are a host of issues with this government.

Mr Corbell: After cabinet.

MR COE: Well, there were not many cars in the car park at 8 o'clock; let me tell you that. Unless you had cabinet off site somewhere, I do not think you were here at 8 o'clock, Simon.

The fact is that this is a government that is tired; it is a government that does not have an executive program. It is trying to disguise it by shifting papers to this morning rather than doing it in their rightful place, according to standing order 74, which is after question time.

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (10.42): It looks as though no-one from the government side is going to speak. I would just like to back Mr Coe up. There is no courtesy from the government. The government is trying to break from standing orders, trying to change the daily program. If there is a rationale for that, if there is a reason for that, we would have been happy to hear that. I am sure that we would have complied and done what we could to make this place work as effectively and efficiently as it can. But without that reason being put forward, it becomes startlingly obvious that this is just an attempt by the government to make it appear that it has an agenda, while there is none. We have seen repeatedly on Tuesdays, and sometimes on Thursdays, all of the Labor Party members come down and filibuster on matters simply to give the appearance that the government has got an agenda when it has only got, perhaps, one bill on the notice paper.

If the government has no agenda, let us make that very clear. Let us not try and hide from it by changing the daily program. That is an inappropriate way to do business, and it makes a mockery of Katy Gallagher, Andrew Barr and Simon Corbell claiming that they need a larger Assembly when we see tricks like this being played today in this place.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo—Minister for Territory and Municipal Services, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Housing, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs and Minister for Ageing) (10.43): I will be voting to support the suspension of standing orders to allow the government to bring this business on. It is entirely unclear to me why one would exercise time over this matter. The matters have been presented on the blue. It is quite transparent what is taking place. I know Mr Coe made the observation that if these had been listed under presentation of papers there would have been a shorter paper, but from a transparency point of view there is actually far more information available on the blue than we would have seen if they had been listed in the alternate format. Frankly, I do not think it matters when in the day these things are done, in that it is not forcing other business off the program.

It seems entirely a matter of petulance to me that there is some sense that this could not be done this morning. There is scope for flexibility in the program. I note that last week when we discussed the disallowance of the draft variation, that was done on Wednesday. Normal practice would have dictated that it be done perhaps on Tuesday, but Mr Coe had a preference for doing it on Wednesday, and the Assembly was quite agreeable to that. I think there is recognition that, unless it is precluding another member from doing something they want to do, there is flexibility to move the program around. It seems quite appropriate that we proceed with this business this morning given that there is the space to do it.

Question resolved in the affirmative, with the concurrence of an absolute majority.

Statement by minister

MR BARR (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Sport and Recreation, Minister for Tourism and Events and Minister for Community Services) (10.45): I have presented to the Assembly the March quarter 2013 consolidated financial report for the territory. This report is required under Section 26 of the Financial Management Act 1996. The March quarter headline net operating balance for the general government sector was a deficit of \$263 million. This result was \$26.2 million lower compared to the year-to-date budgeted deficit of \$289.3 million. Total revenue for the general government sector for the quarter to 31 March 2013 was \$2,901.2 million. This is \$20.5 million lower than the March year-to-date budget of \$2,921.7 million.

Major variations in total revenue include lower taxation revenue of \$36.4 million, mainly due to lower than expected conveyance revenue which reflects the continued softening in the housing market, largely as a result of the threat of an Abbott government, and lower than expected lease variation charge collections due to the timing of payments and underlying market conditions. For example, the latest ACTPLA data show that year on year to March 2013, total residential property turnover in the ACT decreased by 4.1 per cent while the total weighted average price decreased by 2.6 per cent.

Madam Speaker, global economic uncertainty, commonwealth government fiscal consolidation and uncertainty in the lead-up to the federal election all continue to contribute to caution on the part of potential homebuyers and investors, which is undoubtedly weighing on property market activity. The commercial sector has also seen softening in activity in an environment of high vacancy rates, the prospect of significant public sector job cuts under an Abbott government and economic uncertainty.

Dividend and income tax equivalents revenue was also lower by \$18.3 million due to the timing of payments and accruals received by public trading entities. These decreases were partially offset by increases of \$17.1 million in contributed assets due to the higher than anticipated assets transferred from developers—major transfers include roads, stormwater, street lighting and footpaths—\$5.8 million in commonwealth grants due to the timing of payments; and \$5.3 million in interest income due to higher than expected investment earnings on balances held under investment.

Total expenses for the quarter to 31 March 2013 were \$3,263.3 million which was \$45.9 million lower than the March year-to-date budget. Major variations in total expenses include lower supplies and services by \$36.3 million mainly due to the timing of payments for contractors and consultants associated with budget initiatives; lower grants expense by \$10.2 million associated with the timing of commonwealth grants, which are anticipated to be rolled into the 2013-14 fiscal year; and lower depreciation and amortisation by \$9.1 million due to the timing of the capitalisation of assets under the territory's infrastructure program.

Madam Speaker, on an Australian accounting standards basis, the general government sector recorded a deficit of \$95.9 million compared to a year-to-date budgeted deficit of \$270.7 million. The reason for this improved performance is mainly due to higher returns on the territory's superannuation investments as a result of the strong performance of global equity markets.

A key balance sheet measure is net debt, which takes into account gross debt liabilities as well as financial assets such as cash reserves and investments. Net debt is calculated as the sum of deposits held, advances received and borrowings, less the sum of cash and deposits, advances paid, investments, loans and placements. Superannuation investments are excluded in determining net debt.

The net debt of the general government sector, excluding superannuation investments, as at 31 March 2013 was \$120 million, a decrease of \$593.2 million from the 30 June 2012 result of minus \$473.2 million. The variance is mainly due to additional borrowings undertaken, as budgeted, to support the territory's infrastructure program. By supporting the territory's infrastructure program through prudent levels of debt, we are supporting economic activity and the provision of important facilities and infrastructure.

In particular, the territory's infrastructure program responds to the needs of a growing city and of our growing population, and provides the necessary high-quality infrastructure required to support the increasing level of essential services the Canberra community deserves and expects. It is prudent for the government, which has a strong balance sheet, to borrow to finance high-quality assets which increase the productive capacity of the economy, thereby providing benefits to the community over a long period of time.

The March quarterly report demonstrates that the ACT's fiscal position continues to be in strong shape, though, Madam Speaker, we do face challenges such as continuing global economic uncertainty, the need to return to surplus and the threat of significant public service job cuts should there be a change of federal government later this year. The March quarterly report demonstrates, though, that the ACT can face these challenges with confidence. It does demonstrate that there are short-term challenges, especially confidence suffering due to the threat of an Abbott government. The impacts on revenues are likely to continue in the short term and certainly will impact on the 2013-14 budget position. Madam Speaker, I commend the March quarterly report to the Assembly. I move:

That the Assembly takes note of the paper.

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (10.52): I thank the Treasurer for the opportunity to comment on the consolidated financial report for the March quarter of 2013. Of course, the draft program last week indicated that today we were going to talk about the December quarter, but that dropped off the agenda. Indeed, one would have expected the March quarter tomorrow but it has come a day early. One can only assume that it has been dropped a day early so that it gets lost under the cover of the debacle that will be the federal budget tonight. When you look at the report, what we

still have is the government being on target for a record deficit of \$362,940,000, which is not modified, of course, since the mid-year review.

When you look at the reason for this, of course the minister trots out the Abbott government. Apparently the spectre of an Abbott government has now been affecting the ACT economy since about 2010. No doubt it will go on for as long as the minister can milk it. He talked of fiscal consolidation to seemingly portray the economic management of the federal budget by federal Labor and to indicate that somehow they have got it all under control. He blames potential public service losses under an Abbott government but fails to acknowledge that even as late as yesterday, \$580 million was ripped out of the federal public service appropriation by the Gillard-Rudd government without any acknowledgement that a single job will be lost from that. This is cloud-cuckoo-land stuff and at best it is just disingenuous. At worst, the Treasurer can live with the consequences himself.

What we do know, though, is that jobs are being cut. We all saw that *Canberra Times* headline earlier in the week where something like 3,000 jobs went last year. We do not know what has gone in the first quarter of this year, but we do know that the \$580 million wind-back that has been occurring surreptitiously under federal Labor, and Gillard and Swan in particular, is genuinely affecting the ACT. If there is a loss of revenues through conveyancing or the lease variation charge, it is because of federal Labor and their mismanagement and the complicit actions of this government in not standing up to them.

We note again that conveyancing is down. It is down by some \$30 million. The much vaunted lease variation charge is still \$7 million shy of its target for three quarters of the year. Indeed, at the half year it was also \$7 million shy of the target. This is a tax that is not delivering. This is a tax that is in fact exacerbating the very conditions that the minister describes in terms of a softening of the market and the impact of federal budget cuts. It is time the minister admitted that his tax is having a dampening effect on the economy.

To simply say that it is Tony Abbott's fault I think is just simplistic. I think people are sick of it. They are sick of government, and particularly ministers and particularly treasurers, not taking responsibility for their management. This is Treasurer Barr's tax. This is ACT Labor's tax. It is a tax on everything they say they want to happen in the city. They want to move to 50 per cent of development being in the urban existing areas, not in greenfield areas. Yet this is a tax on infill.

They say they want more people living in the town centres. Yet this is a tax on town centre development. They say they want to increase the density per square hectare, but this is a tax on that sort of development. In fact, it is a tax on the environment, because what it does is it forces greenfields development. It forces people to move further and further out. We have now got a city called Canberra that covers probably the same area as, say, Hornsby to Cronulla does, with a twentieth of the population.

For all the talk of the Green-Labor alliance across the way there and about sustainability, this is a tax on sustainability and you are reaping the dividend. You are getting what you sow, which is people baulking at development. Developers tell us all

the time that they cannot get money from the banks. The banks, we understand, are willing to lend, but developers cannot get the money because the lease variation charge can make a development not viable.

The problem is that you have sown the roots of our destruction. That is what you have done. This is your tax. It is impeding the market. If the market slows and if developments do not go ahead, what happens is that we will lose skills. Those skills will go to markets that are either heating up or are already hot, like northern Queensland or Western Australia. Indeed, I understand that the New South Wales market is starting to pick up and it is a very short trip up the highway to Sydney to get a job as a builder or a developer in Sydney. This is the benefit. You have put the brakes on through your tax.

We all suffer as a consequence of it. I think it is a shame that the minister does not take responsibility for what he has done. We have seen the Gillard-Swan litany of broken promises and lies. We have seen the drop in federal public service numbers through fiscal consolidation—the rest of us call it “cuts”. We have seen the incredible dampening effect of calling an election eight or nine months before that election was due. That has led to loss of confidence in the public service and it has led to a decrease in spending. People are just not making decisions because you have got a rudderless government not making decisions. You have got a rudderless government that just stumbles from disaster to disaster. That is what is contributing to the economic uncertainty here in the ACT.

Of course, you have got a government that does not have plans to address its bills. For instance, we know that superannuation liabilities in the December quarter were \$7,680 million, 66 per cent of liabilities. That has gone up now to 67 per cent of liabilities. It has gone up to \$7,700 million. In fact, it has gone up to \$7,765 million. It is about time the Treasurer told the people the truth of the effects of his taxes, about his inability to manage the budget, about the inability of the government to live within their means, about the inability of the government to diversify the economy, about the inability of the government to grow the base of taxpayers who could reasonably provide employment and contribute revenue—ie, business—and about the inability of this government to deliver their capital works on budget, on time and on scope.

These are the failures of the government that led to the disaster that is the budget from this local Labor government. It is still seated with an enormous prediction, courtesy of the mid-year review, of a \$362 million deficit—a near record deficit. We will see what the actual outcome is as we progress towards the federal election with the uncertainties increasing. We will hear later today what the budget is and we will see in the coming weeks what the effect of this is on confidence. We will feel the real legacy of six years of federal Labor and some 12 years of local Labor’s inability to deliver surpluses, inability to get the money into the bank, inability to deliver capital works on time, on budget and on scope and their inability to stimulate the economy in a real way such that people can get the benefits of a government instead of the burden of a government.

Yet again, this is a quarterly report that outlines the failures of the Treasurer, outlines the failures of the Gallagher government and really does not offer a great deal. It is

about time they came clean. I doubt we will see in their budget a month from now what they intend for the coming years and the out years. But I do not think that people can have any confidence in the way this government budgets because they simply continually fail to deliver.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Criminal justice—statistical profile 2013 Paper and statement by minister

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

ACT Criminal Justice—Statistical Profile 2013—March quarter.

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

Leave granted.

MR CORBELL: I thank members. I can think of no better way to demonstrate the government's commitment to fighting crime and continuing to make Canberra a safer place to live than to provide to the Assembly the March 2013 results for the ACT criminal justice statistical profile.

In this profile I am pleased to report positive downward trends in personal and property crime. In the 12 months to March 2013 compared to the 12 months to March 2012 there are across-the-board decreases in robbery, including extortion and related offences, which are down 31 per cent, making for 79 fewer offences; burglary and break and enter offences, down by 21 per cent, which translates to 587 fewer offences; sexual offences, down by 20 per cent, making for 83 fewer offences; public order offences, down by 19 per cent, which is 200 fewer offences; property damage, including environmental offences, down by 15 per cent, amounting to 996 fewer offences; assaults, down by 12 per cent, amounting to 302 fewer offences; motor vehicle thefts, down by 10 per cent, translating to 115 fewer offences; and weapons and explosives offences, down by seven per cent, 14 fewer offences.

These consistent reductions in crime are the result of dedicated, strategic and proactive policing in solid partnership with other government agencies. It is important, though, to recognise that crime fluctuates, and our police remain ready and able to tackle rises in crime should they occur. What supports ACT Policing's capacity is a community that is willing to report criminal or suspicious activity. The government asks the community to remain vigilant and to report crime or suspicion of it. We can all contribute to making Canberra a safer place, and we need to ensure that these consistently positive results do not make us complacent and vulnerable to crime into the future.

I will now turn to a number of the specific crime types and the results.

Firstly, let me go to property crime. Central to the reductions in property crime is the government's commitment to the ACT property crime reduction strategy 2012-15. This strategy focuses on making Canberra a safer place to live through a collaborative whole-of-government effort to produce a sustainable reduction in burglaries, reduced by a further 10 per cent, and motor vehicle theft, reduced by a further 20 per cent, over the three-year life of the strategy.

The strategy is positioned around three key objectives: firstly, stopping the cycle of offending through justice reinvestment; secondly, engaging the disengaged through early intervention; and thirdly, creating a safer, more secure community, supporting victims of crime, making buildings and public places safer and ensuring that motor vehicles are kept secure.

To successfully fight crime we need a sound evidence base. The government is committed to building the most informed body of evidence that we can as the basis for our strategies to keep reducing crime in the ACT. It is about using what we know from the past and the present to improve for the future. It is about breaking cycles of offending and the associated cycles of vulnerability, including poor mental health and physical health, low levels of education, unstable or no employment, and unreliable or no housing. These all contribute to increases in crime rates. It is about working with vulnerable and at-risk youth to engage them in education, to engage them in training and to engage them in jobs, ultimately choosing education and jobs over committing crime. It is about providing support and crime prevention information to victims and making buildings and public places safer by designing out crime through good lighting, easy-to-read signage and clear pathways.

ACT Policing undertake a range of property crime prevention and reduction strategies in support of the strategy. The volume crime reduction strategy involves a multipronged approach to reducing property crime through intelligence-led targeting of known offenders, proactively patrolling public places to prevent property crime and raising community awareness about being safe and about making homes, businesses and workplaces secure.

