



# Debates

WEEKLY HANSARD

Legislative Assembly for the ACT

**EIGHTH ASSEMBLY**

**15 MAY 2013**

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**Wednesday, 15 May 2013**

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

### **Australian Capital Territory (Ministers) Bill 2013**

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

Title read by Clerk.

**MR HANSON** (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (10.01): I move:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

I welcome this opportunity. I am very pleased to present this bill that would allow the Legislative Assembly to appoint a sixth ministerial position. The legislation for this is quite clear. I sought advice from the Clerk that led to the draft of this bill. This place can essentially decide on the number of ministers the executive has. I have put this bill forward with six. Equally, it could be seven, eight, nine or a higher number.

This is very much arising from the debate that we have had about the larger Assembly. There has been quite a bit of discussion about the number of ministers. Mr Seselja said when he was Leader of the Opposition that he would support the government in appointing a sixth minister, and I have repeatedly said it.

We have heard comments from Katy Gallagher that she does not have a ministry that is large enough. She has said that at some time she will appoint a sixth minister. The issue is that she has been dragging her heels on this. The government are saying that they want to up to double the number of politicians, up to double the size of the Assembly because they do not have enough ministers, whilst actively limiting the size of the executive to five when it could be six or more. You cannot have two of those debates going at the same time.

So what I want to do is have a sixth minister enacted so that we can then further have a debate about the size of the Assembly. I make the point that this does not actually appoint the sixth minister. This would not create a sixth minister. What this bill today would do, if it gets passed when it is debated in a future sitting, is allow the Chief Minister to appoint the sixth minister. That is an important point of clarification.

It is not just the Chief Minister who has been calling for another minister. The recent review into the size of the Assembly said:

A convincing case was made in the submissions and other discussions that the current 5 member ministry in the ACT is too few.

Dr Hawke in his review said:

A key challenge facing the ACT, which is ultimately hindering performance and capacity, is the breadth and volume of ministerial responsibilities in a Cabinet of four or five ...

Professor John Halligan, in the review into the size of the Assembly, says:

A ministry of only 5 confounds the basic tenets of effective cabinet government ... The number of ACT ministers is fixed at five ... As a consequence each ACT Minister is responsible for a number of portfolios plus having COAG roles.

I think this case has been pretty well litigated both in the media and in this place. We agree with the Chief Minister and with many of the experts that there is a need to expand the size of the ministry in the first instance, as I have put down, to six.

Should the Chief Minister make an amendment to this bill to say that it should be seven or a greater number then we would certainly look at that. If she thinks that seven is a more appropriate number then we could support that. It does not mean that she would have to appoint seven ministers, but it would give her the ability to do so.

There has been, I believe, some commentary in the media from the Chief Minister about this issue. One of the concerns that appears to have been raised is that it would not leave enough backbenchers for committee work. I would like to make a couple of points about that. Firstly, this is as big a backbench as a government has ever enjoyed in this place. Secondly, the government has chosen to appoint two members to each committee. Essentially, committees are there to scrutinise government, to assist the Assembly in doing what it does, and that is a non-executive role principally.

There is no reason for each committee to have two members of the government on it. It is a nonsense, to be honest. What we could do—and gladly what the opposition would do—is take on perhaps a greater role in the committees, where we could see on each committee two members of the opposition and one member of the government. So we could significantly reduce the number of members of the government who are engaged in committee work whilst we would actually be doing what committees should be doing, which is actually scrutinising government in a better way. We can have a win-win out of this should we choose to do so.

I call on the Chief Minister to consider that. If she is serious about this, if that is a concern that she legitimately has, that she has two members on committees, then let us move to change the committee structure. Unless this is just jobs for the boys and jobs for the girls, let us do that now. We will get a better result and it will free up her members. So that is enough of that nonsense.

We have argued in this place for the appointment of a fifth judge, as I have mentioned on a number of occasions. The Chief Minister's retort, essentially, was that the court needs to work harder. She said:

We don't just necessarily say, "Well, we've got a whole load of money to give you just because you're under pressure." We do say—we say to every other area

and I understand the courts are different, they're not departments of the Government, but it is, you know, it is a pretty routine ask that you look at efficiencies and make sure you're doing what you can with the resources available before you inject more funds in.

There will be a limited cost to appointing a sixth minister, but it is a squib compared to the initiative being put forward, which is calling on up to doubling the size of the Assembly. So we need to ensure, as the Chief Minister says, that we are doing everything within the resources we have got, or doing it as effectively and efficiently as we can to resolve the issues that she faces as the Chief Minister, just as the courts face in the delays that they have and the calls from the court for an additional member.

There has been some resistance from the government to this. I note that there is a significant amount of sensitivity from the government benches when this matter is raised. But I would like to point out that the government had five Labor members as ministers. Essentially the Chief Minister sold out at the election by saying, "I'm going to remove one of my own members from the ministry in order to make way for a Green to secure government." That is what happened. She was quite prepared to sack one of her own people, sack a Labor member, in order to get him on the frontbench. I commend the fact that Mr Seselja, as the Leader of the Opposition, said he would not do that.

Mr Rattenbury often, when I raise this issue about a sixth minister, is quick to attack me, to essentially throw jibes at me. The reality is—this is why he is so sensitive about this—that the price for him to get government, amongst other things in terms of the policy arena, was to demand to be a minister. The price was paid by a Labor member—in this case, Dr Bourke. But what I am offering is an opportunity here for the government to reinstate one of its own members as a minister.

I find it highly ironic, Madam Speaker, that it is a Liberal Leader of the Opposition that is providing the opportunity for the Labor Chief Minister to actually reappoint one of her own members as a minister, having recently essentially dumped them in order to secure government. Why will she not do that? Why did she not, on the first sitting day in this place after having to make room in her ministry to secure government by putting a Green in there, knowing that Mr Seselja and the Liberal opposition were going to support this, come into this place and say, "Right, let's do this right now"?

That really is a question that the Chief Minister needs to answer, because the committee excuse is nonsense. When she is putting two members on every committee, she cannot then say, "We've got too many members on committees." We have got a path out of that. She could have one member on each committee. We can halve the government workload on committees overnight.

What is the reason? I struggle to find one. We have got Dr Bourke, who has been a minister in this place before. We have got Mr Gentleman, who is in his second term. Andrew Barr came in here, straight into the ministry. I do not think Katy Gallagher was a backbencher for long. We have got other members who have come in straightaway. Mary Porter is on her third or fourth term. She has been here for a

significantly long period of time. Probably the only one in respect of whom there is any rationale not to appoint as a minister from the perspective of time served is Ms Berry.

I really am confounded by what is happening here. Why is the Chief Minister so resistant to appoint one of her own backbench to the ministry? This provides the opportunity for her to do so. This provides an opportunity for the Chief Minister to increase the size of her ministry to take care of some of those issues that she has raised and we agree with. This provides a logical first step and a step that would need to be taken before you can have a parallel argument that you need a larger Assembly. If you are not making the best use of resources, just as Katy Gallagher said about the courts, then it is very difficult to argue to double the number of politicians.

Madam Speaker, I look forward to debating this bill. I look forward to hearing what Katy Gallagher has got to say. I look forward to hearing from her why she has lacked any sense of urgency in appointing a sixth minister. I look forward to further debate about committees where we can make this place work effectively, where we can free up government backbenchers, and we can actually have committees doing what committees are meant to do, which is to scrutinise the government. I look forward to that debate. I commend this bill to the Assembly and I indicate that we will be debating this as a matter of urgency.

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

## **Federal government—spending**

**MR SMYTH** (Brindabella) (10.13): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) that the Federal Labor Government has broken countless election and previous budget promises, including, but not limited to:
  - (i) not to introduce a Carbon Tax;
  - (ii) to introduce tax cuts to offset the Carbon Tax, once it was introduced;
  - (iii) to increase Family Payments packages;
  - (iv) not increasing tax on superannuation;
  - (v) not to cut public servant numbers;
  - (vi) not to means test the Private Health Insurance rebate;
  - (vii) not to increase the Medicare Levy;
  - (viii) the pledge to have a budget surplus; and

- (ix) not to re-introduce a Higher Education Amenities Fee;
  - (b) the significant waste which has occurred as a result of the financially reckless Federal Labor Government, including, but not limited to:
    - (i) an immigration budget blowout of \$6.6 billion in the last four years;
    - (ii) the National Broadband Network being over budget by at least \$8.7 billion and \$20 million spent on solely advertising the network;
    - (iii) over \$69 million being spent on advertising the Carbon Tax and \$1 million spent on researching the effectiveness of this advertising;
    - (iv) \$150 million being spent on spin doctors to sell Labor's policies; and
    - (v) an average of \$6.1 million a month on chartering flights to move asylum seekers between overcrowded detention centres; and
  - (c) that the ACT Government put back delivering the ACT Budget from May to June to ensure the effects of the Federal Budget can be incorporated into the ACT Budget; and
- (2) calls on the Government to detail in the 2013-14 Budget the full impact of the sixth Federal Labor budget on the ACT.

Yesterday was a great publishing day in Australia. Of course the federal budget was published, a mighty tome and, for those that haunt bookshops like I do, the new Dan Brown novel called *Inferno* came out. Dan Brown, of course, is the author of *The Da Vinci Code* and *Angels and Demons*. One is a complete work of fiction. It is full of speculation, misrepresentation and distortions. The other is a novel that will actually spend many weeks on the *New York Times* bestseller list and will be very successful. One brings a great deal of pain to the ACT. The other will bring people pleasure and enjoyment.

It is unfortunate that yet again we have to have a motion like this about the federal government, its budgets, its spending and its attitude to the ACT, and it is a shame that the Chief Minister said at the convention centre this morning, "This is a tough budget for our government and for our budget which we are finalising. It is tough for our businesses. It is tough for Canberra workers, for the public servants that have had their jobs go and for the efficiencies that can be made."

Yes, it is a tough budget and it is an unnecessary budget because it follows the mismanagement of the economy. It follows the mismanagement of the budget and it follows the mismanagement of the spending of this federal government. And it follows six years of broken promises, lies and distortions from a government that cannot keep its word. You only have to look at some of the items outlined in the motion that I have moved to see that. The problem was to actually cull it down. This could have been a four- or five-page motion.

But this is a federal government that, of course, promised not to introduce a carbon tax. This is a federal government that promised to introduce tax cuts to then offset that carbon tax once it was introduced but has now reneged. This is a government that promised to increase family payment packages but has now reneged. This is a government that promised not to increase taxes on superannuation but has now reneged. This is a government that promised—and local members, Gai Brodtmann, Andrew Leigh and Senator Lundy, promised it—there would be no cuts to the public service. But that, of course, we all know, has occurred.

By stealth and in total denial of our federal members—and I am yet to hear anyone opposite criticise the government for these cuts, although I did hear the Treasurer use the “cut” word yesterday, I think, for the first time—they promised not to means-test the private health insurance rebate. They promised not to increase the Medicare levy and, best of all, they pledged to have budget surpluses. And we can all remember the Treasurer last year choking up as he got to that killer line, “I am delivering four surpluses,” in his sort of Neville Chamberlain-esque way. We all remember Neville Chamberlain saying “peace in our time”, and then we had Wayne Swan last year saying “surpluses in my time”. They were an illusion. They were just an illusion.

But it is an illusion that all Canberrans pay for and, indeed, everybody in Australia will pay for, because we now have total gross debt reaching \$300 billion within the forward estimates. We have got Labor’s fifth record deficit in five years. There is no credible path back to surplus. They have reaped \$25 billion in higher taxes. Let us not say the revenue has collapsed. The revenue has not collapsed. Revenue has gone up but unfortunately it has not kept pace with Labor’s higher spending.

Indeed, last night this was meant to be a budget—what were the words that the Treasurer used?—for a “stronger economy”, “smarter” and “fairer”. For a stronger economy, why are we getting record deficits now and for budgets to come? If we are to be a smarter nation, why are they reducing funding to higher education? And if we are to be fairer—and let us face it, fairness is about having a job—why are they saying that unemployment will go up to 5.75 per cent? The internal contradictions in the speech, let alone the internal contradictions in the budget documents, are astounding. And it is important that we put on the record that we as a place are not happy with this budget because, as the Chief Minister said, it means that Canberra will now be shouldering the burden of their failures.

The other thing with all of this is: where does it go? Where is the credible path back to surplus? We have got \$19.4 billion in debt this year. We have got \$18 billion in the coming year, \$10 billion in 2014-15 year and, miraculously, it is suddenly back in surplus in the 2015-16 year. There is no credible path here. Robert Gottlieb said this morning at the Canberra Business Council breakfast at federal parliament, “Watch China, because if China stops buying Australian commodities this will get worse.”

So what does it mean for Canberra? What it means is job cuts. Remember that promise “no job cuts in the federal public service”? Yet 1,262 jobs will be cut from the commonwealth public service in the 2013-14 year. That does not include the 3,000



jobs that were cut in the six months leading up to December last year or any jobs that may have been lost so far in the second half of the financial year which, of course, in denial they say is not happening but in reality, as we talk to our friends in the public service, we do know is happening.

I have a friend in a compliance area in one of the federal departments who started the year with 20 staff. He is now down to 10 staff and he has no budget in the second half of this year to enforce the compliance issues that he is legislated to uphold. We all know those stories but we have denial from our federal colleagues and we have denial from those opposite that this is happening. It is happening. We now know that the Department of Human Services and the APS are big losers in this, with the biggest losses to be focused on middle management.

The federal government are saying that the revenue has collapsed, which we know is not true. Their inappropriate targets, their misleading targets, were not met. But revenue has gone up and it will go up even more with the introduction of pay parking in the parliamentary triangle, raising \$74 million for the government over the next three years. This equates to something like, on average, \$2,600 per public servant working in the parliamentary triangle. And if you are a young family starting out and you have got a car because you drop the kids at care or at school and you leave to pick them up and the only suitable mode of transport for you is the car, you are paying \$2,600 a year. How is that going to affect your cost of living?

Let us look at infrastructure. I do not think I heard the word “Canberra” mentioned as the Treasurer rattled off all the infrastructure projects that they announced in the budget last night. I did not hear a single new infrastructure project for the ACT, and I look forward to those opposite pointing out what it is we got in this year’s budget. The Property Council says:

The 2013 federal budget’s commitment to infrastructure spending is let down by missed opportunities and misguided tinkering.

This is a government that cannot be trusted. This seems to be the recurring theme in all the budget analyses this morning. The budget sadly fails. It fails the ACT, it fails our public service, it fails on jobs, it fails families and it fails on the economy.

If we go through the list of promises, the Gillard government promised, the Prime Minister promised just days before the 2010 federal election, there would be no carbon tax “under the government I lead”. Gillard opposed Rudd’s introduction of the ETS in 2009 and could have formed government without the Greens. But she lied to the Australian public and then she lied about the tax cuts that would follow.

This is another quote:

The government had previously ruled out dumping the 2015 tax cuts.

However, with the carbon package in tatters, the price in tatters, the estimates in tatters, the federal budget confirms that the promised tax cuts for the 2015-16 year have been abolished.

On family assistance, the government will no longer proceed with the increase to the family tax benefit part A announced in the 2012-13 budget worth \$2.5 billion. Ms Wong said the government had been forced to back away from some spending promises associated with the mining tax, particularly an increase to the rate of the family tax benefit part A. This is just another hit on Canberra families from the Gillard-Swan government.

With regard to the tax on superannuation, the Prime Minister promised that the government would never remove tax-free superannuation payments for the over 60s, yet the government announced a 15 per cent tax on superannuation earnings for those who are self-funded retirees, a forward structure potentially allowing those with small and large balances to be taxed. Superannuation is an industry which requires certainty. Hardworking Australians who are contributing to superannuation and planning for their retirement need to have certainty in what they will be facing. This is not possible under the Gillard-Swan government.

Remember the private health insurance rebates? Julia Gillard gave an ironclad guarantee that she would never touch the private health insurance rebate. This is just another broken promise, another lie from the Gillard government.

Remember the Medicare levy? Australians will pay the highest effective tax rates in almost a decade under Julia Gillard's plans to lift the Medicare levy, a broken promise. After previously saying she would not fund disability care with the levy, Ms Gillard announced a hike from 1.5 to two per cent because she had changed her mind.

Then, of course, there are the surpluses. Despite Labor's constant promise to deliver a budget surplus, after six budgets, again Treasurer Swan has failed to deliver a surplus. At the handing down of the 2013-14 budget, Mr Swan has now announced that the budget would return to surplus in 2016-17. I am not sure anyone believes it. I am not sure anyone trusts the numbers in this budget. I am not sure anyone has any faith that a Labor government will break the 23-year drought since they last delivered a surplus in the late 80s. Again, what we have got is broken promises. Four years of surplus have turned, I think most commentators are assuming, into four years of deficits.

As to the higher education amenity fees, Stephen Smith stated in 2007:

I am not considering a HECS style arrangement, I'm not considering a compulsory HECS style arrangement and the whole basis of the approach is one of a voluntary approach. So I am not contemplating a compulsory amenity fee.

Yet on 11 February 2009, the Minister for Youth and Sport introduced the Higher Education Legislation Amendment (Student Services and Amenities, and Other Measures) Bill 2009. The bill imposed a \$250 annual fee on all university students, whether they were full time, part time, studying on campus or external.

The list goes on: cutting company tax, defence cuts, standard deductions on tax returns, foreign aid cuts, tax discounts on interest income, onshore processing, the East Timor solution, the solar credit scheme and delays in the national curriculum.

This is a government of broken promises but at the end of the day it is ordinary people, in our case the people we represent, Canberrans, who suffer the pain. And it is a triple whammy, this budget, to the ACT. Three of our biggest employers are the public service, education and the tertiary sector and people in the property sector. And yet they are the sectors that will cop an inordinately high impact from this budget.

We had a Treasurer stand up and say, "We want to be a smarter nation," but then he pitted sectors of the education community against each other. Bill Shorten this morning at the Canberra Business Council breakfast was saying, "How can you argue against funding a primary school?" True, how can you argue against funding a primary school? But at the same time, how can you argue against funding higher education? Mr Shorten went on to say 20 per cent of the jobs that people will have 10 to 15 years from now have not even been invented yet. Where will those jobs come from? They will come out of the higher education sector.

The government are saying this is a budget about jobs, but they are cutting the potential sources of those jobs now. So you have to question: will we be ready 10, 15, 20 years from now for those new jobs as a consequence of what this government have done? It is dreadful politics to play one section of the education system off against another.

Again, a large number of the questions this morning were about the cuts to higher ed. People see higher education as something all Australians should be proud of and, indeed, in the city that has the highest level of residents with degrees in the country it is quite clear that Canberrans understand that. But it is quite clear that the federal government does not understand that and that, of course, has an impact on the people of the ACT.

We see some of the changes regarding HECS and discounts, which again affect people who want to get ahead of the system but are now being penalised for doing that. This is an attack on the higher education system. It is unwarranted, and had the government managed its affairs and its budget better, it would be unnecessary.

I will leave members to look at the significant waste section on their own. I think they all understand that. What we want from this motion is for the government to detail in the budget what the full impacts of the sixth federal Labor budget are on the ACT. They did, in fact, put back our budget, which would normally have been issued probably next week, a month so that the impacts could be incorporated. It is important we understand the full impacts. The government have the ability to do that so that we can go back to the federal government and say, "This is not a good budget for the people of the ACT."

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Before I call you, Chief Minister, and for the benefit of other members, Mr Smyth, you did in your comments refer to members of another parliament and said that they lied. The standing orders do not require me to ask you to withdraw such a comment because it was not against a member of the Assembly or a member of our judiciary. However, I would like, in the interests of civility, to enjoin members not to make such accusations against other members of parliament as well. Chief Minister.

**MS GALLAGHER** (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Health and Minister for Higher Education) (10.28): I welcome the opportunity to speak about the federal budget delivered last night. The government will not be supporting Mr Smyth's motion without the amendment that has been foreshadowed by Mr Rattenbury, and we will be supporting the amendment. We believe it is important that we are clear about the full financial impact of the federal budget on the ACT. Of course, this is something that we would do as standard practice in the budget papers, but it will be supported in terms of an amendment today.

As I said this morning, I have mixed feelings about the federal budget. As a leader looking at it from a national perspective, there is no doubt that the budget delivers social policy reforms that will change Australia forever and for the better. I note that Mr Smyth spent almost all of his time critiquing parts of the budget but did not acknowledge that significant social reform is delivered through this budget in the form of DisabilityCare and the national plan for school improvements, both significant reforms that this government supports.

The budget, therefore, allows for a \$19.3 billion commitment to fund DisabilityCare Australia and \$9.8 billion for the national plan for school improvements, both great steps forward for equality, opportunity and fairness. I think anyone who has sat through meetings with carers of people with a disability essentially begging governments for resources so that their children can access support that enables them to live a dignified life would understand that, under the current system and the current level of resourcing, the funds simply have not been available and that we have created a system where it is a race to the bottom essentially—those who are lucky and get support from government to support their disability or their loved one's disability and those that do not. It is a constant struggle for those who do not to try to become one of those who do.

This will remove that, and the significance of that in terms of the productive nature of Australia's economy, let alone the impact of that reform on being a decent country that supports people who are less fortunate than ourselves and that understands the needs for the social security system to support people with additional needs, should not be underestimated, and it is an important part of this year's federal budget.

There is \$9.8 billion in the budget for the national plan for school improvement, again, supporting the idea that every child actually gets the same level of resourcing regardless of whether they go to school in Canberra, Adelaide, the Northern Territory, Queensland, Victoria or in rural or remote Australia. That is an important social reform that will provide benefits to a modern Australian economy, and that is an important pillar in this federal budget.

But I am not going to pretend that the budget does not have aspects that are tough for Canberra; there is certainly an impact on our own budget. Last night we lost \$49 million across the forward estimates in write-down of GST revenues just from the MYEFO updates, and that will have to be factored into our budget. Now, that does not sound much when you are looking at the federal budget, but \$15 million a year is tough in the ACT.

In terms of savings and efficiencies across the public service, finding those additional savings will be hard. But on one level those savings can be met in a moderate way; they will not deliver a shock to the ACT economy of the order that we would be expecting should an incoming government remove 12,000 to 20,000 public servants from the ACT. That is the silent sleeper in terms of Canberra going forward.

As to the tertiary cuts, I have met with both the vice-chancellors. In terms of their funding going forward, they will get less growth, and they will have to assess that and reflect that in their businesses. My discussion with the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Canberra is that while it will be tough, they made the decision—and it is reflected in their strategic plan—that they cannot be as dependent on government funding as they have been in the past. I think universities understand this, and they are making the necessary changes. But they will get less growth funding than they had anticipated, despite university funding being at record levels.

For the ACT, when we look at the impact on business, it is complicated this year because of the uncertainty about the federal budget and talk of both parties looking to drive efficiencies through the public service. One party is looking to do it in a measured way and the other party is talking about doing it in a way that would shock the economy, and business is responding to that. As I said this morning, I do not think anyone would dispute that business sentiment is weak and that they are concerned about the decisions the federal government is taking through this budget. But I have to say, in all the representations to me, they are more concerned about what would happen if Tony Abbott were Prime Minister. This is coming from people who would normally support, I would imagine—not that I have asked them their political persuasion—and are more naturally affiliated with the conservative side of politics.

The budget has allocations for pay parking in the parliamentary triangle. This is something the ACT government supports. I am not sure whether it is something the Canberra Liberals support; they have not been clear on that. We have been on the record for a long time that we think the triangle should be brought into line with the rest of the city. We believe there are parking problems that impact on tourists and visitors coming to our city and not being able to find a park and that standardising the process across the city would be welcome.

The revenue that is collected—I think it is \$72 million factored in across the forward estimates—we believe should provide a revenue source to the National Capital Authority and the national institutions. If you are generating that revenue essentially from Canberrans who are parking close to their workplaces, there is a strong argument for that revenue to stay within the ACT and support the important work in maintaining the look and the amenity of national land in the national capital.

I will certainly be arguing very strongly for that to be the case. We will work with the NCA in terms of any assistance they might need around implementation of that decision over the next year. It will provide us with the opportunity to look at the bus routes into and out of the triangle and hear back from people who say it is too hard to catch a bus and see whether there are other things we can do to make that decision a bit easier. That goes to the issues of things like park and rides. When you look at the

frequency of the services in the parliamentary triangle, you will not find another part of Canberra that is as highly serviced from all sides of town. It is on both the red and blue rapid services, so that is moving buses through every five to seven to 15 minutes through the working week. It also has a number of specific route services that travel in there outside the rapid service.

There is a lot of information on the ACTION website about frequency and service. In fact, I think there is a dedicated brochure around services in the parliamentary triangle that you can search, and you can see the level of frequency provided. Sure, we can talk about whether that meets the needs—I understand there are some capacity issues in the peaks, but there is certainly a lot of capacity through the working day.

I know we were looking at promoting the services in the parliamentary triangle. That overlapped with the decision about the centenary bus loop, I think, so we may have put that on hold. But we can certainly have a look at that to see whether that should get a push forward in light of this decision and also reviewing the use of the centenary bus loop which travels through that part of Canberra.

Overall, as I said this morning, there are very big elements of the budget which the ACT government supports and we think are positive for Canberra and positive for the country. But there are also elements of the budget which will be tough for Canberra. It is certainly a mixed result for the city. In some ways—and it is difficult to admit this—I think some of the speculation about what could have happened to the public service had led us to be gravely concerned about any efficiencies that would have been sought through this budget, and those concerns have not been met by the delivery of this budget, although we acknowledge that there are efficiencies in there. The reversing of the efficiency dividend is very welcome. Reducing that from four per cent back to 1.2 per cent I think is a very sensible decision, and it is a decision that has been taken in a very tough budget environment.

The government will support this motion with the amendment when it is moved by Mr Rattenbury. We will reflect the financial impact of the federal budget in our budget, and it is important that our budget do that. But our budget will not be a critique of another jurisdiction's budget. If we were to follow the line that Mr Smyth provided, we can then put a whole range of other critiques about other budgets in that paper.

**Mr Coe:** You never did that to the Costello budgets?

**MS GALLAGHER:** Well, it has never been the intention of the ACT budget to take that role. Our budget is focused on our budget. It will reflect financial changes that flow from decisions of other governments—in this case, the federal government. It will be reflected in the budget paper, and that is important, too.

**MR HANSON** (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (10.40): I would like to start by commending Mr Smyth on this motion. If there is anyone that stands up for good budget management, it is Mr Smyth. What he is calling for is sensible, and I am glad that it will be in the main supported, although I think we do need to consider what it means by inserting “financial”, and whether the broader aspects of what we need to see in terms of the implications for families are going to be addressed.

Let us be in no doubt that this is a very bad budget. I do not think we should be surprised. I hear those opposite saying, “This is a Labor budget.” Well, it is a Labor budget, because I think national debt now exceeds \$300 billion, and it has now been something like 23 years since the federal Labor Party has delivered a surplus. So it is a classic Labor budget, and it is a Labor budget that is bad for Canberra. I will go through why it is bad for Canberra, but clearly it is, and it is disappointing that the Chief Minister, the Treasurer and other members are not actually standing up. It seems that they are more interested in acquiescing with their mates up on the hill and giving them cover than standing up for Canberrans, which is what they are paid to do.

This budget highlights the absolute—I do not know if I am going to get away with it—hypocrisy of the federal Labor members who have been saying things that quite clearly were not true, and I will go through those.

Looking at the detail itself in terms of what it means for Canberrans, firstly there are the public service job cuts. This mob were railing about what might happen in the future the other week, whilst at the same time we saw that the federal government, the Gillard government, had cut 3,000 jobs in the six months leading up to December last year. No doubt more jobs have been cut so far, they are planning another 1,282 next year and God knows how many beyond that. So while this mob complain about it, they are doing exactly that to Canberra.

There are attacks on superannuants. We know that in Canberra we have a disproportionately high number of self-funded retirees who are dependent on superannuation, and there is a direct attack on those people. Perhaps those socialists opposite would decry these people as the super wealthy, but we do not see it that way. This is an attack on people who have worked very hard to fund their retirement.

There are reductions in family tax payments—significant reductions. Again, this mob over the road say that they care about families. Remember “working families”? That seems to have gone with Kevin Rudd. This is an attack on working families. That is exactly what it is.

Scrapping the baby bonus: I heard Mr Barr making jokes about that on 666 radio. I can assure you there will be many parents who will not find that funny. He tried to make some mocking comments, trying to make light of it. It is not funny. It is a serious issue. There are people who are wanting to have families, wanting to have babies, who are now going to find it difficult to do so because they are not going to be provided with the support that was provided to them to do so. There is a big expense in having kids, and there will be people out there now who are going to make a decision not to have families as a result of this decision.

**Ms Gallagher:** Well, industry supports it.

**MR HANSON:** Katy Gallagher sneers across the chamber, “Well, industry supports it.” What about families? Go out there and ask the mums and dads whether they support it. Let us ask them.

**Mr Barr:** I thought the age of entitlement was over. That's Joe Hockey's position, isn't it? It's the age of entitlement; it's over.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Order!

**MR HANSON:** We have some more mocking from Mr Barr. Mr Barr, who is constantly—

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mr Hanson, remember to direct your comments to the chair.

**MR HANSON:** Sorry, Madam Speaker. This is on the back of Mr Barr's mocking comments this morning.

I will move on to other issues: paid parking in the parliamentary triangle. Of course, Gallagher and Barr: "Yeah, we'll do that. Let's have \$2,600 ripped out of Canberrans' pockets to pay for Wayne Swan's deficit." That is what is going to occur. That is what this is all about. This is not about better transport planning. They are now trying to bolt some more buses on to see how we can try and move people working in the parliamentary triangle around. This is not about any sort of transport initiative. This is simply to pay for Labor's debt and deficits.

With the ongoing efficiency dividends, there is more of a squeeze on the federal public service, making people's lives more difficult. With potential wage squeezes or reductions in office space, what is that going to do to the property market here? Just imagine if we had built the edifice in the car park, Madam Speaker. Mr Barr and Katy Gallagher said, "Let's have this lovely tower block that's going to save us all this money." It would be sitting there empty, would it? We are about to lose—on the figures I think I heard, there will be \$100 million in savings by doing that. Most of that will be money that comes straight out of the property sector here in the ACT.

University cuts: the people that talk about the importance of education are going to be attacking our universities. In a town that places such importance on our tertiary education sector, for this mob to come out on one hand and attack our universities like this, whilst on the other hand saying, "We're all for education," is just an absolute nonsense. That is all going to affect the lives of Canberrans, and it is going to damage our economy. But this mob opposite, because it is a Labor budget and it is their Labor mates, are being quiet.

Let us have a look at some of the statements made by this mob opposite and their mates. I remember getting a brochure in the mail. I imagine it was from Gai Brodtmann or Senator Lundy—I cannot remember which one it was—telling me that Wayne Swan had delivered a surplus. I remember getting it—they had delivered a surplus. This mob opposite were going, "Isn't it wonderful? Wayne Swan, Treasurer of the year, has delivered a surplus." Let us see what Gai Brodtmann said in the House of Reps about this:

It was a Labor budget ...



This was last year. Go back in time; it seems like a long time ago. She said:

... it was a clever budget and it was a budget firmly focused on the future ... and I would like to congratulate the Treasurer for a budget that both supports and assists families facing cost-of-living pressures and returns our budget to surplus. The surplus will provide a buffer in uncertain global economic times—and times are indeed uncertain. The surplus will also give the Reserve Bank further room to cut interest rates and the surplus will allow us to protect low- and middle-income families and our most vulnerable communities.