ACT Policing's suburban policing strategy allows ACT Policing to proactively target and address community concerns about motor vehicle theft by patrolling public places where this type of crime is likely occur. Proactive patrolling in areas such as public car parks not only increases ACT Policing's accessibility to the public but deters and reduces the opportunistic theft of motor vehicles through the identification of suspicious activity.

An activity specific to the March 2013 quarterly report involved the "crime scene house", a main feature of ACT Policing's annual ActewAGL Royal Canberra Show display. This interactive mock burglary crime scene was designed to educate our community on what could be done to prevent burglaries from occurring.

In March 2013 ACT Policing conducted project safe plate, a motor vehicle crime reduction activity. Project safe plate involved ACT Policing officers fitting vehicles with special one-way screws designed to reduce motor vehicle registration plate theft.

This crime prevention program is specifically designed to prevent number plate theft, as this can often be the precursor to motor vehicle theft and other property and traffic related offences. During a four-hour fitting program in Gungahlin Marketplace, police secured the registration plates of 284 vehicles with the special one-way screws. This crime prevention initiative will continue to assist the community throughout 2013.

I would now like to turn to another crime type which is of notice from the statistical profile, the issue of bicycle theft. An increase is reported in the quarter relating to bicycle theft. The number of bicycle thefts increased by 41 per cent to 164 offences in March 2013 compared to 116 offences in the December 2012 quarter. A 12 per cent increase was recorded for bicycle theft in the 12 months to March 2013, 470 offences, when compared to the 12 months to March 2012, with only 420 offences. That is an increase of 50 offences.

Bicycle theft, as with other high property crime, can be susceptible to fluctuations. There appears to be a seasonal peak in bicycle theft, with five of the last six March quarters showing a clear spike in this crime type. This is possibly linked with the recommencement of university and senior schools. When examining a five-year trend in bicycle theft, there is only a small increase, two per cent, evident in the 12 months to March 2013, 470 offences, compared to the last 12 months to March 2009, with 460 offences. Nevertheless, this is a crime type of concern, and with the increasing use of bicycles by many in our community this is a timely reminder to ensure that people secure their bicycles when parked.

The Justice and Community Safety Directorate will work with ACT Policing to investigate strategies, including additional awareness and prevention campaigns, to address the rise in this crime type.

I will now turn to some issues around personal crime. The decrease in assaults, down 12 per cent, and public order offences, down 19 per cent, in the past 12 months can be seen in part as a result of liquor legislation reforms by this government which encourage safe and more responsible drinking practices.

ACT Policing continues its commitment to work with partner agencies in the prevention of alcohol-related violence in public places. Over the summer months of the March 2013 quarter, ACT Policing have undertaken a range of targeted initiatives as part of the work of the alcohol crime targeting team, a team of additional police officers funded as a result of the liquor licence fees put in place as part of liquor licence reform.

The activities undertaken by ACT Policing include the launch of a new social media campaign called "Don't take your chances" to deter young people from underage drinking as part of its Skyfire fireworks partnership efforts. There was a partnership with Red Frogs, a not-for-profit-organisation, at Skyfire to strengthen the message that "It's OK to say no to alcohol". As a result, only a small number of teenagers were taken into custody for alcohol-related offences, a decrease of 75 per cent compared to the previous year, and there were no reported incidents of alcohol-related antisocial behaviour.

ACT Policing have been working with security at the gates of the Australia Day concert and refusing entry to young people who appeared to be affected by alcohol. As a result of this strategy, only four young people were taken into custody for intoxication, compared to the 44 young people placed in custody at the previous year's event.

ACT Policing have been sponsoring the Multicultural Festival and working with event organisers to reduce the number of alcohol-related incidents. This close partnership has helped to ensure that there were only a handful of breaches of liquor licensing regulations detected and only one minor theft reported during this year's event.

Turning to the issue of prison admissions, in the most recent report there continue to be quarterly fluctuations in admissions, remands and committals for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults and youths. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander remands and committals at Bimberi increased by 27 per cent, up from 15 admissions in December to 19 admissions in March, in contrast to a low rate of admissions reported in the September 2012 quarter—five.

Admissions at the AMC increased, with 26 admissions recorded for March 2013 compared to 15 admissions in December 2012 and 19 in September 2012. This increase of nine additional people is of concern. It is a further reason why we must continue to focus on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander justice agreement to tackle the overly high incarceration rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. My directorate is continuing to work with the Indigenous elected body to build on the achievements of the previous agreement in a new justice agreement to drive down incarceration rates.

Finally, I will turn to the purpose of this profile itself. The Justice and Community Safety Directorate is currently conducting a review of the content and presentation of the profile. Consultation has been undertaken with relevant stakeholders to understand how useful the dataset currently in the profile is, whether there are particular datasets that could be removed, what new data could be incorporated into the profile, how the data in the profile could be better presented or made available, and what analysis could enhance the presentation of the information contained in the profile.

I am pleased to say that since the start of the consultation process on the review, my directorate has consulted with a broad range of bodies and organisations, including Aboriginal Legal Service NSW/ACT; the ACT Indigenous elected body; the ACT Council of Social Service; the Alcohol Tobacco and Other Drug Association ACT; the crime prevention and community safety forum; the Law Society of the ACT; the sexual assault reform program, SARP, reference group; a number of educational and research institutions; and all ACT government agencies that contribute data to the profile.

It is anticipated that the first profile of the 2013-14 financial year, for December 2013, will incorporate revised content and presentation taking into account the feedback from the review.

In conclusion, the results reported in the March 2013 ACT criminal justice statistical profile are important to acknowledge, particularly when we see such a positive impact on our community's perceptions of crime. Perceptions of crime are important. Perceptions of community safety are important. They are important not just from a statistical perspective; they are important because they impact on our sense of wellbeing. If people do not feel safe, even if that feeling is not necessarily entirely based on the evidence, they are less likely to participate as broadly as they otherwise would in the community. Therefore, this government remains committed to ensuring that residents benefit from living in a very safe and fair community and that we all have the confidence to participate fully in community life.

I commend the paper to the Assembly.

Planning and Development Act 2007—variation No 311 to the territory plan

Paper and statement by minister

MR CORBELL (Molonglo—Attorney-General, Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations and Minister for the Environment and Sustainable Development) (11.16): For the information of members, I present the following paper:

Planning and Development Act, pursuant to subsection 79(1)—Approval of Variation No. 311 to the Territory Plan—Dickson Group Centre: Amendments to the Dickson precinct map and code and zone changes to Dickson section 34 block 20 from commercial CZ1 core to commercial CZ3 services with the introduction of a Pe [urban open space] Public Land overlay on part Dickson section 34 block 20, dated 29 April 2013, together with background papers, a copy of the summaries and reports, and a copy of any direction or report required.

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

That the Assembly takes note of the paper.

Variation No 311 to the territory plan—Dickson group centre—implements the findings of the Dickson group centre master plan. It amends the Dickson precinct map and code in the territory plan to provide for an increase in maximum building heights at the centre and provisions to guide future development on unleased land. Improvements to pedestrian and vehicle connections are to be achieved while ensuring the character of the centre is retained.

Variation 311 also rezones a parcel of unleased territory land that is currently used as a public car park. The zoning changes from commercial CZ1 core to CZ3 services and introduces a public land overlay for urban open space over part of the same block. Variation 311 provides an opportunity for government and the private sector to deliver the vision proposed by the Dickson centre master plan. An initiative of the government, the master planning program promotes the rejuvenation of our suburban

group centres like Dickson. The changes put into practice the vision of ACT planning strategy 2012 by facilitating mixed use development at commercial centres and locations close to main transport routes.

The draft variation was publicly exhibited between July and September 2012. Only nine written submissions were received during this time. The main matters raised in the public submissions included the location, scale and utility of the proposed park on the corner of Badham Street and Dickson Place, impacts of future development on traffic and car parking, and interpretation of proposed development controls upon specific blocks, including surface level car parking sites that are, separately, the subject of the ACT government's land release program. Other matters raised sought protection of public areas from mall development and the function of particular parts of the centre, such as Dickson Place.

I am pleased to advise the Assembly that various changes were made to the variation in response to these issues raised in submissions. These include substitution of the urban open space rezoning with the combination of a commercial zone and public land overlay to allow development of a pedestrian plaza with limited basement parking and protection for some existing mature trees, provisions to prevent the enclosure of public spaces in mall developments, a building envelope introduced to ensure urban amenity is retained along main pedestrian areas and routes, provision of service, delivery and emergency service vehicle access to and from Antill Street, various provisions being reworded or consolidated to improve clarity of the variation, and a statement of desired character being included to ensure consistency in urban character across the centre.

While the sale of surface level car parking sites for development separately from this process is due to occur as a result of actions on the part of the Economic Development Directorate, I can assure members of the Assembly that the variation retains the existing policy of requiring the continued provision of publicly available car parking on the nominated sites. Disruption during the development of these car parking sites is expected. However, arrangements are being undertaken by EDD, in conjunction with TAMS, to provide for temporary car parking at the centre.

Under section 73 of the act, I have chosen to exercise my discretion and not formally refer the draft variation to the Standing Committee on Planning, Environment and Territory and Municipal Services. I have done this on this occasion as I believe the issues raised in the submissions have been adequately considered. There has been a very low level of formal interest during the public consultation process and there are no significant or outstanding issues.

Therefore, I think it is desirable that the territory plan now be varied to provide for the implementation of the agreed master plan outcomes for the Dickson centre as this will facilitate the timely redevelopment of certain areas of the centre and the upgrading of its existing public realm for the improvement and benefit of the community. I am pleased to table the approved variation to the territory plan No 311.

MR BARR (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Sport and Recreation, Minister for Tourism and Events and Minister for Community Services) (11.22): I thank the minister for planning for

bringing forward this variation. The changes proposed in the variation will indeed be a great boost to the Dickson group centre. The variation provides the opportunity for new development at the Dickson centre which will benefit local businesses and certainly will benefit the residents of the inner north.

As part of variation 311, section 30 of block 21 will be developed for a full-line supermarket and for an ALDI supermarket. For members who are unfamiliar with the area, this is the block between the Dickson library and the existing Woolworths, which is currently used as a car park. The block is being sold through a tender process for the development of both a full-line supermarket and an ALDI supermarket.

On 22 February this year, the preferred respondents to an expression of interest process were invited to tender for the site. Tenders close on 30 May this year. The selection of the preferred tenderer is to occur by 15 June and it is anticipated that the sale process will be finalised within weeks of the tender process closing.

This project, Madam Deputy Speaker, it is fair to say, is enthusiastically supported—some would say fervently supported—by those who have spent many hours of their lives standing in line at Dickson Woolworths. This addition of supermarket competition in Dickson will bring a greater variety of shopping options for residents of the surrounding area, more parking and certainly more residents to the Dickson group centre.

The development will more than double the car parking currently available on the site and will also include a residential component above the retail. This is, in fact, commonplace now in Dickson. Previous developments in the group centre have involved that mixed use development and it has worked exceptionally well.

Many people, myself included, have long complained about the lack of competition in supermarkets at Dickson. It is fantastic to see progress towards a second full-line supermarket and an ALDI—so three supermarkets in the Dickson group centre to ensure that shoppers in the inner north have more choice. There is no doubt that the presence of an ALDI helps lower costs amongst the nearby supermarkets. Those who have lived in the inner north for an extended period of time would be aware that Dickson Woolworths is one of the busiest in the country. Anyone who has spent time waiting in line there will certainly understand and acknowledge this. There is a need and demand for new supermarkets in Dickson.

The variation that the planning minister has tabled today has the potential to encourage other retailers to expand and locate in Dickson and for other businesses to see this precinct as a great opportunity to relocate or to redevelop and renew their existing businesses in the area. It will bring new shoppers to the group centre and revitalise Dickson.

The government acknowledges the particular need to ensure adequate parking during the redevelopment phase. Arrangements will be made to ensure that there is additional car parking available in the group centre. In particular, an analysis of the short-term parking options available in Dickson identified a number of additional sites that could be utilised for replacement parking during the construction phase of the development.

The five tenderers are required to address the temporary replacement of lost parking as part of their tender. Short-term temporary car parking arrangements will be provided on block 13 section 72 in Dickson. This site will allow for about 140 car parking spaces and the successful tenderer will be required to construct the temporary car parking within the budget of their tender.

The Tradies club have agreed to provide, at no cost to the public, access to their basement car park as temporary car parking whilst block 21 is being redeveloped. The Tradies have also agreed to make their site at Downer available for construction worker parking during the construction period. This is a significant contribution from the Tradies club to the redevelopment of Dickson and certainly deserves to be acknowledged today. I thank them very much. There will be no net loss of car parking during the redevelopment of the Dickson group centre. This is a very important commitment from the government.

In closing, variation 311 and the redevelopment plans for the Dickson group centre will be a significant benefit to businesses and residents in north Canberra. It will bring new life to the group centre and provide long overdue competition for supermarkets in this area. I certainly join with the planning minister in commending this variation.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

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

Sitting suspended from 11.28 to 2.30 pm.

Questions without notice

Planning—draft variation 306

MR HANSON: My question is to the Minister for the Environment and Sustainable Development and relates to draft variation 306 to the territory plan. Minister, industry groups warned that DV306 could lead to downturn in development in the territory. I understand that land for the new suburb of Denman Prospect was set for auction last week and that has now been postponed. Minister, what modelling has the government done to determine the effect of DV306 on the territory's budget and what were the results of that modelling?

MR CORBELL: In relation to the issues Mr Hanson alludes to around the auction at Denman Prospect, I would refer him to my colleague Minister Barr, who is responsible for land release decisions.

In relation to the budget impact modelling, the government does not as a matter of course undertake budget impact modelling for any variations to the territory plan. Nor, to my knowledge, has any previous government. But the comment and observation I would make is that the government takes account of industry and other stakeholder feedback in determining the practicality and implementation issues arising from variations to the territory plan.

I think it is very clear that this variation is a very important reform. It is a reform which provides greater guarantees for solar access for people who live in new homes; it is a reform that provides for greater certainty and appropriate levels of redevelopment in the existing suburban areas. It is not uncommon for critics of a variation to claim that it will have detrimental economic impacts. The same claim was made, of course, about variation 200 to the territory plan. Such claims were not able to be substantiated and are a common tactic in these types of public debate.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: My supplementary question is to the Minister for Economic Development. Minister, how much revenue will the territory lose as a result of DV306?

MR BARR: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. Firstly, the Denman Prospect sale has been delayed a matter of weeks. That was to allow for more bidders to be able to undertake due diligence. That will take place in the very near future.

Mr Hanson: Not enough bidders—didn't they know it was happening?

MR BARR: No, I understand that a number of major national developers wish to have a board meeting prior to the date in order to consider—

Mr Hanson: To understand the implications of DV306?

MR BARR: No, it has absolutely nothing to do with DV306 and I can only echo the comments of the planning minister that, yes, similar observations were made about DV200.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Minister, what benefits does 306 bring to the ACT community?

MR CORBELL: I thank Ms Porter for the supplementary. As I was indicating in my previous answer, there are significant benefits that this variation brings. Let us talk about two important issues. The first is, of course, the issue of access to a good level of sunlight, particularly during winter hours. I do not think—in fact I find it difficult to believe—that anyone in this place would suggest that it is not a good idea to ensure that when new homes are built, people's homes are not overshadowed by their neighbours and that they are able to get sunlight. It is a good idea that they are able to get sunlight, especially during winter hours. It is a good idea to make sure that planning regulations stop homes overshadowing their neighbours. These are good things to be doing. But it is clearly not a policy supported by those opposite.