I assume, therefore, that if Gai Brodtmann says that our surplus will “allow us to protect low and middle income families and our most vulnerable communities” that she accepts that the \$19 billion deficit that was actually delivered will not actually support low income families and will not help the budget. You cannot have it both ways, can you?

Canberrans have been misled by Gai Brodtmann and by her federal Labor colleagues who have been telling us that the budget was in surplus when it was not, and have been saying that they would not be cutting jobs when they have been. You can go to any number of quotes. Senator Lundy, Gai Brodtmann and Andrew Leigh said:

A Gillard Government will move Australia and Canberra forward, continue to deliver a strong economy and bring the budget to surplus by 2013 ...

How about this? This one was actually delivered on April Fool’s Day in 2010. Ironic! It is from Senator Lundy. Maybe she was having a bit of a joke. She said:

Under Labor, the overall size of the Commonwealth public service has remained steady and while there is movement within departments and agencies to reflect Labor’s priorities, this sensible approach by the Rudd Labor Government will continue.

Really? Is that true, members opposite? Madam Speaker, I do not think it is. It really is not.

The question then is: why should Canberrans who are listening to Gai Brodtmann or Andrew Leigh, or their patsies here in this chamber who just echo their sentiments and try to support what is only a bad budget for Canberra, believe them? When they say, “Gonski’s going to be good for Canberra,” or, “We’re going to be delivering surpluses some time out in the forward estimates,” why would the average Canberran—who is now not going to get the baby bonus, who is going to have to pay for their parking, who is under the threat of losing their job because of the job cuts, who is going to be crammed into more constrained office space, who is losing family tax benefits, whose parents are going to be getting less superannuation or paying more on their superannuation, who are told repeatedly by Labor that the budget would be in surplus—believe anybody? And they should not. They would be right not to, because the reality is that this is a classic Labor budget. It is taxing us more; it is spending more.

This is the other great line, and I think Mr Smyth went to this. Wayne Swan's excuse for this is that revenues have declined. Well, revenues have not. As a matter of fact, revenues have gone up by seven per cent, and they are forecast to go up by eight per cent next year. That is a massive increase in revenue. So why is it then that we are getting a massive deficit—\$19 billion followed by \$18 billion? I will tell you why. It is because this is a government that cannot manage its budget, and we are being delivered cuts into Canberra that are going to cut deep into Canberra families. And why? Because the federal Labor Party has wreaked havoc on our economy, and Canberrans are going to pay. They were conned about it by their federal representatives, and now Andrew Barr and Katy Gallagher are not supporting them, are not standing up as they should be. I commend this motion.

**MR RATTENBURY** (Molonglo) (10.50): Last night's federal budget is one that is, in many quarters, still being fully digested, but already there are issues identified in the budget that are of real concern. Certainly from a Greens perspective, there are things in there that are quite short term and that have failed to tackle some of the important issues. We have seen a situation where cuts are being made to real and important services. The necessary increases in things like Newstart that both the NGO and business sector have supported have not been followed through. The budget has failed to tackle real issues like cutting fossil fuel subsidies, which cost the federal government literally billions of dollars a year. Those issues have not been tackled. There has been a failure to address important social and environmental issues in the budget.

There are some missed opportunities in the budget. I am particularly concerned by the funding cuts to universities. Mr Smyth said earlier, and I share much of the sentiment he expressed in his comments, that this is quite a short-term thing. We discussed this yesterday in the context of Mr Seselja's matter of public importance. The approach that has been taken by federal Labor to cut money from the university sector to fund the Gonski reforms is incredibly short-sighted. It is a poor decision and one that has been reinforced by the budget last night. The universities are drivers of the future wellbeing of Australia at both a social and an economic level. This decision is simply a poor, short-term decision.

We see in the budget a \$685 million cut to renewable energy and energy efficiency—again, measures that will prepare Australia for the future in terms of providing clean, cost-effective energy sources. There has been a failure to get on with improving energy efficiency in this country and that simply keeps driving up the energy bills of both households and the business sector in this country. It is disappointing to see a cut of \$257 million to the biodiversity fund, which was part of the carbon tax arrangements. Again, this is a real missed opportunity. We know there are important issues that need to be addressed in Australia.

Similarly, there are the cuts to the CSIRO. The cuts to the CSIRO are one of those areas that, again, are not unlike the situation with the universities. Not unlike the university sector, the CSIRO is an important driver of Australia's future economic prosperity. Let us strip the politics from it—we know that Labor and Liberal are going to spend the next week or two slugging it out over who is better and who is worse and

what Joe Hockey is going to do as the alternate—and let us talk about the real issues of what is actually being brought forward in the budget. We see that the areas that are important to Australians and important to the future of this country are being resolved in the budget in a way that is simply bad news for the future of this country. My federal colleague Christine Milne described the outcome of the budget as producing a weaker, dumber, meaner Australia. I think when one works through some of the cuts and changes we have seen and the failure to tackle some of the long-term issues, like significant fossil fuel subsidies, one can understand why she made those comments.

Regarding the impact on Canberra, I think that between this budget and the prospect of a change of government things are certainly looking tough for Canberra and the ACT into the future. We have seen a significant reduction in the number of public service jobs. With the prospect of further cuts, as has been foreshadowed by the opposition and as we debated extensively in this chamber last week, the prospects for the territory are difficult. This city has been growing very rapidly in recent years and we face the prospect of a significant turnaround in that economic trend for the territory. That is going to be very difficult for the ACT government and for many people in Canberra who will find themselves, as we saw in 1996, having to really reassess their future, reassess whether they will stay in Canberra or whether they will move away. Those issues have been canvassed broadly in this chamber around the impact that is going to have on the territory in terms of the loss of economic activity and the loss of skills to this city. There is the impact on the social fabric. There are also the direct impacts that people will see through their personal loss of jobs and a reduction in the value of their houses. These things are very real for people in Canberra.

In some ways today's motion is a tit-for-tat motion in response to last Wednesday's debate about the prospect of a change in federal government and the stated policies of the Leader of the Opposition and the shadow treasurer around what they intend to do with the public service. I think we need to see that for what it is. That leaves the Assembly to debate these things in the way it wishes.

Looking at parts (1)(a) and (1)(b) of Mr Smyth's motion, that is a particular narrative that the Liberal Party has and, I think, reflects some of the content of Tony Abbott's little red book, so we will take it for what it is. At any objective level, one could sit here and say that each of these points is arguable. I am quite sure that Mr Barr or Ms Gallagher could stand up and put an alternative perspective on each of these, and certainly I would have a view on it. The narrative that the Liberal Party has on the federal carbon package, for example, fails to acknowledge that the Prime Minister did not win government in her own right and she was forced to negotiate for government. That means that there needs to be a level of compromise and negotiation. As a result of that, there is a federal carbon package. I know the Liberal Party struggles to deal with the concept that parties need to collaborate and work together, but that is actually what resulted in a carbon tax in this country. That is what I mean about each of the points in Mr Smyth's motion being arguable; others will have different perspectives on them.

Nonetheless, what Mr Smyth has observed at the end of his motion—that the ACT budget has been moved from May to June to be able to more accurately reflect the

outcome of the federal budget—is a fair observation. I think that was always the intent behind it. So paragraph (1)(c) of Mr Smyth’s motion is quite fair enough. I think the call to reflect accurately in the ACT budget what those impacts will be is a good point as well. The intent of my amendment is to strip out the politics of this motion and simply move forward on the practical elements of Mr Smyth’s motion.

I will be moving an amendment to insert the word “financial” after “impact”. I think that is the intent of the motion. The other alternative when we talk about the full impact of the budget—this may be the way Mr Smyth intended it but I do not think it is a tenable way forward—is to have some sort of complete narrative on all the flow-on effects. Again, those matters will no doubt be canvassed in this place. They will be canvassed in the response speeches from members of the opposition. What we can objectively look for in the budget is a reflection of the financial impacts of the federal budget.

The other matters will be, to some extent, matters of debate and matters of perspective, and they are better taken up on the floor of the chamber. The budget papers are about presenting the financial situation of the ACT. I simply seek to clarify that with the amendment that I will be moving—that the budget should reflect those objective financial matters. The debate and analysis of the broader impact that others will seek to put forward can be taken up on the floor of the chamber and in the media and the places where that should be done. In that sense, I am keen to support parts of Mr Smyth’s motion. It is fair enough that those things are accurately reflected in the budget. I seek leave to move the amendments circulated in my name together.

Leave granted.

**MR RATTENBURY:** I move:

- (1) Omit subparagraphs (1)(a) and (b).
- (2) In paragraph (2), before “impact”, insert “financial”.

I have explained the amendments. I commend the amendments to the Assembly.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** The question is that the amendments be agreed to.

**Mr Smyth:** Are you speaking, Andrew?

**Mr Barr:** I may speak in the debate, but if there are further speakers—

**MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (11.00):** All right; I will close. In closing the debate, let me say that I find it quite extraordinary that the Treasurer of the ACT will not comment on this budget. That is the biggest indictment of this budget that we could expect. In startling, clear, political terms Andrew Barr has spoken his loudest by not saying a word about this Swan-Gillard 2013-14 budget. He has squibbed his responsibilities. He has betrayed the people of the ACT. I think his mutinous approach will be remembered by many for a long time to come.

It would appear that the Treasurer cannot raise the energy to stand and defend his federal Labor colleagues. That is a condemnation that will ring loud around the Assembly. It will ring loud around the territory. And I will make sure it rings loud around the country when I tell everybody that I can get on to that not even the Treasurer of the ACT, the Labor Treasurer, thinks that this is a good budget. He can find not a single good word for this budget.

As to the amendments from Mr Rattenbury, perhaps Mr Rattenbury has not heard from Susan Helyar, the ACT Council of Social Service director, who, according to a news report, lashed out at the lack of boost to social payments in the budget. She said that the poorest members of the Canberra community would suffer as a result. With no increase to Newstart payments, thousands of people looking for work in Canberra are stuck on \$35 a day, she said. She referred to how ironic and cruel it was that during two decades of tax cuts and growth in tax concessions no government has been willing to show corresponding generosity to the poorest people in our community.

That is why, when I asked for an assessment of the full impacts of the sixth federal Labor budget, I left it. I intentionally did not put in “social, economic and financial” because I just assumed that everybody would want to know what the full impacts are as the government sees them. If you want to limit it to financial, you can only assume that the Greens, as a member of the government and the cabinet, want to hide what the social, and indeed the environmental, impacts of the federal budget will be on the ACT. I say: shame on you for that. It is outrageous that you would simply say, “Let’s just look at some numbers,” when it is the real impact.

This is why last year we put in that there be a cost of living statement in the budget—so that we knew what the ACT budget meant to the people of the ACT. Now you would seek to exclude what the impacts of the federal budget are, the government’s analysis of the impacts, on the social and environmental wellbeing of the ACT. I think that is a shame.

Mr Rattenbury’s response to the motion does raise the question of what the federal Greens will do about this budget. How in good conscience could any senator vote for a budget that makes the country weaker, dumber and meaner? But we all know that the Greens will vote for this budget. They will vote for this budget because that is ideologically where they lie. It is interesting to see that Mr Rattenbury wants to strip out the politics of the argument. He wants to strip them out, but let us face it: weaker, dumber and meaner are meaningless if you do not vote against it. And let us have no doubt that the Greens senators will vote for this budget.

It was interesting that Mr Rattenbury raised cuts to the CSIRO as opposed to cuts at the CSIRO with whipper snippers. He faltered. He realised his mistake. He grabbed those words back as quickly as he could. Yes, we are against cuts to the CSIRO, but at the CSIRO, as long as you are using a biofuel to power your whipper snipper, they are okay.

*Mr Coe interjecting—*

**MR SMYTH:** So this budget, apparently, is toxic. That is very funny. But the cat is out of the bag there. We stumble sometimes, but that is okay.

The Chief Minister reveals now the \$49 million in GST revenue loss. It is important that we learn what the full impacts are. Some of them are not disaggregated in the documents; they are hidden. That financial analysis is important.

But we really need to also keep our eye on the social and the environmental impacts. Katy wistfully said, “There are significant social reforms in this budget.” Yes, there are. People of all persuasions politically have said that the NDIS is a good thing, but it is only a reform if you can pay for it. Holding out false hope to people that, potentially, all 450,000 people with a disability, and eligible, will get something by the 2018-19 budget is predicated on the budget being able to fund it. We know that in Wayne’s world that ain’t possible. It may well be worth saying that these are good things, and I have not heard anybody disagree with that sentiment, but somebody has to pay for it.

So I have not asked for a critique; I have asked for analysis that shows the impacts. That is why the amendments should be resisted.

When I drafted the motion I thought you could look at the last six years and wonder what might have happened and what advice somebody should have given Wayne Swan. Indeed, compare the Howard-Costello budgets that delivered strong surpluses. Nobody ever got sacked through the surplus; you get sacked when there are huge deficits. Your job disappears when the government cannot pay its way. The Labor Party looks at Canberra and says: “We’ve got three safe seats. She’ll be right. We’ll just slash some public servants and use them as the balancing item on our budget.” But these are Canberra families; these are Canberra individuals. These are people who live here; these are our neighbours. It is very important that we understand what the full impacts are.

Commentary made this morning was that this is a first year of a first term sort of budget. I happened across a speech that Peter Costello put together for Wayne Swan and said, “This is what he should have said.” It is worth a read. It is typical Costello: it is a bit tongue in cheek; it is a bit funny. But think about what he says. This is a speech Peter Costello has written for Wayne Swan:

Mr Speaker,

I guess by now you have all figured out that I don’t know what I’m doing. That awful truth has finally dawned on me as well. I hadn’t been too good before, but last year’s Budget was the one where I totally blew myself up—you remember? It was May 8 ... I thought I needed a dramatic opening ... So I began by saying, ‘The four years of surpluses I announce tonight ...’

No one heard the rest of the sentence because of the guffaws from the other side. That smart Alec Costello called it some of the best stand-up comedy ever delivered in the House of Representatives. But the thing is I really believed it. I’m not good at numbers—of the financial kind. As state secretary of the Queensland ALP I used to run numbers for party ballots. But the outcome was always fixed in advance. I thought that’s how you did Budgets.

I was just getting into my stride when I declared that Labor's core purpose was, 'To share the tremendous benefits of the mining boom'.

We were going to do this with a company tax cut starting from July 1 this year but I cancelled that in last year's Budget. Also, we were going to restore the Liberals' contribution levels for superannuation but I postponed that in last year's Budget. And last year I said we would give \$1.8 billion to families in more generous payments from July 1 this year. But I'm cancelling that in this year's Budget. That's the thing about my Budgets. I do take up a lot of time cancelling what I've announced before.

Anyway, there are only so many billion-dollar packages that you can fund out of a tax that raises \$126 million. That Resources Super Profits Tax (RSPT) has shown me no R-E-S-P-E-C-T. When I announced it, I said it would raise \$9 billion in the forthcoming year—whoops! I had high hopes for that tax. I called it 'the greatest economic change in our lifetime'. Of course I had no idea what I was saying but the Liberals are always going on about GST, which raises \$50 billion per year, so I thought I had better lodge my nomination for the greatest tax 'reform' ever.

Last year, I came home with a wet sail declaring, 'The deficit years are behind us. The surplus years are here'.

Looks like I got the words the wrong way around. I should have said that the surpluses were behind us and the deficit years are here. But I did so want to balance one Budget before losing office.

I've been thinking about who to blame. For the first few Budgets I blamed the financial crisis. But that was five years ago and we've been through a mining boom since then.

Currently I'm blaming the high dollar, although someone in the Treasury told me last year's Budget forecasts were based on the dollar being just where it is. I'm desperate that people don't think it's my overspending because that is something I could have controlled. So we've been on a media blitz recently to say it's an unexpected revenue shortfall.

In April, I said the revenue was down \$7.5 billion. A week later Julia said it was down \$12 billion. Then Penny went out last week to say it was down \$17 billion. I leaked out a Treasury briefing on the weekend to say we were \$26 billion down. How do you reconcile all these figures?

Well, it beats me and I hope it beats all of you because that is the whole point—to try to cloud the issue.

AT LEAST no one in the press ever asks me to explain what these forecasts are 'down' against. Because the truth is they are down on the false forecasts I made last year. Get it? I am not the victim of these downgrades, I am the culprit. Every time I downgrade, it just illustrates again how ... wrong I got it last year.

I know we can always rely on the ABC, but the thing that amazes me about those other guys in the press is they keep writing what I say—as if that is going to happen ... How many times do you have to get it wrong before they start to see there is a pattern?

*(Time expired.)*

Question put:

That the amendments be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 9

Noes 8

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

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Amendments agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

## **Work safety**

**MR GENTLEMAN** (Brindabella) (11.14): I move:

That this Assembly:

- (1) reaffirms the importance of workplace safety across the ACT and the growing levels of injury reported in recent years;
- (2) endorses the outcomes from the “Getting Them Home Safely” report and its recommendations;
- (3) congratulates the Government on its timely response to the report; and
- (4) reaffirms the importance of:
  - (a) ensuring workplace safety is paramount when procuring capital works across the Territory;
  - (b) that the recommendations from the “Getting Them Home Safely” report are encapsulated in the procurement process;
  - (c) working with industry peak bodies and unions to ensure positive and inclusive safety cultures in all workplaces across the Territory; and
  - (d) reviewing its actions from the report relating to OH&S and workplace safety annually.



I am pleased to be able to move this motion this morning about the importance of workplace safety in the ACT. Workplace safety is an issue that the Australian Labor Party and the union movement are proud to fight for day in and day out. It is a sad fact that a safe work environment is something that some take for granted until it is too late. Workplace injuries are sadly on the rise in the ACT. This can be shown through Safe Work Australia's comparative performance monitoring report 2012, which reported that the ACT was the only jurisdiction which reported an increase in serious claims between 2000 to 2011. The ACT experienced a 5.3 per cent increase in serious injury claims while Australia experienced a decrease of 27.7 per cent.

In September 2012 the ACT government asked Lynelle Briggs and Mark McCabe to conduct an inquiry into compliance with and application of work health and safety laws in the ACT's construction industry. The inquiry panel was established in the wake of three deaths in the construction industry throughout the last year and a high number of other serious safety incidents. No worker should have their life and wellbeing placed in jeopardy while at work. But, unfortunately, we still have workplace accidents occurring in the territory.

The *Getting home safely* report handed down 28 recommendations on how government, business and industry groups can play a role in creating a safer working environment to reduce the amount of incidents occurring in our workplaces. These recommendations vary greatly from a target for reducing workplace injuries to industry groups taking the lead on safety training.

The *Getting home safely* report is an important government initiative and demonstrates the ACT government's support to ensure that the families and friends of construction workers will no longer live with the daily fear of their loved ones sustaining a serious injury in the workplace. One of the most confronting figures which arose from the *Getting home safely* report is the fact that, on average, every working day one ACT construction worker will be injured at work or that each year one in 40 employees in the building and construction industry will sustain a workplace injury, and this increases if they have been working in the industry for 10 years to one in 10. These are staggering figures which are just far too high. When we look at the long-term comparison of the ACT's construction industry rate of serious injury it paints an even bleaker picture—it is 50 per cent worse than the national average.

I am pleased to be part of a government that has agreed to all of the recommendations within this report. The report went through and identified priorities for the individual areas which make up the industry, including that of the business, training and government sectors.

The report identified a large number of concerns for businesses. One of the overarching themes was the scary reality that some businesses will choose to reduce costs and time on projects through sacrificing safety. I would like to pull up one quote which I believe sums up the way I hope everybody in this chamber feels:

No bereaved family member would ever find it an acceptable proposition that a fatality occurred because safety was a lower priority than meeting a deadline or incurring a cost.

The report made some serious recommendations to businesses through local industry associations such as the Master Builders Association and the Housing Institute of Australia, which I hope all construction firms in Canberra will give serious consideration to and consider who they are putting at risk on a daily basis.

Once again I refer to the report, and I quote from page 26—the most profitable companies are the safest; there is no need for a trade off between safety and profit. One of the main points I hope business give a great deal of consideration to is the necessity of effective safety practices and procedures. The report found that while many businesses had established health and safety procedures, both employers and employees had little or no idea of the reasons behind creation of these practices and procedures.

It is usual practice, particularly for subcontractors, to employ consultants to develop these documents to satisfy regulatory requirements, with the business having very little to no input. It was made clear that safety procedures and practices are most effective when they are actively developed rather than simply imposed. This is one of the reasons WorkSafe ACT inspectors have changed to a model which focuses less on checking paperwork and more on the inspection of the actual worksite and providing employers and employees with education rather than penalties.

I would now like to go to the subject of who is actually looking after the safety of working people. Let us focus on the two main groups that represent workers and employers in the ACT—the union movement and employer representative groups.

If we look at what their listed priorities are and what each of these have to say on workplace safety and the priority they give it, we will see some interesting results. Looking at some of the employer groups, I will start with the Master Builders Association. I am very pleased to see they have listed safety on their first page. It does come in ninth overall, but at least it is listed as one of their key disciplines. I am also pleased they operate several safety-related courses. I add that they make submissions to WorkSafe and other enquires on workplace safety.

However, on reading into their submission on the ACT construction industry health and safety inquiry, I find that, after reading some 16 pages of the submission, unlike the vast number of other submissions, it states:

More regulation and by definition greater compliance obligations are therefore not the answer. Furthermore, we strongly contend that such an approach will only serve as a greater distraction to the safety effort.

This, in my view, goes against the results of the *Getting home safely* report, and I am concerned that this may indicate to businesses that they may see regulation and compliance for their workers as a distraction.

We also have the ACT and Region Chamber of Commerce and Industry. There is no mention of workplace safety on their web page. They have lots of courses coming up for employers and their staff—sadly, none on workplace safety. It is rather upsetting for me to see that an employer organisation can simply not think about workplace safety. It concerns me to think what their thought process is on this important topic and if employees are possibly seen merely as just numbers they believe can be replaced.

Let us have a look at the other side of the coin—the labour movement. There is the peak body, the ACTU. Their front page says that the theme for International Workers Memorial Day was that unions make work safer. Let me quote their press release:

A new national memorial to Australians who have died at or because of work will be a lasting reminder of the ongoing battle to make our workplaces safer ... There were 374 Australians killed in traumatic workplace incidents in 2010-11 (the most recent year that statistics are available) but it is estimated the death rate when work-related diseases are added is well over ten times that.

They have also created a safe work website at [www.safeatwork.org.au](http://www.safeatwork.org.au). This website lists rights and obligations of both employers and employees, upcoming courses, and resources including those in OH&S training, OH&S for managers, supervisors, and refresher courses.

Then there is Unions ACT. They have their own RTO—Workwatch Occupational Health and Safety. Workwatch is a provider of training for workplace representatives. Workwatch also provides information regarding the health and safety requirements existing in the ACT with a wide range of workplace health and safety courses.

We can look at the CFMEU's front page. Their first headline: "No more deaths in the workplace". There are also quotes on the front page from people affected by workplace tragedy. One is, "I didn't want to see another wife get that phone call." Another quote: "At the end of the day, a safe job is a happy job; a clean job is a happy job." The CFMEU list several training schools across the country. All of them have OH&S training, including high risk work training.

There is also the Transport Workers Union. The website refers to truck drivers and road safety, and an article states:

Plans announced by the Coalition to review the Road Safety Remuneration Tribunal in the event of winning September's Federal election ignore all of the evidence collected over twenty years showing a direct relationship between pay and conditions for truck drivers and road safety, said Tony Sheldon, National Secretary of the Transport Workers' Union.

So, as you can see, Madam Deputy Speaker, there appears to be quite a divergence in regard to safety in the workplace from employer groups and employee groups.

I will quote from the *Getting home safely* report:

The Inquiry Panel was impressed with the way many players in the industry saw culture change as a key step in the renewal process. They identified a can-do culture of tough men working to do a tough job who pride themselves on their achievements in getting the job done in a tight timeframe. There seems to be a nonchalance about work health and safety dangers and a desire to avoid anything that might be seen as weak or “sissy”. Doing things quickly and easily is their unofficial motto: they do not want to be constrained by rules, paperwork and restrictions on using their common sense. In many ways this culture is admirable and has made the national capital what it is today. But, every culture needs to grow and develop, and this is certainly the case in the construction industry.

If we are all trying to do our best on workplace safety, one needs to ask why there is this divergence in ideals. This simply shows that the labour movement are the ones caring on the ground every day and making sure that workers are brought home safely. They do this by fighting constantly to make sure they name and shame those businesses that are showing poor track records and standing up for workers employed on our building sites and on our roads.

It is only appropriate that we note the ACT government must ensure that, when it comes to the procurement of works across the territory, safety is a paramount issue. This is a sound step the government can take to ensure the safe return of all those that gain employment through these initiatives. This government is acting to ensure every employee has the right to return home in the same safe condition that they left in in the morning, and the government is committed to working to provide this assurance to families through agreeing to all the recommendations within the government’s response, stating on page 1:

The Government acknowledges the findings of the Inquiry and supports the view that urgent changes are required. To achieve this, a collaborative and genuine approach that includes industry, worker organisations, importantly every person working on a construction site and government is required.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we also need to point out the great contribution these workers provide to the community outside their working hours. They are raising children, they are out there every weekend coaching the local kids’ sports teams, manning the charity BBQ or even just spending quality time with their family and friends. These workers are people’s friends, mothers and fathers, daughters and sons. As a loving father, I could not stand to think of my children working somewhere that is not safe for them in any way. My heart goes out to the families and friends who have received “that” phone call. As a government we need to do everything within our power, including through the procurement process, to ensure that no parent, wife, husband or friend ever need to receive “that” call due simply to a decision made giving cost precedence over safety. I urge all members to support this motion.

**MR SESELJA** (Brindabella) (11.28): I foreshadow that the opposition will be supporting Mr Rattenbury’s amendment to Mr Gentleman’s motion. We think that this improves the motion and takes away the self-congratulatory nature of the motion, particularly given the record of this Labor government when it comes to safety over the last decade. I think that Mr Gentleman, in his speech, departed from many of the

words of his motion, particularly where it talks about working with industry peak bodies and unions to ensure positive and inclusive safety cultures in all workplaces across the territory. In his rant he claimed that only the labour movement cares about safety on work sites.

It is a Labor government that has been here for the last 11 years and overseen this record when it comes to safety on our work sites. It is this Labor government that has overseen that shocking safety record. I reject the claim in Mr Gentleman's speech that only the unions care about safety on work sites. I think that that is offensive. I think it is offensive to the vast bulk of good employers. I think it is offensive to those industry bodies who Mr Gentleman is seeking to attack. I think it is aimed to be a distraction, as the self-congratulatory nature of part of the motion is, from the fact that it is this Labor government that has overseen this shocking safety record.

In the ACT we can expect—this has occurred under this Labor government—on average that every working day one construction worker will sustain an injury somewhere in Canberra. In the ACT, under this ACT Labor government, we have a serious injury rate one-third higher than the national average. In the ACT, under this Labor government, each year one in every 40 territory construction workers can expect to receive an injury at work that results in their being off work for at least one week and in some cases much longer.

In the ACT, under this Labor government, in terms of long-term injuries in the construction industry, the ACT's results have been deteriorating—currently more than 50 per cent worse than any other jurisdiction and approaching double the Australian average. This is highly distressing, especially for such a small jurisdiction. Of course, it is distressing for those people who are affected by such injuries. It is for that reason that we cannot support the self-congratulatory nature of Mr Gentleman's motion. This is a serious matter, and claiming that the government has somehow been exemplary when the facts tell a completely different story, I think, would be fundamentally dishonest. That is why we will support Mr Rattenbury's amendment to the motion.

The Canberra Liberals endorse the intent of the *Getting home safely* report, as there must be change to bring down the number of injuries and deaths. No workplace death is acceptable. One workplace death is one too many, and we need to be vigilant and we need to work hard. We should not be pitting employers against employees, though I think that is the very clear tenor of Mr Gentleman's speech.

We are concerned that the government gets the implementation of the recommendations right. There is no indication that the ACT government will act in a timely manner to take action on the recommendations given how many years they have had to act while the injury rate has increased. Additionally, I am concerned about arbitrarily assigning powers and responsibilities to organisations and groups that will not always act in the best interests of our construction workers, businesses and the broader community.

What we do not want to see is a situation where workplace safety is used as an excuse, as a proxy, for union bullying. We have seen that. That is one of the reasons why the Building and Construction Commission was set up. It was because of union bullying

on work sites in the construction industry. You can talk to anyone in the industry and have stories about how unions bully them right around the country. I think it is important that we make sure that we deal with safety issues properly, that we have the right settings in place, that we allow our inspectors to do their jobs, but that we do not have a situation where we use safety as a proxy for unions to bully employers, as we see on so many occasions.

I think that that Building and Construction Commission is something that does need to come back. It does need to come back, and if there is a change of government federally, we look forward to that coming back, as was recently announced. I think that is a positive. That prevents the misuse of power by any group. What we want to see on our construction sites and in other areas of the workplace is a balanced approach in respect of the rights of employees. On safety issues, we are agreed. We want to see everything done to make our workplaces safe. But in the broader context, we do not want to see an imbalance. We do not want to see too much of a shift towards union power, as we have seen in recent times.

I think the ABCC is important. It is important to ensure that the rule of law exists in our workplaces. It is up to this government here in the ACT to get those laws right. But then we need to make sure that those laws are enforced and that we do not allow the unions simply to run amok.

I turn to the parts of the motion. It acknowledges the atrocious safety record over recent years but it fails to take any responsibility. I look forward to the government, when Mr Corbell gets up and speaks, explaining why this has been allowed to occur over the last 11 years of this government. This is a Labor government that claims to be about workers. It claims to be about workplace safety. Yet it has the worst record of any jurisdiction in the country. How do we explain that? How do we explain that under ACT Labor we have seen the worst safety record on work sites in the country?

What is it about this government's mismanagement? There are a number of things that have led to it. There have been times where they have underfunded the number of inspectors. We have seen that. It is clear that there have not been enough inspectors. But perhaps it has been because they have not built a positive working relationship with parts of industry. Industry needs to take responsibility and they are taking responsibility. Governments need to take responsibility and this government, of course, has failed to do that over the last 11 years.

Individuals need to take responsibility on work sites. It is important. Training takes people so far. Individual decisions have a part to play in whether or not safety protocols are followed, in whether or not good decisions are made. Of course, in some of these tragedies we know that there is sometimes no explanation. Unfortunately, sometimes tragedies occur. Sometimes errors occur. With the best will in the world, we will never be able to take away any risk on all of our work sites. All we can do is try to have the right settings in place that make them as safe as possible, that lower the risk and make the risk absolutely as low as possible for there to be any serious injuries or deaths on our work sites.

I do not think the kind of rhetoric we have heard from Mr Gentleman is helpful. What he again seeks to do on behalf of the union movement is to pit employees against employers. I do not think that that is the key to safety on our work sites. I think the key is for those groups to be working together. I do not accept the assertion from Mr Gentleman that our peak bodies do not care about safety. I think that they do. Can they do better? Of course they can. But it is a bit rich to be lectured by this ACT Labor government about the record when they have been in charge for the last 11 years. Clearly, based on that record, their measures have failed and failed in a pretty serious way in comparison to other jurisdictions.