Equally, the changes to the RZ2 zones have been strongly welcomed by many established residents groups. They have been welcomed because people have been concerned about the scale of redevelopment activity in the RZ2 area and this variation

puts in place changes to make sure the scale of redevelopment in places like Dickson, in places like the inner south, in places like the Woden valley, are more appropriate and of a more sensitive nature to established residential areas, whilst still providing for housing choice. That is what this variation is about. It is the reason it should be supported. It is the reason why this Assembly supported it in the disallowance debate last week, because a majority of members in this place clearly understand its benefits, the benefits that accrue to the community overall, and those are the benefits that are going to be seen by members of the community.

Mr Coe: On a point of order, I ask whether the minister is reflecting on a vote of this place.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thanks, Mr Coe. No, I do not think so. Mr Corbell.

MR CORBELL: I have concluded my answer, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Minister, what threshold of lost revenue will the government have to lose before DV306 is tinkered with?

MR CORBELL: I do not accept the proposition that the government will lose any revenue from this variation.

Supermarkets—competition policy

MR COE: Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister for Economic Development. Minister, last week the government announced that it was withdrawing the supermarket competition policy implementation plan. Given this change, will the Amaroo and Dickson supermarket site tenders, which have now closed, continue to be administered under the former supermarket policy or under a new policy framework?

MR BARR: As I indicated to the Assembly when I made my statement, they will continue under the old arrangements.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Minister, what is the policy framework that will be applied to direct sales of land for supermarket sites?

MR BARR: Cabinet has a process for considering direct sales for any land and that process will apply also for supermarkets.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Minister, what will you do to allay any confusion arising in the supermarket sector over the introduction of a new term “net selling area”?

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Corbell, are you going to answer that?

MR CORBELL: It is a planning matter. I will take that question. The issue of net selling area is addressed in recent draft variations to the territory plan that I have released dealing with planning controls for commercial zones, including local centres. In relation to the definition of “net selling area”, the definition is set out I believe clearly in the draft variation. However, I note that a number of stakeholders are raising questions about the definition through the consultation process that is now underway for that draft variation.

The government is looking closely at the comments made by stakeholders during the consultation process. At the conclusion of that consultation process, the ACT Planning and Land Authority will prepare a report to me on issues raised in that consultation. I anticipate that the issues around net selling area raised by stakeholders will be addressed in that consultation report. The government will conclude whether any adjustments need to be made to the draft variation prior to the matter either being referred to the planning committee of this place or alternatively for the government and me as the minister to make a decision on the variation.

But at this point in time, I think it is pre-emptive to get into a definitive discussion about what will be the outcome. We are in the middle of a consultation process. The issue that is being raised is the issue of net selling area and its definition. We will take those comments into account as we move through the consultation process on the draft variation.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Minister, as Minister for Economic Development, what influence did your directorate and the former supermarket policy have on DV304?

MR BARR: All draft variations go through a cabinet process, and all agencies are involved in providing input into that process.

Economy—trade missions

MR SMYTH: My question is to the Minister for Economic Development and it relates to trade missions undertaken by the government. Minister, in an answer to a question taken on notice, question No 61, the government stated:

It is not possible to measure in any meaningful way the outcomes from an individual mission.

Minister, if there are no meaningful outcomes for the territory, what steps will the government take to restructure its trade missions program so that it does yield meaningful outcomes for the territory and for local businesses?

MR BARR: There would be a variety of ways that one could report upon trade missions. I thought I gave quite an extensive report this morning. I have taken a number of questions in relation to those trade missions. They are not secret. The companies that are involved publicise their involvement.

It certainly is a question of what you consider meaningful. You could, for example, record the number of meetings taken, the number of leads pursued by the individual companies. You could, for example, seek to measure in some way how many people the companies met with. But a lot of that would be commercial-in-confidence and individual companies may not wish to report on whom they met with and what the outcomes were.

However, it is generally established, by virtue of companies seeking to promote their achievements, that they do so through the issuing of media releases and the like, celebrating their particular successes.

Mr Hanson: So you can measure it.

MR BARR: You can measure it through issuing of media releases, Mr Hanson, but I do not consider that to be particularly meaningful.

Mr Hanson: Surely they talk about deals they have signed or contracts they have signed.

MR BARR: They do.

MADAM SPEAKER: Do not respond to Mr Hanson. Address your remarks through the chair. Mr Barr, you have the call.

MR BARR: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Companies do seek to promote the outcomes they achieve from particular trade missions, but the government is not going to be in the business of seeking to devote resources to recording who met with whom, how long they met for, how many contacts were made in particular markets. Those sorts of questions are entirely subjective. The value of a particular lead is entirely subjective. And we do report on outcomes following trade missions.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Thank you, minister, for that meaningless answer. Minister, why does the government provide additional Trade Connect grant funding on top of budgeted funding for its trade missions?

MR BARR: To pursue specific opportunities.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, what is the purpose of this grant funding? Does it cover travel and/or accommodation and what class of accommodation and travel does this cover or supplement?

MR BARR: Businesses meet their own costs associated with travel and accommodation. The government assistance is provided through partnership arrangements with Austrade and on a fee-for-service basis the government engages

with our Austrade offices, our embassies and the like to facilitate meetings for businesses.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, what follow-up is undertaken with trade mission participants to evaluate the extent to which missions yield measurable and positive outcomes to the territory and local businesses? If none, why not?

MR BARR: There is a debrief of participants following each mission, and then a series of subsequent meetings are held in periods 6, 12 and 18 months after particular missions. If Mr Doszpot had been listening to my presentation this morning, he would have heard me allude to a particular debrief on the Indonesian delegation occurring later this month.

National Volunteer Week

MS PORTER: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, in this National Volunteer Week, can you outline for the Assembly the important contribution that ACT volunteers make to our community?

MS GALLAGHER: I thank Ms Porter for the question and for her long-held interest in all matters around volunteering, across the country and in the ACT. I am very happy, in National Volunteer Week, to be able to support the work of volunteers and take the opportunity to say thank you to them. We acknowledge the work of the over 100,000 Canberrans who volunteer. They donate their time and their energy to the community and they do make a difference.

Their contribution spans a wide range of areas—areas like sport and tourism. I even saw volunteers out with the centenary team on the weekend. They work in the environment area, through community safety initiatives and of course within the health area and in the general community service sector. It has been estimated that volunteering is worth more than \$200 billion a year to the Australian economy, which was in a recent study published by the University of Adelaide.

The ACT has a proud record of volunteering, with ABS figures showing that 37.1 per cent of the ACT population aged 18 and over volunteer. This is slightly higher than the national rate of 36.2 per cent and significantly higher than the rate of people living in capital cities who volunteer, which is 33.9 per cent.

The ACT's young people are enthusiastic volunteers, with 35.2 per cent of 18- to 24-year-olds volunteering, compared to only 27.1 per cent nationally. Similarly, 37.6 per cent of men in the ACT volunteer, compared to a national average of 34.4 per cent. These are great results, and we should be proud of our community contribution that is provided through the work of volunteers. Also throughout National Volunteer Week it gives us as community leaders the opportunity to acknowledge the work that they do and to say thank you.

In Canberra there is no doubt that volunteers—and I meet them regularly as part of my work—develop social capital across the ACT by participating in society, through the networks and sense of belonging, through supporting economic growth and through shared values around social cohesion. It is what makes our city strong. It is great to see the ACT leading the way in relation to volunteers, and it is also really good to acknowledge the efforts of young volunteers. Young people are often probably not acknowledged for their volunteering work, but the fact is that large numbers of them, over a third of young people aged in the 18 to 24 year age group, are active volunteers across the ACT.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Chief Minister, can you outline for the Assembly what contributions volunteers have made over the past 40 years at the Canberra Hospital and how their achievements have been honoured this week?

MS GALLAGHER: ACT Health has over 450 volunteers that work across the portfolio, ranging in age from 18 to 85. They give their time to assist by working across 20 different programs within ACT Health, including running the shop, the Canberra Hospital auxiliary, the chaplaincy, hand and foot massage, volunteering in paediatrics and, of course, within the women's and children's hospital. Other not-for-profit organisations who provide volunteer services within the hospital include the Cancer Council wig service, Bosom Buddies and Miracle Babies.

On 1 May 1973, the Woden Valley Hospital opened with 36 beds. In the same year the hospital kiosk, under the auspices of the Woden Valley auxiliary, opened for business. Forty years on, ACT Health is celebrating a small group of volunteers who commenced in that year and who are still today providing volunteer support to the hospital auxiliary and pastoral care.

Volunteer pastoral carers from the Society of the Sacred Mission continue to assist with wheeling patients to church services held on Sundays within the hospital. These contributions are acknowledged every year, but they were acknowledged this year at a breakfast which was held on Monday. It particularly recognised three volunteers for their commitment to volunteering since 1973: Lesley Thompson at the auxiliary, Isobel Bain at the auxiliary and Maire Cook from the Canberra Hospital pastoral care services. They were particularly acknowledged.

I would also say that I have had the privilege of meeting a number of volunteers, being the Minister for Health. They turn up every week, rain, hail and shine, to add to the quality of care provided across the health system. Again, I think this week gives us the opportunity to acknowledge and thank them for their efforts.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Chief Minister, in what other important areas of our community activities are volunteers active?

MS GALLAGHER: Volunteers give their time for a wide range of activities in the ACT. The most common areas where you will find volunteers are at sporting groups, schools, community welfare groups, religious groups and where parents are volunteering to support their own children's activities.

Volunteers also make a significant contribution to the arts and the environment. They contribute to cultural institutions and significant events which make the ACT an engaging place for both tourists and locals. They protect and restore the environment through initiatives such as Landcare and Clean Up Australia Day. In 2012, 6,990 Canberrans volunteered with Clean Up Australia Day and removed 264 tonnes of rubbish.

Many essential services in the ACT are enhanced or provided by volunteers. I mentioned some across the health system but they are also very much a part of animal welfare and emergency services. Volunteers support us in times of individual or community vulnerability. That is particularly an acknowledgement to the emergency services volunteers.

The work is very diverse, with volunteers contributing to international aid and development, justice, political parties, recreational groups and ethnic groups.

The point we are trying to make today is that they make a fantastic contribution to living in Canberra. They make it the city we are and we acknowledge them this week.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Gentleman.

MR GENTLEMAN: Minister, how important is it for the government to support volunteers across the territory?

MS GALLAGHER: I thank Mr Gentleman for the question. It is very important that the government and individual directorates in particular acknowledge the work of volunteers. I think they do that routinely. It certainly enhances the services that we can provide and opportunities like National Volunteer Week give us the opportunity to speak publicly about the contribution that volunteers make.

There will be a number of events through the week. Like the event that was held in the Health Directorate on Monday, I expect that there will be similar events where the contribution of volunteers is acknowledged and thanked.

Child care—standards

MR DOSZPOT: My question is to the Minister for Education and Training. On Wednesday, 1 May the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority published a snapshot of how childcare centres are meeting the national quality standard introduced in 2012. The snapshot found that only 13 centres in the ACT met or exceeded the standard. Minister, why are so many centres in the ACT failing to meet the new standards?

MS BURCH: I thank Mr Doszpot for his question. ACECQA recently published the first tranche of assessments under the new quality framework. Only about 25 per cent of the services in the ACT have been assessed to date. Of those, 70 per cent have been deemed to be working towards and the others have met or exceeded.

I continue to have great confidence in the services here. They provide quality care to our children. Mr Doszpot, we have set the bar through the national quality framework exceedingly high, and rightly so, because we know that quality in the earlier years is very important. I am confident that as we go through assessing the remaining centres in town, and as we go through this new framework, all our centres will meet the new quality framework, because I have confidence in the provision of care that they give.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, what particular aspect of the new standard are ACT childcare centres struggling to comply with?

MS BURCH: I think if Mr Doszpot went to the various websites, he would see it, centre by centre. And he can do that work. If one centre has a working towards across any of the seven areas, then the overall status is working towards. These are new standards and I think you are jumping to a negative conclusion about the services here.

Mr Doszpot: We are asking you a question.

MS BURCH: I am giving you an answer, Mr Doszpot. You are jumping to a conclusion. The inference in your question was that the services here in the ACT are, and I do not agree with that inference.

MRS JONES: Supplementary.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: Minister, given the low number of centres currently complying, why is child care in the ACT more expensive than the rest of Australia?

MS BURCH: I thank Mrs Jones for her question. Mr Softspot, I am about to answer—

Members interjecting—

MS BURCH: I do apologise. Mr Doszpot—

Members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, members! You would avoid these problems, Ms Burch, if you addressed your comments to the chair.

MS BURCH: Madam Speaker, I will endeavour to give Mrs Jones—

Members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, members! Mrs Jones has asked a question; she deserves an answer.

MS BURCH: the attention she was after in her question. As I said, about 20 or 25 per cent of the services have been assessed, so we are a long way from getting a true picture of the services here in the ACT. It does come up regularly. Following ROGS, it does come up—the cost of ACT compared to other states. We also provide to the opposition that we are a city-state, with the cost of an urban base provision. When you look at costs compared to New South Wales, they are taking regional, remote and rural areas as well, and that does have the potential to unbalance the cost. But I also make mention that around 80 per cent of our long day cares are community organisations. These are not-for-profit organisations that run for the benefit of the community. And we have also done a test—not so much a test: a review—of services and their cost, a couple of years ago now. *(Time expired.)*

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: Minister, why are the government's past budget initiatives failing to assist the childcare sector to meet the requirements of the national quality framework which your government so readily imposed onto the sector?

MS BURCH: Our investment is supporting the local childcare sector. We are supporting it by building new services and by putting significant numbers of dollars into the upgrade of government-owned, community-based services. We are supporting the workforce through scholarships. There is absolutely no truth, I have to say, Mrs Jones, in saying that this government is not supporting the sector.

Before I was cut off, because I got distracted by an earlier slip of the tongue, about 18 months ago we looked at all the services and their daily rate—those that met the coming requirements as far as workforce to child ratio, those that were community based, those that were not community based and those that were paying rent and had all the operative costs of a private company. There was no difference between the costs. Perhaps it is just, in many ways, what it costs here. I have a lot of confidence and a lot of regard for the services that look after our sons and daughters here in Canberra. I think all of us should give them the regard that they deserve.

Schools—vandalism

DR BOURKE: My question is to the Minister for Education and Training. Minister, can you inform the Assembly how the government is combating vandalism at ACT schools?

MS BURCH: I do thank Dr Bourke for his question. It is a sad reality that our schools are, from time to time, the subject of vandalism, damage and theft. To help combat this, the government has put in place a number of strategies to reduce vandalism. We have built strong relationships with local communities to involve them in the

protection of their local schools and contracted security providers to provide for targeted security patrols, particularly during school holidays.

We have also taken steps to provide for the better physical security of our schools, such as improved lighting, fencing, alarms and security patrols. The Australian Federal Police give high priority to school security and attend school sites when multiple alarms have been activated.

Ensuring our schools are used by the community after hours not only provides much needed community space but also ensures that the local community develops a sense of ownership and responsibility for the local school and acts as a deterrent to vandals and theft.

Over recent years we have also focused on combating school vandalism through the installation of security fences. It is not a one-size-fits-all solution and different schools and their communities have made different choices. It is always a balancing act to create an environment that is open and welcoming but also secure.

The installation of security fences has occurred where it is needed and agreed through conversations with the school. They not only protect schools from vandalism but provide a safe and secure environment for staff and students.

In total, 56 government school sites have full or partial security fences. Security fences have been designed to complement and enhance existing electronic security systems, community accessibility requirements and any identified heritage issues. This, together with security monitoring measures, improved lighting, installation of security mesh on windows and the ongoing maintenance of existing electronic security alarm systems have contributed to a reduction in vandalism in schools and a decrease in reported security incidents at schools.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Minister, can you highlight any indicators that show whether these measures have been effective?

Members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, members! Mr Hanson, Dr Bourke, stop. Could we restart the clock for Minister Burch please.

MS BURCH: I do thank Dr Bourke for his interest in security. The results of these measures have, indeed, been dramatic. The total number of reported incidents at ACT public schools has decreased from 300 in 2009 to 147 in 2012, a reduction of 50 per cent of incidents in these three years. The security incidents include vandalism, theft, unauthorised access and damage to schools and their facilities.

A study of incidents at 18 schools which had a full perimeter fence installed between August 2009 and March 2011 showed the number of incidents falling from 95 prior to fence installation to 38 incidents post fence installation. Over the past four years, there

has been a significant reduction in cost resulting from vandalism, from \$606,000 to \$282,000. This is a reduction in cost of 53 per cent, saving the ACT taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars a year.

This is money that can be put into providing books and computers and ensuring that we have the best teachers. It is money that can be used to deliver on the excellence in education that the ACT is renowned for. And we will continue to work closely with the school executives and the AFP to assess and discuss strategies to improve school security and further reduce the incidence of vandalism at school sites.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Ms Berry.

MS BERRY: Minister, how important is it to keep our schools free from vandalism?

MS BURCH: I thank Ms Berry for her question. Vandalism not promptly dealt with at a school invariably leads to further vandalism at the school and within the local community. It may be perceived that, if acts of vandalism are not dealt with in a timely manner, it is socially acceptable to vandalise buildings in the area. This has wide-ranging implications for the public perception of the school community.

Vandalism at schools can disrupt the teaching and learning environment for students and staff. It is an ACT government priority that students and staff have a safe and secure environment to achieve the best educational and social outcomes possible. A safe environment improves students' engagement with, and success in, learning. Staff and students should be able to attend school without the disruption that vandalism can cause. Community groups should also be able to enjoy the benefits of a vandal-free school. Many organisations hire school facilities to run their programs.

Security fencing also supports schools in student management and supervision, reducing the risk of students leaving school grounds without permission and providing schools with greater control over their grounds and facilities. While there has been significant reduction in the level of vandalism in schools where fences have been installed, it is recognised that school fences are just a mechanism in combating vandalism in schools.

The importance of strong partnerships with the school community is a primary control mechanism that cannot be understated. Getting the balance right between the physical security of school sites and community use and engagement requires site-by-site consideration which is determined at the school level in consultation with their community.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Minister, what have been the types of vandalism we have seen in the past?

MS BURCH: I thank Ms Porter for her question. Vandalism, unfortunately, is something that occurs in schools, but what we have seen here now and what I have just spoken about is the reduction in that. Vandalism could be considered minor

things—broken windows or graffiti on the external structures—or it could be fire and significant theft of computers and other equipment. It is illegal and it is wrong, but it is devastating to the school community as well. If a school community turns up to a school where they have had damage, it disrupts the learning capacity of those students as well.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MS BURCH: Mr Hanson continues to interject. He does not know how to keep quiet. I have to support Dr Bourke's comment back to you that your continued harassment and bullying and nasty comments to Dr Bourke—

MADAM SPEAKER: Minister Burch!

MS BURCH: is an appalling statement of your own behaviour.

MADAM SPEAKER: Minister Burch, sit down. It is not your job to keep order in this place. Mr Hanson, you will cease interjecting.

Canberra—centenary

MR SESELJA: My question is to the Chief Minister. On Thursday it was announced that the ACT government had paid \$172,000 to construct the *Skywhale*. On Friday it was revealed during a public accounts committee hearing that the total cost of the *Skywhale* to territory ratepayers could be more than \$300,000 for a balloon that we do not own—indeed it is owned by a Melbourne-based business—and that may fly here only infrequently. Finally, official documents show that the *Skywhale* will cost \$334,000. Chief Minister, why did you decide to spend \$300,000 or more for a balloon that we do not own and that may only fly here infrequently?

MS GALLAGHER: I thank Mr Seselja for the question. The decision to have a balloon as part of the centenary commissions was contained in the program that everyone got last September. So I think the fact that people are now concerned about it—

Mr Hanson: Not quite what we were expecting, though, was it?

MS GALLAGHER: With the artist, with Patricia Piccinini as the artist—

Mr Hanson: You were expecting it?

MS GALLAGHER: That was in the information that was provided to people in September; that is the point I am making. If you had looked at some of Patricia's work, I think that would have given you an idea of the fact that it would not be a standard hot-air balloon.

Mr Seselja: That would tell us that it was not going to be owned and that it wasn't going to fly here very often?

MS GALLAGHER: I am just pointing out that no-one on your side seemed particularly concerned about a Patricia Piccinini hot-air balloon in September but now—

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, Mr Hanson!

Mr Barr interjecting—

MS GALLAGHER: the concern is immense; that is what I see. The ACT government has commissioned a number of different pieces through the centenary. We have spent \$24½ million of ACT government money on the centenary celebrations. That has included things like \$500,000 on the one day international, \$300-odd thousand on the fireworks and the finale, about \$165,000 on the Canberra symphony, the same on the ballet. There has been a whole range of elements to the centenary program. The balloon, commissioned from a young woman who was educated here in Canberra and developed her love of the arts here in Canberra, was part of that commission.

In relation to the cost of the balloon, this was allocated through the centenary fund. So yes, the balloon cost \$172,000. The question, incidentally, that the journalist asked Mr Lasek was: what was the cost of the balloon? So I do not think there was any sort of shock, horror that it was uncovered. There were additional costs relating to the balloon which will be determined by the end of the centenary year. That has been capped at \$300,000, as we explained in annual reports hearings on Friday.

With respect to the issue of ownership of the balloon, if we had retained ownership of the balloon it would have required that we retain an operating budget for that balloon, including ongoing maintenance of the balloon, and a pilot for the balloon. We took extensive advice from the Government Solicitor and it was determined that the ACT government does not want to have ongoing ownership of the Patricia Piccinini balloon and instead the way to engage with this particular piece of art during the centenary year was through a sponsorship arrangement. Those documents are available for people to peruse and I am very comfortable that all appropriate steps were taken around the commissioning of this piece of art.

MADAM SPEAKER: Before we go on, Mr Barr, would you like to withdraw that comment you made across the chamber to Mr Hanson?

Mr Barr: I withdraw, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you. Supplementary question, Mr Seselja.

MR SESELJA: Chief Minister, how can ratepayers be sure that the ACT government will cap the costs of this project at \$300,000 given that as recently as Thursday you were claiming that it would cost \$172,000?

MS GALLAGHER: Mr Seselja obviously has already left the building for the Senate and did not listen to my last answer to his question. The cost of the balloon was the question that was asked, and that was the figure that was then reported in the *Canberra Times*. That figure is \$172,000. The total contribution that the ACT government has allocated under this project, through the centenary budget, is \$300,000. That is for a range of different parts of the project, which are around maintenance, licensing, pilot fees and all of those other—

Mr Coe interjecting—

MS GALLAGHER: All of those additional costs for the centenary year will be met from the centenary budget. I accept—I presume, from the comments that have been made about this—that the opposition is not a fan of the *Skywhale*. I am taking that, feeling that vibe from across the chamber. But part of the centenary challenge has been to meet a whole range of different interests across the community. For example, the Spin component of the centenary is over \$600,000. I know plenty of people who do not like cricket and are upset that \$500,000 was spent on the cricket. I have heard arguments of “We’ll only have the whale till the end of this year.” The fireworks lasted under half an hour. These are all open for individual consideration about what is important to you, but the centenary is a broad-based festival of our city and our city’s history, and right back to the founding fathers, when they established the city, they wanted this city not just to be the home of politics but to be the city of arts. And where arts were welcomed—and yes, even if that art is controversial—they wanted this to be a place that was mature enough to engage in that discussion and celebration.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Chief Minister, what recruitment process was used for the design and delivery of this project and what were the terms used?

MS GALLAGHER: As I understand it, that information is available on the procurement website. I have had a look at that because of the interest about the costs of this balloon. It looks to me like it has been a very thorough process. But those documents are available on the procurement website, and I am happy to take any further questions about it.

At the end of the day, the decision was taken, essentially, to have a sponsorship arrangement where we sponsored the owner of the balloon.

Mr Smyth: A sponsorship arrangement?

MS GALLAGHER: Is that a revelation to you, Mr Smyth? I think not only have we established that—

MADAM SPEAKER: Direct your comments through the chair please.

Mr Smyth interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Smyth, cease interjecting.

MS GALLAGHER: I know Mr Smyth's fascination with all things ballooning and flying, but at the end of the day we did not want to own the balloon. We do not believe that we have an ongoing need to have the *Skywhale* in the ACT's ownership. It is a part of the festival of the centenary of Canberra, and once that agreement expires we hope the *Skywhale* lives a long and happy life and yes, we hope that she comes back and visits us from time to time in the short life expectancy that the *Skywhale* has.

Mr Hanson: Is it a she or is it an it? Does it live?

MS GALLAGHER: Mr Hanson, you have a look at the *Skywhale*. I presume it is a she.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, members! Mr Gentleman has a supplementary question. Mr Gentleman.

MR GENTLEMAN: Minister, how have the centenary balloon and other promotions raised the profile of the ACT across Australia and internationally?

MS GALLAGHER: There is no doubt that the *Skywhale* has brought considerable attention to the centenary program, and that was one of the original goals—to raise awareness about Canberra and the centenary not just nationally but internationally, and I think the *Skywhale* is one element of the program that has done that.

There are mixed views about the *Skywhale*. I am not pretending there are not. My own position on the *Skywhale* has changed the longer I have had to admire her in her natural habitat. I do think that there is a role for provocative art in a centenary celebration. The commitment from the ACT taxpayers to the centenary program has been appropriated through this place at \$24½ million. The *Skywhale*, no matter how important she is, is a very small part of the overall centenary program; but she is an important part. I think Canberrans will remember the *Skywhale* in years to come as a good part of the centenary program.

Canberra—centenary

MRS JONES: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, in regard to the *Skywhale* balloon, referred to in some parts as hindenboob, does the agreement with the operator and artist allow them to receive payments other than those included in the \$300,000 cost cap when the balloon is presented external to the ACT centenary celebrations? Will the operator and artist make further money from the balloon other than at ACT government events?

MS GALLAGHER: Potentially, the intellectual property of the *Skywhale* remains with the artist, as it should. I think that is quite standard. That is the same with the symphony and the ballet. Their creative artists retain that intellectual property. In terms of any commercial opportunities outside of the centenary year, this is probably

restricted by the size of the basket, because it actually has a very small basket. So I imagine there are opportunities but from my discussion with the owner of the balloon on the weekend, I do not think he is doing it in relation to any future commercial opportunity.

He has 100 flights as part of the life expectancy of a balloon. He is doing it because he is committed to the project. But our commitment, our \$300,000, is for a fixed period of time, for the centenary year. Once that expires, it is over to the owner and, indeed, the artist about any further opportunities that come from the *Skywhale*'s creation.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: Chief Minister, are payments for the events going to be simply for the 100 flights and are they in the ACT?

MS GALLAGHER: We have not paid for 100 flights. As I understand it, the life expectancy of the balloon is for 100 flights. I think we have actually taken this on notice from annual reports hearings. There are a number of flights within the \$300,000 budget that we have allocated. My understanding is each flight is \$3½ thousand.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Chief Minister, how many flights does the government's committed \$300,000 get for the territory overall?

MS GALLAGHER: I will come back, and I think we did take this on notice. I have not seen an exact figure; I have not seen a number that I can give you other than that there are flights around Australia as part of the centenary celebrations. But again that goes to the original goal of the art. The art is to project Canberra outwards to Australia, not just here in the ACT.

I do find it interesting that those that criticise the *Skywhale* and say how awful it is then want to know that every flight happens in Canberra. I presume they then shut their eyes when she flies over because they do not actually—

Mrs Jones: Yes. I'll have to lock the kids up; otherwise I will have to explain it to them.

MS GALLAGHER: My kids were down there on the weekend, Mrs Jones, and I can tell you that the kids do not have a problem with *Skywhale*. They were pretty happy with the *Skywhale*. It is the adults that have the problem with it.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Chief Minister, does the government pay to get the *Skywhale* to the interstate events? If so, how much is set aside for this? Does the territory get any residual payments for appearances interstate?

MS GALLAGHER: I will see if I can provide you with that information, Mr Doszpot, around the allocation of the budget. What I have got is \$166,000, which is the contribution over and above the \$172,000 to commission it, for operation, licensing, insurance, test flight, photography, videography, education kit, social media, website, travel costs for a flight crew. So that is included in the \$300,000. Again, I go back to the fact that this was never commissioned as a project that was to only be shared with Canberrans. We are the national capital. The centenary has a national focus. And part of the agreement with the owner is to take the *Skywhale* to other parts of Australia and have it seen as a centenary of Canberra project.

Work safety

MR GENTLEMAN: My question is to the Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations. Minister, can you please tell the Assembly about the new campaign, speak up about safety, that was launched recently?

MR CORBELL: I thank Mr Gentleman for the question. Yes, the speak up about safety campaign was recently launched by the Work Safety Commissioner, Mr McCabe, along with industry and union representatives. This campaign is designed to encourage workers and supervisors in workplaces in the ACT to actively engage in discussions about workplace safety.

It is an ongoing initiative designed to help change the culture in workplaces in the ACT, particularly in the construction and civil sectors in the ACT, about the importance of safety, about not making it taboo to talk about safety, about making sure that workers and their supervisors feel able to speak up and talk about safety in the workplace, to identify problems before they become accidents and before someone is injured or worse on a worksite in the ACT. The campaign is just one of the responses to the *Getting home safely* report, a report that looked into safety on construction sites in the ACT.

The initiative recognises that one of the best ways to prevent workplace accidents is through the active engagement of workers about their safety concerns up-front. Often we know that it is workers who understand the safety issues present in the workplace better than anyone else and that they may understand workplace safety problems that managers simply have not noticed. Supervisors, for their part, may be aware of procedures or controls to mitigate risks but they may not fully understand where the risks are.

So the purpose of the campaign is to get material out and get the message out into the workplaces that it is okay to speak up about safety. We want to encourage a culture where that exists because that is one of the key ways in which we are going to work to reduce the rate of workplace injury and, tragically, workplace death that unfortunately does exist on construction sites here in the ACT.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Gentleman.

MR GENTLEMAN: Minister, does the campaign have any support from key stakeholders?

MR CORBELL: I thank Mr Gentleman for the supplementary. Yes, it does have the support of stakeholders, in addition, of course, to the Work Safety Commissioner, who has led the charge on this campaign. It has received strong support from the Master Builders Association, the Housing Industry Association and also the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union. This tripartite level of support, from industry, from the regulator and from the union, is very important. It sends a common and united message that we need to talk about safety in workplaces.

The executive director of the MBA, Mr Miller, indicated that the MBA was very pleased to join WorkSafe ACT in this campaign. Other industry stakeholders have indicated the same level of support. The branch secretary of the CFMEU, Mr Hall, has expressed that it is important that workers be encouraged to speak up as they are the ones who are often subject to injury if something goes wrong.

This is all about getting that message out into the workplace. I am delighted it has the support of industry bodies, of unions, of workers and of the regulator. We will continue to roll out this campaign. There is a bit of advertising already happening on buses and in workplaces. We will continue to push that advertising out as part of our overall response to *Getting Home Safely* and the implementation of the recommendations from that report.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Minister, can you update the Assembly on the implementation of the *Getting home safely* report?