In conclusion, Madam Deputy Speaker, we will support Mr Rattenbury's amendment. We think that is a more sensible way forward. It takes away the self-congratulations. This government does not deserve self-congratulation on this issue. But we are committed to safer work sites. We will look to work with industry. The opposition will work with the industry, including unions, including employer representatives, to ensure that there is better safety on our work sites—something that, unfortunately, over the last few years has not been the case in the ACT.

**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) (11.38): I thank Mr Gentleman for bringing this motion forward this morning. It is critical that we have a discussion about, and we recognise the importance of reaffirming our commitment to, ongoing reform and improvement in the safety culture that exists in particular in the construction and civil sector here in the ACT but, indeed, right across all parts of the ACT economy.

I have listened with interest to Mr Seselja's comments. I am now very confident that he will fit in very well with the neo-conservatives, his colleagues up in the Senate, should he be successful in the election which is due in September. What we heard, of course, were pious words from Mr Seselja about the importance of bodies such as the Australian Building and Construction Commission. He talked about the rule of law and what a wonderful institution the Australian Building and Construction Commission was under the Howard government.

This was an organisation that could compel people to be interviewed and removed the right against self-incrimination in those interviews. For the shadow attorney-general in this place to support an institution which, in its previous incarnation, removed the right against self-incrimination in evidence given to it by workers is, of course, rank hypocrisy. It is rank hypocrisy, but I am confident that Mr Seselja is going to fit in just fine.

The issues before us are not about trying to portray this as a fight between workers and employers. It is about recognising—

*Mr Seselja interjecting—*

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Mr Seselja!

**MR CORBELL:** It is about recognising that parties in the workplace—workers, labour and the employers—have roles to play. But it is also about recognising that the overriding legal responsibility for a safe workplace rests with those who are in charge of the workplace. That is what the law says. That is what case law over time, what the common law over time, has also determined—that it is those who are ultimately in charge of the workplace who have the overriding safety duty. That is employers. There is no getting away from that. They are the people legally in charge of the premises. They have the overriding safety duty.

The report by Lynelle Briggs and Mark McCabe highlights that there are a range of things that need to be done which can only be led by those with the legal power and authority—the employer, the person in charge of the property, the work site, the construction site, the building site. That is where the authority rests. That is why the government has said consistently that we urge and expect those in industry, those who are representing employers, to take the lead in reminding their members, in educating their members and potentially even in sanctioning their members to abide by and uphold their responsibilities for safe workplaces.

Yesterday I was reviewing the circumstances of one of the four tragic deaths that have occurred in the ACT over the past 18 months or so. Without going into the specifics, what I can say, and what is clear to me, is that there are still employers in the ACT who in my view are not doing what other employers do as a matter of course to make their work sites safe and to reduce—significantly reduce—the capacity for someone to be seriously injured or killed on their work site.

There are still employers in this town who will not follow best practice. There are still employers in this town who will ignore the need for commonly accepted practices that other employers do put in place as a matter of course and which regrettably, where they fail to do so, can lead to the potential for injury or death. It is that culture that we have to try to change.

The government has accepted all of the recommendations of the Briggs-McCabe report, even those recommendations which are the responsibility of industry to implement. What we have said in relation to those is that the government itself cannot lead on that, but industry must. We have sat down with industry, the Work Safety Commissioner in particular has sat down with industry, and said, “What are you going to do to uphold your side of the bargain?”

I am pleased to say there have been a number of positive developments in that respect. The MBA and the HIA have shown a willingness to engage in this matter and to put in place a range of steps, perhaps not as uniformly as I would have liked to have seen as the minister responsible. Nevertheless, they have taken steps. I mention in particular the response of the MBA. To highlight the situation, they are going to engage additional education capacity within their organisation to educate, inform and advise their members on safety. This is a welcome development. It is a welcome development. Equally, the response of the HIA to say that they are prepared to develop guidance material for their members on issues around work safety is also very welcome.



The government is not being tardy in its response at all. The government has agreed from day 1, from the day the report was received, that we will employ more work safety inspectors. We are going to follow through on that commitment, which members will see when the budget is released next month. We have also said that we are going to revise the legislation. We are going to give our inspectors more capacity for on-the-spot fines so that a clear message can be sent promptly and clearly to employers and others who breach their safety duties that there are immediate, real and financial consequences for their actions.

We have introduced the exposure draft of new legislation for the Industrial Court to bring a focus for occupational health and safety and other industrial relations matters before a dedicated court which can develop a dedicated expertise on these issues. Again, this is the implementation of a recommendation from the McCabe-Briggs report, as well as a Labor election commitment. So we are showing our willingness to act, to act in a timely way and to follow through on those things that we have agreed to.

Finally, I note that in Mr Rattenbury's amendment he has suggested that there should be an annual review process. The government has no objections to the amendment. The only point I would make is that the government has already actually agreed to a six-monthly reporting obligation to the Assembly. If Mr Rattenbury says he only wants a year, so be it. But we are open to a regular reporting arrangement to the Assembly, and we have already agreed as such.

It is this Labor government that has chosen to make work safety a priority. We did not hear Mr Seselja or any other shadow minister raising concerns about workplace safety over the last few years. In fact, they voted against reforms to laws, including harmonisation, I think, of work safety laws here in the ACT. So it is a bit rich for them to be pious on this issue. It is a bit rich for them to be pious on this issue. But we know that Mr Seselja is going to fit in very well with the other neo-cons up in the Senate.

Madam Deputy Speaker, it was this government and this Chief Minister after the election that said she wanted this issue fixed. She created a dedicated ministry of workplace safety. She said this was an area that needed to be addressed. I am pleased that she has given me the opportunity to do that.

We are following through on these commitments. We are implementing the outcomes of McCabe-Briggs in full. We are working closely with industry. We are going to continue to advocate, to implement and to act on a whole range of measures which we hope will drive improvements, the improvements that are needed so that workers get home safely at the end of a working day.

**MR RATTENBURY** (Molonglo) (11.48): I thank Mr Gentleman for bringing this motion to the Assembly today. It comes at an important time for work safety in the ACT.

As has been noted in the debate, there have been several tragic deaths on ACT worksites over the last 18 months. The ACT Greens were active in campaigning for work safety reforms over this time.

The government commissioned the *Getting home safely* report, which was released in November last year. That report drew attention to some very serious problems. On average, every day a construction worker will sustain an injury in the ACT. Our serious injury rate is almost a third higher than the national average. The ACT construction sector's fatality rate was almost three times the rate of fatalities of all other industries. As I have said, and as I am sure we will all agree, this is unacceptable and we need to take action to improve the safety situation in the territory.

The government tabled its response to the *Getting home safely* report in February this year. It agreed to all of the recommendations. As I said at the time, the government has the Greens' strong support for reforming the ACT's construction industry. I will be following the implementation of the report's recommendations closely.

Really I think the key now is to simply get on with it. Implementing these recommendations should be a priority for the government. At this stage I am quite confident that the government is taking its response to the report very seriously. As we have heard, it is taking significant steps to implement the recommendations, and this will be quite a long and ongoing task.

On this note I am happy to support the motion that Mr Gentleman has presented, with a few amendments which I will move shortly. The amendments essentially focus the motion on the ongoing task of implementing the *Getting home safely* report's recommendations and calls on the government to ensure they do this in a timely way.

Workplace safety has always been an important issue to the Greens. We have been very active in the ACT, and in fact right across Australia, in promoting and progressing workplace safety.

At the last ACT election, the ACT Greens released a specific election platform focused on workplace safety. This was our policy called "Making Canberra the work safety capital". It outlined our vision for there to be no deaths on ACT worksites in Canberra and set out a number of initiatives. I am pleased that some elements of this election platform are now encompassed in the ACT Greens-Labor parliamentary agreement. Some elements are also captured by the recommendations of the *Getting home safely* report.

Item 9.1 of the parliamentary agreement requires the government to "Review the operation of the Building and Construction Training Authority and consult on a proposed increase of the building and construction training levy to 0.3%". The purpose here, and it was one of the identified gaps, was to ensure that there was more money available for training when it came to safety issues.

Item 9.2 of the agreement requires the government to "Increase proactive worksite investigations, particularly in construction to ensure safety is adequate and prevent

‘sham contracting’”. That sham contracting again is identified as an area where gaps occur when it comes to safety initiatives.

Some of the *Getting home safely* recommendations also reflect the issues we have taken forward as part of that policy platform—such as an increase in the amount of WorkSafe inspectors, a new focus on proactive inspections, and reform of the ACT’s procurement system. I am hoping that the ACT moves quickly to the new process of “active certification”. That essentially involves the government employing its own auditors to conduct regular and ad hoc audits on government work. That is an initiative the Greens have pushed for and was part of our election platform.

It is right that we have focused on construction worksite safety in recent months given the deaths and very serious injuries that have been occurring. I do want to emphasise, though, that work safety also extends beyond traditional physical injuries and hazards.

In the last Assembly the Greens introduced and debated legislation that would have helped to address psychosocial hazards in the workplace, focusing on workplace bullying and harassment. These are damaging practices that can have a serious impact on people’s lives and health and also have a detrimental economic and productivity impact. That legislation would have ensured that WorkSafe’s inspectorate included specialist expertise in dealing with bullying and other workplace psychosocial issues, recognising that these are quite complex issues. It also would have established an expert advisory committee to ensure that the ACT implemented best practice laws and procedures on workplace bullying.

That legislation was not supported at the time, which was deeply disappointing given the thought and care that had gone into it and the recognised issues that exist in the workplace. The response of the Canberra Liberals was particularly ironic given that they spend so much time talking about bullying in the ACT. Here was an opportunity to take some sensible steps, and they manufactured an excuse to make sure it would not pass.

Another major reform was passed in the last Assembly, the reform of OH&S legislation now largely harmonised in the new Work Health and Safety Act. That, too, was rejected by the Canberra Liberals despite the long awaited improvements it will make to work health and safety. Fortunately it was supported by the Greens and got the numbers in the Assembly. We also moved various amendments to strengthen that legislation.

Even the territory’s Dangerous Substances Act, obviously one of the most important pieces of legislation when it comes to protecting workers—workers who deal with contaminants like asbestos—was not supported by the Canberra Liberals at the time it was brought forward in the chamber.

I wonder what improvements to workplace safety the Canberra Liberals will actually support. I will be interested to see the position they take in relation to the issue of an industrial magistrates court in the ACT by way of example.

I will now briefly turn to the amendments I am moving today. I note the comments members have already made and I welcome their support.

The main change is the omission of Mr Gentleman's clause 3 and the insertion of a new clause 3 which calls on the government to ensure a number of things. I think it is a better form than simply reaffirming the importance of something, especially in combination with clauses which congratulate the government. I might observe, and we covered this in the last motion from Mr Smyth, that as a matter of form in this place the Greens are not really interested in these sorts of texts or those that are simply gratuitous attacks on the government. I think these motions that we debate should generally be about achieving something for the future, acknowledging things that are actually happening. Motions of both those kinds do very little to move us forward in the Assembly.

So my amendment calls on the ACT government to "ensure a timely implementation of the recommendations in the report". It also calls on the government to work with stakeholders to annually review and report on actions taken and progress made in relation to the *Getting home safely* report.

I note the comment that Mr Corbell just made about the six-monthly commitment. I did actually pick it up from Mr Gentleman's original motion—the annual reporting. In the spirit of not seeking to amend Mr Gentleman's motion any more than was necessary, I had simply carried that forward. If members are agreeable, I am happy to simply amend that on the floor. That might be something that, if Mr Gentleman wants to move a further amendment to my amendment, I would be quite comfortable with if Mr Corbell does. Of course, the government can always report more often than is asked for in the motion. I am quite happy to resolve that. It does seem a shame that we could not have sorted that before we came to the floor of the chamber today.

**Mr Seselja:** Why don't you just move it?

**MR RATTENBURY:** All right. I will just move an amendment to my amendment. In my proposed paragraph 3(e), if members are agreeable, we will change that to "six monthly review and report". I think that has the support of the house.

The other amendments are fairly minor reforms to the words that Mr Gentleman was proposing. I know that essentially his motion had the same intent. But one difference is that I have asked the government to report publicly on its progress against the recommendations, which I do not think will be burdensome, particularly in the light of the comments that Mr Corbell made.

One of the key points in the amendment is a call on the government to ensure that workplace safety is a key consideration when procuring capital works across the territory. This is an issue that has been a focus for the Greens. We want the ACT government to be a best practice employer when it comes to capital projects, and they can make a real difference to safety.

The *Getting home safely* report pointed out that shared service procurement should take a balanced approach to assessment of tenders where safety and a range of factors, including price, are all weighted comparatively and assessed. The report describes the process by saying:

... this won't necessarily mean that being the best safety performer will guarantee a given contractor will win a tender, it will give them an advantage over their competitors and, if all other factors are relatively equal, it could very well be the deciding factor. The weighting given to the safety criterion will also play an important part in determining tender outcomes.

The report goes on to say:

... a minimum threshold may also need to be established for the safety criterion. This threshold may be able to be raised over time as the performance of the local industry improves.

I accept that is a sensible approach for now, but I remain very interested in the minimum threshold and how we are able to ramp this up over time.

Mr Gentleman, this is why I have slightly reworded part of your motion where you used the word "paramount". I think you had the same intention, but I have simply picked up the intent in the *Getting home safely* report.

To sum up, I am very happy to support Mr Gentleman's motion and I appreciate that he brought it forward to the Assembly today. Work safety should remain at the fore of the government's agenda. I look forward to seeing further significant work on the *Getting home safely* report done in a timely fashion.

I now seek leave to move together two amendments circulated in my name and also to make proposed paragraph 3(e) refer to a six-monthly review.

Leave granted.

**MR RATTENBURY:** I move:

(1) Omit paragraph (2), substitute:

"(2) endorses the recommendations from the *Getting Home Safely* report;"

(2) Omit paragraphs (3) and (4), substitute:

"(3) calls on the ACT Government to:

- (a) ensure a timely implementation of the recommendations in the report;
- (b) ensure workplace safety is a key consideration when procuring capital works across the Territory;
- (c) ensure the relevant recommendations from the *Getting Home Safely* report are incorporated into the ACT Government's procurement process;
- (d) work with industry peak bodies and unions to ensure positive and inclusive safety cultures in all workplaces across the Territory; and

- (e) six monthly review and report on actions taken and progress made in relation to the *Getting Home Safely* report.”.

**MS BERRY** (Ginninderra) (12.00): I rise to support Mr Gentleman’s motion today on the important matter of workplace safety in the ACT. As I have said previously in this Assembly, workplace safety is the backbone of any progressive set of workplace laws. For more than 10 years now the ACT government has been committed to constantly improving the safety and workers compensation laws of our city.

Even though the ACT is limited by federal legislation about what we can do to protect our working people, we are always striving to improve safety in our workplaces, whether it is our public servants, cleaners, carers, tradies or our construction workers, where there have been far too many injuries and deaths on construction sites.

I want to talk on a range of themes during my speech this morning. I will touch on some of the recommendations from the *Getting home safely* report, and I will talk about the need for continued dialogue between workers through their union, employers through their associations and government. The getting them home safely report was an inquiry into workplace health and safety laws in the ACT’s construction industry. The committee was established to look into the industry after three workers died on construction sites in the ACT over the last year and a half. The report made a number of significant recommendations that I believe are relevant for all industries across the ACT, especially those that require workers to work in potentially dangerous or labour-intensive sectors. I commend the government for establishing the industrial magistrates court this year, and I look forward to seeing the full implementation of all the recommendations in the report as soon as possible.

One of the key findings from the report was the need to change the culture on construction sites to bring a greater focus on the importance of safety to our workplaces. It was great to see the government recently launch the speak up about safety campaign, a campaign that encourages workers to talk openly about safety at work and to encourage their colleagues and work mates to speak up as well.

It is so important for members in this community and this city to know that they have the right to speak up about safety at work. In my previous role at United Voice I saw many workers, especially those from migrant backgrounds, who were too afraid to say something if they thought their safety was being compromised. But it is not just the workers who have the responsibility to make safety at work the number one priority. As Mr Corbell talked about earlier, employers and their peak organisations also have tremendous responsibility to ensure that the workplaces they expect their workers to work in are safe and that they are not exposed to dangerous practices or conditions.

Kay Catanzariti, the mother of young builder Ben, who died in a workplace accident on 21 July 2012, pleaded in the *Canberra Times* in September of last year for the industry and the government to listen. She said:

My son's death should not have happened. This kind of tragedy should never happen in today's modern society, but it did. Please just stop and think, lives are irreplaceable, they can never be restored, buildings go up and down every day, money comes and goes.

I would like to acknowledge the constructive role that the Master Builders Association played during the workplace safety inquiry, and I hope they hold true to their commitment to continue to work with the government and the unions to ensure there are no more avoidable accidents or deaths on construction sites.

The toll on families who lose loved ones to a workplace injury or death is too big to measure. Many workers who die or are seriously injured at work have families and, indeed, many of these workers are the major breadwinner for those families. Whilst workers compensation helps to alleviate the pressure of the accident, it can never replace the presence of a loved one or the income they have provided.

Talking to the *Canberra Times* at the opening of the workers memorial, Fiona Vickery, the wife of Wayne Vickery, a worker who died on a construction site in west Macgregor in 2011, spoke about how her family remembers him. She said:

He was six foot four and 99 kilos and he was a golfer and into the football and into the gym ... We've got pictures of him up all around the home. His hat and his sunnies and all sorts of stuff around the place. He'll never really be forgotten. He was a mate, a friend. He looked after everybody.

Now, it is okay for people over there to be talking about unions being bullies, but they are the only ones that represent and will stick up for workers who are being treated badly on their worksites, have their safety compromised or maybe even their lives. I think that is shameful.

Madam Speaker, I commend Mr Gentleman for bringing this motion to the Assembly. I look forward to the full implementation of the review's recommendations.

**MS GALLAGHER** (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Health and Minister for Higher Education) (12.05): I thank Mr Gentleman for bringing this motion to the Assembly today and the other speakers who have contributed to the debate this morning. As previous speakers have said, the government will be supporting the amendments moved by Mr Rattenbury.

I acknowledge the very sad background to this discussion and the fact that families of construction workers, in particular, whose deaths prompted the *Getting home safely* report are still grieving today. It is out of respect for these victims and the determination to improve safety standards that the government responded with a comprehensive and transparent process to improve safety and oversight in the sector. This work was led by Mr Corbell.

Over many years the labour movement has led an important cultural change in Australia around workplace safety and has built consensus around some basic principles—that employers have a duty of care towards their employees, that workplace safety representatives and trade unions are forces for safer work places, and that employees who suffer workplace injuries should be supported and rehabilitated to get back to work. Over time the culture has shifted from one where workers accept danger money in return for occupational risks to the far more rational and humane position—that all employees have a right to a safe working environment.

Health and safety representatives elected by their colleagues are key to improving and maintaining workplace safety, and there is plenty of evidence that engaging workers in the safety of their own environments is crucial. They have the ability to ensure open dialogue between workers and managers in different workplaces and to make sure safety issues are addressed promptly.

The ACT government, indeed, the ACT Assembly, has been a leader in making laws to combat unsafe work practices. As industrial relations minister in 2004 I delivered the first legislation in Australia to provide for the offence of industrial manslaughter. The government amended the Crimes Act to ensure companies can be held responsible if criminally reckless or negligent conduct causes the death of the worker.

This legislation does not impose any greater responsibilities on employers than those already required under the Occupational Health and Safety Act 1989, but it allows for new penalties to be imposed if an employer's recklessness or negligence is proven beyond reasonable doubt. Penalties include fines of up to \$220,000 for individuals and \$1.1 million for companies and a maximum of 20 years imprisonment.

At the federal level legislation was updated to provide for industrial manslaughter in January 2012. While the ACT was disappointed that the federal laws stopped short of including a specific offence for negligence, we welcomed the fact that our commitment to workplace safety has helped to instigate change on the national level.

Despite the ACT's proactive legislative stance, we have seen too many tragic deaths on construction sites in the territory. When Mr Corbell commissioned the inquiry into compliance with work health and safety requirements last August, we got the no-holds-barred results on the poor safety record and culture of the ACT construction industry. The *Getting home safely* report provides little comfort to the families and friends of those who have died or workers who have suffered serious injuries on unsafe construction sites. Unfortunately, it shows the cultural change I mentioned—the move away from an idea that danger is just part of a job—is yet to take a strong hold in our local construction industry.

But the report provides a path for improvement through 28 recommendations which the government has fully agreed to, and we are continuing to push safety reforms as a high priority. Where the government has control to improve safety on sites, we are acting, and Mr Corbell has brought an industrial magistrate a step closer with the tabling of an exposure draft last week. This is in addition to the steps we took in the aftermath of the *Getting home safely* report.

Ultimately, the day-to-day safe running of construction sites is in the hands of those who run them, and we want the key stakeholders—such as the construction companies, the MBA, the HIA and the CFMEU—to show leadership in reforming dangerous practices. At the time the inquiry panel released its finding, it noted that all stakeholders wanted to see change, and we are all obliged to keep up the momentum.

Where the ACT government runs workplaces day to day we are also acting. Under the ACT public sector workers compensation and work safety improvement plan, the



government is modernising the workplace safety and rehabilitation model of our public sector. Under the improvement plan we have implemented targeted programs to improve health and safety across the sector, including skilling managers to promote positive workplace culture and minimise the risk of psychological injury.

Where ACT public sector workers are injured on the job, it is important that we help them recover and get back to work as soon as possible. Evidence from around the world shows that long-term absence from work following injury is detrimental for the workers involved, and it is a significant cost to the taxpayer. In this regard, the improvement plan provides better mechanisms for job redeployment for injured employees returning to work.

This is a long-term project, but we are already making good progress, and Comcare has recognised this by accepting a \$2 million reduction in the ACT public service premium for this financial year. As the improvement plan continues to be better and more widely used, we expect to see further reductions in the number of ACT employees suffering workplace injuries and further reductions in the social and economic costs these injuries cause.

Protecting workers rights and improving the legislation that governs our workplaces are core values of the Australian Labor Party and they are core values of this government. We promised the ACT before the last election that we would drive further improvements to workplace safety, and this is what we continue to do. I commend Mr Gentleman's motion to the Assembly.

## **Visitors**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Before we proceed, I would like to acknowledge the presence in the gallery of senior students from Radford College and their teachers. Welcome to your Assembly.

## **Work safety**

Debate resumed.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** The question is that the amendments be agreed to.

**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) (12.11): I thank Mr Gentleman for raising this issue today. I particularly acknowledge his passion and commitment to workplace safety. I know throughout his career and throughout his time in the Assembly he has been a very passionate advocate for improved workplace health and safety issues. It is a passion that, as we have seen this morning, is shared by his colleagues in the Labor Party. There is no doubt that the government takes workplace health and safety very seriously.

In my Directorate of Economic Development and, most particularly, through the Land Development Agency, workplace health and safety is a priority area—noting, of

course, the key role that these agencies have in liaising and dealing with the local building and property sectors. I can advise the Assembly that in September 2012 the Land Development Agency board established a workplace health and safety subcommittee to oversee the development of interim guidelines for managing work health and safety in construction projects. The interim guidelines were developed in consultation with the Chief Minister and Treasury Directorate, my other portfolio area, Commerce and Works, through Shares Services Procurement, and the ACT Government Solicitor's Office.

I am pleased to advise the Assembly that the Land Development Agency board endorsed the interim guidelines in February and that they are now being adopted across the Land Development Agency, the Economic Development Directorate and, indeed, the broader ACT public service. The interim guidelines have been implemented from 4 April this year and there have been a series of information workshops held for staff, for industry and also for union representatives.

A key feature of the guidelines is that work health and safety is taken into account at every stage of a construction project. This is a critical element—that we encourage a workplace health and safety focus at the feasibility and design stage of projects, at the tendering and procurement stages of projects, at the contract management stages of projects through to the completion and handover of the new asset.

In addition, Madam Speaker, there is a feedback process so that lessons learned from one particular project can then inform further improvements to work health and safety in future projects, thus ensuring that we have a virtuous circle of continuous improvement in work health and safety outcomes. The interim guidelines are built on the active assurance concept to ensure that all Land Development Agency and Economic Development Directorate staff are meeting their due diligence requirements under the Work Health and Safety Act.

There are clear reporting requirements through the use of checklists at every single stage of a project. In addition, there are reporting requirements to ensure that the Land Development Agency board and the Economic Development Directorate senior executive committee are aware of existing and, importantly, emerging work health and safety issues to enable them to meet their due diligence obligations in their senior management roles.

The interim guidelines are dependent on the development of template documents that will capture the work health and safety requirements at each stage of the process. These documents are now being reviewed and finalised in conjunction with the Government Solicitor's Office. The interim guidelines have been informed by and take into account the government's response to the *Getting home safely* report that Mr Corbell outlined in his contribution to this debate this morning.

Turning now to my Directorate of Commerce and Works, here Shared Services is taking a key role in implementing strategies to support the recommendations in the *Getting home safely* report. I would like to touch on several of these recommendations today. Recommendation 12 calls for a national approach to the registration of engineers, with the ACT to go it alone if a national scheme is delayed or likely to be

delayed. Shared Services Procurement is considering the implications and liaising with the various areas of the territory government and also, importantly, with relevant industry bodies and union representatives on how best to quickly and effectively implement this recommendation. We are also discussing this recommendation with Consult Australia, the industry association for consulting companies, which includes engineers.

Recommendation 25 calls on the ACT government to develop and implement active certification by 30 June this year. This is an endorsement of a process that was already underway when the report was released. I can advise the Assembly that Shared Services, in consultation with WorkSafe ACT and the ACT Government Solicitor, is developing a new framework to actively manage workplace health and safety performance on the territory's work sites. Shared Services has been consulting with industry bodies and unions on the proposed framework. This framework is robust and will include a process for work site inspections by an external panel of workplace health and safety auditors. Having an external panel in this context is very important. The framework will also include a mechanism for gathering and retrieving information for contractors' prequalification applications and their status. The framework will include clear guidelines for contractors to understand the possible consequences that arise from workplace health and safety incidents or from WorkSafe findings.

Recommendation 26 calls on the territory government to encourage excellence in health and safety performance by introducing a comparative assessment of contractors' safety record and their capacity as part of the tender selection process for government construction projects. The way this recommendation is to be implemented is now under active consideration, noting that a coordinated approach between Shared Services, WorkSafe ACT and the various territory government directorates is required to ensure safety rankings for contractors are consistent between tender evaluations that are conducted by multiple directorates within the territory government. An inter-directorate steering committee has been established to oversee the implementation of this active certification process and workplace health and safety is a weighted criterion in tender assessment.

Currently, the committee is considering the first draft of the guidelines for auditors, the first draft of guidelines for the appeals process, the first draft of guidelines for point allocation and mitigation measures and the role of a governance committee. This is a comprehensive response from my areas of the ACT government. We recognise the importance of reform in our procurement and to be able to provide an assurance that the government is taking a leading role in ensuring workplace health and safety.

The measures that I have outlined today in response to the recommendations in the report—and certainly in partnership with what Minister Corbell has outlined—clearly demonstrate that the territory government is working proactively with industry and with unions and is reaffirming our support and recognition of the importance of workplace health and safety.

In the time remaining to me, I again thank Mr Gentleman for raising this issue today. He has, as I have said, been a very passionate advocate for workplace health and

safety. I am sure that he will continue to be diligent in this role. I thank him very much for bringing this motion to the Assembly today.

**DR BOURKE** (Ginninderra) (12.21): Madam Speaker, workplace safety is everyone's concern. Workers must be able to return to their loved ones at the end of the day uninjured. It is a major concern for government. Proper work health and safety policies to minimise risk and their enforcement are crucial. Another aspect is making sure workers have the appropriate training for the tasks they are required to perform.

Today I want to highlight just one aspect of the great contribution to work safety that this ACT Labor government is making in the construction industry. I will focus on the new purpose-built construction industry high-risk training facility at the Canberra Institute of Technology campus at Bruce in my electorate of Ginninderra. The construction industry high-risk training facility at Bruce opened late last year. CIT built it in anticipation of the new national licensing system for high-risk roles in the construction industry especially involving working at heights or with cranes. The national assessment instruments for high-risk licensing legislation took effect in the ACT on 1 October last year, three months before the other states.

With the new Bruce facility, CIT can offer courses for obtaining the latest high-risk licences covering work in dogging, hoist, rigging, scaffolding, slewing mobile cranes and boom-type elevating work platforms. Again, it illustrates the ACT government's commitment to worker safety. Indeed, the ACT led the way in Australia in introducing the high-risk licensing and training facilities. The construction industry is clearly a more dangerous industry than most. That is why it is a hard-hat, fluoro-vest workplace, but it also means we have to work harder to ensure worker safety.

Last year I had the pleasure, under appropriate supervision, of driving the new KATO mobile slewing crane at the Bruce campus of CIT. The crane not only supports crane driver training but also elements of assessment for other areas such as scaffolding, dogging and rigging. The facility gives students hands-on, up-close and personal training in the situations they will encounter in the workplace.

CIT is leading the nation with the implementation of this new legislation. Many interstate RTOs have inspected the CIT's facility as a model for themselves. CIT developed the specialist training facility at Bruce to be ready before the new high-risk work assessment rules came into effect and to be able to fulfil all the new training and testing required.

The wisdom of CIT's forward planning has been confirmed. The high-risk licensing courses in Bruce are proving very popular with construction workers and tradies upgrading their qualifications. These new qualifications are all about being better qualified to work in these high-risk jobs, safer and smarter. No-one in the construction industry, or any other industry, wants to risk injury or do a job they are underqualified for. These new qualifications and assessments for high-risk jobs give workers the ability to work safer and smarter. Employers cannot send underqualified people to do these jobs. Unions working to protect the occupational health and safety of members have firmer grounds for saying what is the nationally mandated level of skills needed to work in these high-risk areas.

These new qualifications were developed in conjunction with industry stakeholders, including unions and employers, to raise the level of occupational health and safety in these high-risk areas. Indeed, it is a great example of working with industry peak bodies and unions to ensure positive and inclusive safety cultures in all workplaces across the territory.

CIT at Bruce should be congratulated—congratulated for taking the lead in looking at the new industry requirements and working with local stakeholders; congratulated for designing the new facility and furnishing it with the latest high-tech equipment, including the mobile slewing crane, providing a range of training environments in scaffolding, rigging and crane operations. I am very proud that CIT Bruce has taken this forward step to protect workers in the most high-risk jobs in, unfortunately, our most dangerous industry, construction.

Amendments agreed to.

**MS PORTER** (Ginninderra) (12.27): I am pleased to support this important motion that is before the Assembly today, and I thank my colleague Mick Gentleman for giving it the attention it deserves. When speaking on this motion, it is important that we all remember the reasons that make it significant. We all know too well safety at work can mean, and does mean, different things to different people. Sometimes it is the difference between having a parent, husband, wife or brother or sister coming home safely from work or not. Unfortunately, as we know, there have been too many occasions when this has not happened. Other members have mentioned these tragic circumstances before me.

To others, it is the ability to continue working and providing for their families in a safe and healthy environment. To the government, work safety means the continual improvements to the health, safety and wellbeing of all people in their workplace, wherever that may be, and ensuring that that is backed up by legislation. It also means a joint effort by all parties to ensure that workplaces are safe and that people are protected. As we all know, failure to address these elements could have, and indeed has had, a negative effect on the whole community and a devastating effect on individual families. I am encouraged by the steps that this Labor government has taken over the years. It has been this government which has addressed occupational health and safety in the workplace.

In the Seventh Assembly, when speaking to the Work Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2009, which built on what had previously been done in this area, I said that the legislation and the amendments were aimed at securing the safety of people at work, the management of risk and the provision of an environment for workers that is safe and healthy, that protects them from injury and illness and that provides for their physical and psychological needs and wellbeing. I also talked about how the legislation sought to encourage cooperation and consultation between employers and workers and the organisations representing them, as well as providing an environment for ongoing improvement and progressively higher standards for work safety, taking into account changes in the workplace and technology and practices. Other speakers before me this morning have outlined the various amendments and legislation that the government has put before this place over time to achieve that.

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

**Sitting suspended from 12.29 to 2.30 pm.**

## **Questions without notice**

### **Budget—election promises**

**MR HANSON:** My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, yesterday in the Assembly the Treasurer tabled the March quarterly financial statements which showed a softening of property revenue. In addition, last night's commonwealth budget showed a reduction in GST revenue to the ACT. Chief Minister, given the reduction in revenue coming to the ACT, will the government be delaying any of its election commitments that were promised to be funded from the 2013-14 year?

**MS GALLAGHER:** The government is currently finalising our own budget. We were waiting for information on the federal budget. That has had a detrimental effect on what we were expecting in terms of GST receipts. We still have a number of budget cabinet meetings to go, and I am not in a position to let Mr Hanson know decisions that are yet to be finalised.

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

**MR HANSON:** That is a shame. Chief Minister, will commitments in the Labor-Greens parliamentary agreement be given preference to other Labor Party policies?

**MS GALLAGHER:** All the commitments we have made in the election, and indeed since the election, are being considered in the budget, and that will become clear when the budget is tabled by the Treasurer in June.

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

**MR SMYTH:** Chief Minister, will priority be given to election commitments or returning the budget to surplus?

**MS GALLAGHER:** We have a budget plan and we have a range of commitments we have made. We have four years in which to deliver on our commitments. The budget this year, like every other year, will be a balance of expenditure, looking at our revenues, looking at commitments we have made, looking at cost pressures across government and looking at the overall economy and pressures that are there. And the budget will be a response to all of those things.

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

**MR SMYTH:** Chief Minister, what actions are you taking to prepare for further falls in federal revenue, and are delayed election promises part of those preparations?

**MS GALLAGHER:** The budget that the Treasurer delivers will be a responsible budget which is cognisant of the times in which we are operating. We have made a

number of commitments. They were modest commitments because we certainly understood last year that there were challenges facing the ACT economy. A budget is a balance of competing priorities; every year it is.

We have taken a range of steps in order to look at how we diversify our economy. The Treasurer is leading that work in relation to the business diversification strategy. I am doing my own work in relation to the higher education sector. We are acutely aware of the fact that, I think, under any federal government of any political persuasion the next couple of years are going to be tough for Canberra and that does require a measured response from the local government. Where we can influence decisions and impacts on the economy we will take those.

### **Energy—renewable**

**MR COE:** My question is to the Minister for the Environment and Sustainable Development. Minister, you are on the record as stating:

Modelling undertaken for the ACT's climate change policy shows that a 90% renewable energy target can be achieved in 2020 with the ACT maintaining the lowest electricity prices.

That quotation is from an ACT government media release of 23 April this year. Minister, in the federal budget released yesterday, funding was cut from the agency responsible for clean power grants and the clean technology program was reprofiled. Minister, do these federal cuts change the abovementioned modelling that seeks to achieve a 90 per cent renewable target by 2020?

**MR CORBELL:** No.

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

**MR COE:** Minister, do you share the federal Labor government's change in priorities away from renewable energy?

**MR CORBELL:** First of all, I do not accept the proposition of the question that the federal Labor government is moving away from its commitment to renewable energy technologies.

**Mr Coe:** How would you characterise it?

**MR CORBELL:** I would characterise it as a complete misrepresentation on your part. The issue of Labor's commitment to renewable energy is very clear. The establishment of ARENA and the establishment of the funds under ARENA are very significant contributions, and they remain significant even after the reprofiling that has taken place in this budget. They are still multimillion dollar commitments to renewable energy deployment, and they reflect Labor's commitment to the uptake of renewable energy generation across the country. Those opposite, Madam Speaker, will have you believe—

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Order, members of the opposition! Members of the opposition will come to order.

**MR CORBELL:** Those opposite will have you believe that the only appropriate course of action is just to continue to rely on fossil fuel generation. Those opposite would have you believe that there should be no view to the future, no commitment to the future, to shift towards a low carbon future. We have seen conservative governments around the country roll back investment in renewable energy generation and give the green light to a continued reliance on fossil fuel generation, even though we know that that will only result in higher costs to consumers and greater levels of pollution.

**Mr Hanson:** A point of order.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Can you stop the clock please, Clerk.

**Mr Hanson:** On a point of relevance, the question was clearly about the federal Labor government's changing priorities away from renewable energy, and I would ask him to address that, not coalition policy.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Could you address the budget initiative please, Mr Corbell.

**MR CORBELL:** I cannot address a federal government budget initiative, Madam Speaker, but I was asked about its relevance and whether it would change our position and I am contrasting that with the terrible record of those opposite. (*Time expired.*)

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

**MR SMYTH:** Minister, how much will it cost to displace 90 per cent of the total electricity demand from the NEM with emission-free renewable energy?

**MR CORBELL:** The government has outlined the costs in action plan 2. I refer Mr Smyth to the modelling that is set out in action plan 2. The figures are publicly available; they have been publicly available now for about nine months and they are clearly set out and the modelling is clearly set out. We anticipate that those costs are both modest and manageable. We know that a 90 per cent target can be achieved by seeing a significant increase in renewable energy generation for the city. I refer Mr Smyth to action plan 2 for the details, which are already a matter of public record.

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

**MR SMYTH:** Minister, when will the government publish its methodology for accounting for renewable energy consumption and when will it commence reporting against this target?

**MR CORBELL:** We already have a methodology, and the government has already set out how we measure the uptake of renewables as part of our overall climate change strategy. The territory has a policy of accounting not just for its own-source



emissions within the ACT but also accounting for emissions that are produced elsewhere but are a direct consequence of our use of stationary energy, in principle, in the overwhelming majority of cases, electricity use, because obviously we do not generate emissions within the ACT from electricity generation but we do consume that electricity. Therefore, we account for that in the methodology that, again, is set out in action plan 2. I would encourage those opposite, if they have such a great interest in this, to perhaps do a little bit of homework and review action plan 2.

### **Health—food poisoning**

**DR BOURKE:** My question is to the Minister for Health. Can the minister update the Assembly on the current situation in relation to the food-borne illness outbreaks currently being experienced in Canberra?

**MS GALLAGHER:** I thank Dr Bourke for the question. As members will know, the Health Protection Service is currently managing two unrelated outbreaks of gastroenteritis in the ACT which have occurred since the weekend relating to two different restaurants. The Chief Health Officer has responsibility for the response to this situation and has been making public statements around providing, I think, the community with the latest information that is possible.

Due to the fact that a large number of food-borne illness presentations have the potential to overwhelm ACT hospital and healthcare facilities, ACT Health yesterday afternoon at 4 o'clock activated the health emergency control centre. The health controller, who is also the Chief Health Officer, Dr Paul Kelly, requested also that Canberra and Calvary hospitals activate their external disaster plans at 5 o'clock yesterday to effectively manage potential demand.

Related to that, the following actions were undertaken: Canberra Hospital arranged for additional staffing and identified units that could be used should there be an influx of patients; Calvary Hospital sourced additional beds, available in both the public and private hospitals; extra capacity in the hospital in the home was identified for use if required; the Chief Health Officer also liaised with New South Wales Health regarding the outbreak; and a request was made to Greater Southern Area Health Service for only life-threatening transfers to arrive in Canberra from regional New South Wales.

I think it is important for members to know that Canberra and Calvary hospitals have been able to maintain the provision of normal health services during the outbreak. It is hopeful that the peak in presentations for gastroenteritis occurred on 14 and 15 May. However, further cases may be identified. Investigations into the cause of the outbreak continue.

I would like to take this opportunity, I hope on behalf of the Assembly, to congratulate the staff on the fast and effective response both within the Health Protection Service—they have been working to identify the cause of the outbreak—and the staff at the hospitals who have been under enormous pressure treating the people who presented as unwell.

Of considerable note in the context of this outbreak and the additional pressure it has placed the hospitals under is the excellent news that they were able this morning to continue with elective surgery at both hospitals without any interruption. I think it is a reflection of how well the activation of the plans has gone and the commitment of staff of ACT Health and Calvary to manage an unfolding situation.

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

**DR BOURKE:** Minister, how many people have been admitted to hospital as a result of the outbreak?

**MS GALLAGHER:** I thank Dr Bourke for the question. I have been receiving regular updates since yesterday from the health emergency control centre. As of midday today, there were over 80 cases of illness reported relating to one restaurant, with 13 cases of suspected food-borne illness admitted to both Canberra and Calvary hospitals—shared between those two—and over 20 cases of illness have been reported in relation to the second restaurant. It is not believed that these are likely to be salmonella and the cases from the two restaurants are unrelated. The ACT Ambulance Service is reporting this morning that there were not any calls overnight relating to the food-borne illness outbreak.

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

**MS BERRY:** Minister, what other health services are available to people whilst hospitals are under pressure?

**MS GALLAGHER:** Part of the information that has been provided to the community is that the hospitals are experiencing higher than normal presentations. At Canberra Hospital yesterday I think the final figure was 222 presentations in a 24-hour period, of which around 80 people were admitted to hospital. So it was a very busy day yesterday. Calvary was no different.

We have been advising people of the other options. We have been working with the Medicare local, again under the activation of the emergency plan. It gives us the opportunity to work with non-government health service providers, and I thank them for their help in assisting us with this outbreak. We are advertising, of course, that the walk-in centre is there for people. The GPs are providing excellent care for people. CALMS, the after-hour GP service, of course, was seeing people through the night. And the community pharmacist is a place where people can go and get some initial advice. Also there is healthdirect, a 24 hours a day, seven days a week phone line.

Of course, if a person is seriously ill, they should always present to the hospital emergency department at either Canberra or Calvary. They will be seen. But for minor illnesses, injuries and other non-urgent health complaints, we are still encouraging people to use one of the alternative options.

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

**MS PORTER:** Minister, how will these occurrences help the emergency departments to plan for future similar outbreaks?

**MS GALLAGHER:** All of these incidents, once they are through and managed, will be reviewed, and they will be reviewed against the context of how the activation of the emergency plan worked. It also provides the opportunity for healthcare providers, including non-government providers, to assess what the response was, how it could be improved, whether there were weaknesses, whether there need to be additions to the arrangements. All of that will be thoroughly investigated once the priorities are finished. The priorities at the moment, of course, are dealing with the amount of sick people and making sure that they are receiving the health care they need, and also investigating the outbreak and making sure we get to the bottom of that.

### **Construction industry—support**

**MR SMYTH:** My question is to the Minister for Economic Development. Minister, according to the *Canberra Times*, the federal budget, handed down yesterday, commits the commonwealth to just \$300,000 in new capital works expenditure in the ACT. This comes as bad news for an already struggling building industry and on the back of a recent spate of several building company financial collapses, with consequences for employment, industry certainty and the economy generally. Minister, what assessment have you made as to the impact on the sector of such paucity of commonwealth expenditure?

**MR BARR:** In the 15 or so hours since the federal budget was delivered I have not undertaken a full economic impact analysis of the particular measures undertaken or not undertaken in the federal budget. What I can say, though, is that there are a number of projects that were funded or first announced in previous budgets that, of course, continue in this fiscal year that will be coming. Those do include the Majura Parkway, the Constitution Avenue duplication and National Arboretum as examples of ongoing commonwealth work.

I do note—and it probably has escaped the attention of the shadow treasurer—the CSIRO was granted approval in the federal budget to undertake a significant capital upgrade at Black Mountain.

**Mr Coe:** Out of existing revenue.

**MR BARR:** Indeed, yes, out of existing revenue and royalties that the CSIRO have earned from the development. At least this will be new capital works expenditure. They have been approved to undertake that upgrade at Black Mountain. And that is important.

But I think it also worth the shadow treasurer recognising that there are, indeed, hundreds of millions of dollars worth of projects that are ongoing and will certainly be underway during the 2013-14 fiscal year.

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

**MR SMYTH:** Minister, what strategies does your government have to support the ACT's building and construction industry to ensure its future viability?

**MR BARR:** We have a vibrant capital works program of our own, in the order of about \$1.7 billion over the forward estimates. Of course, we will make further announcements in relation to our own capital program in the budget next month.

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

**MR WALL:** Minister, what support is your government offering to the building and construction industry employees affected by the decline in the building and construction industry?

**MR BARR:** I think it is important to recognise the inherent strength of that industry regardless of decisions taken or not taken in the commonwealth budget last night. It still remains around 10 per cent of the territory economy and there are, of course, a number of large projects that will continue into the next fiscal year, not just funded by the commonwealth government but funded by the territory government and funded by the private sector. Work will, of course, continue in the private sector, supported by the territory government.

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

**MR WALL:** Minister, what are you doing to advocate for a commonwealth building and construction program that will better support the construction industry?

**MR BARR:** The government's focus is in fact on securing new private investment into the territory economy. My recent trade mission to Singapore and the launching of invest in Canberra was focused on international—

**Mr Hanson:** What did you secure?

**MR BARR:** I only launched the project a few weeks—

*Mr Hanson interjecting—*

*Mr Coe interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mr Hanson and Mr Coe, can you desist from interjecting, please.

**MR BARR:** I only launched invest in Canberra a matter of weeks ago, but I am pleased to advise members that since the launch I have had two follow-up meetings. One Singaporean investor was in Canberra only a few days ago and dropped by to see me, to further discussions on investment possibilities.

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

**MADAM SPEAKER:** A point of order. Can you sit down please, Mr Barr.

**Mr Wall:** Madam Speaker, on relevance, the question was about what the minister is doing to advocate for a commonwealth building program, not what he is doing on his jaunts overseas.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** The standing orders require you to be directly relevant. Can you be relevant to the question?

**MR BARR:** As I was saying, I am seeking investment in the territory. It will not all come from the commonwealth. We believe—

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**Mr Corbell:** A point of order.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** A point of order, Mr Corbell?

**Mr Corbell:** Madam Speaker, you have been consistently ruling in this place that members opposite should cease interjecting. You made about half a dozen or more such rulings yesterday. You have already made at least two in question time today, calling to order members of the opposition. They continue to interject, and I would ask you to again remind members of their responsibilities.

**Mr Coe:** What is the point of order, Simon?

**Mr Corbell:** The point of order is under standing order 202—disorder. The members are persistently and wilfully refusing to adhere to your orders, Madam Speaker, and I would ask you to call them to order.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr Corbell. Like Minister Burch yesterday, I do not need your assistance in keeping order in this place. I have said from the outset that I believe that this is a place where there is an exchange of ideas and that there will be conversation. I do not expect that members should be heard in silence, except on appropriately important and monumental occasions. Question time has always been a time for the exchange of ideas, and if I find that it is getting out of hand, I will deal with it.

**Mr Corbell:** Madam Speaker, on your ruling, and of course I respect your ruling, but I must advise you—

**MADAM SPEAKER:** No, I do not think you do, Mr Corbell.

**Mr Corbell:** I must advise you, Madam Speaker, that members of the government are increasingly concerned at the level of interjection from those opposite and whether or not they are properly having regard to your repeated reminders to them.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Questions without notice? Mr Seselja.

**Health—bulk-billing**

**MR SESELJA:** My question is to the Minister for Health. In the federal budget released yesterday, Medicare service charges for GPs have been capped at \$36 per visit. The latest report on government services shows that the ACT has the lowest bulk-billing rate for GPs in the country and the longest emergency department waiting times in the country. The service charge is a large factor in whether GPs bulk-bill patients, which directly affects people's affordable access to GP services. Chief Minister, what action will you take to encourage more ACT GPs to bulk-bill, given that the federal Labor government has decided to cap service fees?

**MS GALLAGHER:** I would draw members' attention to the fact that in the last report—I think it is a quarterly report—on bulk-billing rates, bulk-billing rates increased slightly in the ACT in the last quarter and are now, I think, about 51 per cent, which is still about 20 per cent below the next jurisdiction's average bulk-billing rate. The only thing the ACT government can do in this area, and we have no ability to influence bulk-billing rates locally, is to ensure that we have a good supply of doctors coming through. We have a range of supports through the GP development fund that both encourage and support existing GPs that train the next generation of GPs and, alongside of that, work with GPs about the establishment of clinics across Canberra. That is what the government has been doing, and that is what we will continue to do. We cannot require GPs to bulk-bill; that is an individual business decision for them.

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

**MR SESELJA:** Minister, did you advocate to the federal government on the issue of Medicare services charges and the effect of possible changes on Canberrans? If so, what were those representations? If not, why not?

**MS GALLAGHER:** I am sorry, I did not hear the question. The question was: did I?

**Mr Seselja:** Did you?

**MS GALLAGHER:** No, I was unaware of it. It is no surprise, Mr Seselja, that we are not sitting round the table when the federal government are formulating their budget or specific elements of it. I have and will continue to lobby the commonwealth government in relation to the supply of GPs in the territory. The single biggest thing that will increase the bulk-billing rate in the ACT is more GPs and the competition that that creates.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Supplementary question, Mrs Jones.

**MRS JONES:** Minister, what options do Canberrans have for urgent doctor services if they are unable to access a bulk-billing GP and there are fairly long waits at emergency?

**MS GALLAGHER:** As Mrs Jones would know, under national health reform the responsibility for primary care is not with the ACT government. It remains with the commonwealth. But we have entered the space in terms of funding services. There is the walk-in centre—and I know you said medical services, but the walk-in centre provides out-of-hours access to health assessments and, if required, referral to a medical practitioner either in the emergency department or back to general practice.

We also fund, I think at a cost of over \$1 million a year to ACT taxpayers, the after-hours CALMS service. That does have a component where people have to pay, although they are able to bulk-bill individual patients. At the moment, just over half of all presentations to GPs are bulk-billed. When you talk individually to general practitioners, they will tell you that they bulk-bill the people who need to be bulk-billed but that they also run a business and in that business they are, like every other business person, able to make decisions about the level of income they generate through their work.

But over 50 per cent of presentations are bulk-billed. You talk to any GP. They tell you that they will bulk-bill kids. They will bulk-bill concession cardholders. They will bulk-bill the families that they know are under pressure. Also, the large out-of-hours medical practices also provide a bulk-billing service for certain criteria of patients, and they are open out of hours as well.

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

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Minister, how important is it to support GP growth across Canberra?

**MS GALLAGHER:** It is very important to ensure that we have a good supply of GPs. We are coming through the worst of a GP shortage here. Part of what the government has been focusing on is encouraging younger doctors to enter the GP training program because what we do see when we do any analysis of the general practice workforce is that it is an ageing workforce. There are a lot of part-time arrangements in place, which also reduces the amount of sessions that particular GPs will work.

Medicare Local is undertaking a current, up-to-date survey about the intentions of GPs in terms of workplace decisions they might be taking, whether they are retiring, and also new GPs that are coming on. When that work is finished, it will be released and I think it will provide us with more than just anecdotal information about the level of supply.

What I am hearing from established general practitioners in Canberra is that they believe the supply has reached a point where we have an adequate number of GPs. They are now concerned about issues of quality and making sure that the GPs that are working in Canberra are quality GPs. And they have raised some issues there. We will wait and see what the results back from this survey are, but I think that will give the Assembly and the community the best information we have to date about the level of supply and also future intentions of the GP workforce.

**Construction industry—building approvals**

**MR WALL:** My question is to the Treasurer. Building approval data released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics on 2 May 2013 shows that in trend terms in March the ACT recorded a 1.2 per cent fall in building approvals. And last night the commonwealth handed down a budget that will put further pressure on the cost of living for ACT families. Treasurer, taking into account the effect of the federal budget on the cost of living for Canberra families, what assessment have you made of future building approval trends?

**MR BARR:** Yes, the member is correct that on that release on 2 May there was a decrease of 1.2 per cent in that period. I do note, just looking at the data, that it is coming off an all-time record high level of approvals and does appear to be above the five-year monthly average. There were 338 residential building approvals in that period; the five-year monthly average is 324. So whilst it is not as high as the, I think, nearly 500 approvals that were achieved back in the final quarter of the 2011 fiscal year, it still is above the long run trend.

The government will, of course, look at what measures we can take in the coming budget. We have a significant land release program ahead of us and I think some exciting opportunities in various parts of the city to continue the city's urban growth.

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

**MR WALL:** Treasurer, what strategies does your government have to counter the impact of the federal budget on the cost of living for Canberra families?

**MR BARR:** I am not sure how that question relates to the first one. It was about building approvals.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** The first question, as I recall, asked about building approvals and did mention the cost of living. Did you mention the cost of living in the first question, Mr Wall?

**Mr Wall:** Yes, Madam Speaker, the question did relate to the cost of living. The first question was: taking into account the effect of the federal budget on the cost of living for Canberra families, what assessment have you made of future building approval trends?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** It does relate.

**Mr Wall:** So the supplementary does relate.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Yes.

**MR BARR:** The government will make an assessment of the various outcomes that are affecting the macro-economy. I do note that interest rates fell and are now, I think, at historic lows. Those who are in the housing market and have a mortgage,



depending on the size of that mortgage, would be somewhere between \$30 and \$120 a month better off as a result of that most recent interest rate reduction.

*Mr Coe interjecting—*

**MR BARR:** They would be between \$30 and \$120 a month better off, depending on the size of their mortgage, as a result of recent reductions in interest rates.

*Mr Coe interjecting—*

**MR BARR:** They could be. It would depend on the size of someone's mortgage.

*Mr Coe interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mr Coe!

**MR BARR:** I am giving some examples, depending on the size of the particular mortgage. It could be more; it could be less.

*Mr Coe interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mr Coe, I think you have made the point.

**MR BARR:** The things that amuse Mr Coe, Madam Speaker. Anyway, as I was saying, the government will assess the wide variety of economic indicators. We also note, of course, the potential for a significant reduction in water prices.

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

**MR COE:** Treasurer, to what extent will your assessment of building approval trends impact on future ACT government revenues from land sales and property taxes?

**MR BARR:** If current trends continue and we remain above the five-yearly average then one would presume you could continue to factor in the five-yearly average or thereabouts into revenue projections.

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

**MR COE:** Treasurer, what savings will you be implementing to counter the impact of falling building approvals on government revenues in order to meet your stated fiscal strategy to return the budget to surplus in 2015-16?

**MR BARR:** The Deputy Leader of the Opposition can wait until budget day to see that.

### **Federal government—budget**

**MS PORTER:** My question is to the Treasurer. Could the Treasurer outline how the federal budget will impact on the ACT economy?

**Mr Smyth:** He's going to give us his speech from this morning now, is he?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Order, members!

*Mr Coe interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mr Coe, Mr Barr has the floor.

**MR BARR:** I am pleased that those opposite are interested but it would seem a pity to give exactly the same speech twice, so I will just give it once. I am pleased, of course, to be able to outline to the Assembly the ACT government's warm endorsement of the federal government's commitment to two nation building reforms contained within the federal budget.

**Mr Hanson:** Shame!

**MR BARR:** It is interesting that before I even finish a sentence, the Leader of the Opposition is calling out "shame" for the ACT government's warm embrace of the national disability insurance scheme and DisabilityCare. That speaks volumes of the true position of the Leader of the Opposition.

The two key nation building reforms have been funded, and funded in the long term in last night's federal budget—schools reform, education funding, and disability funding. Disability care and the national plan for school improvement will be of significant benefit to residents in the ACT and they will be of significant benefit to the ACT economy. They will provide better opportunities for people with a disability and an even better educated community. We certainly look forward to working with the commonwealth government on the rollout of these programs.

The commonwealth budget forecasts an increase in average public service staffing levels in 2013-14, although this is off a lower base in 2012-13 than anticipated in the previous commonwealth budget. It must be said that there is a significant difference between what was outlined in the budget last night and what is proposed by the federal opposition. As I alluded to in an earlier answer, there is new funding for the CSIRO's Black Mountain facilities and a funding boost for Geoscience Australia. These are, of course, important national institutions based here in the ACT.

I must say I particularly welcome the extra funding for the ACCC. We hope that this funding will be focused on competition modelling and particularly focusing on petrol prices and supermarkets. The Tax Studies Institute at the ANU is a welcome addition to public policy debate in this country. I certainly look forward to another positive voice on tax reform.

I am particularly pleased that in the tax reform roadmap booklet that was released as part of the federal budget, the ACT's bold, comprehensive and progressive plan for reform of property taxes was acknowledged. These are the very same reforms that those across the chamber continue to oppose. Talk about being on the wrong side of history!

With regard to some of the specific items within the budget, federal revenue payments to the ACT are broadly in line with expectations, but as the Chief Minister has indicated, the commonwealth has revised down the GST pool from 2013-14 from \$48.25 billion to \$47.7 billion. This results in a reduction of GST payments to the ACT of around \$15 million in the next fiscal year and an overall reduction of around \$50 million in aggregate terms across the budget forward years. This unfortunately negates the increase in GST relativities that we received earlier this year. (*Time expired.*)

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

**MS PORTER:** Treasurer, how will the ACT government support the economy in light of the federal budget?

**MR BARR:** The government will, of course, work in partnership with the commonwealth government on a number of national partnerships. We are particularly pleased to see funding for the Canberra Hospital, for national partnerships for the social and community services sector around pay equity, also national partnerships on homelessness and early childhood education. The ACT government is very pleased to see funding from the commonwealth for the royal commission into sexual abuse. There are a number of other smaller specific commonwealth cash injections, particularly in relation to the Tuggeranong Parkway and democracy walk, where the ACT government will be undertaking complementary work. The government will, through its support for DisabilityCare, be providing additional resources in the disability sector. We also are focused on education, and we note the commitment of the commonwealth government in relation to Gonski reforms and look forward to a successful conclusion of negotiations on that matter.

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

**MR SMYTH:** Treasurer, having been selective in your endorsement of the NDIS and the Gonski review, does the ACT government offer the same warm endorsement of the entire 2013-14 Labor federal budget?

**MR BARR:** The ACT government is certainly pleased with those key elements and the main focus of the federal budget. I think it was important for the commonwealth to outline a long-term funding plan for these two most critical areas of public policy.

**Mr Hanson:** Madam Speaker, on a point of order, Mr Smyth's question directly related to those elements of the budget that excluded NDIS and Gonski. The minister is ignoring that element of the question and is reverting to NDIS and Gonski. I would ask him to be directly relevant to Mr Smyth's question, which is about the broader budget and whether the ACT government provides warm support for it or not.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** The standing orders, Mr Barr, require you to be directly relevant to the question, which was: did you provide a general endorsement to the budget? Mr Barr.

**MR BARR:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. We are certainly very pleased to endorse the extra funding for Geoscience Australia, for the CSIRO, for the ANU, the 508 additional staff in the Australian Taxation Office, the additional funding for the ACCC. We certainly support a continuation of the national partnership on early childhood education, and we support the additional national partnership funding in relation to combating homelessness.

I am particularly pleased to be able to endorse the new university spending of \$186 million to extend funding to research facilities, the \$135 million for a further round of the future fellowships program, the \$84.6 million for additional postgraduate and diploma places and the \$346 million set aside for additional university places. All of those elements of the federal budget are, indeed, supported by the ACT government, and we look forward to working with the commonwealth government on the implementation of those important measures.

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

**DR BOURKE:** Treasurer, are there any threats to the ACT economy?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Sorry, just bear with me for a second. Ms Porter, can you read me your first question, please?

**Ms Porter:** My very first one?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Yes, the very first question, because I am just reflecting on it.

**Ms Porter:** Could the Treasurer outline how the federal budget will impact on the ACT economy?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Did you say “economy” in the first place? You said “economy” in the first place.

**Ms Porter:** The ACT economy, yes.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** The question is in order, Dr Bourke. Mr Barr.

**MR BARR:** Yes, there are threats to the ACT economy and they come from a change of government. They come from a change of government. They come in the guise of Tony Abbott and Joe Hockey. They also come in the guise of those opposite who would seek to talk down the territory economy at any and every available opportunity, who seek to aid and abet their former leader in his attempted passage to another place in order to advance what they perceive to be the Liberal agenda for Australia, and that is an agenda that sends the Canberra economy into recession.

That is their agenda. The Liberal Party locally and nationally are the party of recession for Canberra. For those opposite to have been expressing any concern at all in relation to a small reduction in the commonwealth public service, the irony is that they are going to the next federal election talking about cutting between 12,000 and

20,000 jobs, depending on which city Mr Abbott or Mr Hockey are in and which media outlet they are talking to. But even if it is only 12,000, that will send this economy into recession.

Mr Wall, you can certainly worry about building approvals if 12,000 jobs are cut. You can certainly worry about cost of living for Canberra families if they do not have a job. That is the most significant impact on cost of living. It is not having a job. If you do not have a job because Joe Hockey and Tony Abbott have sacked you, aided and abetted by would-be senator Mr Seselja, then you have absolute reason to be angry with the Liberal Party of Australia.

### **Education—funding**

**MRS JONES:** My question is to the Chief Minister. I am speaking of Gonski. In the 2013-14 commonwealth budget handed down last night, the budget papers stated:

Commonwealth National Education Reform funding, to be calculated according to the Schooling Resources methodology, will replace the National Schools SPP from 1 January 2014.

Chief Minister, how much of the commonwealth funding for the Gonski reforms will actually be redirected funding from the specific purpose payments that were already previously committed to the ACT?

**MS GALLAGHER:** I think I have probably answered this in the responses I have been giving on Gonski over the last two sitting weeks where I have said it is not a matter of doing nothing—that the current SPP and, actually, NPPs in education expire and we need to make sure arrangements are in place for 1 January 2014. We have to make sure that schools understand what level of funding is coming to them under those arrangements.

So, yes, there will be a large component of Gonski which is funded through existing revenues that are funding the SPP. I do not think anyone has made a secret about that. But over and above that, in this budget I think the figure is \$9.8 billion allocated for the national plan for school improvements. So you take the existing funding and the commonwealth government is adding in extra funds. I think the total on the national school improvement plan is \$9.8 billion. That includes the current commonwealth contribution to schools and extra funding for the implementation of the school resourcing methodology.

**MRS JONES:** Supplementary.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Supplementary question, Mrs Jones.

**MRS JONES:** My supplementary is to the minister for education. Minister, what is the difference in funding between the old national schools SPP for the ACT and the new national education reform?

**Mr Corbell:** Point of order.

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

**Mr Corbell:** Madam Speaker, my understanding of the standing orders—I seek your guidance on this—is that if a question is asked of a minister, the supplementary is to the same minister. Obviously if another minister chooses to answer the question, that is allowed for under the standing orders, but not the approach that has been adopted by Mrs Jones.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** My understanding of the standing orders is that the first supplementary question is to the receiver of the original question. There has been a bit of back and forth over the last few days in this place where other people have taken it, so that might have led to the misunderstanding. The supplementary question should be directed to the Chief Minister in this case, because that is where you addressed your original question, Mrs Jones. Mrs Jones, would you like to direct your supplementary question to the Chief Minister?

**MRS JONES:** I would. Chief Minister, what is the difference in funding between the old national schools SPP for the ACT and the new national education reform?

**MS GALLAGHER:** That is subject to the current negotiations, but it is additional money. But as I have indicated a number of times in this place and in public, it is not a large increase on the money that is already flowing to the ACT. I cannot give you the final figure because we have not agreed to it yet.