MR CORBELL: I thank Ms Porter for her supplementary question. Yes, the government is moving forward with implementation of all 28 recommendations of the *Getting home safely* report. For example, last week I released the Magistrates Court (Industrial Proceedings) Amendment Bill for public consultation. This bill is one part of the government's response to the *Getting home safely* report and its recommendations. Provisions for dealing with work safety and industrial relations matters in a dedicated court was a recommendation of the report from Lynelle Briggs and Mark McCabe, and I am very pleased that the government has acted promptly to introduce that legislation as an exposure draft for stakeholder comment.

In addition, across-level government coordination of implementation is ongoing. In particular, a high-level directors-general steering committee is continuing to meet to ensure implementation is occurring across government. There are also now tripartite advisory mechanisms in place through the Work Safety Council to develop project plans to drive implementation at an industry level. There are a number of recommendations where industry has the lead, and we continue to work with industry and encourage industry to take the lead on those matters where they have responsibility and control.

The government has also undertaken to provide a six-monthly update on progress of the implementation. I anticipate to do that for the period commencing 1 September this year.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Ms Berry.

MS BERRY: Minister, how can industries outside of the construction industry be sure that their workplaces can remain safe and healthy through this campaign?

MR CORBELL: I thank Ms Berry for the supplementary. I think the most important thing to state is that a discussion and changing a culture around workplace safety in the construction sector flows through to other parts of the economy and other workplace sectors. If we have a situation where we have a sector that has been an area of intense focus around workplace safety, is starting to change its culture and has a high profile in the media, that flows through to other parts of the economy and other workplaces.

If there is a clear message from government that death and injury are not acceptable in workplaces, as they are not, and if there is a clear message from government and action from government that will see additional resources for work safety inspectors on the ground, it also flows through both to employers and to workers that the issue of workplace safety is critical and cannot be ignored. There are increased resources to respond to it and there is a strong culture of acting after the event, but most importantly before an incident occurs, to identify safety problems and get them fixed.

Canberra—centenary

MR WALL: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, last Tuesday in the Legislative Assembly, you presented the results of a University of Canberra survey, which showed that almost four in 10 people said the \$3 million Canberra centenary event on 11 March had a negative impact or did not change perceptions about Canberra. Now the government has spent over \$300,000 on a hot-air balloon which is owned by a Melbourne-based business and may fly only infrequently in the ACT. This hot air balloon, which is attracting national ridicule, will tour the nation in an effort to change the negative perceptions about Canberra. Chief Minister, given the current level of national public ridicule of the centenary balloon, what strategies does your government have in place to counter that ridicule?

MS GALLAGHER: I do not agree with the question. I think it runs counter to the comments that Mr Seselja made at the end of the annual reports hearing on Friday, where he actually congratulated the centenary creative director for a wonderful series of events that have been put on in the centenary and also acknowledged how difficult it was to please everybody. Perhaps there should be a bit of conferring between colleagues on the backbench—even one in the departure lounge.

I would say that the work of the centenary team, and I am not in any way defensive here around the centenary program; I think the centenary team have achieved a wonderful program of different events—

Mr Hanson: Point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: Point of order, Mr Hanson.

Mr Hanson: The question is specifically around the balloon, not about the broader centenary. I repeat the question for the minister's edification: given the current level of national public ridicule of the centenary balloon, what strategies does your government have in place to counter that ridicule?

MADAM SPEAKER: Can we stop the clock, please. I think that the Chief Minister has said that she does not agree with the premise of the question, and she is referring to the balloon. But could you be mindful of sticking to the balloon.

MS GALLAGHER: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The question also alluded to the evaluation that has been done across the centenary, in particular the one big day, which has nothing to do with the balloon.

I am responding to the fact that there has been mixed feedback about particular elements of the centenary program, which was part of the question. The centenary program—we can all focus on individual elements of it—does have a strong arts program but it also has a strong sports program. We have had a lot of good feedback from a range of different arts programs, even *You Are Here, Mr Wall*, which is a festival that supports young creative artists in Canberra—a lot of good feedback about that. \$680,000 of the centenary budget was spent on that. \$500,000 was spent on the one-day cricket that everybody seemed to enjoy.

There are mixed reviews about different elements of the centenary. But overall are we proud of the centenary program? I can certainly speak from my point of view: yes, we are. And a different evaluation—you have quoted one in particular; there was other feedback from the two studies that were released that said that people were aware of the centenary, that they had enjoyed different elements of the centenary, that they had gone to more than one of the centenary events. There are a range of different goals and evaluation criteria that have been set for the centenary program. We will continue to evaluate and, importantly, we will continue to respond where we have had feedback that people have experienced negative feedback. We will respond to that and we will make sure that at future events we are addressing those areas.

In relation to the *Skywhale* in particular, and it goes to another question, there are six flights paid for as part of the arrangements with Global Ballooning. Four of them are in Canberra, and Hobart is paying for three of the four flights there. So that partially answers the other question I took on notice.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Chief Minister, what methodology will your government use to evaluate the success or otherwise of this program?

MS GALLAGHER: That is different; so of the *Skywhale*—not the program, the *Skywhale* project?

Mr Wall: *Skywhale*—the project; my apologies.

MS GALLAGHER: We are not commissioning a particular survey on the *Skywhale*. I think we are getting a range of feedback from different sources that is showing mixed views. We will evaluate that in terms of—

Members interjecting—

MS GALLAGHER: There will be local views. I have also seen pieces written by people who actually understand the arts. I did not actually realise we had seven art critics in waiting sitting across the bench. Everyone is an expert in skywhales. They are coming out the door at the moment: I knew about that *Skywhale*.

Members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson and Mr Coe, you are being disorderly; stop.

MS GALLAGHER: Part of the success or otherwise of the *Skywhale* will be taken from a variety of sources, including those who actually understand the arts. It will be around—

Opposition members interjecting—

MS GALLAGHER: I think it is commonly accepted that there will be critiques of art from art critics and that will be part of the evaluation. Part of it will be about the coverage that was received. I know that you are all saying that all the coverage is negative. I do not actually believe that is the case. In fact, I know it is not the case. We will also take feedback, and have been taking feedback, from the local community. As I said, I think there are different elements to the centenary program. They are not all unanimously approved by every member of the community. In fact, there are mixed views on almost every element.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Chief Minister, what brief did your government give to the artist who created this centenary balloon, what assessment was made of whether the artist delivered on that brief and will you table it?

MS GALLAGHER: I will take some advice on that. There were detailed discussions. It was arranged through a single-select tender, with negotiations directly with the artist. I will check on anything more specific. Did the government seek to control the artist in her work? No, we did not.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Gentleman.

MR GENTLEMAN: Minister, what responses have you received from art experts on the program?

Mr Hanson: From the elite.

MS GALLAGHER: It is not the elite, Mr Hanson. This is not a class war. This is about—

Mrs Jones: Oh, so people can't understand it if they're normal?

MS GALLAGHER: No, I did not say that at all. I did not say that, so do not misrepresent what I have said. I think the issue here is that you can have—and those responses that we have had from the community are as valid as anybody's, those people that have not liked it and those that have, and I have received representations on both sides of the *Skywhale* debate in the last week.

Also, in terms of understanding the artist's original intention, understanding what she is trying to portray through her work, understanding how it builds on her international reputation and how she has rolled that into the centenary of Canberra commission, I think it does require feedback from people who understand her work and maybe have examined it in the past or people who understand sculptors and their work. So I think there will be a range of expert advice that will be provided. We have seen some of it come already. But overwhelmingly I think the *Skywhale* has done what we had asked of it in the sense that it is a unique commission by a Canberra girl done good—probably our most famous artist of the time, who has been commissioned to do a work about the city she grew up in and where she grew to love the arts and which has raised the issue of the centenary not just nationally but internationally. And I reject the view that that has only resulted in negative coverage. I simply do not agree with that.

Beekeeping

MS BERRY: My question is to the Minister for Territory and Municipal Services. Minister, I recently received correspondence from constituents regarding the keeping of bees in backyards. Could the minister please advise the Assembly on the government's policy relating to the keeping of bees in domestic and urban environments?

MR RATTENBURY: Thank you, Ms Berry, for the question. Currently there is no specific legislation for beekeeping in the ACT. The Apiaries Act was repealed in 1997 and replaced with provisions in the animal diseases regulation. I think it is important to observe, in the context of this question, that bees of course play a very important role as part of the food production process, with their pollinating of plants and in the production of honey and wax.

Legislation in relation to the keeping of bees was included in part IV of the animal diseases regulation 2006, and this is the only bee-specific legislation in the ACT. It is restricted to two offences only: firstly, the keeping of bees other than in a frame hive and, secondly, allowing bees to access honey other than in a frame hive. Perhaps I

could further add that there is currently no register or registration process for beekeepers in the ACT. The ACT and the Northern Territory are the only jurisdictions that do not register beekeepers.

TAMS is currently considering developing a code of practice similar to the one used in New South Wales, which will limit the number of bee hives that can be kept on a residential property as well as introducing a registration scheme for beekeepers, but that is only in development at the moment. It is something that we need to undertake some consultation on as there is no final position on that at this stage.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Ms Berry.

MS BERRY: Minister, what are the benefits of domestic beekeeping and how are they balanced out with the considerations of public health needs?

MR RATTENBURY: I think there are a number of benefits to domestic beekeeping—the actual capability for people to produce food in their own backyards, the benefits of having bees in the environment for the pollination purposes that they serve and also just that connection for people of having that sense of how nature works and growing food in their own yards is something that is very positive.

I believe it is actually quite popular in the ACT. In June of 2012, TAMS funded the printing of 1,000 copies of the Plant Health Australia beekeeping biosecurity manual. That was distributed to all ACT beekeepers by the ACT Beekeepers Association. I think just the scale of that production run indicates the popularity of this pastime in the ACT.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Minister, as part of the directorate's consideration of introducing registration for beekeepers, will there be a fee associated with this registration?

MR RATTENBURY: Thank you for that question, Mr Wall. That has not been determined yet. It will be part of the consultation process. There certainly has been a discussion about this at a national level, about the benefits or otherwise of having a fee, and there has certainly been, at a national level amongst ministers, some discussion around the value in generating some revenue to assist in biosecurity issues related to bees in particular. Unfortunately we do have external species coming in to Australia which have a detrimental effect on the native bee population. I think even within the bee industry there are some who would advocate some level of fees to provide some resources to combat those biosecurity issues. But it is not seen that there has been a final decision on it yet in the ACT.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Minister, are there any plans to extend this insect regulation to other species that could be bred at home, such as butterflies?

MADAM SPEAKER: Could you repeat the end of the question, please, Dr Bourke?

DR BOURKE: The question was, Madam Speaker: are there any plans to extend these proposed regulations for beekeeping to other insect species, such as perhaps butterflies?

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: I do not think there is any standing order against mocking people.

MR RATTENBURY: Perhaps there should be a standing order to that effect, but Mr Hanson would be in trouble far too often. At this stage no, there is no consideration of other species. The issue of bees has come up. Ms Berry has written to me off the back of a letter of concern from some constituents. It would be fair to say, I think, that was a very fair letter from the constituents, who acknowledged the value of having bees in a suburban environment but also expressed concerns about safety issues around bees for those people who are allergic to bee sting, and they cited some figures about the number of people in the community. I have sent you a reply today actually, Ms Berry.

Mr Coe: On a point of order—

MADAM SPEAKER: On a point of order, Mr Coe.

Mr Coe: Madam Speaker, Dr Bourke's supplementary was simply about extending registration to other insects, including butterflies. I think the minister should address that supplementary.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Rattenbury, do you have anything to add in answering the question?

MR RATTENBURY: On the point of order, Madam Speaker, I was simply observing why certain insects might need a level of registration. That is the point I was discussing. But I am happy to leave it there.

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

Supplementary answer to question without notice Energy—electricity prices

MR CORBELL: On 9 May Mr Smyth asked me a supplementary question in which he said:

... why did electricity go up 13 per cent in this financial year and is it the lowest increase in the country?

I am pleased to advise Mr Smyth that the main drivers of the 17.74 per cent nominal increase in the transitional franchise tariff determined by the ICRC on 8 June last year were increases in the wholesale cost of electricity, which accounted for 66 per cent of

the increase, and increases in network costs, which accounted for 24 per cent of the increase.

The increase in wholesale prices was driven by the commencement of carbon pricing on 1 July last year. The remainder of the increase was due to increased retailer operating costs and margins and a small allowance for the commencement of the ACT energy efficiency improvement scheme.

The increase in ACT regulated household electricity prices was lower than in other national electricity market states where an independent regulator determines such prices. In New South Wales IPART approved an average 18 per cent increase for 2012-13 and the Essential Services Commission of South Australia approved an 18 per cent increase for the same period. In Victoria and Queensland prices are not set by an independent regulator. In Tasmania an increase of 10.56 per cent occurred, which was the result in part of a change in pricing methodology.

Despite the increase, the ACT retains the lowest household electricity price in Australia. For 2012-13 the Australian Energy Market Commission reports that the ACT's electricity price was lower than in every other jurisdiction, and was only 65 per cent of the average national price and 63 per cent of the New South Wales price. The AEMC also reported that feed-in tariff costs are lower in the ACT than in New South Wales. In 2012-13 feed-in tariff costs were 1.3c per kilowatt hour in New South Wales but only 0.4 of one cent per kilowatt hour in the territory.

Paper

Madam Speaker presented the following paper:

Intergovernmental Agreements—Letter to the Speaker from the Chief Minister, dated 27 February 2013.

Gene Technology Act—operations of the Gene Technology Regulator

Paper and statement by minister

MS GALLAGHER (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Health and Minister for Higher Education): I present the following paper:

Gene Technology Act, pursuant to subsection 136A(3)—Operations of the Gene Technology Regulator—Quarterly report—1 October to 31 December 2012, dated 15 February 2013.

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

Leave granted.

MS GALLAGHER: I am pleased to table the quarterly report on the operations of the Gene Technology Regulator for the period 1 October to 31 December 2012. The position of the Gene Technology Regulator was established to oversee a nationally

consistent regulation scheme for gene technology, which is comprised of legislation of the commonwealth and each state and territory. A Gene Technology Ministerial Council consisting of representatives of each jurisdiction has been established to provide broad oversight of the scheme.

The overarching role of the regulator in the legislation is to protect the health and safety of people and the environment by identifying risks posed by or as a result of gene technology and by managing those risks through regulating certain dealings with genetically modified organisms.

Under section 136 and 136A of the relevant ACT legislation, the Gene Technology Act 2003, the regulator must prepare and provide reports to the Minister for Health on the operations of the regulator as soon as practicable after the end of the relevant reporting period. The ACT Minister for Health is required to present a copy of this report to the Legislative Assembly within six sitting days of receiving it.

The report I am tabling today shows the key activities of the regulator for the quarter 1 October to 31 December. In that period two organisations were issued with accreditation under the national gene technology system, one licence was issued for dealings involving the intentional release of genetically modified organisms into the environment, two licences were issued for dealings not involving the intentional release of GMOs into the environment, 60 physical containment facilities were certified, 25 instruments were surrendered, 160 certifications and 22 licences were varied, and one investigation was completed. The report provides a detailed explanation of each of these activities and the regulations pertaining to them.

During the quarter approximately 13 per cent of current field trial sites and 19 per cent of post-harvest field trial sites were subjected to routine monitoring. There were five findings of non-compliance, all of which were considered minor in nature and resolvable by reminders, education and/or cooperative compliance. I encourage members seeking further information to consult the report or the website of the Office of the Gene Technology Regulator.