**Mr Hanson:** What is on the table at the moment?

**MS GALLAGHER:** I think that could jeopardise negotiations. The commonwealth has issued a statement, I think in the paper, that it is an additional \$100 million. That was published in the *Canberra Times*. We are currently in negotiations with the commonwealth.

**Mr Coe:** Point of order.

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

**Mr Coe:** Madam Speaker, on your ruling earlier, I draw your attention to 113(b) of the standing orders. How does that apply to the original minister?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Because it is a supplementary that arises out of the original question, and the question is directed to a particular person. It has been the form and practice of this place that you cannot just say, “Now I’ll ask a supplementary somewhere else.” There was some chopping and changing with some questions asked on, I think, problem gambling last week where various ministers answered two questions each, from recollection. But my understanding, and I see the Clerk is nodding, is that the form and practice are that the supplementary question is a question that arises out of the answer from the original questionee. Therefore the supplementary should be addressed to the original questionee.

**MS PORTER:** A supplementary.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Ms Porter.

**MS PORTER:** Minister, how will these reforms change the face of education across the ACT?

**MS GALLAGHER:** The implementation of a school resourcing standard means that every child, regardless of what school they attend in the ACT, will be treated the same in relation to a base allocation for funding. I think that is important for the school-age population in Canberra. It is also important for the transient school population that comes in and out of Canberra. In particular, if we look at Defence Force families that move from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, they will now, wherever they move across the country, have a base allocation of what will offer their children a reasonable and high quality education.

So it will change and reform education. I think it will remove the divisive debates between non-government and government schools so that we have reached a point where we accept that all children deserve a certain amount of funding to achieve a high quality education. This is something that we support. We also support it on the grounds that all of us as Australians should care and show concern for children who are educated right across the country. At the moment there are thousands of children who are not as fortunate as children in the ACT, who are not receiving the level of funding they deserve and that is going to give them the best shot at life. The ACT government has proudly and consistently supported extra funding going to those children to make sure that those children, even though they do not live in the ACT, get the education that my children and your children are getting here in Canberra, in an education system that is the envy of the nation.

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

**MR HANSON:** Chief Minister, will you guarantee that Gonski money flowing to the ACT will be no less than money currently received under SPP?

**MS GALLAGHER:** We are currently negotiating with the commonwealth for an extra allocation of funding flowing through Gonski or the national plan for school improvement but I am not going to pretend that it is going to be rivers of gold, because it is not. It is not going to be the same as what New South Wales kids get. It is not going to be the same as what Victorian kids get.

**Mr Hanson:** Madam Speaker, on a point of order, my question was very specific. It asked for the Chief Minister to guarantee that the Gonski money will be no less than we are currently receiving under SPP. I would ask her to be directly relevant, yes or no.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Standing orders do require ministers to be directly relevant. It was a fairly direct question. Chief Minister.

**MS GALLAGHER:** And my answer was direct. I said we are negotiating with the commonwealth for extra funding. If Mr Hanson does not understand what that means, I cannot help him any further.

**Canberra—heritage festival**

**MR GENTLEMAN:** My question is to the Minister for the Environment and Sustainable Development. Minister, I understand that the 2013 heritage festival finished at the end of April. Could you tell the Assembly if it was a success?

**MR CORBELL:** I thank Mr Gentleman for the question. The year's Canberra and Region Heritage Festival ran over a period of 15 days from 13 to 28 April. There were 120 events during that time. We have yet to receive all the attendance data from all the events but at this point we estimate that up to 5,000 people over the 2012 numbers participated in the various events.

Some of the larger events that saw some good participation included the Tidbinbilla extravaganza, which saw around 7,000 visitors; the way we wore exhibition at The "Q", 2,500; the Hall and district 1913 event, 2,700 visitors; the National Carillon frolic, around 2,500 people; and the 1913 country fair, around 2,500 people.

These are great outcomes for the heritage festival. Of course, this year's festival's theme was "milestones". This has special significance given that this is our centenary year. This was a great opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate how far the national capital has come in our first century. It also allowed us to showcase the uniqueness of the broader capital region, with many regional partners coming on board to celebrate the festival.

Over 25 events were held across the border in the surrounding region. As well as events in Bungendore and Captains Flat, we saw new regional partners at Bombala, Cooma, Goulburn's historic Riversdale and Garroorigang homesteads and the Yass and District Museum. They all opened their doors as part of the heritage festival to give the community an opportunity to understand the broader history of the region.

We also saw a number of places where access was given to venues which are not usually open to the public. This includes Cuppacumbalong, Environa, Ginninderra blacksmiths workshop, Elm Grove at Bonner, the Parkwood chapel, Robertsons House at Oaks Estate and Burnima at Bombala.

This really does highlight a great level of access to some historic places right across the ACT as part of the heritage festival. We saw photographic exhibitions, oral histories, archaeological displays, art exhibitions, an organ performance, book launches, Landcare and Parkcare events, and even treasure hunts.

Can I highlight the very important work of a number of friends of groups who are joining the festival this year? This year we saw community-based organisations such as the Friends of Mt Majura, Friends of the Pinnacle, Friends of Aranda Bushland, Friends of Grasslands, the Mt Taylor Parkcare group, Mt Ainslie Weeders and the Geological Society of Australia all participating in the heritage festival, highlighting not just our built environment but also the heritage of our natural environment.

I would like to congratulate them all for their engagement in the heritage festival. This is perhaps an unsung but very valuable community activity in the national capital, one



that increasingly more and more people are participating in as we highlight the rich nature and history of the national capital both prior to and after European settlement and also the unique natural heritage of our city, our region and the country it inhabits.

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

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Minister, what were some of the highlights of the festival?

**MR CORBELL:** I was very pleased to participate in two events myself which I would consider to be highlights. The first was the launch of *A Labour of Love—Celebrating Landcare in the ACT*. My colleague Mr Rattenbury joined me at that event, which was held down at the Tuggeranong homestead; of course a very important heritage site in the Tuggeranong valley and, indeed, for the ACT as a whole. It was a little bit windy and cold on the day, but there was a great turnout from Landcare volunteers across the ACT to celebrate the launch of a book that tells their story of caring for, enhancing and restoring the natural environment of the ACT. I think all members understand the important work undertaken by Landcare groups. I was delighted to launch that book as part of Heritage Week.

I was also able during the week to open “Gudgenby in a box”, the new interpretive display of the old Gudgenby homestead now at the Namadgi National Park visitors centre. This was an initiative of my predecessor, Mr Stanhope, when he was the minister responsible. He was successful in securing funds. I was delighted to open this new display which has the remnants of the 1845 slab hut from Gudgenby interpreted in a new shelter at the Namadgi visitors centre.

This is probably the oldest remnant of a European building in the ACT; in 1845 this hut was first built. The remnants were preserved for many years in private ownership. They were purchased by the government in recent times and, with the help of the Kosciusko Huts Association and the descendants of the people who lived on the Gudgenby property, the hut has been reinterpreted at the visitors centre. I commend it to all members.

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

**MS PORTER:** Minister, is the heritage festival important in the overall protection of the territory’s heritage assets?

**MR CORBELL:** I thank Ms Porter for the question. Yes, it is important in the overall protection of the territory’s heritage assets because it highlights the breadth and depth of our heritage in the city—European, Indigenous, natural, even archaeological. It gives us the opportunity to spread that information more broadly and remind Canberrans of why it is so important that we continue to take steps to preserve, protect and inform people about our heritage.

For example, we can focus on the enormous legacy of early European settlement. We can see that at Tidbinbilla, with the restoration work this government has done of the Nil Desperandum homestead and the Rock Valley homestead, which were destroyed in 2003 but have now been restored, rehabilitated and are again available for the

community to view and understand. As with the Gudgenby homestead, which I referred to earlier, all of these are an opportunity to promote, inform and educate our community about our heritage. In doing so, we strengthen the protection of heritage in Canberra.

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

**MS BERRY:** How is our heritage in the ACT supported in Ginninderra?

**MR CORBELL:** I thank Ms Berry for the question. Of course there are some very important heritage sites in Ginninderra, and the government continues to undertake work in relation to them. For example, the Ginninderra blacksmiths is a very important site. We have sites out in west Belconnen. As the government looks very closely at options for future urban development in west Belconnen, we also have regard to any heritage values in those locations and we will continue to focus on those into the future.

### **Education—funding**

**MR DOSZPOT:** My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, the federal budget has confirmed the government's intention to slash \$2.6 billion from universities, including \$1.2 billion abolishing student start-up scholarships. Given the high number of students in the ACT—over 32,000 at last count—and recent growth in enrolments, what analysis have you done, or will you do, to determine the impact of these cuts on the number of students who will attend Canberra universities?

**MS GALLAGHER:** I thank Mr Doszpot for the question. The priority for this government, and I think that is reflected in the decision that the incoming government took to create a portfolio ministry for higher education, is a very public statement about the priority that we are giving to higher education in the territory and how we are prepared, where we can, within the confines of our reasonably small budget, to leverage our support to growing the education side of our economy.

What we will be doing, Mr Doszpot is—instead of talking down the higher education system here, we will be talking it up. I met with the vice-chancellors yesterday. We had a good meeting about the way that we should work together in order to promote higher education here in the territory. Yes, efficiencies are being sought from the record level of university funding that has been provided from the commonwealth. Yes, the universities are getting less growth than they had anticipated. And yes, they are having to review their practices and their business operations to make sure that they can meet that reduction in growth that they were expecting across the forward estimates period.

But the advice to me from the universities is very optimistic. They are very pleased with the increase in enrolments. They are very pleased with the accommodation—the point that they have got with NRAS—and the support they have been provided with through the ACT government and the commonwealth government in providing accommodation for students, because that is helping them to attract students. And then they are very pleased to be working with us and our commitments around study

Canberra to promote the higher education side and develop that side of our economy here further. That is exactly what the ACT government will be doing, and I will be leading that work.

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

**MR DOSZPOT:** We have yet to hear you stand up publicly for the university sector, Chief Minister, so what analysis have you done or will you do to determine the impact that these cuts will have on the money spent by students in Canberra?

**MS GALLAGHER:** Again, this government has taken the decision that we will be putting our effort into promoting and attracting students here to the ACT. That is the priority for this government. That is the priority with the work that I am doing with the vice-chancellors, and that will be our focus. I am not going to sit down and analyse and spend money on modelling impacts of another government's decision when I could be out selling Canberra and selling ourselves as an education destination. When I have a look, in the time available to me, at the work that I am doing and the priorities that I have, the best use of our dollars and our time—and yours, Mr Doszpot, indeed—is to go out and promote and let people know what a great place Canberra is to come and work and study. That is the best use of all of our time.

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

**MR COE:** Chief Minister, on ABC radio today Minister Barr said, I understand, that the territory had already secured funding for Gonski and the NDIS. Is this correct?

**MS GALLAGHER:** We have secured funding for the NDIS and, I have been clear, we are extremely hopeful of signing on the dotted line in relation to the national plan for school improvement. And we cannot do nothing, because what you do not seem to understand is that we have to reach agreement. If we do not reach agreement, there will be no money for education coming from the commonwealth and then we have a much bigger problem to deal with.

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

**MR COE:** Chief Minister, if there are fewer students in the ACT, what impact will this have on the retail sector?

**MS GALLAGHER:** There are not fewer students in the ACT. If you listened to the debate on Mr Seselja's MPI yesterday, there are more students in the ACT. So one would presume from that that it is having a positive impact on the retail sector.

### **Education—student survey**

**MS BERRY:** My question is to the Minister for Education and Training. Minister, can you inform the Assembly what the recent survey of ACT year 12 graduates says about their career and further education prospects and what implications this has for education in the ACT?

*Mr Hanson interjecting—*

*Mr Barr interjecting—*

**Mr Hanson:** Madam Speaker, Mr Barr just interjected across the chamber, “You are an idiot” to me. I would ask him to withdraw.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I did not hear it. Mr Barr, did you say it?

**Mr Barr:** Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition asked was I “blinging” him. I said no, I was not. I said, “I think you’re an idiot.”

**Mr Coe:** Bullying, actually.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** In that case, I will ask you to withdraw.

**Mr Barr:** I withdraw, Madam Speaker.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** It was a simple, straightforward question. I did not hear it. Did you say it? Yes or no. If you did say it, you have to withdraw.

**Mr Barr:** I did—

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I know, but you do not need to embellish it. It was a straight and direct question.

**Mr Hanson:** On a point of clarification: I asked Mr Barr, “Are you bullying me?” and he responded, “No, you are an idiot.”

*Mr Barr interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** It has been withdrawn, so that should be an end to it. Ms Berry, I am sorry. Could we first of all restart the clock for Ms Burch. I call Ms Burch.

**MS BURCH:** I thank Ms Berry for her interest. I am pleased to inform members of the recent results from the 2012 survey of students who graduated in 2011. The survey is conducted annually and collects information from graduates who were awarded an ACT year 12 certificate from an ACT public or non-government school or the Canberra Institute of Technology.

The survey results show that our former students were positive about their senior secondary experience and are enjoying further success. Of the students who graduated in 2011, 94 per cent were employed or doing further study in 2012, a figure that has been trending upwards over the past few years. Fifty-seven per cent of graduates were studying in 2012 and 76 per cent of those who were not studying intended to do so in the next two years.

While the outcomes for students with a language background other than English were very similar to those with an English language background, these young men and women were much more likely to be studying. Graduates achieving a higher ATAR had a greater tendency to undertake further study, as one would expect, and 76 per cent of the graduates with an ATAR between 96 and 100 were undertaking study in 2012. The survey showed that, of those students who were not studying in 2012, nearly 40 per cent stated that it was because they were taking a gap year.

A greater proportion of females were studying at a bachelor degree level or higher than males. In contrast, the proportion of males studying at certificate III level was more than the proportion of females, although the difference was less than in previous years.

Overall, seven per cent of the year 12 students who graduated in 2011 were undertaking an apprenticeship and 10 per cent were doing a traineeship. Male graduates were much more likely to be undertaking an apprenticeship than females. Seventy-eight per cent of students who graduated in 2011 were employed—29 per cent full time and 48 per cent part time.

It is pleasing to see that ACT year 12 graduates are continuing to engage in productive career paths following their graduation. A summary of the survey results is provided in the *2011 ACT year 12 graduates: Where are they now?* publication which is now available on the Education and Training Directorate's website.

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

**MS BERRY:** Minister, did this survey ask students to rate their education experience and, if so, what did they say?

**MS BURCH:** The survey included a number of questions about satisfaction with the school. An impressive 97 per cent of year 12 graduates thought that year 11 and 12 were worthwhile, and 95 per cent thought their school offered a good range of subjects and thought years 11 and 12 were satisfying and rewarding. Ninety per cent thought year 11 and 12 prepared them for future choices, while 79 per cent gave a positive response to the statement that their year 11 and 12 experience “provided them with relevant skills in the workplace”. This compared favourably with the 2011 school satisfaction survey results which showed that 86 per cent of public school college students were satisfied with the education their school provided.

These patterns were also consistent with survey results from 2008, 2009 and 2010, which showed that graduates continue to be very satisfied with the quality of senior secondary education in the ACT.

These results tell us that ACT students are preparing well for life after school and their feedback is valuable for us to plan for the future. The ACT school system has a great reputation in offering a wide range of courses which are applicable to further learning, training and employment, and it is great to see this acknowledged in the

results. The survey and report show not only the high quality of our schools and teachers but also the high level of confidence that our community has in the quality of education in the territory.

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

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Minister, what is the importance of compiling a report such as this?

**MS BURCH:** I thank Mr Gentleman for the question. The survey allows the government to focus on our priorities on ensuring that young people's needs are met, providing flexible and responsive training options, engaging with industry and employers, and improving retention rates. The annual survey of ACT year 12 graduates provides useful information about post school study and employment destinations and satisfaction with school.

The survey results contribute to the planning, development and provision of appropriate education and training options for the young people of the ACT. An indication of the proportion of year 12 graduates participating in further education, training and/or employment is important because these activities are likely to result in improved educational and employment outcomes in the future. Through this survey and other mechanisms, the ACT is being proactive in looking to the future of education and training in our region, building on the strength of current collaborations, relationships and partnerships within the sector, and promoting opportunities for change.

The government is committed to providing learning pathways for students which result in an educated and skilled workforce to meet not only the needs of the ACT but also the needs of the individual students, equipping them with the skills and knowledge to have a productive and rewarding life through opportunities for lifelong learning and employment and labour force participation.

**MR COE:** Supplementary.

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

**MR COE:** Ms Burch, have any longitudinal studies or surveys been undertaken about the efficacy of ACT public education?

**MS BURCH:** There are a number of studies in place. This study itself, "Where are they now?", which looks to a survey of graduates of year 12, has been in place for a number of years. We have also got work looking at our attainment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. I would direct you to the directorate website; you will find that information there.

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

## Supplementary answer to question without notice Planning—Amaroo

**MR CORBELL:** On 9 May, Mrs Jones asked me a question as to how many long-term unfinished residential properties had the directorate taken action on and how many had been finished as a result. I can advise Mrs Jones that, in relation to the Amaroo residential properties that she was referring to, in July last year the Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate issued control activity orders under the Planning and Development Act over all eight properties in question. The orders require the properties to be developed within strict time frames.

In relation to these matters, the lessee has exercised the right to appeal the directorate's decision in the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal. And as that matter is before the tribunal, I cannot provide any further comment on it.

## Work safety

Debate resumed.

**MS PORTER** (Ginninderra) (3.44): As I was saying before the lunch break, more recently we have seen this government again reaffirming the importance of work safety through legislation and by swift and timely response to the *Getting home safely* report. And I believe it needs recognition for this.

With National Volunteer Week being observed this week, I thought I would focus on what work safe means for those who are contributing daily by volunteering their time, skill and experience to our community through their work. Members will not be surprised to hear me saying that volunteering is an area that I have been passionate about since my childhood. I have seen volunteering and the perception of what it is and what it means evolve over time, from what was once seen as a post-retirement option and mainly the domain of women to now being a much better appreciated, recognised and valued workforce that is better resourced and managed, a workforce which encompasses all aspirants from young people to older members of our community.

One of the major changes that have occurred over the years involves a change of scope of coverage of health and safety legislation and it being extended to better capture contemporary work and employment arrangements, with our daily concept of "employee" being replaced by the broader definition of "worker". This definition covers all those who work in employment-like settings, including independent contractors, outworkers, apprentices, trainees and, most importantly in this case, volunteers.

Apart from recognising the valuable contribution volunteers have made and, indeed, continue to make to our community, which I believe must continue to be protected by legislation, this change in scope also acknowledges that volunteers work in various sectors of our community, sectors such as sport, art, heritage, environment protection, health, education, science, emergency services, policing, transport and caring roles,

such as friendly visiting and self-help groups as well as administration and governance. As members know, all workplaces have the potential to generate risks for all workers.

Only this week I was honoured to attend the National Volunteering Week appreciation breakfast that was hosted by ACT Health to thank the over 450 volunteers who work across 20 programs within ACT Health, including the Canberra Hospital Auxiliary, chaplaincy, hand and foot massage, paediatrics and women's and children's hospital. As we all know, volunteers, like all of those they work with, are vulnerable to injuries from manual handling, exposure to dangerous substances and workplace accidents and other conditions that could cause harm to the workers. Unfortunately, volunteer carers and other volunteers can also be exposed to psychological and physical risks when working with vulnerable groups.

However, Mr Assistant Speaker, you will be glad to know that the ACT government has a strong commitment to provide a safe and healthy workplace for all its workers and those who interact with all ACT government programs, including volunteers.

If we focus on ACT Health, its initiatives in this area include: staff orientation sessions, ie, for volunteers, that have a strong focus on health and safety; mandatory manual handling training for all ACT staff, with targeted training for clinical staff; an influenza vaccine program which is available to all staff and volunteers to prevent the spread of current strains of the influenza virus within ACT Health; development of a comprehensive dangerous substances manual to enable all staff to easily understand and use across ACT Health; ACT Health-wide fatigue management policy to reduce the incidence of staff fatigue; ongoing work on the hand hygiene program to protect staff and patients, an evidence-based initiative to reduce the spread of infection.

Sectors other than ACT Health also attract high levels of volunteers, and all volunteers need to stay safe and healthy in their workplace. For instance, if we look at the many challenges that the 21st century gives us in the area of climate change, volunteers continue to play an important part, for instance, in protecting and restoring our environment and assisting the community to reduce its carbon footprint. This has been clearly demonstrated by the over 7,000 volunteers who have worked with organisations such as Greening Australia over the last decade to help revegetate the lower Cotter after the 2003 Canberra bushfires. Only last week, we talked about the number of volunteers that actually went up on the regeneration day to celebrate that regeneration, and there were a large number of volunteers, indeed, on that day.

No-one can argue about the safety issues that these volunteers face whenever they go about their work. I know how risky the terrain can be, with blackberry runners tripping one up, rough and uneven ground and the necessity to use mattocks for digging, not to mention carrying heavy buckets of water, sometimes over large distances, to water the new plantings. As I said, I speak from experience. Other Landcare volunteers are engaged in weed eradication involving spraying. Landcare volunteer managers take their responsibility seriously, as does Greening Australia, making sure all volunteers are properly trained and attired. Thanks to the Work Health and Safety (WHS) Act that is designed to protect the health and safety of all workers,



including volunteers, such volunteers as those working for Greening Australia and our Landcare groups and also our community fire units can go about their work in the confidence that their work and their training are protected.

Protecting the health and safety of volunteers demonstrates to them that their commitment is valued, that we value them as workers. It recognises the vital role they play in the community and how much poorer we would be without them. It is the right thing to do, and I am proud to be part of this ACT government which takes workplace health and safety seriously.

**MS BURCH** (Brindabella—Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Disability, Children and Young People, Minister for the Arts, Minister for Women, Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Minister for Racing and Gaming) (3.51): I would like to begin by thanking Mr Gentleman for bringing this motion forward for debate. It is an important motion. WorkSafe ACT does do important work. In the 21st century it is deeply concerning and deeply upsetting that so many people are being seriously injured at their workplace. It is even more concerning that too many people in this territory are not returning home from work at all.

I have a family. Indeed, I have sons that are in the engineering and construction sector. So I understand the apprehension that far too many of the mothers, fathers, wives, husbands, sons and daughters in this town have about the safety of workplaces. It is simply not good enough that people have to worry whether or not they will be seriously injured or killed at their workplace. This is not acceptable. I do not know that it was ever acceptable at any point in our history but in the modern day it certainly is not. We must, as a government, as an Assembly and as a community, do all we can to make sure that every member of our society can go to work and be absolutely assured of their safety.

I am very pleased to be a member of a government that is committed to doing all that it can to ensure the safety of our citizens and that we have accepted all 28 recommendations of the *Getting home safely* report. As a minister in this government, I will be looking to my own portfolio to ensure that I and my officials support these recommendations and are mindful of how we can improve our own practices and offerings to ensure that safety is always at the forefront. I am mindful that the report made a number of recommendations about the need to support and examine the provision and quality of workforce training. Indeed, the report notes:

Quality training has an important contribution to make to work health and safety in this potentially dangerous and high risk industry.

I could not agree more with this statement and, indeed, education and training are crucial to ensuring that a culture of safety develops in any workplace, the construction industry included.

It is up to our training bodies to ensure that workplace safety is included as a core component of training and not simply as an add-on. As Minister for Education and Training, I look forward to working with industry and training providers to ensure we carry out the recommendations in this report and continue to work on the already extensive amount of training.

It is perhaps useful to outline to the Assembly some of the work that happens in the ACT from both the Construction Industry Training Fund Authority and the CIT. These two bodies, as public providers, have an important part to play in delivering on the recommendations of the WorkSafe report and in ongoing training on safety in the construction industry. In 2013, the Building and Construction Industry Training Fund Authority reaffirmed its commitment to the funding of work health and safety training for workers in the industry. The authority provides funding to a number of registered training organisations in the ACT for the specific purpose of occupational health and safety training. The Construction Industry Training Fund Authority funding includes drug and alcohol and fatigue awareness; bullying, harassment and racial vilification, suicide awareness; asbestos awareness; first aid; working safely at heights; manual handling training; sun smart and nutrition training; dust and disease training; confined space training; safety observation and conversation; and traffic management.

These courses include builders, plumbers, electricians and carpenters. A worker is eligible for funding if they work for a company or organisation that is substantially engaged in carrying out work described in the schedule of work in the Building and Construction Industry Training Levy Act 1999. The authority is a sponsor of the ACT building and construction industry safety handbook which has been compiled by ACT WorkCover particularly for the building and construction industry and related sectors. CIT is the largest provider of training and, indeed, as the public provider of vocational education and training, has a particular responsibility to its students and the ACT community as a whole.

Workplace safety is a core component of all construction training courses. The minimum requirement to enter a worksite is the attainment of a white card. The white card is issued by the Office of Regulatory Services upon the successful completion of the unit of competency called “work safely in the construction industry”. Further, there are a number of stand-alone, high-risk competencies with practical outcomes that are both core and elective within training package qualifications such as the one called “use explosive power tools”.

The competency called “work safely at heights” is an underpinning competency that supports training for the stand-alone competencies called “operate an elevated work platform” and “erect and dismantle restricted height scaffolding”. These competencies are part of the trade qualification package but also give restricted access to and some core skills within the high-risk licensed competencies for scaffolding, articulated boom lift, rigging, cranes, dogging and hoists. All of CIT’s training and assessment is developed, monitored and reviewed in consultation with the industry, as directed by the relevant standards.

In October 2012, rigorous, new, high-risk licensing legislation came into effect in the ACT to help reduce the rates of accidents for those people who work in occupations such as scaffolding, rigging and crane operations. In anticipation of this development, and over a three-year period, CIT built a new high-risk training facility at CIT Bruce. This \$600,000 investment was designed to meet an increase in demand for training in a real life, work site-type environment. Since construction of the new facility, CIT has

used an allocation from the ACT technology upgrade program to produce a new crane and a high-risk training tower to supplement the constructed facility, and more than 1,200 students have undertaken training.

I think, from the examples I have given here today, it is clear that both the Construction Industry Training Fund Authority and the CIT have a clear mandate and intention to support workplace safety in the ACT. As minister, I will continue to support their work and look forward to bringing industry and training providers together to progress the recommendations from the *Getting home safely* report.

Again, I recognise the importance of this report. I want to thank those that have had input into it and also note again, as has been said here today, that the government had no hesitation in accepting the 28 recommendations. I will, if I can, in the time left, refer to some of these recommendations that I think are worthy of comment. Recommendation 1 is:

The ACT Government should work closely with the Australian Taxation Office, Fair Work Australia and other government agencies to do all it reasonably can, including through its powers and responsibilities under ACT workers' compensation legislation, to eradicate sham contracting practices in the construction industry.

It also recommends and makes references to, because this is a whole-of-sector response:

The ACT construction industry should place greater emphasis on the importance of effective task induction. This emphasis should be supported through education and enforcement activities by the regulator as well as education and other support from employer and worker representative bodies ...

It also recommends:

The ACT Government should appoint an Industrial Magistrate who could develop knowledge and experience of work health and safety matters and the impact of deterrents on the behaviour of duty holders.

I note that the Attorney-General has brought forward an exposure draft of that work. Recommendation 25 makes comment:

The ACT government should proceed with development and implementation of Shared Services Procurements' proposed active certification approach following consultation with stakeholders.

The final recommendation is:

The government should conduct a stocktake of the construction industry's work health and safety performance as at 30 June 2016 to identify what has been achieved, what is yet to be achieved and what new targets or strategies should be put in place.

This will ensure that everyone—our sons and our daughters, our fathers and our brothers and our uncles—who works in the construction industry arrives home safe and sound. I want to thank Mr Gentleman for bringing on this motion today, and I feel confident in saying to the Assembly that I will do all I can as Minister for Education and Training to improve the safety of our workplaces.

**MR GENTLEMAN** (Brindabella) (4.01): To close the debate, I thank all of the members here today for their contributions: Ms Berry for her passionate speech on people who have lost their lives at work and her emphasis on procurement as a priority; Dr Bourke for the discussion on the great work that CIT Bruce are doing in training on workplace safety and becoming a national leader in that area; Ms Porter on the importance of workplace safety for nurses and volunteers such as Greening Australia and Landcare; Minister Corbell, who reiterated the work of the government and its response to the *Getting home safely* report; Ms Burch for her family concerns on safety in the workplace and, of course, workplace safety training competencies; and Mr Rattenbury for his support through the amendments, and I support his concerns on sham contracting and psychosocial hazards.

I will make some further comments, though, on Mr Seselja's contribution. I feel Mr Seselja rejects my impetus in my motion—that is, it is the labour movement that has been at the forefront of concerns for workplace safety. I put the challenge out there for him to counter my claims, but, instead, he moved to discuss workplace bullying in the construction industry.

He went on to say that the Australian Building and Construction Commission needs to come back—it may take a change of government to do it, but it needs to come back. So I thought I had best have a look at what the ACTU says about the ABCC.

While its brief is to oversee adherence to industrial law, the ABCC conspicuously fails to investigate or prosecute employers underpaying workers or breaching safety regulations.

Rather, it targets individual workers involved in union or collective activity not strictly related to EBA negotiations.

Even if a worker is killed on site, his colleagues must be able to prove they had a reasonable concern about an imminent risk to themselves to legally stop work and assess the safety situation.

Passers-by can also be interrogated by the ABCC for witnessing activities on a building site.

The ABCC has the power to seek fines against individual workers of up to \$22,000 and to gag interviewees. Anyone who refuses to cooperate fully faces a potential 6 month jail term.

More than 92 construction workers have been secretly interrogated by the ABCC.

They go on to tell the story of Ark Tribe:

Ark Tribe is a construction worker from South Australia who faced six months in jail simply for not attending an interview with the ABCC.

Ark was working on the Flinders University site in Adelaide. Conditions were so bad that workers drew up a petition calling for safety improvements, on a handtowel.

It took an intervention by the union and the state government safety regulator to get the most pressing problems fixed and finally, after several days, things began to get back on track.

One by one workers from the site were called before the ABCC. Ark refused to do so.

In Ark's words: "If I've done something wrong, I'm prepared to cop it, but I won't be treated unfairly."

It is interesting to see Mr Seselja, recently referred to as the number one Liberal Senate candidate for Canberra at the AHA awards, now using the ACT Legislative Assembly to support Eric Abetz and many of his federal colleagues who want the ABCC to be returned.

I will quote from a paper by John Buchanan from the Workplace Research Centre entitled, "Who will protect our IR protections?" He speaks about the federal coalition's IR policy and the Fair Work Commission:

Left unstated in the policy is how Abbott and his likely minister for workplace relations, Eric Abetz, will exercise their considerable power over the commission to influence the outcome of industrial disputes and the content of awards.

The main impact of the policy would be through initiatives designed to further confine unions' ability to operate effectively. These initiatives include:

...

Re-establishing the Australian Building and Construction Commission (a Howard government agency that, among other things, severely limited the common law protections available to union members and delegates in the construction sector)

While I thank Mr Seselja for his support on workplace safety and his call for all to work together to reduce the incidence of workplace injury across Canberra, I raise again this divergence where we see him actively supporting the return of the ABCC that, in the view of the majority, did nothing but scare workers into not reporting workplace safety issues. Mr Assistant Speaker, I urge all members to support the amended motion.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

## Planning—service stations

**MRS JONES** (Molonglo) (4.07): I seek leave to amend my notice, pursuant to notice.

Leave granted.