Financial Management Act—instrument Paper and statement by minister

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): For the information of members I present the following paper:

Financial Management Act, pursuant to section 16B—Instrument authorising the rollover of undisbursed appropriation of the Justice and Community Safety Directorate, including a statement of reasons, dated 8 May 2013.

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

Leave granted.

MR BARR: Section 16B of the Financial Management Act 1996 allows for appropriations to be preserved from one fiscal year to the next, as outlined in instruments signed by myself as Treasurer.

As required by the act, I have tabled a copy of a recent authorisation made to roll over undisbursed appropriation from 2011-12 to 2012-13. This package includes one instrument signed under section 16B. The appropriation being rolled over was not disbursed during 2011-12 and is still required in 2012-13 for the completion of the projects identified in the instrument.

The instrument authorises a total of \$12,070,000 in rollovers for the Justice and Community Safety Directorate, comprising \$2.454 million in net cost of outputs, \$9.395 million in controlled capital injection, and \$221,000 of the territorial capital injection appropriations.

These rollovers have been made as the appropriation clearly relates to project funds where commitments have been entered into, but the related cash has not yet been required or expended during the year of appropriation—for example, where capital works projects or initiatives for which the timing of delivery has changed or been delayed, where outstanding contractual or pending claims exist, or, finally, where there are delays in implementing the budgeted recurrent initiatives.

Details of these rollovers are included in the instrument, and I commend the paper to the Assembly.

Papers

Ms Burch presented the following paper:

Education, Training and Youth Affairs—Standing Committee—Inquiry—Auditor-General's Report 3/2012—Early Childhood Schooling—Government submission.

Mr Corbell presented the following papers:

Subordinate legislation (including explanatory statements unless otherwise stated)

Legislation Act, pursuant to section 64—

Civil Law (Wrongs) Act—Civil Law (Wrongs) Law Institute of Victoria Limited Scheme 2013 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2013-48 (LR, 26 April 2013).

Health Act—Health (Fees) Determination 2013 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2013-46 (LR, 26 April 2013).

Road Transport (General) Act—

Road Transport (General) Application of Road Transport Legislation Declaration 2013 (No 5)—Disallowable Instrument DI2013-49 (LR, 1 May 2013).

Road Transport (General) Segway Exemption Determination 2013 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2013-47 (LR, 22 April 2013).

Education—tertiary

Discussion of matter of public importance

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

The importance of the tertiary education sector to the ACT.

MR SESELJA (Brindabella) (3.51): I welcome the opportunity to speak on the importance of tertiary education in the ACT. The ACT has a very vibrant tertiary education sector. There is not just the Australian National University; the University of Canberra, the Australian Catholic University, ADFA and CIT are some of our outstanding public tertiary institutions.

A strong tertiary sector is an essential part of a growing, strong, prosperous and stable economy. Australia currently sits at 25th out of 29 advanced economies ranked on public investment in universities as a percentage of gross domestic product. Despite this, the latest data from the University of Canberra shows that the university's research publications have increased by 75.5 per cent from 2009 to 2011, while research income jumped from \$11.6 million in 2009 to \$17.1 million in 2011.

The University of Canberra has continued to grow its student population, with total student load up 32.7 per cent since 2009. The number of research students enrolled at the university went up by 41.9 per cent between December 2010 and December 2012.

The university has suffered under financial strain in the past, but I do think that it is important to acknowledge the good work the current vice-chancellor, Professor Stephen Parker, has initiated on the campus. I recall a debate in this Assembly some years ago—I think it was initiated by Mr Mulcahy—where the Canberra Liberals in response highlighted the turnaround in finances of the University of Canberra under the leadership of Professor Stephen Parker. He inherited a large deficit and very quickly turned that financial situation around.

It is worth noting also for the record that there has been criticism of things like the University of Canberra sponsorship of the Brumbies. But I personally see that as a good community partnership. I see great benefit for the University of Canberra, great advertising and promotion for the University of Canberra, as well as benefit for the ACT Brumbies.

We see good news in relation to the Australian National University. According to the *Times Higher Education* world university rankings, they are 38th in the world, and at other times have been ranked in the top 20, depending on the measure. We as Canberrans should be very proud of having an institution like the ANU here in Canberra.

The tertiary sector in Canberra is vitally important not only to our economy but to our culture of diversity, discussion and debate. I know that my colleague Mr Doszpot, the shadow minister for education, will speak to this point.

Federal Labor's decision to pit universities against high schools and primary schools is yet another example of a government that is making it up as it goes along. The \$2.8 billion in cuts to universities is yet another consequence of five years of Labor mismanagement. The ACT has been the victim, and today's federal budget will no doubt continue this mess of mismanagement and its effects on the ACT.

The government has announced a two per cent efficiency dividend on university funding in 2014 and 1.25 per cent the next year. This comes just as universities begin pay negotiations expected to increase wages bills by four per cent. It must be said that this is the legacy of economic mismanagement. This is the legacy of economic mismanagement under federal Labor.

The cuts have, of course, been widely condemned. Universities Australia chairman Glyn Davis said the efficiency dividend would place "severe strain" on the sector, which had been encouraged to expand enrolments to enable greater access to higher education. He added that the cuts came on top of the \$1 billion that had been taken out of the system six months ago as part of the midyear economic and fiscal outlook.

Fred Hilmer, Vice-Chancellor of the University of New South Wales, slammed the cuts, describing them as "shortsighted" and "cynical". He continued:

This is a bitterly disappointing, shortsighted move on the part of a government which claims education as one of its highest priorities. It is an absurdity to seek to provide students with a better education at school by providing a worse experience at university.

Jeannie Rea, president of the National Tertiary Education Union, deplored the cuts to university funding. She said:

The idea of cutting higher education to fund massive reforms in schooling, when the purpose of schooling is to prepare students for work and university, is ironic to say the least.

Colm Harmon, head of the University of Sydney's economics school, said decisions impacting on one cohort—university students, in this case—could span generations. He stated:

Parents and children form their decisions to stay in education long before year 12 ... By even hinting that supports may not be there for them when they reach that point you are dampening the potential impact of the 'Gonski' investment on participation right along the educational pathway.

Mr Assistant Speaker, you know that you have failed to institute the reforms when the namesake of said reforms publicly and loudly criticises the measures put forward.

David Gonski himself has said that Labor is mishandling the reforms. He has attacked tertiary education cuts and stated:

As chancellor of a leading Australian university, I fervently believe in and will continue to advocate that increases be made in funding the university sector.

The criticisms are not surprising. This is, after all, a federal Labor government who threw \$16 billion at school halls, many unwanted, and of course much of the money was wasted because of the way it was spent and the haste with which it was spent. Now they want to slash billions from universities. School education minister Peter Garrett has said that universities should be able to “accommodate these efficiencies” and went on to say:

I think there will be scope for universities, they’re very big entities.

I believe these statements should be treated with the contempt that they deserve. Unfortunately, we have not had much in terms of advocacy for the university sector in the ACT from the Labor government. We know that effectively the cuts to the tertiary education sector are now part of the overall education package. The federal Labor government have said that they will fund the school sector more significantly, but they will fund universities less. So they now form part of the same package—a package which the Chief Minister has stated that she will be supporting, and appears to have already signed off on. We read this in the *Canberra Times*:

But Ms Gallagher warned that parents and students needed to understand the rate of growth in funding would be slower in the ACT than in the states and other territories.

So we are seeing a significant part of our economy in the tertiary education sector cut by the federal Labor government, and of course we are seeing less extra money coming into education in the ACT compared to other states. We miss out on both counts.

Under the former coalition government the number of students in higher education increased by 63 per cent, the number of postgraduate students by 118 per cent, the number of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds by 23 per cent and the number of students with disabilities by 140 per cent. The coalition also established a \$6 billion higher education endowment fund to fund improved capital works and research facilities.

That is quite a record, and it stands in stark contrast to that of the federal Labor government. But it also, again, is the dividend of good economic management. When there is good budgetary and economic management, we see things like the \$6 billion higher education endowment fund from the coalition. When there is poor budgetary and economic management from federal Labor, we see them having to cut the university sector in order to fund reforms in other parts of education. I think it is an example of the dividend of good economic management and the downside of poor economic management, which is what our nation is seeing right now.

We have seen some recent controversies in the higher education sector here in the ACT, including one of our Green candidates using the Australian National University as a recruitment tool. It is one thing to be recruiting on campus; it is another thing to go in as a guest lecturer and be recruiting for your campaign, as it appears Simon Sheikh was doing. We saw a number of students complaining about that. One said, "I don't pay to go to university for politicians to ask me to join their political campaigns. Outraged and appalled."

Mr Rattenbury: That's it; take up your campaign in the Assembly, under privilege.

MR SESELJA: He is very sensitive on this. Another said, "Disgraceful that Simon Sheikh was allowed to campaign as a guest lecturer today at the ANU." And another said, "Interesting ideas by Simon Sheikh, but the campaign volunteer sheets were inappropriate, cheap and opportunistic."

The importance of this particular issue is that it did not reflect well on the ANU that they allowed this to go on. I think it is important that our public tertiary institutions make sure that they avoid this kind of thing. I think that the negative publicity that the ANU received as a result of what the Greens candidate acknowledged was an error, or that he had done the wrong thing at least in part, could have been avoided if the Greens had shown a little more respect for the Australian National University and not seen it as their personal place where they can recruit people for their campaign.

I will finish where I started. We have a wonderful tertiary education sector in the ACT. It is one of which we can be very proud. It is not just the ANU and UC; as I mentioned, we have a number of other tertiary education institutions.

I make brief mention of one of the Canberra Liberals' policies from the last election, which was to partner with the Australian Catholic University to build a practical health training facility. We announced that we would partner with ACU to establish a state-of-the-art health paramedic learning facility for Canberra's health workforce. A Canberra Liberals government would have provided \$2 million to refurbish existing space at the Australian Catholic University for a simulation-based training facility. This would have included human patient simulators and state-of-the-art recording and feedback systems to provide reflective learning through video playback. In announcing this policy I said:

There's a shortage of paramedic training facilities in Canberra, due to the significant growth in enrolments in health courses. Our plan will get more health professionals in the workforce where they're desperately needed.

I think it is important that we look to establish these kinds of partnerships. Where there are sensible partnerships for the ACT government to make with our tertiary sector, we do welcome them and we have in the past supported them where we see the government going in the right direction. But I would commend that one in terms of paramedic training.

We have a number of wonderful tertiary institutions and it is up to us not to ignore them but to look to work with them wherever we can. I personally see the University of Canberra as Canberra's university, and we have great potential to see it used and see it grow into an even better tertiary institution than it is at the moment. As I said earlier, I think that Professor Stephen Parker has done some wonderful things over the past few years. He inherited some very difficult budgetary circumstances and he appears to have turned much of that around.

That kind of leadership is needed. I think it is important that we have governments here in the ACT that partner with that and that we do not have an ad hoc arrangement when it comes to federal government funding. When we see that ad hoc approach to funding, when we see the mismanagement of the budget leading to the need for cuts, as we see, the tertiary sector does not do well and nor do many other sectors.

In conclusion, the Canberra Liberals will continue to look for ways to partner with our tertiary education sector, to promote our tertiary education sector and to ensure that it continues to be an important part of the ACT economy and our ACT community.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (4.05): Today is certainly a good day for this matter of public importance to be raised in the Assembly, as we anticipate the federal budget and its impacts on the ACT. I think we all know how vital the tertiary education sector is to our city and to the region, and I welcome the chance to talk about this and to hear the views of other members.

As the nation's capital, we are home to many government and national institutions, but we have also become an educational hub which proudly represents our city with schools and universities of international repute. Canberra has become a knowledge and learning capital. We are a city with a long history as a place of academic learning, boasting a fantastic range of leaders in education such as the ANU, University of Canberra, University of New South Wales Defence Force Academy, and Australian Catholic University. We have a dynamic CIT, offering world-class hospitality courses, amongst others, and we are home to other great research centres for agencies such as CSIRO, the Mount Stromlo Observatory and the John Curtin medical research school, as well as a growing aeronautics and aerospace industry.

The ACT has ambitious carbon reduction targets; and this, combined with our research and educational institutions, means we are well placed to become a centre for excellence for the nation in tackling climate change. As we transition to a more environmentally sustainable future, we can offer international students an opportunity to be part of the cutting-edge innovations that will create new technologies and jobs in the growing green economy.

Due to our role in the capital region as well as our reputation across Australia and the world, our tertiary education sector caters for many visitors. Moving to Canberra, as we know many students do for a variety of reasons, offers them a chance to live locally in a city that understands global issues.

The international education sector is important not only to Australian society but also to the country's economy. International education activity contributed \$16.3 billion in export income to the Australian economy in 2010-11. The economic benefits for the ACT are clear to see. But just as importantly, so are the social benefits. We are favoured by these visitors, some of whom will stay in Canberra after their studies, bringing a cosmopolitan, multicultural and diverse dimension to everyday life.

So why is it that there is so much debate about the education funding by the federal Labor government?

Announcements last month that the government is proposing cuts to the higher education sector of \$2.3 billion to assist with the funding of the Gonski reforms were dismaying. These cuts are the biggest hit to the sector since 1996 under John Howard, and will put additional pressure on the higher education sector at a time when the sector was in fact due to receive additional funds.

The benefits in a stronger tertiary education sector are clear for all to see. The pride we take or the disappointment we feel when we see the nation's universities' rankings rise and fall are a good indication of the views we all have on quality education. Of the 29 advanced economies, Australia is ranked 25th for public investment in universities. The poorer our universities, the poorer our society. I have yet to read any credible research or report that calls for less funding or that diminishes the role that quality education has in the health of our combined community, economy or environment and the success that comes from investing well in universities. In fact, there are many reports that state quite the opposite. Reports clearly show that we need to increase both base funding and student support services, increase research and development funding and opportunities, and increase equitable access to a tertiary qualification.

In March 2008 the federal government initiated a review of higher education to examine the future direction of the higher education sector in what became known as the Bradley review. At the time, Professor Bradley wrote:

Australia faces a critical moment in the history of higher education. There is an international consensus the reach, quality and performance of a nation's higher education system will be key determinants of its economic and social progress.

Professor Bradley went on to say:

Australia is falling behind other countries in performance and investment in higher education.

At the time of the report, in the OECD we were ninth out of 30 in the proportion of our population aged 25 to 34 years with such qualifications, down from seventh a decade earlier. And more recently, in December 2011, the federal minister for tertiary education, Senator Chris Evans, released the final report of the Higher Education Base Funding Review. The panel reached the conclusion that the current funding clusters no longer reflect the costs of delivery of teaching, scholarship and base research capability in all disciplines.

So we have academics and government convened panels talking about the need for increased education funding and a federal Labor government ready to cut funding for the tertiary education sector. As well as the ludicrous notion that the education of Australia benefits when we rob one education sector to fund another, this proposal by federal Labor undermines their commitment to the tertiary education sector.

No-one will argue about the importance of the school funding needs, but it is a shame that it may come from another education sector instead of, for example, from the proposed mining industry superprofits tax or by cutting the diesel fuel rebate, which is such a significant subsidy provided by the federal government. Of interest, I note that the federal shadow minister for education, Christopher Pyne, is reported in the media recently as saying that he thinks the current funding and pricing arrangements have the correct parameters and that he does not propose any changes. I also note that Christopher Pyne has criticised the government for having a re-election plan and not an education plan.

I for one would like to hear more about the federal Liberals' education plan, if they have one, that takes into account all the issues and is built on the recommendations of respected researchers and academics, all of whom attended a university at some point themselves. I would like to hear some policy discussed that will ensure that our universities are funded better now and into the future.