**MRS JONES:** I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) that Canberra has numerous disused service station sites across the city;
- (b) that the community is concerned about the non-utilisation and the derelict nature of these sites; and
- (c) that there is ongoing feedback from the community about the desire to see these sites redeveloped; and

(2) calls on the Government to publish by 30 May 2013:

- (a) any plans to deal with the large number of vacant service stations across Canberra;
- (b) any measures the Government is taking to ensure a collaborative process to seeing these sites utilised; and
- (c) the list of sites and status of their remediation.

At the heart of suburban communities across the ACT are a number of derelict blocks which once housed petrol stations. These blocks are usually fenced off, however, they are often overgrown with scrubby bushes reaching out from broken shadecloth barely hiding walls covered in graffiti. Footpaths along these blocks are often overgrown with weeds, and some of these sites house disused petrol drums and boarded up broken windows.

This government is very good at putting out designer pictures of perfect lifestyles associated with their visions for Canberra's future, but for over a decade these sites have grown into derelict eyesores at the centre of our lives. At the heart of this government is a preference for grandiose schemes at the expense of the little things that make more of a difference every day to hardworking ratepayers who deserve more. What good is the city to the lake design when the front door to the local bus stop feels like a walk past a derelict graffiti hotspot?

This motion notes that Canberra has numerous disused service station sites across the city, that the community is concerned about the non-utilisation and the derelict nature of these sites, and that there is ongoing feedback from the community about their desire to see these sites redeveloped.

Let us look at some of the sites. Duffy has a site that is fenced off, a daily reminder of the 2003 firestorm. Duffy residents write to members of the Canberra Liberals on a regular basis seeking answers to when this painful reminder of the past will be developed into something new and fresh which will continue the healing process for the community and give a more lively feel to the dilapidated central shopping zone. It really is sad that, over a decade later, off the road there is a lovely bushfire memorial to facilitate healing but on the main road of the suburb where the locals drive and walk every day is a sore reminder of the most painful episode in the suburb's history.

Rivett has a petrol station site that has been empty for well over a decade. The site boasts falling down shadecloth, fire-hazard length grass around the perimeter and tall weeds, and it gives the whole central area of Bangalay Crescent, where a number of children attend Noah's Ark every day, a dilapidated, depressing feel. The site is a drain on the local community and really should be turned into something soon.

The Chapman site has seen recent excavation, but right here where hundreds of cars drive around the corner of Thring Street into Perry Drive to drop kids off at the school is a fenced-off, derelict site which also has simply provided a backdrop for the speeding that frightens local residents living on that corner for decades.

The Garran site has windows boarded up. There are several large oil and petrol drums by the building. The fencing is intact but the shadecloth barely covers the view of the vast, run-down, empty space. The grass seems to have at least been cut this past summer, but generally the abandoned feel is strong and the local residents wish the develop would hurry up and commence for what seems to be an intended medical centre for the site.

Campbell has a station which has been closed for over 10 years. There are no buildings left on this site. There are, however, several stretches of graffiti, including a blue and somewhat menacing snake and a panda bear. The graffiti is not at all obscured by the blue and green shadecloth stretching across some sections of the fence.

To the north of Civic, Watson has a particularly derelict block with an orange shipping container and a white shipping container on the site. The grass is especially long and there is graffiti of a large square eye on the side of the white container. There are also wire baskets and a water tank on the site. The grass is very long. The blue shadecloth on this block is falling down in places. There is also barbed wire around the top of the fence. Local residents of Watson would like to see this site turned into something and are sick of seeing the site on their daily walks.

The residents of Lyneham live with an empty petrol station site, too. It is almost entirely concrete. There are some shrubs outside the perimeter fence which could be better maintained, but the main issue here is an abundance of graffiti. There are green outlined letters spelling "A-O-D", a word in very large bubble-like characters, and a little face on the old garage door with at least six fangs and two horns looking menacingly at passers-by.

The disused Higgins petrol station site is fenced with a brown brick wall and has quite tall weeds across the dirt of the entire block. The padlocked gate on the side has been bent out of shape and the brown brick wall has a bright green and blue word graffitied on it. The site is highly visible to pedestrians and commuters along the street.

Page has a site which seems to have an approval on it to build aged-care units, but no construction has started on the site. The shade cloth covering some of the fence has been graffitied in white, and there are various grasses and shrubs growing on the site. There is a section of green cloth that seems to have been ripped and come adrift from the fence base of the gate and is flapping around. To one side of the block is a building which has three doors which open out on to this eyesore, and I imagine the owners of that property would prefer it to look on to something better maintained.

Some sections of the fence are not covered at all, and piles of weed-covered dirt are clearly visible from the road. There is a wall covered in large graffiti letters spelling something like "Hoodies are best" with the "b" of "best" double underlined and the term "IOEC FRATE" in very large bubble-like letters. The site has a lot of grass and general waste dirt in some places.

Narrabundah also has a disused petrol station site which is very visible to the main road. There are tall weeds all over the site. I understand there has been a building approval for the remediation of the site, but there is no evidence yet of construction. The site has a gaping space in the fence, meaning the public can easily access—and do—the site. Perhaps if the government made sure the fence was properly maintained and the grass cut it might set a good example to the Narrabundah tyre slasher who is still creating damage to local residents, as he or she or they have for decades.

I have been doing some research to find out what empirical scientific evidence I can offer to the government that explains what residents innately know—that is, these sites increase petty crime and leave residents feeling less comfortable with and proud of their local communities. And I have discovered the broken windows theory. This theory, well researched and well known, makes two major claims: if we clean up or eliminate sites such as our vacant petrol station sites, further petty crime and low-level antisocial behaviour will be deterred and crime will be prevented as a result.

Ms Burch yesterday acknowledged that school vandalism deeply affects schools. She said it is devastating, and I agree with her. I think a good government would put a very high priority on resolving the concern and possibly petty crime hotspots which are caused by these derelict sites. I believe the government had a scheme in the past whereby there was a special dispensation or reduction in taxation paid by developers wishing to develop the sites prior to 2010.

I understand some money was set aside in the 2011-12 budget for a program to address community concerns relating to these leases across the ACT. But I wonder why there is not a stronger emphasis on a policy to see these sites developed from the government. I am sure the good people of Canberra do not spend as much as they do on housing to raise their families in or live in during their retirement to spend their days commuting past run-down, graffiti-scrawled fences and walls.



I call on the government to publish any plans or policy to deal with the large number of vacant service station sites across Canberra, any measures the government is working on to ensure a collaborative process to seeing these sites utilised, and the list of sites and their status of remediation or approvals to date. Please, minister, take the focus from the grand schemes and focus on the walk from the front door to the bus stop, not just the city to the lake.

**MR CORBELL** (Molonglo—Attorney-General, Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations and Minister for the Environment and Sustainable Development) (4.16): I move the amendment circulated in my name relating to this motion:

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

“notes:

- (a) that there are currently 13 disused service station sites across the city;
- (b) that the remediation and redevelopment of service station sites across the Territory poses particular challenges and is governed by stringent environmental protection processes;
- (c) that all of these sites are at various stages of lease variation, remediation and development approval processes;
- (d) that four of these sites have completed the required remediation and received final environmental clearances;
- (e) that seven of these sites have problems with ground water contamination and other related complexities which makes the sites very difficult, costly and time consuming to remediate; and
- (f) that the Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate is monitoring the status of work on all sites and is working with each of the lessees who are not making reasonable progress on their sites.”.

The government is strongly committed to protecting our environment, and the remediation and redevelopment of service station sites across the territory poses a particular challenge and as such is governed by stringent environmental protection processes. The work required to evaluate and ultimately remediate a site can be both very costly and take a considerable period of time to finalise.

Given the issue has been raised by Mrs Jones today, I think it is instructive for members to better understand the framework for dealing with these sites in the ACT and how the Environment Protection Authority oversees remediation through to a final site clearance. This will also help to explain why sites apparently remain dormant over long periods of time.

The ANZECC 1992 guidelines for the assessment and management of contaminated sites list service stations as an activity associated with land and groundwater

contamination. In this regard, the level of contamination at a particular service station site is dependent on how effectively that site has been managed over the course of its use, which can often be for many decades. The remediation of service station sites in the ACT is governed by the Environment Protection Act. The act requires a rigorous assessment and audit process to ensure that sites are suitable for the proposed redevelopment, which is often a residential redevelopment.

The specific policies that apply to the contaminated sites in the ACT are detailed in the EPA's contaminated sites environment protection policy 2009. For service station sites in the ACT, a site assessment remediation, if required, and independent audit are normally triggered by the lodgement of a development application to redevelop a site for a different use. In the majority of cases, the change in use is to facilitate residential development, and it is this land use that dictates the need for a very stringent standard of remediation.

The EPA is a mandatory referral entity under the Planning and Development Act for applications involving petroleum storage facilities that are being redeveloped. Over the years there have been a significant number of service station sites successfully remediated and redeveloped in the ACT through this process. Guidelines, which are national in their development and adopted here in the ACT, have specific criteria for the clean-up of service station sites to ensure the protection of human health and the environment.

I cannot understate the importance of this work. Members may recall the tragic incident that happened at the Centre Cinema in Civic in 1977, where an employee was fatally injured as a result of explosive fumes in the basement of the cinema. The fumes which created the explosive situation originated for a nearby service station where fuel had leaked into the groundwater. There are a significant number of businesses, including service stations, industrial premises and fuel depots in the ACT that have underground petroleum storage tanks and piping. Over time, these components become subject to corrosion, which creates holes in the tanks or piping.

The release of petroleum through leaks and spills can contaminate the soil, groundwater, surface water and sometimes the air. Some of the components of petroleum are extremely toxic and they are also soluble in water. This means that there can be significant impacts to groundwater and surface water ecosystems and make the groundwater itself unsuitable for use. The remediation of some service station sites, therefore, can be very complex and time consuming, particularly if there is contamination to groundwater, as has been the case in a number of sites recently or currently under assessment.

The government takes the issue of long-term vacant sites seriously and my directorate spends a considerable amount of time trying to resolve it. But we do so in the context of recognising the very difficult nature of these sites. In the event that groundwater is contaminated, for example, the mandatory criterion adopted nationally is that all phase separated—free—petroleum product must be removed as this is generally the component that has the potential to be explosive if it is captured in basements and building structures. Let me make that clear. In circumstances where vapours from petrol which is in groundwater escape into a basement, if that basement is in a new

residential building that presents a real and immediate hazard to residents in that building. Therefore, it is critical that before a site is redeveloped that hazard must be removed.

To elaborate further on that, even when the volatile component is removed, sites often require continued monitoring and management over time to ensure all the volatile contamination has been removed and no longer poses a risk for the development. The reason for this is that groundwater moves up and down. The actual groundwater level moves up and down and this can reintroduce contamination that is leaked from the tanks or pipes into the soil above the groundwater table. The remediation of contaminated soils at a site is normally required, at least to some degree. The procedure for the remediation of sites is typically detailed in a site remedial action plan which is developed by an expert environment consultant engaged by the owner of the site or the development proponent.

In the ACT the remedial action plan is required to be endorsed by an independent auditor approved by the Environment Protection Authority with a copy of the endorsement provided to the EPA prior to works commencing on the site. The use of independent auditors to oversight contaminated land assessment and remediation is national practice to provide consistency and robustness to the management of these contaminated sites. Auditors are approved by the EPA under the Environment Protection Act and are accredited by either the New South Wales or Victorian EPAs.

Consistent with ACT and national waste policies where contaminated soil requires mediation, this firstly must be done on site. This ensures that we are not using landfill, public landfill, to dispose of waste that can be treated and reused elsewhere once it meets that strict criteria. This is called land farming. The land farming of soil contaminated by petroleum hydrocarbon is an established international practice with strict guidelines on the control of potential omissions. Basically, with land farming the soil is exposed to the air and sunlight and over time the hydrocarbons in the soil break down and eventually disappear. It requires the turning of the soil on the ground for the period of time necessary for those hydrocarbons to be destroyed through sunlight and exposure to the air.

In cases where on-site land farming of contaminated soil is not possible or feasible, a site is available at West Belconnen Resource Management Centre for owners to land farm their impacted soil. These land farms are also subject to an environmental authorisation. This initiative was instigated by the government to facilitate the timely remediation of service stations and other contaminated sites. Where it was not practical to remediate on site, the government has made land available for that to occur.

The EPA continually monitors the progress of various service station sites across the ACT. While many sites may appear idle to the passerby or to members, active remediation is usually being undertaken to impacted groundwater beneath the site. Due to the complex nature of the geology in the ACT, the remediation of groundwater can take, in some instance, many years. In the ACT the majority of service station sites are owned by the major oil companies or large commercial retailers such as Woolworths, Coles and 7-Eleven.

When remediation is complete, and to demonstrate that the site is suitable for the proposed development, the independent auditor will review the environmental consultant's work and issue a statutory site audit statement and report. The auditor certifies whether the site is suitable for the proposed new use and any conditions that should apply. The site audit statement and report are required to be submitted to the EPA for review and endorsement. In accordance with the requirement in the Environment Protection Act conditions relating to the development approval, a copy of the site audit statement report and an EPA endorsement are then provided to the Planning and Land Authority so they can decide on the development application.

Following this endorsement, information relating to the contamination of these sites becomes publicly available and can be accessed through the established contaminated land search or lease conveyancing inquiry administered by the Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate. It is at this point, subject to other agency approvals, that redevelopment of the site can commence in accordance with any conditions in the site audit statement. Typically, the conditions, if required, relate to the procedures to be followed should anything unexpected be found during the development of the site and any ongoing management requirements as deemed necessary by the auditor.

While sites are thoroughly assessed and remediated, there is always the potential for unexpected discoveries during development. If this is the case, the EPA must be notified. In some cases where contamination of the site is not significant or specific, mitigation measures must be included in building construction. The auditor can issue interim advice to facilitate the commencement of some works of the building. No further works are permitted without the endorsement of the auditor and the EPA.

To ensure that service station sites are appropriately managed so that these legacy issues are addressed, the government in 2007 introduced a regulation into the Environment Protection Act requiring all service stations to be authorised by the EPA where any large fuel storage facilities with a capacity greater than 50,000 litres are proposed. Currently, there are approximately 70 active service station sites that have underground fuel tanks. These authorisations which are reviewed annually provide a legal framework by which the EPA applies the minimum standard for all new and existing underground hydrocarbon storage tanks. These include, as a minimum, leak detection systems and environment monitoring programs aimed at reducing the potential impacts of leakage on to human health, land and water resources in the ACT.

These new requirements will prevent the current problems we are currently facing now in the future. Service station sites can be decommissioned more quickly and issues such as leaks can be appropriately detected. What we are doing now is having to deal with the legacy of poor regulation of service station sites for the past 50 or 60 years—even longer—prior to these new requirements being put into place.

I appreciate the frustration that the community feels with long-term undeveloped sites across Canberra. I think members will agree that it is important to have stringent processes for identifying possible contamination and undertaking remediation work. I am of the view that for most sites across the ACT work has progressed within time

frames, albeit sometimes these are lengthy, appropriate to the assessment and remediation required, and that where activity on some sites is not evident, they are still subject to intense monitoring. Where there has been little progress on remediated sites, my directorate works with the owners of these sites to progress proposals for redevelopment.

I would now like to address a couple of other issues that are raised in Mrs Jones motion and that are dealt with by my amendment. The government is not in a position to provide information on contamination of sites where final endorsement by the EPA has not yet occurred. It is only at that point that that information is made available to the territory. I understand that there is an amendment from Mr Rattenbury which asks this of the government. The government is simply not in a position to detail contamination on every site. We do not have that information. That is held by the leaseholder. It is only when their contamination report and their audit is endorsed by the EPA that we do have that information. That information, as I have said, is already publicly available, but information prior to endorsement by the EPA is not.

Finally, I would just like to address the sites that Mrs Jones has raised concerns about. Duffy: there is no breach of the crown lease or planning laws. There is currently an approved development application for the site, which will expire if development does not commence by the end of this month. If that does not occur, the appropriate action will be taken by the Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate. I am advised that the site has been cleared in anticipation of development.

Garran: as a result of personal issues affecting the lessee, there have been delays in the commencement of development on this site. The lessee's representatives are currently working with my directorate to execute a new crown lease for the site to facilitate development.

Page: throughout last year there were detailed discussions between the lessee and my directorate regarding possible joint venture options to assist in the development of several blocks owned by this lessee. No suitable options have been identified. My directorate continues to work with the lessee to see when we can reach agreement on the development of this site. (*Extension of time granted.*)

Rivett: this site was due to be auctioned in late 2012 but was halted because my directorate required changes to the lease before any sale to a new lessee. The lessee's representatives are currently working with the directorate to execute a new crown lease. This will allow for the auction of the site.

There are four further sites that have complex remediation issues that are being managed. However, the purpose clause in the crown leases for these sites means that final compliance with the lease will not be able to be determined until after construction is completed. Of these, two sites cannot achieve final sign off and clearance until after construction is completed due to the nature of contamination.

There are a further four sites due to commence development this year. These include block 16/17 section 29 Braddon and block 224 Jerrabomberra. One site is progressing, with the lessee engaged with development assessment leasing and the EPA. This is

block 1/2 section 25 Griffith. We expect remediation to commence in relation to block 5 section 11 Chapman in mid-2013. This site has also recently received a development approval and activity on the site will shortly be commencing to undertake remediation. Once this is completed to the satisfaction of the EPA, construction of the approved development can commence. It is anticipated that this may occur before the end of this year.

There are a further four sites which are considered to be tier 2 sites. Tier 2 sites are considered to be sites which are more complex in relation to their remediation. There is one of these sites which is fully remediated and has almost completed its development. That is block 1 section 7 Waramanga. Indeed, as a resident of a nearby suburb, I can advise that they are marketing these units and that they are complete. Finally, there are three other sites that have commenced remediation—Campbell, Higgins and Watson.

I hope that information is of use to members, both in terms of the process the EPA has to go through and the status of the sites. I commend my amendment to the Assembly.

## Visitor

**MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER** (Mr Gentleman): Members, before we continue on the question of the amendment, can I recognise a former member of the Assembly, Mr Richard Mulcahy, in the gallery.

## Planning—service stations

Debate resumed.

**MRS DUNNE** (Ginninderra) (4.34): Mr Assistant Speaker, I want to congratulate Mrs Jones on being a proactive and engaged local member and bringing these issues to this place. I am going to speak particularly about service stations in my electorate of Ginninderra that have been a problem over the years or that are possibly going to become a problem. I think that what we have seen here is years of policy failure—policy failure in relation to retailing in the ACT and the running down of shops in the ACT, policy failure in relation to diversity of ownership of service stations and the decline of the independent service station operator in the ACT, and policy failure on behalf of the government in relation to compliance with leasehold conditions.

I want to put on the record that I believe that the issues of soil contamination and remediation are important and that, for the safety and benefit of the community, they have to be done properly. There is no doubt about that. I do not want anyone to say that the Canberra Liberals just want this hurried through. First and foremost, we need to have clean sites that are not going to create the problems that Mr Corbell referred to about the fuel plume under Civic that resulted in tragic circumstances at the Centre Cinema many years ago. But in saying that, the people of the ACT deserve a better service. They also deserve some information about what is going on in their suburbs.

I was looking through my records when Mrs Jones first put this notice of motion on the notice paper, and I think it is about seven years since I first started doing

representations on behalf of people in Page in relation to the former Page service station site. When you add the other problems in Page, with its proximity to the Belconnen town centre and Belconnen markets, it is a shopping centre that has been in decline for many years. It has not had a supermarket for the best part of 10 years. The tavern from time to time struggles. Some of the food shops there struggle from time to time and they have a high turnover. Of course, it has the enviable and longstanding restaurant, perhaps the second Vietnamese restaurant ever established in the ACT. The Vietnam Village Inn is still providing great takeaway for the Dunne family on a semi-regular basis and a great service to the community. That restaurant and the tavern are the only things that are really keeping the shopping centre going. The new tavern owners are really putting in a great effort to improve the ambience in that area.

Mrs Jones is right, and it was interesting that she had the same thought that I had. We did not actually consult on this part, but she has the same thought about the New York approach to no broken windows. If you go around and fix up the vandalism or you fix up the daggy sites, there is less chance of there being vandalism in the suburb. I did note that Minister Burch talked about this yesterday in relation to vandalism at schools. If you go around and fix it up, it sends the message that we do not tolerate this. So if it is good enough for our schools, it is also good enough for our service station sites and some of our shopping centres that are associated with those service station sites which are in decline.

I think that it is a substantial policy failure and a failure of the leasehold system that work is not done to bring leaseholders to book and ensure that this land is not left forever languishing with nothing being done on it. Mrs Jones talked about the Rivett situation, which is a problem there. For me, Page has been a long-running problem. It is a problem for the shop owners who are there because there is vandalism. It is a problem for the church which is there because there is this large site on three corners of three streets where it is dilapidated, there are falling-down bits of hoarding, and all of this creates an impression that vandalism is fair game, and everyone around suffers as a result of that—in addition to it being an eyesore.

Really, what we need is a coherent way forward. First of all, Mrs Jones is seeking information. The minister has given some explanation as to how he cannot provide all of that information. But, really, perhaps the leaseholders need to be required to do a certain number of basic things—keep the site clean, make sure that it is not a place where vermin can breed, if it has got construction fences around it, ensure that they are in good order, ensure that the hoarding on the construction fences is in good order, that it basically looks as clean and tidy as it possibly can while this work is being undertaken.

The people who are living in the suburbs around these sites deserve some basic information. They deserve to know whether remediation is going on at that time. They deserve to know whether the remediation is complete, because once the remediation is complete, they have a reasonable expectation that the government would do something about compelling leaseholders to do things with their leases.

I have stood in this place on a number of occasions and we have had debates in this place about people getting around the provisions of the land act and the like who are

land banking. There are people who are land banking all over this town on valuable sites which are usually turned over to multi-unit development in places like Page, in places like Higgins, in places like Giralang, where the service station is on its last legs, and places like Latham, where the service station has been closed as an operating service station for about 10 years. There will be problems there soon because they have not yet started remediation on that site. Until recently it was an active, ongoing business.

These are ongoing problems for people in the suburbs. They have undeveloped or underdeveloped blocks and they do not have enough information. They come to us because the information is not easily accessible. First and foremost, I think that one of the things that we should be doing is being able to provide people with information, either on-site or to be able to direct them to a website which says, "This is what is going on in your suburb. Where are they on the time frame for getting this block remediated and eventually having something else on the spot?"

In the meantime there should be more work done by the compliance people who are responsible for ensuring that blocks are not dirty across the ACT, and ensuring that those blocks are cleaned up as best as is possible given whatever is going on in relation to remediation. The weeds should be gone, the hoardings should be up, the construction fences should be in good order, and the people of the ACT need to know what is going on. And they need to know that this government are being proactive about these things. They have had policies and they went, "You know, we had this policy but it didn't really work," but they have not addressed the issue.

Looking at Mrs Jones's list, there are about a dozen sites across the ACT which are causing inconvenience and are an eyesore in the suburbs, and the people who pay their rates and who pay us to ensure that their suburb is kept clean deserve better service from this government than they have been getting.

I commend Mrs Jones for this motion, and for being proactive on behalf of her constituents not only in Molonglo but across the ACT on this important issue. I think that we will actually get an outcome as a result of this. This will be hard work that is down to Mrs Jones as the person who is prepared to ask the questions and get things done.

**MR RATTENBURY** (Molonglo) (4.43): I thank Mrs Jones for raising this motion today. I am aware it is something that gives concern to the community, and I know it is a source of frustration for people across Canberra. It is also an issue that the Greens have taken an active interest in over the past Assembly. My former colleague Ms Le Couteur also asked questions and sought briefings on this issue. I think it can be said that disused service stations are an unsightly and unwanted addition to our local suburbs.

Ms Le Couteur asked many of the same questions as Mrs Jones in August 2010, and Minister Corbell's response at the time was that there were 15 disused service stations around Canberra. So it looks like two of them have since been redeveloped, which is a good sign.

*Members interjecting—*



**MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER** (Mr Gentleman): Order, members!

**MR RATTENBURY:** There is quite a conversation going on across the chamber. I thought it was interesting that when the Assistant Speaker acknowledged the presence of a former member of the Liberal Party, Mr Mulcahy, there was a distinct lack of “hear, hears” from members of the opposition, who normally are so vocal in their welcoming of guests to the chamber. But I was not here during Mr Mulcahy’s tenure. I cannot imagine why that was the case.

*Members interjecting—*

**MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** Order, members! Mr Rattenbury has the floor.

**MR RATTENBURY:** Returning to the matter at hand, unfortunately, due to changing economic and business circumstances and models, there are now many disused petrol station sites around Canberra. Certainly, if you think about an area like Weston Creek, in the lists that have been discussed today about the various sites it is an area that features prominently.

I was at the Weston Creek Community Council just a couple of weeks ago speaking to the members of the community council and taking questions. One of the issues that came up was the service station sites, and also the fact that in Weston Creek there is now only one service station, and how it is always busy and there is always a queue. It is quite interesting to think about how the economic model has changed—the fact that all of the other ones closed down for lack of business, yet now there is only one and it is generally, I think from most people’s views, overcrowded and they are desperately in need of another service station in the Weston Creek area.

Some of the sites that have closed down, of course, have been redeveloped. I touched on the fact that some have made that progress since 2010. They have become either residential or commercial sites. Unfortunately, some of them are lingering, leaving sorry-looking sites right in the middle of suburbs.

There are environmental health issues associated with chemical contamination from petrol and other fuel leaking into the ground. It is important that these issues are addressed through the appropriate environmental remediation, which does take quite some time in some circumstances. Mr Corbell has given quite some detail about this rehabilitation process, and why, therefore, there are so many sites currently in the process of remediation, and gathering the neighbourhood’s litter, as well as attracting graffiti. It is worth noting that the government did waive the lease variation charge for former petrol station sites to expedite the process of getting these sites ready for reuse.

In terms of what is before us today, I certainly support the basis of Mrs Jones’s motion. I do not think that information about the status of these sites should be a secret. I think that the community should have the opportunity to know more about the status of former petrol station sites.

I do support Mr Corbell’s amendment. I think that in the text that he has brought forward he has provided a level of information that goes some way towards

addressing the issues that Mrs Jones raised, both in her motion and in the comments she has made today.

As Mr Corbell foreshadowed, I had flagged a further amendment to the motion. There was some dispute about how much of that information can be provided. Certainly, in light of the relatively detailed information that Mr Corbell has provided in his comments, particularly about the current status of each site, I think it is best that I not move that amendment today. I appreciate that the minister has brought forward as much information as he could, and I think that has given both Mrs Jones, who moved the motion, and potentially the rest of the community a good update on the status of many of the sites. A lot of the questions that I had sought to resolve through my amendment have been addressed in that.

It is perhaps frustrating for some that not all of the information is available until a later time. Specifically, information about the types of contaminants that are present, how much exists and where the site is at in the remediation process should be available to the public, but given the comments Mr Corbell has made about the EPA processes, we will have to simply accept the information that has been provided thus far.

As a general principle, as a concept about the community right to know when it comes to a range of chemical and pollutant issues, that is a view that the Greens ascribe to very strongly. We have done for a long time, and I think these debates have taken place over some decades regarding the community's right to access information in these areas. I thank the minister for giving the information that he did today.

That said, I would certainly encourage those people who are lessees of the sites to be focused in redeveloping these sites. It is a source of frustration for the community. It is a waste of valuable land in some ways. Having regard to the pressure we have for redevelopment, and with the state of some of the local shopping centres which are very dependent on having a community around them to provide the customer base, the redevelopment of some of these sites is very valuable in re-energising those areas and certainly boosting the ongoing viability of some of those local shops and shopping centres.

I am keen to see these sites redeveloped as quickly as possible. Measures such as waiving the lease variation charge are an important part of that. I thank the minister for the information he provided today, and I welcome the fact that Mrs Jones brought this debate forward to the Assembly today. We will be supporting the amendment from Mr Corbell.

**MRS JONES (Molonglo) (4.50):** To conclude, and in speaking to the amendment, giving locals ordered suburban centres that they deserve and the peace of mind that would ensue from as speedy as possible development of these derelict sites are very important.

I thank the minister for the details he has provided in the amendment and in his speech about the state of sites in general. I will look in detail at my list of sites and the information that has been given and potentially come back with more questions. I am

not here to say that nothing has been done; I am here to shed light on something that is irritating members of the community. If there are, indeed, 13 sites needing to be redeveloped and there are, from my estimate, around 115 suburbs in Canberra, the matter of the future development of these sites is in fact directly relevant to the daily lives of around 10 per cent of the population. Over 40,000 Canberrans live with the eyesore of these sites every morning and every evening at least.

I hope that there will be a stronger emphasis on policy around these areas. For example, Narrabundah resident Ria Warke, who has owned the nearby Dollworks store for more than 20 years, says she cannot believe the site is still vacant. “I look at this every day, along with the rest of the community, and I think it is just an eyesore,” she said, as reported in the *Chronicle* yesterday.

Given the depressing sight that these blocks create and the impact on good, hardworking ratepayers’ lives, I think the minister should keep bringing information to the Assembly about what is going on. Obviously I would prefer that my original motion be agreed to by the Assembly, so we will not be supporting the amendment.

However, I also ask that the minister consider upkeep of the construction fences and the cutting of the grass. At the Watson site in particular, I believe more than 30 per cent of the site is covered in rubbish, given that there are containers and baskets full of rocks on the site. At the Narrabundah site there is a mattress and several broken chairs. I urge the minister to find out if there is something that he can do to have those sites checked again. The Narrabundah site has a fence that is bent and broken. I would like to see a website with some time frames—a linear depiction of where each of these sites is up to. I will continue to shed light on this issue.

In summation, these sites affect good people every day. There is no point in planning a grand scheme to flog off the land from Civic to the lake and put on public display beautiful pictures of how happy life will be for the residents of this great city when the government do not place as high a priority as they could on the daily walks and views of people in the suburbs. What good, indeed, is city to the lake? Where is the minister’s plan for front door to the bus stop? How about the front door to the local shop? How about a plan like from home to school? The government do not have the focus quite right and we will keep reminding them of this for the next several years, I am sure.

Amendment agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

## **Planning—Calwell**

**MR WALL** (Brindabella) (4.53): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) that master plans give the community the opportunity to provide input on how an area may be developed into the future;
  - (b) the ACT Planning Strategy states that “a master plan is a high level plan that sets out outcomes, actions and urban design principles to guide and manage”;
  - (c) the omission of the Calwell precinct in the short and long term strategies set out in the ACT Planning Strategy;
  - (d) that the ACT Government plans to relocate ACT Emergency Services to the Calwell precinct;
  - (e) that a number of groups are expressing interest in establishing community facilities such as child care centres in the Calwell precinct; and
  - (f) the Tuggeranong Homestead, located in the Calwell precinct, holds significant historical and environmental value; and
- (2) calls on the ACT Government to develop a master plan for the Calwell precinct including Tuggeranong Homestead as a priority and table it in the Assembly no later than 30 June 2014.

This motion highlights the need for a strategic plan to be developed for the Tuggeranong Homestead and Calwell group centre. This motion has been brought on as a result of this government failing to acknowledge the importance and significance of this location.

Under this government’s watch, there has been a lack of proactive planning practice. Most of the master plans that have been released to date have been reactive policy development. This motion today presents an opportunity to get ahead of the curve and develop a master plan that is proactive in approach and ensures that the important site is utilised to deliver a vibrant centre in Tuggeranong’s east.