I did note that Mr Seselja, in a serious discussion today about higher education policy, tertiary education, in the ACT, took the opportunity to have a go at Simon Sheikh for a recent incident at the Australian National University. I suspect it was a bit of nastiness motivated by jealousy, as it seems Mr Seselja has never been invited to a university to give a speech. That may well be because he has no policies to comment on and no background of any interest to anybody who would actually want to invite him to a university—unlike Simon Sheikh, who has been the director of a national organisation, has contributed significantly to the debate on a range of national issues in this country and has done so much that people want to hear what he has got to say in the context of a politics course.

I would also note that, of course, Simon Sheikh has had the good grace to acknowledge that he misjudged it last week. I think in his enthusiasm for getting young people to sign up for politics he has been the first to acknowledge that he probably took that a bit far. But acknowledging when you are wrong is a strength that Simon Sheikh has demonstrated and that perhaps Mr Seselja did not demonstrate in the discussion about the staffing controversies in his office in recent times.

Let me return to tertiary education by noting that in fact it is only the Greens that have been clear about their commitment to higher education. We have long supported the call for real attention to be provided to the importance of our tertiary education sector and have consistently raised the needs of the nation in this area. My federal colleagues are at the forefront of positive action to ensure that students and teachers are respected and supported. My Greens colleagues have stood up in the Senate calling for an increase in public funding by 10 per cent per government-supported university student, as recommended by the Bradley review, to give budget certainty to universities. And

we were the only party to set a longer term target to invest one per cent of GDP to fund universities, to bring Australia into line with the OECD average to ensure that Australia maintains a quality tertiary education sector and remains internationally competitive.

We believe that we can fund universities properly and sustainably without reducing funding to our primary and secondary schools. As I said recently in response to the Gonski reforms, I just hope that by the time the children of this generation have benefited from the proposed reforms there will be a strong, world-class higher education system waiting for them.

It is only the Greens who have made these kinds of commitments, who have moved the positive motions to call for change and who have the policy to back them up. I thank Mr Seselja for bringing on the matter of public importance today, discussing the tertiary education sector in the ACT. We in the Assembly all know how important it is, as I said, for both the economy and the social life of the territory. Having the universities in town brings great benefit to this city. We need to get behind our university sector and ensure it has a prosperous future for both the good of this city and the good of the nation.

MS GALLAGHER (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Health and Minister for Higher Education) (4.15): The ACT government fully understands the vital place of tertiary education in our economic success and in the vibrancy and energy of our community. This is why I created the higher education ministry and have worked so hard over a number of years to grow the size and international profile of our universities. The government's vision is for Canberra to be Australia's learning capital, the home to world-leading research, a highly educated workforce, and a large and diverse student community.

The contribution of the ACT's universities to our city is clear. Based on official data from 2011-12, international students contributed \$321 million to the ACT economy, which was a growth of \$16 million on the previous year; interstate students contributed \$180 million to the economy and Canberra attracted more than eight per cent of national funding for research, supporting the work of nearly 4,000 academics and postgraduate students, which is an amazing result considering we constitute just under two per cent of the population.

Overall, the sector is worth more than \$2 billion to the ACT's gross state product. This money flows through the economy to benefit our hospitality, retail, tourism and transport sectors. Investment in university facilities and student accommodation also produced benefits for our construction and property industries. This is on show in the University of Canberra's work in Belconnen to turn former office blocks into accommodation for the thousands of new enrolments it expects in coming years. These are among more than 2,000 affordable student housing units the government is contributing to at the campuses of the ANU and the University of Canberra.

The other crucial quality of our education sector is to act to cushion our economy against downturns in other sectors. When growth is lower and unemployment higher, people invest in education and re-skilling. This keeps more local people in work,

grows the skill base of the economy, and the human capital it builds becomes a key driver of economic recovery and growth. Our education sector has been a key driver of the diversification of our economy and it is one of the reasons we are better prepared to weather the challenges of federal budgets that pull money out of Canberra through cuts to the Australian public service.

The ACT government has a full program of initiatives and investments driving growth in our tertiary education sector. A commitment we made in the last election for a \$2 million investment in a project called study Canberra is a key vehicle for this. This is building partnerships between ACT tertiary education providers, the business community and the government to create a strategy that capitalises on the links between us to further grow the sector.

Study Canberra will look at key drivers of growth in the tertiary sector from marketing to student life and career opportunities. There is also scope to extend these partnerships to schools as the University of Canberra is already doing with Kaleen and Lake Ginninderra College. Study Canberra is delivering on the commitment the government made in response to the Learning Capital Council paper.

The new subacute hospital to be built on the University of Canberra campus is another project that will bring major benefits to the territory but also to the university. As the trainer of most of the region's health workforce, it makes sense for UC to run this new facility which will provide new services such as rehabilitation and mental health services and new student opportunities for clinical placements and research. Also at University of Canberra the government is investing \$5 million in a world-class sports hub which will merge high performance sport, community sport, and research and education opportunities in addition to forming the new headquarters for the ACT Brumbies.

Just this morning Mr Barr made a statement on his trade mission to Indonesia and Singapore in which promoting our tertiary education sector was a central aim. The Australian National University, University of Canberra, Australian Catholic University and CIT all participated in the mission as an opportunity to reaffirm existing connections and to explore new opportunities. Mr Barr also led efforts to strengthen the ACT's connections in Washington, growing the academic relationship between the ANU and George Washington University and paving the way for the education exchanges between Canberra's cultural institutions and the Smithsonian Institution.

We stand by our record in growing higher education in Canberra and the results speak for themselves. Canberra's tertiary institutions have reported strong growth in enrolments in 2013; 6,000 new students at the ANU, up three per cent from last year; more than 4,000 new students at UC, up 4.6 per cent from last year; 369 new students at the Australian Catholic University Canberra campus; 357 new students at ADFA and 155 new students at the Charles Sturt University campus. Total tertiary enrolments in the ACT are now nearly 40,000. The ACT universities are a major employer and education is the ACT's largest non-government export earner.

This morning I met with the vice-chancellors of both the University of Canberra and the Australian National University to discuss the higher education agenda going forward. So it is timely that this MPI is on the notice paper today. There is no doubt that universities will feel the pinch from the reduction in federal funding that has been announced, and which presumably will be reflected in the federal budget released tonight.

In my discussions with the University of Canberra, they are already moving to deal with that efficiency dividend. Whilst it will not be a cut in funding to them, it is certainly less growth money than they were anticipating. But both universities, I think, are positioned well. They are working hard to continue to attract new students. They acknowledge that their business plan cannot rely entirely on government assistance, that they as vice-chancellors need to be constantly examining the competitive environment that they now work in and operate in and look at how they leverage dollars coming into the university through those different processes.

We had a good discussion this morning in terms of some of the priority areas to investigate over the next three years. We had discussions around the role of international students—the role of both international students as perhaps postgraduate students, year 11 and 12 international students or senior secondary international students and also the role of the children of international students and their access to particular services here in the ACT.

I guess the commitment that we have made as a group is to work together to make sure that the decisions we take as a government are supporting the directions that they are going as universities and that, where we can, we work together and leverage the resources that we will all put into promoting Canberra as a university city and a great education destination when we make decisions about those particular policies. For us it will be around study Canberra.

We have also considered the idea of an education delegation. The advice from the vice-chancellors today was that that should look at countries such as China and India as the places where we could coordinate our effort. We have agreed to meet again to take the next decisions that are required. But the reason I am the Minister for Higher Education—and this is the first time we have had a Minister for Higher Education—is because I want to drive this portfolio and make sure that we are doing everything we can to support the growth of the university sector and the role that it plays in our local economy.

We have done the work through the Learning Capital Council. We have made commitments through study Canberra. It is now time to get on and deliver and set some reasonable targets about what we expect we can achieve over the next two to three years in improving international students, but also look at the role we play in the region and also the decisions that local students take about their education destination. If they are leaving Canberra, why are they leaving Canberra, particularly if we offer the same course that they are leaving Canberra to go and study interstate.

The work is underway. I am very pleased that Mr Seselja brought this matter of public importance to the Assembly today, because tertiary education is important to the future of the ACT. I look forward to being the minister responsible for implementing the changes that I have just outlined.

MR DOSZPOT (Molonglo) (4.23): Mr Assistant Speaker, I thank Mr Seselja for bringing this matter of public importance to the attention of the Assembly today—the importance of the tertiary education sector to the ACT. Today, the day on which the last federal budget is delivered by this appalling Labor government, it is interesting to note that we have university students protesting on the lawns of Parliament House. They are protesting at what the federal Labor government is trying to do to education in this country and objecting to the cuts being made. University students are usually regarded as the disciples of the left—that is, of course, before they complete their education and realise it is the Liberal side of politics that delivers sound policy and jobs—so it is interesting that even they see this as bad policy. Because it is indeed bad policy and it is especially bad for Canberra.

Higher education is a significant part of the Australian economy. While there is no public data on the total financial size of the Australian higher education industry, the Grattan Institute in 2011 estimated that universities had revenue of \$23.8 billion, and the higher education sector made up at least 1.7 per cent of the Australian economy. This figure does not include non-university higher education providers, who account for at least 5.4 per cent of all higher education students and generate revenues of at least \$700 million. Over the last 20 years, higher education has become a significant export industry. Publicly funded universities earned around \$4.1 billion from international students in 2011.

It is against this background that one has to wonder just how desperate or just how short-sighted the federal Labor government were in deciding to slash \$2.3 billion from the higher education sector to help fund the implementation of the Gonski reforms. The federal tertiary education minister summed up the cuts as a \$900 million saving through efficiency dividends, a further \$1.2 billion from removing start-up scholarships and another \$229 million by removing discounts for up-front HECS payments. Whether they thought anyone would notice or that the states would not care is anyone's guess, but it was not long before the ACT tertiary education sector started to realise what it would mean for the ACT and started to raise serious concerns. It is a significant impost on the ACT economy.

According to the *Good Universities Guide*, the ACT's student population is around 32,000. Of these, around 8,400 come from interstate and a further 8,000 are international students. In fact, this high percentage of overseas and interstate students makes the ACT unique. Given Canberra's population is around 376,000, that shows students make up a fair percentage of this city's population. There are good reasons why people from all around Australia and overseas want to study here. We have excellent institutions, quality courses with a wide range of courses on offer and graduates from our tertiary institutions are highly sought after. The Australian National University is ranked number one in the QS world university rankings and it is ranked second in the *Times Higher Education* world university rankings.

Our other universities, the University of Canberra, the Australian Catholic University, the University of New South Wales ADFA campus and Charles Sturt University Canberra campus, located within St Mark's National Theological Centre, are all well regarded. We have an extremely high performing vocational educational facility in the Canberra Institute of Technology. CIT is a highly regarded player in the vocational education sector and offers over 400 courses to local, national and international students to equip them to work effectively in business and industry or go on to further education at one of Canberra's universities.

When it comes to the financial and educational status of our tertiary institutions, we have an impressive account. The ANU, the University of Canberra, the Australian Catholic University and the Australian Defence Force Academy have combined budgets of about \$2 billion. This is money mostly spent here in the ACT on infrastructure, staffing, contractors and equipment. In fact, after government, universities bring more money into the ACT than any other industry.

We have about 32,000 students in tertiary education, a healthy percentage of which are from interstate or overseas. It needs to be remembered that with the high percentage of interstate and overseas students comes a need for them to pay for accommodation, to buy food and other essentials, to entertain, to invite their families to Canberra. This generates around \$500 million a year to the ACT economy and supports the retail, tourism, hospitality, construction and other sectors. These students also find jobs and work in shops and bars, on building sites, in security jobs and as casuals in a myriad of occupations. So the strength of the ACT economy is very closely linked with the growth and viability of our universities.

But it is not only the students who make a contribution to this city. The research and commercialisation of research coming from our universities is also increasing, with real growth in the number of high-tech start-up companies emerging in the ACT. At a recent National Press Club speech, Universities Australia chair and ANU acting vice-chancellor Sandra Harding highlighted the significant impost that funding cuts to universities would have on students themselves. She says changes to the start-up scholarships will put even more pressure on new students to increase their income from outside sources.

A recent Universities Australia survey showed that 80 per cent of full-time students have to find a job and they work an average of 16 hours a week. A third of those surveyed said they regularly miss classes because of employment obligations and about 17 per cent said they regularly went without food or other necessities because they were unable to afford them. The National Union of Students has said the conversion of start-up scholarships to loans would hurt disadvantaged students and put undergraduates under even more pressure. Professor Harding has also warned that the cuts would have a flow-on effect at about \$1 billion to universities by 2017.

University of Canberra vice-chancellor Stephen Parker is also worried about the cuts to universities. The University of Canberra has been particularly aggressive in driving up student numbers in recent years and expanding course options in order to attract more students and more overseas students. This year, the University of Canberra had

historic highs in student enrolments. But, interestingly, both UC and ANU suffered a last-minute reduction in overseas students which they attributed to the high Australian dollar. That shows there is some price sensitivity about the popularity of Australian universities.

If Australian universities are forced to raise fees for international students to help meet funding shortfalls, they could suffer an even bigger international student backlash. Both UC and the CIT are very sensitive about the need to expand their student bases and course options. Both those institutions know only too well from recent experience that smaller universities do not survive. That was the clear message delivered by this ACT Labor government and in the review it commissioned from Professor Denise Bradley. Professor Denise Bradley delivered an earlier review into universities elsewhere and her message for Canberra was similar to her earlier report. She said, *inter alia*, that the size of an institution's operating budget and its capacity to release funds for development are crucial points of advantage when times are tough. She went on to say that institutions must have sufficient scale to invest in new developments but be agile and swift.

If \$2.8 billion is sucked out of the Australian tertiary sector, how can our universities have capacity and capability to develop and invest? Well, simply, they will not. The ANU has estimated it stands to lose \$13 million over the next two years because of the federal government's "robbing Peter to pay Paul" education policy. As Professor Parker described it, it is just bad policy which pitches one side of the education sector against another.

The University of Canberra are facing a \$3 million hole because of this. So where and how do they absorb these cuts? In fewer services, possibly cuts to courses, fewer options and amenities for students and possibly reduced staffing. Students will experience it first hand, because they will lose much-needed start-up scholarships. For the Canberra economy, for Canberra shops, this will seriously be felt. It will mean less buying of study materials, less social life, less food buying. The ACT retail sector is already struggling. Once university students also start to spend less, it will put real pressure on many businesses. Not surprisingly, unions also believe their members will feel the cuts through cuts to working conditions, staffing and programs.

So where is the ACT government in all this? Where is the ACT's Minister for Higher Education? One could be forgiven for asking, "Who's that?" We heard today that she is actually concerned. But the Chief Minister has been absent. The Chief Minister has been happily selling down the ACT tertiary education sector until this afternoon. It does not seem to have sunk in that, while the ACT government and the ACT Education Union are all gung-ho about wanting to give Gonski a go, they fail to realise that all we are doing is setting up our children for disappointment with a reduced chance of a university education. It is like a parent promising their child that if they work hard and do all their homework and all their chores, they will get a reward. But the reward disappears just as they get to claiming it. So too will it be for our students wanting a tertiary education. A university education will become available only to a privileged few and for Canberra families it will most likely mean their children will have to go interstate.

ACT universities generate millions in revenue and cannot survive financial hits on the scale the federal Labor government has foisted on them and ACT Labor has silently accepted. 14 September is Clean Up Australia Day. Bring it on and let us hope this madness in cannibalising one education sector for another can stop. (*Time expired.*)

Discussion concluded.