Today the focus is on the Calwell precinct, which surrounds the group centre. Calwell group centre services a wide-reaching area, which includes the suburbs of Calwell, Theodore, Richardson, Isabella Plains and even south into the Lanyon valley. Because of its close proximity to the Monaro Highway, Calwell also caters to the needs of those who reside in cross-border estates such as Royalla, and will potentially cater to the needs of Googong residents once that development becomes populated.

Calwell has rapidly become the heart of south Tuggeranong—a growing and vibrant community which has the added bonus of having at its heart the historically, environmentally and culturally valuable Tuggeranong Homestead.

Tuggeranong Homestead is a site that has a long history. It is a site that was used prior to European settlement by the Indigenous community, with William Edward Thomas Riley witnessing and recording a corroboree on the site as early as the 1820s. It houses the remnants of what was once a thriving grazing property.

Today the site also plays a significant role in maintaining the health of the valley's environment. Tuggeranong Creek flows through the site on its journey towards Lake Tuggeranong, Canberra's most often closed lake. The grounds of the Tuggeranong Homestead have been identified as a site that would be suitable for the development of a wetland in an attempt to improve the quality of water entering Lake Tuggeranong.

The shopping precinct is well used and offers many services to the community. Currently the Calwell pub provides a social hub for the area. There are restaurants, cafes and professional services as well medical practices and a supermarket.

Surrounding the group centre there is a substantial amount of undeveloped land. It is in a prime position given its proximity to the existing facilities, surrounding suburbs and easy access to the main roadways of Johnson Drive and the Monaro Highway. Recently the government announced that they plan to relocate the Tuggeranong State Emergency Service depot to Calwell, identifying a site that is next to the existing ambulance station located on Johnson Drive. This announcement has been widely welcomed by the community, but has again revived concerns that the area lacks a strategic planning oversight. Along with the SES, there is currently a park-and-ride facility under construction, not to mention a number of proponents who wish to establish further facilities, such as a swimming pool, a childcare centre and aged-care facilities. And also there is additional demand for more commercial space.

The effective use of this land is the crux of the issue. According to the ACT planning strategy:

A master plan is a high level plan that sets out outcomes, actions and urban design principles to guide and manage development and/or redevelopment in a particular area or centre ...

Master plans help to define what is important about a place and how its character and quality can be enhanced.

It also states:

A master plan will be prepared for an area that is undergoing change, is identified for urban intensification or where land use changes will be significant to the improvement of that place.

Calwell definitely meets this criterion. The extensive level of interest highlights the importance of ensuring that Calwell and the Tuggeranong Homestead are not only managed to provide good development outcomes but also recognised as being of cultural, historical and environmental significance and need to be preserved.

Yesterday we heard Minister Barr talk proudly about getting the Dickson master plan underway. Everyone in this place will have their own idea of what centres should be prioritised when it comes to master plans. It is the nature of our positions in that we are parochial in our approach, and it is also our obligation to the people that elect us in this place. However, when we see blatant disregard for certain regions of Canberra simply because of the proportion of Labor representation and its electoral significance,

we seem to have a problem. Yesterday Minister Barr quite rightly pointed out the benefits of a master plan for that centre. I quote:

... the master planning program promotes the rejuvenation of our suburban group centres like Dickson.

I can pre-empt what those on the other side will say about my motion today. They will pat themselves on the back for the Erindale master plan and the Tuggeranong master plan, which have both been completed. Only last week we debated in this place a motion brought on by Mr Seselja which discussed parking issues around the Erindale shopping centre. The Erindale master plan will, hopefully, one day address these issues, but is currently challenging the residents and the business owners of that precinct.

In 2011 Mr Smyth moved a motion which called on the then government, among other things:

... to postpone the proposed sale of Section 790, Block 5 in Calwell until it has developed a master plan for the Calwell commercial and shopping precinct and the surrounding area.

At the time this motion was debated, the ACT planning strategy was still in draft form. However, the draft planning strategy, whilst a little contentious in parts, at least provided some hope for the communities that the haphazard approach that had been taking place previously might be coming to an end. It is imperative to establish a mechanism or process to ensure the activation and regeneration of group centres and local shopping precincts.

Today this government has an opportunity to be proactive. It has the opportunity to ensure that the community needs and expectations are met as the Calwell community precinct grows. This can only be genuinely achieved if the proper planning is carried out and a master plan is developed.

**MR CORBELL** (Molonglo—Attorney-General, Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations and Minister for the Environment and Sustainable Development) (5.00): This motion today from Mr Wall relates to the Calwell local centre, the Calwell group centre, in the southern Tuggeranong valley and the challenges for the area, now and into the future.

Canberra is facing challenges—the challenges of a growing population, vulnerability to climate change and energy security. To ensure long-term environmental, social and economic sustainability, we need to decide now what we are prepared to do and how we will manage it for a sustainable future.

The ACT planning strategy recognises the drivers of the change and the need for us as a community to respond appropriately. The planning strategy responds to the community's shared vision for how our city will grow and develop in the long term. The overarching strategic policy, the Canberra plan, sets the scene for the breadth of public policy provision, from the provision of community facilities to opportunity for development and urban renewal. Under that, the planning strategy underpins the

government's commitment to a sustainable future and reinforces the long-term policy intention of a more compact and efficient city, in response to feedback from comprehensive community and key stakeholder consultation.

The planning strategy sets out clear actions under nine strategies to deliver the five outcomes. Some of these actions are immediate and urgent to initiate change, while others will commence and develop over the medium to longer term. The planning strategy calls for master plans to be done responding to areas of specific need and to meet our overall long-term planning objectives.

What are those long-term planning objectives? The long-term planning objectives are to create a more compact, efficient city by focusing urban intensification in town centres, around group centres and along the major public transport routes, and by providing a balance between greenfield development and urban revitalisation.

Therefore each master plan that is developed needs to set out the objectives and strategies to manage development and change in a particular area over time. They work within the context of what is important about a place and how to enhance its character and quality. Community involvement is essential in defining the scope and area for individual master plans. Generally speaking, the master plan program to date has used the following parameters: the creation of a precinct that provides an easy 10–15-minute walk along the streets and paths to a centre or to a rapid transit corridor; recognising natural and recognisable boundaries set by the landscape character and topographic features; the cultural and natural heritage; the gazetted suburb and district boundaries; and the existing land use policy.

The government's strategy to date has been to focus our master planning efforts on those centres and transport corridors that are subject to potential change or redevelopment pressure. To support better integration between transport and land use planning, the government has prioritised our master plans for areas of future growth, making sure that land use and transport are properly integrated. We have funded this program to a tune of \$2 million per year, and an additional \$1 million for an additional year is about to be allocated.

The master plan program is providing and will provide long-term planning for our main transport corridors, town centres and group centres. It is worth highlighting that completed master plans to date include Dickson, Kingston, Kambah and Erindale, as well as the Tuggeranong town centre. We are following through on these master plans through the appropriate statutory amendment to the territory plan. That occurred yesterday in relation to Dickson, with variation 311. The fact that there was little comment on the variation at Dickson highlights the success of an effective and consultative master plan framework that brought a relatively broad community consensus on the key issues.

I will turn to the proposal in relation to Calwell. It is worth putting the request from Mr Wall in relation to Calwell into a broader context. There are already broad numbers of master planning studies underway, including Pialligo, Weston and Oaks Estate. Preliminary work has commenced on Woden town centre, Mawson group

centre and Athllon Drive. The remaining master plans yet to commence in the existing program are for Curtin, Tharwa and the Belconnen town centre. The Belconnen town centre process will be a review of the 2001 master plan process.

As you can see there is already a lot on the books when it comes to master planning being undertaken by my directorate. Therefore, I have circulated an amendment which highlights that the government is open to giving further consideration to the inclusion of Calwell in a future master planning program.

At this point in time, we have a large number of centres already engaged in master planning or scheduled to be included in master planning. I will just go through that priority list. For the current financial year, the priority list is Woden, Mawson, Athllon Drive, City, Tharwa and an overall review of centres policy. Master plans already completed include Pialligo, Weston, Oaks Estate and Holt. The priority list for the future year is Adelaide Avenue; Canberra Avenue, including Manuka; Curtin; and Belconnen. This is consistent with the overall planning strategy which seeks to focus our planning resources in the areas subject to greatest change and consistent with our broader planning objectives.

The government is willing to give further consideration to a number of other group centres, including Calwell, but I should add that Calwell is just one in a long list of other group centres that the government has identified. Mr Wall might be interested in this, Madam Deputy Speaker, if he was listening. Calwell group centre, Charnwood group centre, Chisholm group centre, Conder group centre, Jamison group centre, Kaleen group centre, Kippax group centre and Wanniasa group centre have all been identified for the master planning program but have not been allocated to a schedule. There are also a number of other centres which are subject to further study, including Amaroo, Hawker, Greenway and Northbourne Avenue. These are studies either by the Land Development Agency or as part of the capital metro project.

As you can see, Madam Deputy Speaker, there are a large number of centres that would be keen to see master planning take place and which the government agrees can be considered for scheduling in the master planning program. At this point in time we have a clear priority list for the current year and for the future year, with a large number of studies yet to be completed. The government is willing to give further consideration to Calwell, for scheduling it in a future master planning program, although the timing of that is yet to be determined.

I move:

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

“notes:

- (a) the Government has in place an approved and funded master plan program currently covering Pialligo Rural Village, Weston Group Centre, Oaks Estate, WAM (Woden Town Centre, Mawson Group Centre, Athllon Drive) and Tharwa Rural Village, in addition to those already completed for Tuggeranong Town Centre, Erindale Group Centre, Kambah Village Group Centre, Kingston Group Centre and Dickson Group Centre;



- (b) consistent with the Government's ACT Planning Strategy, master plans will be prepared for group centres, key transport corridors and town centre precincts;
- (c) as master plans are high level documents designed to set out objectives and strategies to manage development and change over time, it is appropriate to focus Government's master planning on areas of significant change and growth; and
- (d) Calwell, and other group centres, will be considered for inclusion in the next round of master planning activity."

I commend my amendment to the Assembly.

**MR SESELJA** (Brindabella) (5.08): I welcome the opportunity to speak today on behalf of the residents of Calwell and, indeed, south-east Tuggeranong. I thank Mr Wall for bringing this motion forward today. I thank him for the hard work he has been doing on behalf of the community of Tuggeranong and south Woden, particularly in this case in taking up the issue for the people of south-east Tuggeranong. Calwell and the surrounding areas have always been an important focus for the Canberra Liberals. We believe that the outer suburbs of Canberra often do get left behind. The community in Calwell have been calling out for something to be done in terms of their local group centre, so this is an important motion for us to be debating and I wholeheartedly welcome it.

I also acknowledge the work that Mr Smyth has done in this area in the past. In 2011 Mr Smyth introduced a motion which noted that there should be a master planning process for Calwell, including planning for new retail and commercial developments to enhance retail trade, specifying land which could be used for additional residential purposes and for new commercial activities, enhancing the link between the Tuggeranong Homestead and the Calwell precinct, enhancing the link between the ambulance station and the Calwell retail precinct, improving amenities for users of public transport and taxis, installing and upgrading lighting and security cameras to enhance security and safety, installing more pedestrian crossings and upgrading signage around the precinct. The motion called on the government to establish a master plan for the area. The motion also addressed the community's concerns in relation to an alternative pool site, park and ride facilities, improving parking conditions and providing bus shelters and paths.

The government's response, an ongoing response to citizens' concerns, was articulated in the *Chronicle*, which stated:

... the ACT chief minister confirmed the area was not a planning priority for the government.

A letter from Ms Gallagher to the Tuggeranong Community Council states that residents concerns about the group centre could be addressed without the need for a master plan and "further land use planning within the group centre is not considered warranted at this time".

The South East Tuggeranong Residents Association has continued to lobby local members, along with the Tuggeranong Community Council. The Canberra Liberals in 2012 listened to the concerns of these organisations and residents and promised that, if elected, we would conduct a comprehensive audit of existing community facilities in south-east Tuggeranong. The intent was that the audit would then be fed into a master planning process for south-east Tuggeranong to establish community facilities such as the hall that residents asked for. This was in addition to the \$350,000 grant we promised to upgrade Calwell oval. In March this year I asked again what action was being taken in Calwell and the minister, Mr Corbell, stated:

The government receives a high volume of interest in master planning exercises across a range of local, group and town centres around the city. The government seeks to prioritise those, and those are outlined in a yearly program of master planning work. Calwell is not currently part of that work.

Today's motion proves that, despite their promises, ACT Labor have failed to take any action in the Calwell precinct and surrounding areas. They are failing to listen to the concerns of local residents and business owners. By doing so they are hindering Calwell from realising its full potential as a community hub. I know that many in the community do support a master planning process for the Calwell group centre. I note that South East Tuggeranong Residents Association president Mr Russ Morison and Mr Nick Tsoulis, the spokesman for the business and group area, have put out a statement. I will read from that statement:

Community and local business hopes Calwell precinct masterplan will be supported by the ACT Legislative Assembly in a bid to see a positive outcome for this disadvantaged area of ACT.

It goes on to say:

Key business groups and local community in the South East Tuggeranong area have announced today its support for the development of local ponds for the Tuggeranong Homestead area as part of a masterplan push for the area.

Spokesperson for the key business groups Mr Russ Morison said today that the South East area of Tuggeranong have alot to contribute to the ACT and Tuggeranong area and the local groups and business will surely be getting behind the restoration of Tuggeranong Creek, Clean Up Lake Tuggeranong strategies and with the broader aims of seeing an eco village established in the Calwell Shops precinct.

“Russ Morison, Chair of (SETRA) South East Tuggeranong Residents Association said “we are very pleased with the ACT Legislative Assembly once again in bringing the discussion of a masterplan as a priority.

...

“We also note the local facilities that will go ahead once a Masterplan has been passed by the ACT Government and ACT Greens and Canberra Liberals ...

There is significant community support. The reason there is significant community support is because they have seen the area falling behind. We have pushed for master plans in other areas and we have seen progress in some of those areas. But what happens when the government does not plan properly is that often poor decisions get made and blocks of land get sold without taking account of the broader context. Parking issues, therefore, do not get properly considered and all of the other factors that go into planning a well-functioning group centre can be missed.

We think there is a compelling case to see a master plan for Calwell. I again commend Mr Wall for bringing this motion forward. I think this is something that should be supported by the Assembly. The government, as we have urged them to do in other areas and as we have in some cases forced them to do in other areas, should take note of what the residents of south-east Tuggeranong are telling them. They should take note of the real need for better planning in this part of Tuggeranong and they should, therefore, support this motion.

**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) (5.15): I thank Mr Wall for raising this issue today, as there is no doubt that the residents of south-east Tuggeranong have a strong interest in the planning and development of their suburbs. However, I would like to bring Mr Wall's attention to the fact that this is not the first time we have discussed the needs of Calwell in this place. In fact, this exact issue regarding the need for a master plan in Calwell was debated in October 2011. The debate was substantial and culminated in quite a long motion being passed which committed the government to delivering a range of actions which I will address shortly.

My former colleague Amanda Bresnan worked hard to represent the residents of south-east Tuggeranong and raised many of the concerns before us today over the term of the previous Assembly. There are a range of valid issues in the area, including transport, land release and government services and facilities. The Greens are committed to ensuring that southern Tuggeranong has improved services and facilities in coming years and, as the Minister for Territory and Municipal Services, I am working to implement a range of improvements.

As Ms Bresnan has outlined in the past, Tuggeranong generally has a number of transport problems, largely due to the way it has been planned and developed and its distance from major employment centres. However, Calwell in particular is one area which has a concentration and diversity of transport problems. The Greens have been long-term advocates for the improved park and ride service at the Calwell group centre. As a group centre, Calwell is ideal for an ACTION park and ride. It will help the residents in this area connect to the bus network and receive the benefits from public transport. We also know a large number of people travel from the regions south of Canberra to the ACT for work and to access services, which is another key reason for having a park and ride at a location such as Calwell.

There are two items in the 2012 parliamentary agreement which directly relate to southern Tuggeranong. The first is ensuring that the federal funding the ACT

government can spend on the Murray-Darling Basin project will be able to cover cleaning up our lakes and waterways and, in particular, Tuggeranong Creek, which runs through the back of Calwell and into Lake Tuggeranong. I believe that some of this funding will be available for creating some wetlands along Tuggeranong Creek, which will help reduce the sedimentation and algal blooms in Lake Tuggeranong.

The second issue is a community needs analysis of government services which will be undertaken in southern Tuggeranong. This will include a feasibility study for a library in Lanyon. This analysis and accompanying community consultation will be an excellent opportunity for the community to discuss the services and facilities which the government provides as opposed to the master planning process which, being a planning process, can really only discuss zoning of areas in any meaningful way. I think that provides a much more comprehensive approach and that it actually identifies what some of the real gaps are in addition to simply what the land use should be.

I do sometimes wonder whether the Canberra Liberals think that a master plan is a silver bullet, particularly given the number of motions that we have seen in the Assembly in recent years. I am not sure whether they have actually engaged in any of the master planning processes held over the past few years and whether they realise they do not suddenly deliver all the services that they call for overnight. We have had the debate about specific master plans many times in recent years. Mr Wall and other MLAs who were not here in the last Assembly may not realise that we have had so many requests—excuse me—for other master plans that the Greens ended up working with the government to establish a process—I think that is the first time anybody has sneezed mid-speech in the time that I have been in the chamber, but there you go.

**Mr Coe:** How will Hansard record it, I wonder?

**MR RATTENBURY:** I am not sure what Hansard will do with that, but I wish them well!

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** “Member sneezed”, I would imagine.

**MR RATTENBURY:** We had so many requests for other master plans that the Greens ended up working with the government last term to establish a process for prioritising master plans for areas which were undergoing significant change or growth. I think that is probably where the focus should be—where we are seeing significant change and growth.

It does take considerable government time and resources to undertake a master planning process, including substantial community consultation and input, and generally culminating in a territory plan variation process. As members might imagine, it is difficult to rush these processes. We need to allow sufficient time and funding for them to run their full course in the development stages. I know that, from the ones we have seen, the community expresses a very considerable interest. Certainly, when I have been along to some of the consultation processes, I have found it a very valuable process in the sense that many members of the community come forward with ideas that are really reflective of their local knowledge and reflect the fact that they have a good sense of what an area needs and what might be possible.

I would also like to point out that Tuggeranong has not been ignored in these processes either. Of the five completed master plans, which Mr Corbell notes in his amendment, three of them have been in the Tuggeranong area—the town centre, the Erindale group centre and Kambah village.

Coming back to the motion before us today, as I said, we discussed this exact issue around 18 months ago. The motion was passed with many amendments from both the Labor Party and the Greens at the time. I foreshadow that I will be moving an amendment to Mr Corbell's amendment which reflects the fact that the Assembly has already spoken on this issue. Therefore, I think it is important today to reaffirm the Assembly's desire for Calwell to be on the list and on the program because, clearly, there are issues being raised.

As the minister for TAMS, I did want to update the Assembly on the Calwell park and ride. I know this came up in question time the other day, but in the context of this debate I think it is worth mentioning it. The Calwell park and ride will replace the existing site on Webber Crescent at the Calwell shops. The new site will include approximately 60 spaces to replace the existing 12 spaces that are currently located in the shopping centre car park.

As part of the process, the new bus stops on Johnson Drive have been completed and the majority of the earthworks on the park and ride facility have been completed. As I mentioned in question time the other day, an existing high voltage electricity cable requires relocation by ACTEW to allow the new kerb to be installed and, unfortunately, that has created some delay. With Tread Lightly earthworks going into administration, there has been some further delay in that project. The project had been scheduled for completion for the week ending 21 June this year. This will be delayed by approximately six weeks while an alternative contractor can be identified to complete the works.

Mr Wall in his motion also raised the issue of Tuggeranong Homestead. I will quickly address some issues around that. It is of significance to the local and wider community. It is listed on the ACT heritage register, and integrating it into a living area weaves heritage into people's daily lives in a more meaningful way. TAMS is currently the custodian of the Tuggeranong Homestead. The ACT Property Group actually manages the property in accordance with the provisions of a conservation management plan from 2008 which provides direction on use and management and in consultation with the minders of Tuggeranong Homestead.

I understand that the development of a master plan that recognises and incorporates the significant heritage and environmental values of the Tuggeranong Homestead and area, together with use and management, would be of value to the long-term management and planning of the homestead. Any consultation in a master plan would need to include the minders of the homestead, simply given their knowledge and the considerable work they have done over the years. The homestead, of course, is currently leased to a private operator until September 2017 for a range of uses, including a cafe and catering for conferences, weddings and functions. Of course, the popular markets are held there. There is a whole range of other activities that go on.

There are quite a lot of issues of discussion around the Calwell group centre. I think there are some key issues, including ensuring that the area is properly planned. I note there are a significant number of blocks—community, residential and commercial—which are likely to be released for sale in coming years. There are also issues around the planning of waterway improvements through pond sites, the lack of provision of child care and a lack of dental facilities. There is an issue around the best location of an SES base and the need for more diverse residential housing.

I note that with the release of a number of blocks there is concern in the community that people may not be consulted on the proposed use of the blocks which are intended for land release. They are keen for the community to be included in any consultation before any of those blocks are sold. There is an issue here of matching up the master planning process and the timing of the release of any of those lands. Given how long a master planning process can take, given the level of community engagement that is required in that process, I would urge that before any of those blocks are released there is a good level of community consultation. I think it is, as much as possible, valuable to have done the master planning process first. But I think we can do a lot of good work with the community outside of any master planning process if there is pressure on to release those blocks, whether they be for commercial or residential purposes.

I have been contacted by the south-east Tuggeranong residents group. We are organising a meeting in the near future to discuss needs in their community. I think that will also help me get a better sense, both as the Greens member and as the Minister for Territory and Municipal Services, of some of the gaps that exist in the area.

I will be supporting Mr Corbell's amendment. I think it provides some additional information and some context for this. I was also pleased to see in that master planning program the inclusion of the Woden-Athllon-Mawson corridor. This is significant in that it is not just a group or town centre; it is actually a master plan for a transport corridor. That is something new and something very valuable if we are to turn this city into a more sustainable city in the future. I will now move the amendment circulated in my name, which is an amendment to Mr Corbell's amendment:

Omit subparagraph (d), substitute:

“(d) that on 26 October 2011, a motion was passed in the Assembly which, amongst other things, called on the Government to:

(i) prioritise a master plan for the Calwell Group Centre and surrounding community and commercial facilities zones in line with the need recognised in the ACT Draft Planning Strategy and the previously agreed master plan process; and

(ii) through the master planning process, identify:

(A) a site for a second childcare centre in Calwell;

(B) a site for a dental practice in Calwell; and

(C) an alternative site for the proposed pool development; and

- (2) calls on the Government to ensure that the Calwell Group Centre, and the surrounding community and commercial facilities zones, is added to the master plan program.”.

The purpose of the amendment is to recognise that the Assembly has debated this issue before and to reflect on the earlier motion passed by the Assembly. Bringing this back today, as I said earlier, simply reaffirms the Assembly’s commitment to ensuring that the Calwell group centre is given a good analysis as part of the master planning program. I commend the amendment to the Assembly.

**MR GENTLEMAN** (Brindabella) (5.26): I thank Mr Wall for bringing this important motion to the Assembly, and I want to begin by reflecting on Mr Seselja’s remarks—mine are not negative at all, so do not worry about that—on the press release from the president of the South East Tuggeranong Residents Association and Mr Tsoulias, a spokesman for businesses in the area covered by the South East Tuggeranong Residents Association. I want to remind members of the hard work that Mr Tsoulias has put in over the years.

He has lobbied this government, in particular, very hard and encouraged community support for the Calwell group centre. He has joined with government to dramatically increase parking at the shopping centre over the years and has been successful in calling on government to build the extra 60 park and ride spaces, as we have heard. He continues to lobby government to improve access for interstate shoppers which, I do know, continues to grow, having lived in the suburb for quite a number of years. That has been the growth area. While residential growth has gone up a little—over 10 years ago it started to grow a little—interstate growth at the Calwell group centre is making it busier than before.

The motion refers to the group centre itself, and that location in south Tuggeranong has not experienced significant change in population or employment. Whilst we have had some interstate visitors, the numbers in employment appear to me to stay the same, especially relative to other parts of Canberra.

The metropolitan structure for growth locations is set out clearly in the ACT’s planning strategy, and the ACT planning strategy, which was made effective as a notifiable instrument from 1 September 2012, also sets out the course for change to achieve the desired future outcomes. These desired future outcomes, as expressed by the Canberra community, are for a more compact, more sustainable and more vibrant city. This is described under the strategy’s five outcome statements, and I quote from desired outcome B in the planning strategy. It provides:

In 2030 Canberra will be a city where everyone can take advantage of its network of centres, open spaces and modes of travel to enjoy a sense of wellbeing and participate in a vibrant civic and cultural life.

These outcome statements are the targets for Canberra's development and were developed following extensive consultation in 2010 on *Time to talk Canberra 2030* and in 2011 in response to the draft ACT planning strategy. The consultation clearly demonstrates that the Canberra population knew and understood the benefits of greater intensity in town centres, along transitways and in employment nodes that are serviced by public transport. It is this community-driven prioritisation that has determined the master plan program currently underway.

We have listened to the people of Canberra in terms of where our priorities for planning work lie. The Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate has been given the task of delivering the master plan program on behalf of the government, with a prioritised list of the places in most need. The Calwell group centre is not on the list at this time.

There is unprecedented change being experienced today in Belconnen and Woden town centres. The opportunities and initiatives for growth and development mean that these are the highest priority places that are in need of master planning processes.

To date, the government has completed master plans for the Dickson, Kingston, Kambah and Erindale group centres. It has also completed a master plan for the Tuggeranong town centre that envisages and will facilitate renewal for that district. It is worth noting that the Dickson and Kingston group centres were given priority with regard to improving retail opportunities in the inner areas and revitalising these centres. These completed master plans are resulting in action.

On Tuesday, 14 May 2013, this year, only yesterday, my colleague the Minister for the Environment and Sustainable Development, Mr Corbell, announced the development's progress at Dickson, a group centre that is also an employment node along the development corridor of Northbourne Avenue's priority transit route. Dickson is also a key node for the new capital metro project. This is a perfect example of the government listening to the Canberra community through the development of the ACT planning strategy, prioritising master planning work in response to the strategy, and resulting in action on the ground. Master plans set out objectives and strategies to manage change over time. They work within the context of the place and its community and with what is important about the place and how to enhance its character and quality.

The Calwell group centre has a range of community facilities, including a church, a playground and a childcare centre. It has a retail centre with a supermarket and entertainment venue and a service station. And I have been lobbied of course by Mr Tsoulis and some of his colleagues to assist them in the construction of a Kingswim pool at the Calwell centre as well.

In order to encourage the use of public transport, the government is currently building the park and ride facility, which we have heard, linking it with express bus services to the city. Express services together with the park and ride facility are options for people to travel from lower density parts of the city like Calwell to major employment centres like the city centre. The government is doing good work for the people of that part of Canberra.



In more recent years, the Calwell group centre precinct has had a small quantity of medium-density housing constructed in the otherwise suburban low-density neighbourhood. And today the adjacent fire and ambulance station serving the wider district is undergoing redevelopment, as we have heard, in the new emergency services program of facility upgrades.

There is land in the vicinity of the group centre that is undeveloped, but this does not justify the need for a master plan, certainly not at this point in time and given other priorities. In defining the scope for master plans, community involvement is vitally important. At present the justification for a master plan at the Calwell group centre lacks any urgency or community pressure for change. The master plan program is established with a focus on areas requiring or undergoing rapid change and that need intervention to assist in directing this to the optimum, most sustainable outcome, and in areas where we believe change is necessary and where growth should be focused to deliver the most sustainable urban outcomes.

The government has been delivering plans in these areas, and these plans are starting to deliver positive outcomes in development and change. And it is important to remember that planning is dynamic and that the master plans are not static documents but important plans to inform and implement necessary actions to drive the most positive and integrated change possible.

In summary, the government does routinely review programs and initiatives that are underway, and if there were a need for this centre to be master planned, then it would be reconsidered. However, the focus of the resources of the government is on places of greater need. So I do thank members for their input on this motion and thank Mr Wall for the motion.

**MR WALL** (Brindabella) (5.35): In closing the debate, Mr Rattenbury's amendment will ensure that the Calwell precinct is placed on the list of priorities for master plans in the future. That is most definitely a win for the community. It is a win for the residents of south-east Tuggeranong. It is a win for the business owners there, and it is a win for those that are looking to invest in or place further development in that precinct.

Whilst the amendment that Mr Rattenbury has moved does change much of the intent and certainly does not place a deadline on the master plan being completed, which is disappointing, it is an issue that I and my colleagues Mr Smyth and Mr Seselja, while he remains in the Assembly, will continue to fight for and ensure that it is completed to offer that surety for the community. It is most certainly testimony to the consistent determination of the Canberra Liberals to ensure that the community's views and the community's expectations are reflected in the way that their shopping centre is developed.

Mr Smyth, for a number of years, championed the Calwell precinct and championed having a master plan developed for that area, as has Mr Seselja. And for that, I congratulate them, and the Canberra Liberals will be supporting Mr Rattenbury's amendment.

Amendment to amendment agreed to.

Amendment, as amended, agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

## **Volunteers**

**MS PORTER** (Ginninderra) (5.37): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) that 13 to 19 May is the National Volunteers Week;
- (b) the important contribution that volunteers make to our community;
- (c) that 2013 marks the 40th birthday of The Canberra Hospital and that the Hospital Kiosk under the auspices of the Woden Valley Auxiliary opened its doors for business on 6 August 1973;
- (d) that the ACT community has one of the strongest volunteering workforce per head of the adult population of any of the capital cities;
- (e) that the work of our volunteers enriches and strengthens our community through their many hours of selfless work and community spirit;
- (f) that volunteers are active in all sectors of our community including sport and recreation, heritage, health, education, caring science and research and the environment; and
- (g) that volunteers are represented by all age groups and genders; and

(2) reaffirms the importance of:

- (a) encouraging members of the community of all ages to consider volunteering; and
- (b) expresses its heartfelt thanks to every volunteer in our community and congratulates them for their tireless efforts to make our community stronger, healthier, happier and more environmentally sustainable.

I am glad to have the opportunity to raise the importance of volunteers in our community and the significant contribution they make to our everyday lives. It is something we should constantly do. However, in National Volunteer Week I take this opportunity to move this motion as we reflect on the contribution to our society and to our economy. As we reflect on that contribution, I also note the special significance of 2013—that we can acknowledge the role of volunteers in the Canberra centenary celebrations and the role of volunteers in relation to health, as 2013 also marks the 40th birthday of the Canberra Hospital.

National Volunteer Week is celebrated from 13 to 19 May with Australia celebrating and thanking more than 6 million volunteers who contribute over 730 million hours of unpaid work to their communities each year to help others, and these figures are conservative. The ABS general social survey conducted in 2010 estimated 6.4 million adults, 36 per cent of the population, do voluntary work each year across Australia. It is appropriate, therefore, that the theme of National Volunteer Week is, “Thanks a million”. The week was officially launched on Monday evening at the Australian War Memorial by the Hon Mark Butler MP, Minister for Social Inclusion, a fitting place to recognise the volunteer effort. National Volunteer Week was first held in 1989 and was originally designed as a recruitment strategy and only more recently was turned into an opportunity to thank volunteers as well. This formally has been the theme for International Volunteer Day every year on 5 December.