Adjournment

Motion (by **Ms Burch**) proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

ACT Cricket awards National Volunteer Week School volunteer program

MR DOSZPOT (Molonglo) (4.34): First of all, I would like to mention that last Saturday night I had the pleasure of attending the ACT Cricket high performance awards presentation night. Congratulations to all of the recipients in all the high performance teams, from under-12s through to the open age teams, as well as indoor cricket representative teams.

The winner of the Bronwyn Calver medal was Kris Britt; the Peter Solway medal went to Shane Devoy; the ACT Meteors batting award went to Kris Britt; the ACT Meteors bowling award went to Sally Moylan; the ACT Comets batting award went to Dean Solway; the ACT Comets bowling award went to Andrew Maher; the Luke Bush rising star award went to Matthew Condon. The high performance youth female player was Zoe Cooke; the Indigenous player of the year, Mitchell Taylor-Briscoe; the under-19 male player of the year, Nick Winter; the under-18 female player of the year, Zoe Cooke; the under-17 male player of the year, Tom Henry; the under-15 female player of the year, Khiarni Cornish; the under-15 male player of the year, Nikhil Mathai; the under-14 male player of the year, Daniel Leerdam; the under-13 male player of the year, Jordie Misic; and the under-12 male player of the year, Julen Sanchez.

In indoor cricket, the Bill Floros medal went to Timmy Floros; the ACT Rockets batting award went to Max Rankin; and the ACT Rockets bowling award went to Vinesh Bennett. The under-18 male player of the year was Timmy Floros; the under-16 male player of the year, Sam Gunning; the under-14 male player of the year, Adam Seary; and the under-12 male player of the year, Owen Levings.

It also gives me great pleasure to highlight the fact that the ACT over-60s cricket team are now the Australian 2012 national champions. The Australian over-60s cricket championship was held in Adelaide last November, and a team from the ACT were the winners of the 2012 over-60s championship. The members of that winning team are Ron Axelby, captain; Denis Axelby; Tony Paterson, vice-captain; Paul Cullen; Peter Howes; Ian Howe; Jim Martin; and Neil Bulger.

I would like to thank the organisers of the event on the night of the high performance awards. It was, as usual, a very professional presentation night, and a lot of people—a lot of hard workers, including a lot of volunteers—received due recognition for their efforts.

It is also very important to note that it is Volunteer Week. I would like to take a couple of moments to put on record my thanks and appreciation to all those people who give up their time to help others, whether it is the parent who manages or trains the local hockey, netball, football or cricket team, who takes home the team uniforms each week and washes them, or who runs the school canteen; whether it is someone who takes an official position in a club; whether it is those who sing in the Australian Rugby Choir or at the Brumbies matches; or whether it is those who stand at the gates and direct traffic on behalf of Rotary or the Lions.

A group that I particularly wish to highlight today is people in the school volunteer program. This is a program in which people spend time with children in a school setting. Their work is centred on a belief in the power of relationships. For children to thrive, they need to be connected to and supported by an extended network of caring people with the skills and time to listen and provide guidance. The school volunteer program engages students at any stage in their educational pathway, from kindergarten to high school. The volunteers help these children at risk of not achieving their educational potential by providing high quality mentoring programs.

The volunteers come from all walks of life and range from 18 years of age to 90 years, all with varying degrees of experience, professions and jobs. They have one thing in common—the wish to give back to their local community. As mentors, they are not a replacement for a parent, nor are they a counsellor or a teacher; they are a sounding board and a confidante of a young person. If anyone wants to be a successful volunteer mentor with the school volunteer program, it is suggested that they will need patience, empathy and life experience. It is this last criterion that is most valued and makes the program an ideal one.

This program is ideal for those who have retired and still feel they have something to contribute. I cannot speak highly enough of its work or of its national patron, a former Governor-General, Major-General Michael Jeffery AC AO. I would urge all Canberrans who have some free time to give this program some consideration. There are many children who do not have the opportunity for a grandparent or mentor to be in their lives. This program, the student volunteer program, fills that gap.

Ms Lena Nyadbi

DR BOURKE: (Ginninderra) (4.39): Tonight I pay homage to a great Australian artist, Lena Nyadbi. I recently had the pleasure of attending a ceremony at the Australian National Gallery where Lena Nyadbi launched her latest commission. The significance of Ms Nyadbi's work was reflected by the guests. They included the federal Minister for the Arts, Tony Burke, the French ambassador, the President of the Musee du quai Branly in Paris, the Australia Council for the Arts chair Rupert Myer, and Ms Lee-Ann Buckskin, chair of the Australia Council Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Board.

Ms Nyadbi is a Gija woman in her 70s whose country is in the East Kimberley region of Western Australia. Her artwork draws on traditional stories and her bold, spare designs are done with paints handmade from materials from her country including ochres. This commission promises to be one of the largest and most dramatic Australian artworks ever. Ms Nyadbi is already perhaps better known outside Australia, particularly in France. Her work is featured in the Musee du quai Branly in Paris, which opened on 23 June 2006 following the active patronage of French President Jacques Chirac. The museum features non-European art and Ms Nyadbi was one of seven Australian Indigenous artists honoured with great fanfare with exhibitions when the museum opened.

Ms Nyadbi's work has proved so popular there that the museum has chosen one of her other works to be transposed into a spectacular, enormous mural covering 700 square metres on the roof of the museum. The work will be seen from the Eiffel Tower and it will be so large, I am told, that it will be able to be viewed via Google Earth. The mural is an enlargement of Ms Nyadbi's black and white painting relating to her people's traditional story about a barramundi escaping from women fishing for it. The barramundi's scales are illustrated in the painting. The rooftop work is titled *Dayiwul Lirlmim*—barramundi scales—and is due to go on show in Paris on 6 June this year.

ClubsACT—awards

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella) (4.42): I rise tonight to reflect on last Friday night which was a bit of back to the future in the ACT. It was the ClubsACT awards for the year and it was set in an 80s theme. I want to congratulate Jeff House and Louise Gleeson on the awards this year. Clubs were very well represented, with 450 people, including the Chief Minister, Minister Burch, myself and the Leader of the Opposition attending the event. There were 24 awards during—

Mr Doszpot: And me.

MR GENTLEMAN: And Mr Doszpot; my apologies. Twenty-four awards were given on the night. I will just go through some of them, especially in relation to my electorate. The community assistance award for medium clubs went to the Vikings Town Centre. The promotion of sport, large category, award went to Vikings Erindale. The promotion of sport, medium category, award went to Vikings Town Centre. The responsible gaming and gaming facilities award went to Southern Cross Club, Tuggeranong. The responsible gaming facility award again went to the Vikings Town Centre.

The member services award, the large award, went to the Southern Cross Club, Woden. The member services medium award went to Gungahlin Lakes. Then back to the south side, best casual dining was awarded to Kutas Bistro at Vikings Erindale. The ACT chef battle occurred between Josh McCulloch and Martin White at the Vikings Town Centre. The battle was won by Martin White. Congratulations, Martin. Martin lives in our electorate at Isabella Plains.

The apprentice chef of the year was Michael Wood from Conder. Congratulations to Michael for his work during the year as well. The outstanding service award went to David Paull from the Vikings Group and the young achiever award to David Spiteri from the Southern Cross Club, Tuggeranong. We also had the small club of the year award, which went to National Press Club of Australia and the large club of the year award, which went to the Southern Cross Club, Woden.

The awards were held at the Hellenic Club. I congratulate the Hellenic Club on their support of clubs and, of course, their contribution to employment in the ACT. Other supporters were Aristocrat, Lion, Bradley Allen Love and Carlton & United Breweries. It was a fantastic night and congratulations to all involved.

Sercos Sodexo Defence Services—workers

MS BERRY (Ginninderra) (4.44): I rise in the adjournment debate to give my voice and support to the cleaners, security guards and hospitality staff at RMC Duntroon who will be taking action tomorrow to protect their rights and conditions at work.

Sercos Sodexo Defence Services, or SSDS, are a huge multinational company that tenders for the provision of support services at defence sites and buildings. I can tell you, Mr Assistant Speaker, that they do have a reputation for treading on the rights of their employees. Here are some examples of the allegations that have been made by some of their employees that I have been told about. Security officers at SSDS are paid well below the award rate operating for other security firms in the ACT.

Mr Coe interjecting—

MS BERRY: They have until recently worked regular overtime. The security officers were gutted when, without notice, SSDS cut all overtime on the site. These officers could lose their homes. That is what people on this side of the Assembly care about, Mr Coe. They actually care about low-paid workers in this community. They have worked for years to purchase and maintain these homes.

Last month SSDS reduced the number of guards on the gates of defence sites. This means that guards can no longer have a meal or a toilet break whilst on duty. The guards have asked the company on many occasions to resolve this clearly unacceptable situation to many of us, but their requests have been met with what they feel is callous indifference.

For over 20 years, the catering staff at Duntroon and ADFA have worked their shifts according to what is known as a military roster. The roster worked really well, providing some ability to spend time with family and friends. Unfortunately, last year SSDS abruptly put an end to the roster. This meant that families' routines were thrown out of whack and the caterers' partners could not rely on them to help with family activities. One of the caterer's wives recently commented to me, "I just have to make the plans as best I can and if my husband can come—great. I want to be able to do things with him and the kids, but if I don't just make plans without him we wouldn't have any life outside work at all."

There is one story that I would like to highlight, and that is the story of SSDS cleaner Elica Jankuloska. Elica has worked cleaning the defence department buildings for over 17 years. Last month Elica was reprimanded by the company because she left work early because she was feeling ill. Elica explained what had happened and defended herself against the company's actions and it appears that because of this SSDS might be taking actions against her to her disadvantage. SSDS cut her hours and changed her roster, claiming operational reasons, but then they refused to pay her severance.

Elica has worked 12 hours a day for the company, and every cent she earned was spent on the mortgage on her family home and bills. As SSDS pays lower wage rates than the majority of the cleaning industry in the ACT, she must work very long hours to make a living wage. Her particular hours of work were important to her because in between shifts she cared for her disabled niece. Elica made it clear to SSDS that she wanted to be represented by her union's legal advisers in relation to the dispute that followed the change of her hours, but SSDS has ignored her request and is insisting on approaching her directly about these changes.

Unfortunately, it appears that Elica's story is all too common, and that is why I am calling on everyone here today who thinks that people should be treated with respect and decency at work to join with Elica and her colleagues at RMC Duntroon tomorrow at midday as they take action to protect their conditions and rights at work.

Civil Contractors Federation—earth awards Motorcycle Riders Association—blanket run

MR WALL (Brindabella) (4.48): I rise this afternoon to acknowledge the recipients of the 2013 ACT Civil Contractors Federation earth awards. On Friday, 10 May I was pleased to attend the first of the five state and territory CCF award dinners for 2013. Here in the ACT this year's event was co-hosted by the Master Builders Association and was a great opportunity to recognise the significant role civil contractors play in shaping the city in which we live. The Civil Contractors Federation is the peak body representing Australia's civil construction industry and has branches in all states and territories, with over 2,000 contractor and associate members across these branches.

Earth awards are presented to civil construction leaders in each state, culminating in the national awards to be held in Melbourne later this year. The awards recognise outstanding construction and environmental excellence in construction across the industry. The entries are assessed against the same criteria to ensure fairness.

This year the ACT CCF recognised winners in two categories. Category 2 was for projects valued at between \$1 million and \$5 million and was awarded to Ward Civil and Environmental Engineering. Category 3 was for projects valued at between \$5 million and \$20 million and this year was awarded to Cord Civil.

The CCF earth awards were first presented in 1994 and over the years have seen many changes and advances in construction techniques in the civil engineering sector. I

would like to thank both the Civil Contractors Federation and the Master Builders Association for inviting me to be part of their awards night.

I would also like to make mention of a function I attended on Saturday, 11 May where I was pleased to take part in an event with the Motorcycle Riders Association of the ACT when they held their annual blanket run, which collects donations of non-perishable food, blankets and cash for the Salvation Army.

This year's ride consisted of riders from the Motorcycle Riders Association, the Harley Owners Group—or HOGS, as they often like to be referred to as—the Canberra Riders Association and the Blue Knights law enforcement club, to name but a few.

I would like to place on the record my thanks to the executive of MRA ACT: president Kathleen Parson, senior vice president Jen Woods, vice president David Ault, and secretary and public officer Nicky Hussey.

A special thankyou to Steve for being brave and taking me on a motorcycle for the first time. It gave me a brief idea of how road and traffic issues vary depending on the mode of transport you choose to use. Surprisingly, a motorbike offers a significantly different view of the road compared to being on a pushbike, let alone from the perceived safety of a car.

It is always encouraging to see a large group of Canberrans with a common interest banding together to help those less fortunate in our community. This was no better illustrated than by the large pile of blankets and the generous cash donations made on Saturday.

I commend the MRA ACT for their continued support of the Salvation Army and other charitable organisations, and I look forward to participating in the toy run towards the end of the year, where again they band together to help those less fortunate in our community. For more information on the MRA ACT and their events, I encourage members to visit their website at www.mraact.org.au.

Ronald McDonald House Canberra

MR COE (Ginninderra) (4.51): Last Monday I was pleased to attend a ceremony at Ronald McDonald House Canberra where a cheque for \$5,000 was presented to the house by Tour de Cure and the Canberra Raiders. The cheque was presented by Tour de Cure co-founder Geoff Coombes, along with Raiders stars Terry Campese, Sandor Earl and Edrick Lee, and CEO Don Furner, amongst others. Both the Tour de Cure and the Canberra Raiders are sponsored by Huawei.

Ronald McDonald House Charities is an Australia-wide organisation that helps seriously ill children and their families. Over 100,000 families have been helped by the organisation since 1981. The Canberra house is located inside the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children and was opened in October last year. The Canberra house was the 14th Ronald McDonald house in Australia and the first one to be opened inside a hospital. It has 11 rooms and provides a comfortable place for

families with seriously ill babies and children to stay. Ronald McDonald House will use the funds provided by Tour de Cure and the Canberra Raiders to establish a wall garden to grow plants and herbs for use in the house kitchen. A new wall garden will also enhance the outdoor area at the centre.

I would like to congratulate Deirdre Brown, the executive officer of the Canberra house, and her staff, Narelle Casey, Marnie Murrell, Lorren Hyde and Jan Murphy, and the many volunteers who make the centre a comfortable place for families to stay during a difficult time. There have been many organisations and individuals that have been generous with their support for the Canberra house, and I thank all of them for their generosity and commitment to Canberra.

The Tour de Cure was started in 2007 to raise funds for cancer projects. Over the last six years, Tour de Cure has organised “signature tour” cycling tours between major cities as well as country tours to raise money and awareness of cancer. The signature tours for the last few years have each raised over \$2 million, and smaller tours have also raised significant funds. Tour de Cure donates the money raised in its tours to cancer projects, including research projects to find a cure for cancer, support projects for those suffering from cancer, and prevention projects focused on education and awareness.

This year the Tour de Cure signature tour completed a 1,500-kilometre ride from Adelaide to Canberra and raised over \$2 million. Tour de Cure was sponsored by Huawei with a \$50,000 donation. The Canberra Raiders have also raised funds, through competitions and giveaways at their matches at Canberra Stadium.

I would like to place on the record my thanks to the board of Tour de Cure, Bruno Maurel, Dominique Robinson, Geoff Coombes, Gary Bertwistle, Samantha Hollier-James, Julie Briscoe and Mark Beretta. Tour de Cure, the Raiders and their sponsor Huawei are to be congratulated on their fundraising efforts to help those suffering from cancer and ultimately to find a cure. I also congratulate Ronald McDonald House Canberra on their work to support seriously ill children and their families. People interested in finding out more about these initiatives should visit tourdecure.com.au or rmhc.org.au. Both these websites have information about how to financially support the great causes.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 4.55 pm.