In the ACT the highlight of National Volunteer Week are the 2013 ACT volunteer of the year awards held at Old Parliament House this morning. Unfortunately, due to the sitting of the Assembly, I was unable to join in the celebrations for the first time for a very long time. However, I take this opportunity to congratulate the 2013 ACT volunteer of the year, Peter Russell, whose volunteer role of 10 years with the YMCA of Canberra Sailing Club has seen him support scores of people with disabilities and help them enjoy sailing. I congratulate also the 2013 ACT volunteer team of the year—Lanyon youth and community volunteers, a group of 20 volunteers supporting their community through bus transportation of young people, working at the Lanyon food hub and emergency relief centre, working in the Lanyon Ladle community soup kitchen and assisting in child care.

The awards were hosted by Volunteering ACT and recognised the dedicated service of individuals and teams of volunteers in our community. This is also a way of shining a spotlight on this service not in any way indicating that any volunteer is in any way better or more worthy than any other. This year a special award was awarded to one of those who have given a half a century of service—50 years of voluntary service in Canberra.

Guest speakers for the event included Major General Michael Jeffrey, Patron of Volunteering ACT, and Natalie Howson, Director-General of the Community Services Directorate. As I said, the awards publicly recognise the contribution of ACT volunteers and celebrate their voluntary effort. The awards showcase an array of ACT voluntary work and acknowledge a number of very committed and generous skilful people who work tirelessly in our community to improve the lives of others in our society. People can get involved in the National Volunteer Week campaign by visiting Volunteering Australia’s Facebook and Twitter accounts and posting their own messages of thanks to 6 million volunteers around the country.

On Monday night, the official launch, I was privileged to launch a centenary project in the form of Volunteering ACT’s 100 volunteer stories campaign. This calls on organisations and individuals to share their stories of volunteers and volunteering which have made Canberra what it is today. Stories can be submitted by text, photo or video to Volunteering ACT or to any Community CPS branch across Australia.

Submissions for the 100 volunteer stories campaign close on Friday, 27 September 2013. Stories will be published on Volunteering ACT's website and circulated through their social media, culminating in a ceremony of recognition on International Volunteer Day, which, as I said before, occurs on 5 December this year. I am not quite sure what day of the week it is, but certainly that is a great day celebrated by all volunteers in Canberra and across Australia.

I believe everyone has a volunteer story they can tell, and each one would be individual and would be very interesting. I encourage everybody to submit their stories. At the ceremony when we launched the 100 stories campaign at the War Memorial on Monday night I was asked to tell my story about how I started volunteering as a child and how my volunteering changed over time. That is the important thing these stories tell us—our volunteer journey can start as we are children but then as our lifestyles and circumstances change so does our volunteering often change.

On behalf of the ACT government, I congratulate not only the ACT volunteer of the year award winners and the category winners but also all the volunteers and all the volunteering organisations that make such an important contribution to our community and manage and sustain this voluntary effort.

In the Canberra centenary year—2013—we also mark the 40th birthday of the Canberra Hospital. So it is very timely that I say a few words about volunteering in relation to health. To reiterate the comments the Chief Minister made in the chamber yesterday and those I made at the volunteer appreciation breakfast I attended on Monday morning, I wish to pass on the government's thanks to all these volunteers for their continued hard work and dedication. As you know, ACT Health has over 450 volunteers that work across all of the areas of Health, or a great deal of them in any case. ACT Health volunteers' age group ranges from 18 to 85. Volunteers give their time to assist by working across 20 programs within ACT Health, including Canberra Hospital Auxiliary, chaplaincy, hand and foot massage, paediatrics, and the women's and children's hospital, to name a few. As the Chief Minister said yesterday, other not-for-profit organisations also provide voluntary services within the hospital, including the Cancer Council Wig Service, Bosom Buddies, and the Miracle Babies Foundation.

On 1 May 1973 the then Woden Valley Hospital opened with 36 beds along with a departments of radiology, physiotherapy, pathology and social work. On 3 May 1973 the pharmacy commenced and the casualty department opened for treatment of minor casualties, 14 hours daily, on 7 May. In 1973 the hospital kiosk under the auspices of the Woden Valley Auxiliary opened for business, and 40 years on we celebrate a small group of volunteers who commenced in the same year and who are today still providing volunteer support to the hospital auxiliary and also to pastoral care.

Pastoral care volunteers from the Society of the Sacred Mission continue to assist with wheeling patients to church services held on Sunday within the hospital. I imagine some of those volunteers would have been involved in assisting many of the patients to attend an Anzac Day service that I attended on behalf of the Assembly some little while ago. As the Chief Minister mentioned yesterday, three volunteers have been

working with these programs since their inception. One of those spoke yesterday about her experience, and she said that in the 50 years, I think it was, that she has been in Canberra, she has volunteered in 40 years of that. To all the volunteers of ACT Health, you are an inspiration to volunteering. Your dedication in supporting the staff and the patients is greatly appreciated, and we thank you.

According to Australian Bureau of Statistics research from 2010 the ACT community has a high volunteering rate of 38 per cent, which is above the national average and on par with Queensland. This pattern was evident across most age groups and types of activities and organisations. As the Chief Minister said yesterday, the ACT performs particularly well in the 18 to 24 age group. Like other jurisdictions, more women volunteer than men, however, only just. More and more men are joining the volunteer workforce every day.

There are 2,500 non-profit and community organisations in the ACT, most of which work with volunteers. Most volunteers work in sport and recreation organisations followed by education, community welfare and religious organisations. The rate of regular volunteering varies as people move through different stages of their lives, as I said before. People are more likely to volunteer if they undertook some voluntary work as a child, as I did, and if their parents were also volunteers, as mine were. Whilst I started off my voluntary experience as a Red Cross volunteer, I then went on to volunteer as a nursing sister in the Northern Territory. As the wife of a person working in remote communities, one was required to volunteer time with whatever skill you had. I then went on to volunteer when I arrived in the ACT as a way of finding out how my community ticked and making connections in my community. Now as a member of this Legislative Assembly I am unable, as you would understand, Mr Assistant Speaker, to volunteer during the day. So I volunteer on the weekends for Greening Australia, for my community fire unit when it is operational and also for my Landcare group, the Friends of the Pinnacle.

Organisations are recognising that young people are developing through volunteering a sense of belonging in the community and they are using their volunteer effort as a pathway to employment through gaining work experience and skills. It is not widely recognised that many people volunteer for reasons such as that—to gain skills and experience as a pathway to employment. It should be recognised there are many, many motivations to volunteer, and not all of them are just because one wants to help the community. As the volunteer I was referring to at the hospital said yesterday, she always has gained more from her volunteering than she has actually given.

As I mentioned before, there is a great diversity of volunteering roles in the ACT, including in sectors such as sport, art, heritage, environmental protection, health, education, science, emergency services, policing, transport and caring roles such as friendly visiting, and not forgetting boards of governance and administration. However, volunteers are often unseen and unappreciated. That is why weeks like this are so important. Whether behind the scenes or way out in front, volunteers are there making a difference every day. Do we stop and think about the numerous volunteers in school canteens, for instance, in school reading programs, the P&C and the school boards? On weekends so many are engaged in sport across Canberra ovals—hundreds of people giving their time and energy without payment.

Volunteers play a key role in supporting the smooth running and the welcoming atmosphere of Canberra's major public events, for example, the centenary celebrations and the ever-popular National Multicultural Festival. The role of volunteers at these events builds our sense of community and plays a significant role in the enjoyment, learning and appreciation we all experience by attending. However, it is not just social capital; it is also the economic contribution to the nation, and the jury is still out on what this means in real terms. Needless to say, it is probably in the billions.

On behalf of the government and during National Volunteer Week, I want to acknowledge the immense contribution that volunteering makes to the ACT community, both socially and financially. I encourage members of the community of all ages to consider volunteering and the great benefits it brings to us as individuals and collectively as a community. Most importantly, I thank all volunteers for their energy, commitment and skills that make our community stronger, healthier, happier and more environmentally sustainable. I urge all members in this place to make sure they thank a volunteer this week.

**MR HANSON** (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (5.51): I will start by thanking Mary Porter as a volunteer this week. I will take her at her word. My initial thanks are to Ms Porter for bringing this motion before the Assembly today. So I have at least achieved one thing that Mary Porter has not. On a sensible note, I really commend Ms Porter for bringing this motion before the Assembly. I think this is an annual event, the annual Mary Porter volunteer motion. Speaking for the opposition, we do enjoy the opportunity to talk about volunteers in our community. I think this is a nice occasion when the whole Assembly can actually get together and agree on something. At least we do that once a year, Mr Assistant Speaker.

**Ms Porter:** Glad of the opportunity, Mr Hanson.

**Mr Barr:** Are you sure you are going to cope with this emotionally, Jeremy?

**MR HANSON:** Volunteering is about helping others in our community and has many benefits. Members opposite are interjecting. Not more of your barbs are they, Mr Barr—your cutting barbs? It is not only positive for the community; I think it is also important for the individuals themselves. Volunteering is a highly personal form of contributing into the world we live in and contributing to our community and its lifestyle. Canberrans are very generous with their time and skill when it comes to volunteering in the ACT. It has the highest rate of volunteering; 38 per cent of our population volunteers.

Thousands of Canberrans give thousands of their hours to service organisations every year. The diversity of the ACT's community interest is reflected in the range of volunteering activities engaged with. The primary area is sport and physical recreation. I must say a big hello here to the Easts under-seven rugby union coaches. I would not want that job, I can assure you—trying to chase a bunch of under-sevens around. Thanks very much to the Easts' coaches. Community welfare has 19 per cent and education and training is also 19 per cent.

The question is: why do so many people volunteer? There are numerous benefits. Often they have been measured; they have been recorded and documented. The most important of the benefits, of course, are the development of social cohesion and a healthier, more vibrant community. There are also many benefits for the individual person who volunteers. It is a chance to connect with their community, to meet people and to make friends. Volunteering also adds to increased confidence and self-esteem. It can also be an opportunity to develop new skills such as practical IT skills and media and organisation skills, and even to pass those back to the community.

Volunteers work in many areas including organisations relating to the environment, health, welfare, sport, recreation, education, human rights, arts, religion, community services and emergency services. Many volunteers also work alone unrecognised, providing informal support within their neighbourhood. Volunteering also has practical health benefits. It has been said older people who volunteer have longer life expectancy.

Just because volunteer work is unpaid, it does not mean that the skills learned are necessarily basic. Many volunteering opportunities provide extensive training. For example, some volunteers become experienced crisis counsellors. Others volunteer for a men's or women's shelter or become a knowledgeable guide while donating to the National Gallery or the Australian War Memorial. Volunteering can also build upon skills that volunteers already have and use them to great benefit in the community.

When it comes to volunteering, passion and positivity are the only requirements. Many people find that volunteering is a fun way, an easy way, to explore interests and passions. By doing volunteer work, many people find meaningful and interesting ways to relax and escape from day-to-day work, school or family commitments. It also provides opportunities for renewed creativity, motivation and vision that can carry over into volunteers' personal and professional lives.

Volunteering ACT is an amazing Canberra organisation which brings together many, but not all, Canberra organisations that work with volunteers. Volunteering ACT is guided by previous Canberran of the Year CEO Maureen Cane and her volunteer board. Volunteering ACT is a membership-based not-for-profit peak body for volunteering in the ACT, representing volunteers and volunteer organisations in various government and community consultations and forums.

One thing that the Volunteering ACT does organise, of course, is the volunteer of the year awards. In previous years it has been won by some incredible Canberrans. I would like to note some of those category winners from 2013: ACT volunteer of the year was Peter Russell, nominated by the YMCA of Canberra. ACT volunteer team of 2013, the Lanyon Youth and Community Volunteers, was nominated by the YWCA of Canberra.

Going through some of the individual category winners, you can see the diversity here in terms of who has won. In the arts and environment category, in the highly commended award went to Kerin Cox, who was nominated by the National Gallery of Australia voluntary guides association. I would like to read out what each of them has

won their awards for, but obviously I do not have time, unfortunately. The winner in the arts and environment category was Michael Sim, nominated by the Isaacs Ridge Mount Mugga Mugga Parkcare Group.

In the community care and health category, the highly commended award went to Dr Colin Seaniger, nominated by the Salvation Army ACT and south New South Wales division. The winner was Judith Middlebrook, nominated by Clare O'Brien. In the community service category, the highly commended award went to Chris Ellis, nominated by Kippax Uniting Church, and the winner was Barbara Edward, nominated by the Gungahlin VIEW Club. Also winning was Ian Goudie, nominated by Diversity ACT Community Services. In the category of education, science and technology, the winner was Charmaine Honey, nominated by Mental Illness Education ACT.

For sport and recreation, the winner was Peter Russell, nominated by the YMCA of Canberra. For emergency services, the winner was Joan Robson, nominated by the Australian Red Cross ACT. The centenary volunteer award winners were Marjorie Boyer and Sheila Turner—

*At 6 pm, in accordance with standing order 34, the debate was interrupted. The motion for the adjournment of the Assembly having been put and negatived, the debate was resumed.*

**MR HANSON:** Winners of the centenary volunteer award were Marjorie Boyer and Sheila Turner, nominated by Palliative Care ACT. In the arts and environment category, the team winner was Project 6029, nominated by the Australian Railway Historical Society ACT. The team category winner for the community care and health was Bosom Buddies hospital visiting and support team, nominated by Bosom Buddies. It is great to see them win. I think many of us have been involved personally with Bosom Buddies.

In the community services category, the highly commended award went to Ronald McDonald House Canberra volunteers, nominated by Ronald McDonald House Canberra. The winner was Lanyon Youth and Community Volunteers, nominated by the YWCA of Canberra Mura Lanyon Youth and Community Centre. In the category of education, science and technology, the winner was the Monday, Wednesday and Friday morning volunteer team, nominated by Questacon.

In the category for sport and recreation, the winner was Heart Foundation walking—walk organiser heroes, nominated by the Heart Foundation ACT. In the youth team category, the winner was St Jude's youth program, nominated by the St Vincent de Paul Society. For emergency services, the highly commended award went to the AFP volunteers and policing program, nominated by the Australian Federal Police. The winner was the ACT State Emergency Service nominated by the ACT State Emergency Service.

Congratulations to all the winners, both the teams and the individuals, for the ACT volunteer of the year this year. I would like to now turn to some of the great volunteers that we have across the health system, but particularly at—



**Mr Barr:** Are you going to read the org chart, are you?

**MR HANSON:** I will not be reading the org chart, Mr Barr, but thanks for the advice. I know that you enjoyed that one.

**Mr Barr:** It was one of your most glorious moments.

**MR HANSON:** It was, indeed. Many Canberrans would be familiar with the amazing work of volunteers at the Canberra Hospital. There are two highly visible volunteer areas at the hospital. One is the Canberra Hospital Auxiliary. The services provided by the auxiliary include the auxiliary kiosk, the trolley service to the wards, hospital guides and a library service for the patients and staff. The other is the Canberra Hospital Foundation. The fundraising volunteers assist by selling raffle tickets and tickets for events such as the cancer ball. I would like to commend John de la Torre who spent many years as the chair of the Canberra Hospital Foundation.

There are many other quiet achievers who volunteer as well with perhaps a little less recognition. There are, of course, all the people involved in pastoral care and chaplaincy at the hospital. They perform a great role in supporting chaplaincy and pastoral care at TCH, at Calvary hospital and throughout our hospital system.

In aged care and rehabilitation, meal and activity assistant volunteers assist elderly patients to open packaging on meal trays and encourage patients to complete their meals. They also help elderly patients to attend designated activities and physio sessions.

The Canberra community dialysis centre volunteers provide support to assist patients and staff within the Canberra community dialysis centre. Under the community aged care program, volunteers read to clients, write letters, read poetry and play games. The discharge lounge support person provides a welcoming atmosphere for patients and their family members whilst patients are waiting to be formally discharged.

The hand and foot massage volunteers provide a massage service for oncology patients and in the day ward. In the intensive care unit, the intensive care volunteers provide the supporting link between relatives and families for ICU and HDU patients and administering and medical staff. PatCH volunteers—they are actually quite well known—provide caring, efficient services that enhance the activities of the professional staff in the paediatric ward.

Volunteers in the speech pathology aphasia talkback program provide a service to speech pathology patients who have registered for a 10-week talkback group. The volunteers in the veterans' lounge provide support to veterans and their families during hospital treatment. And the Women and Children's Hospital way finding volunteers guide and orientate visitors, staff and patients to the Women and Children's Hospital from other areas of the hospital.

There are so many people that I would like to talk about and to congratulate for the role that they play in volunteering in our community. When you look at the

Volunteering ACT member agencies, the extensive list of people who contribute, both on an individual basis and organisations, it really is quite humbling to know that there are so many people out there working hard for our community for little or no gain at all.

In conclusion, I would like to particularly note our service organisations—organisations like Lions. But I would also like to pay particular commendation to the Rotary Club of the ACT. I am a Rotarian and I understand their work very well. It does not mean that they do necessarily more than other groups but as a group that I am a member of, I do take particular heed of what they do.

My own club, the Rotary Club of Canberra Weston Creek, shows me an example of what people can do on a local level. That is a group of about 40 to 50 individuals who get together, have comradeship but also do fantastic work in the Weston Creek area for the broader Canberra community and also support an international program. They are just a very representative group of our community doing their great work.

Thank you, Ms Porter, for again bringing the volunteer motion before the Assembly. I congratulate you for doing so. I commend Ms Porter's motion to the Assembly.

**MR RATTENBURY** (Molonglo) (6.06): I too would like to thank Ms Porter for bringing on this motion today. And what better day than today to express our thanks as an Assembly to the volunteers of this city? National Volunteer Week commenced on Monday and this morning the 2013 ACT volunteer of the year awards were held at Parliament House. I would like to congratulate Peter Russell, who was announced as the 2013 ACT volunteer of the year, who has spent 10 years volunteering with the YMCA Canberra Sailing Club and supporting people with disability to enjoy sailing. The Lanyon youth and community volunteers are the 2013 ACT volunteer team of the year. They provide bus transportation of young people, work at the Lanyon food hub emergency relief centre, work in the Lanyon Ladle community soup kitchen and assist with child care.

There were many other winners in the different categories and I would like to offer congratulations to them all. I also congratulate and say thank you to all of Canberra's volunteers for the time and effort they have put in this year to making this city a better place.

There is no doubt about the importance of volunteering. Volunteers and the services they perform are vital to the ACT community. Canberrans are avid volunteers, with around 32 per cent of the ACT's total population involved in some form of voluntary work. Every day Canberrans contribute their time towards a range of activities and services that help build the fabric of our society, such as assisting refugee children with reading, running sporting events, delivering services to the homeless and planting trees to help restore our environment. There are the folks who get up early to provide breakfast to people in need or even train to prepare for a bushfire season.

I would like to make specific mention of our bushfire volunteers, who work closely with the Emergency Services Agency and TAMS each bushfire season to protect the homes and lives of Canberrans across the city. We know that this is a volunteer role

that requires a high commitment of time, expertise and training and, inevitably, can involve firefighters putting themselves in personal danger in order to protect the community. This is the kind of commitment that we can never thank them enough for.

A not so small NGO is the RSPCA, which is also in the business of saving lives, albeit the lives of the animals of the ACT. The RSPCA provides a great case study of an organisation that maximises its volunteer support to best effect. In 2011-12 it utilised the support of more than 500 volunteers, including 100 new recruits. Volunteers assist with day-to-day care of animals and people clearly enjoy their involvement.

In a good demonstration of how an organisation can forge networks through the community, the RSPCA has commenced a partnership at the AMC for some staff and detainees to learn animal husbandry skills and provides an opportunity to learn skills that might be useful for detainees for future employment. The RSPCA has also partnered with Anglicare to place “senior” animals with some of our senior residents in Anglicare accommodation, as older animals often struggle to find homes due to their age. There is no doubt that the RSPCA is building its capacity to fully engage in many aspects of the Canberra community, and this is fostered and supported by their active engagement of volunteers.

With respect to a group of volunteers close to my heart and who support the work that TAMS undertakes, I would like to say a specific thankyou to our Parkcare and Landcare groups. They are a dedicated group of people who show genuine concern and passion for our natural environment. With 21 Parkcare groups across Canberra and 16 Landcare groups, the contribution they make is significant.

The Canberra we know could not exist without the generous donation of time and expertise that our volunteers provide. Without them Canberra would be a poorer place and a less inclusive place. Community organisations which provide vital services to our community are an essential element in promoting volunteer activities. And so many not-for-profit organisations owe their continued existence to the efforts of volunteers, who answer the phones and assist with things such as administration and fundraising events. These are often the key to a successful small NGO.

People who have taken part in activities through clubs and societies are often inspired to become volunteers themselves. But for others, knowing where to go to volunteer can be difficult. Organisations such as Volunteering ACT play an important role in giving an avenue for those who want to start contributing but do not know where to start. They also provide support for both volunteers and organisations with advice and skills training so that organisations can find the people they need and people can find the voluntary work that they want.

Volunteering can deliver many benefits not just to the organisation or the recipient of the service but to the person volunteering. People get a sense of engagement with community that is important to all of us. We know that that engagement brings a sense of self-worth, connections to people of like mind and a vehicle for social engagement. Indeed I note that Greening Australia recently held an event called

Landcare for Singles and they promoted it by saying, “If you are single and live in Canberra or nearby and are looking to meet new people or even looking for romance this is for you. Come and plant she-oaks.”

While the benefits being highlighted by Greening Australia are quite explicit in this case, the general premise holds true for all volunteering. There is a chance to form and build new friendships and contacts and relationships. Volunteering can provide an important way to combat social isolation for many in our community and is especially important for older people. With an ageing population and demand on existing health services, finding effective ways to prevent disease, illness and injury needs to be central to our planning.

As our population ages, volunteering has a double role to play. Many of our volunteers are older people who have retired from paid employment but still want to make a contribution or “give something back”, as people often say. We must remember that older Canberrans often have a great deal to offer as volunteers, a lifetime of experience that they can share with the community. Their work benefits the community twice. Firstly, there is the actual value of the work itself and, secondly, their involvement contributes to their own wellbeing by keeping them active and socially connected.

Active engagement in the community is shown to have benefits for seniors’ health and wellbeing. This is something that I have certainly noticed. If you take examples such as the Council on the Ageing and the University of the Third Age, people involved in those groups are so dynamic. Certainly, for the ACT government, and in my role as the Minister for Ageing, one of our key messages to older people is to be active in the community and think about the many ways you can be active in the community. I think there are a myriad of ways. Certainly the seniors expo is just one example where the number of organisations, activities and opportunities being promoted really are very extraordinary. It offers older people the chance to either reconnect with a skill they might have or perhaps to find a new skill later in life.

Older people, particularly those with mobility issues, are especially susceptible to becoming socially isolated. This can flow on to other areas of their lives. When people lose those connections with their community their health, both physical and mental, can be greatly impacted.

There are great programs which encourage and support older people to volunteer and address social isolation. For example, Communities@Work runs a number of programs to address these issues in the Weston Creek, Woden and Tuggeranong areas. Programs include a transport program run primarily by volunteers, seniors’ social groups, Supergrans, and, of course, the well known men’s sheds. They also provide community meals every Tuesday in the Tuggeranong community centre, predominantly run by seniors. With over 200 volunteers who give tirelessly to a great variety of programs, over 75 per cent of these volunteers are seniors who are extremely active in a range of areas. The Tuggeranong 55 Plus Club are a key group in the Tuggeranong area which provide volunteering and social opportunities for older people. They run a variety of programs including digital photography, bike riding, jazzercise and much more.

In conclusion, let me again welcome the fact that this motion is on the program today. It is a great opportunity to stop and recognise the work of volunteers in our city. I would like to once again congratulate the winners of this year's volunteer awards. I simply conclude by commending the motion to the Assembly.

**MR BARR** (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Sport and Recreation, Minister for Tourism and Events and Minister for Community Services) (6.14): I thank Ms Porter for moving this motion today in National Volunteer Week. I would like to particularly acknowledge her ongoing advocacy for the volunteering cause.

I would like to take this opportunity this evening to highlight the tremendous contribution that volunteers are making to the Canberra community, particularly in a couple of portfolio areas of mine—sport and recreation and tourism and events. But before I get to that, I speak as the community services minister to acknowledge that volunteers create a very powerful sense of community, whether that is parents helping in their children's schools or coaching sporting teams—it may even be the Easts under 7s Rugby sporting teams—citizens undertaking welfare and community work or helpers making the Multicultural Festival a success for a quarter of a million people.

**Mr Coe:** Political parties' branches?

**MR BARR:** And even those who volunteer in the political process to support our democracy. Regardless of the capacity and the area of endeavour, volunteering is critical to building a caring and inclusive community. It shows that people are willing to sacrifice something in their own lives to help someone else.

I would like to take the opportunity to highlight this evening how the ACT government is supporting the work of volunteers and volunteer organisations. There are numerous ways that the government supports the work of volunteers. I would like to spend a little bit of time this evening talking about one particular area of focus—the area of corporate volunteering. Under the umbrella of corporate philanthropy, corporate and employee volunteering encourages organisations and businesses to help their employees do volunteering work in the community. Corporate volunteering has many benefits. Not only does it help companies meet their corporate social responsibilities, but staff gain personal satisfaction from helping others, staff learn new skills and find new pathways into community involvement.

Last year the Community Services Directorate became an inaugural member of Volunteering ACT's corporate volunteering program. Launched by my predecessor last May during National Volunteer Week, CSD staff have participated in two volunteering events. An evaluation of the program by the directorate showed that staff enjoyed the networking and sense of contribution that were afforded by both of these volunteering opportunities.

As Minister for Community Services, I have undertaken to assume a stronger leadership role in combining the Community Services and Economic Development portfolios to look at how corporate volunteering can be more naturally embedded in the work of the ACT government and the work of the ACT business community.

Turning now to the contribution that volunteers make to sport and recreation services in Canberra, as Ms Porter has informed the chamber, the 2013 ACT volunteer of the year announced earlier today is Peter Russell, whose volunteering over 10 years with the YMCA Canberra Sailing Club has meant that he has supported hundreds of people with a disability to enjoy sailing.

Latest reports tell us that every year about 27,000 Canberrans volunteer in a sport and recreation organisation in a “non-playing” role. To put this in some context, this equates to three million hours of volunteer labour, which would be worth more than \$40 million annually to our economy. On top of this, the social benefits that volunteers contribute to the local sport and recreation sector and the Canberra community are hard to quantify but just as valuable. Volunteers take on a myriad of roles, including coaching, officiating, fundraising, canteen operations and committee positions. Without these contributions, opportunities for participants from the grassroots to the elite level simply would not be possible.

It is hard to underestimate the impact that volunteers have on people’s health and wellbeing. By helping people to take part in physical activity, sport and recreation, volunteers promote the importance of staying fit, which obviously contributes to the overall health of our population.

Sport and recreation services within the ACT government formally recognise volunteers through the thanks awards program that was introduced in 2001. Since its inception more than 230 volunteers from over 50 local sport and recreation organisations have been recognised through the thanks awards. At last year’s awards volunteers gave a range of intangible reasons for their involvement. The good feeling from seeing kids smile after a football match, raising funds for charity after months of planning, the finalisation of a competition draw, the heartfelt thanks that they receive from mums and dads are examples of what makes the job of a volunteer so satisfying.

However, in recent years the number of volunteers involved has declined. Today’s busy lifestyles often make finding time to volunteer difficult. Knowing this, and because volunteers are the lifeblood of the industry, it is vital that sport and recreation organisations develop new strategies to encourage new volunteers and to manage and work effectively with their existing volunteers. So it is important that we take opportunities like today to recognise our wonderful volunteers, to seek to retain their services and to attract new volunteers to our organisations. That is why active 2020, the strategic plan for sport and active recreation in the ACT, and the national sports volunteer strategy from the Australian Sports Commission are seeking a more structured approach to volunteer planning and support for clubs around recruitment, definition of roles and responsibilities, retention, costs of volunteering and, as I mentioned earlier, corporate volunteering.

Volunteers support almost every part of the sporting pathway, so they are critical to the ongoing success of sport and recreation in Canberra and nationally. In 2009 *The future of sport in Australia* report—perhaps more commonly known as the Crawford report—noted the critical role of volunteers to Australian sport and recommended that the national government develop and fund a national volunteer program for sporting

and physical activity organisations. The Australian government supported the recommendation in its 2010 vision for sport entitled *Australian sport: the pathway to success*, which did commit the government to delivering a national sport volunteer strategy to better engage, support, train and recognise our volunteers. The strategy supports the government's broader national volunteering strategy.

The Australian Sports Commission is facilitating the development of the national sport volunteer strategy through a working group of key stakeholders with representatives from government, including relevant federal departments, the Australian Sports Commission, state and territory departments of sport and recreation, through the Committee of Australian Sport and Recreation Officials. Various non-government organisations, such as Volunteering Australia, Service Skills Australia and various national sporting organisations are involved in this important work.

In the time that remains I would like to focus on the volunteering effort in the areas of tourism and events. The Canberra and Region Visitors Centre, managed by Australian Capital Tourism, provides information to visitors to Canberra. It is open 364 days of the year, and the visitors centre prides itself on very high levels of customer service. During 2012 the centre welcomed 165,000 visitors through its doors, answered nearly 13½ thousand phone calls and responded to nearly 1,500 emails. Approximately 70 registered volunteers support the daily operations of the Canberra visitors centre, with half the volunteers having been in the program for more than 10 years. These volunteers are central to the centre's ability to deliver a comprehensive visitor information service.

Australian Capital Tourism supports these volunteers through familiarisation and customer service training, networking events and a volunteers' Christmas party. These volunteers are passionate ambassadors for our city, delivering exceptional customer service, whether that is face to face or over the phone. Their high quality of work is demonstrated by the outstanding results the centre's annual customer satisfaction survey receives. Ninety-five per cent of the centre's customers rated the quality of service delivered as "excellent". It is a commendable result.

Thank you to all of the volunteers who do so much to assist in our community. I thank Ms Porter for this motion today.

**MS BERRY** (Ginninderra) (6.25): I too would like to thank Ms Porter for raising this motion to acknowledge the work of volunteers in our community. I would like to start by congratulating all of those winners in the ACT volunteer awards.

Volunteers come from all sectors of our society, and we have talked about them today. They are students and old people, public servants and parents. They volunteer in areas as diverse as education, conservation, sports and welfare. It is estimated that each year volunteers make a \$70 billion contribution to the Australian economy, and we all know that they have an immeasurable impact on their local communities.

Today I would like to draw attention to a particular kind of volunteerism—the work many single parents do in their local communities to enrich and strengthen our city. Usually when we think about volunteers we think about people who give up time to

assist the work of large organisations like Greening Australia and St Vincent de Paul. But Volunteering Australia's 2009 report shows that single parents volunteer in different, but no less important, ways.

As we all know, single parents have a lot on their plates. They are often, by necessity, involved in all aspects of community life. For this reason, they are well placed to know where their neighbours are struggling; and I am always impressed by those among them who find time around the full-time role of parenting to take a proactive approach to building stronger communities for their children.

This involvement and commitment to the life of our city is typified by a constituent of mine, Kelly. Kelly is a single mum with four young children who, when she is not doing the full-time job of being a parent, works three days a week in a school-hours job and volunteers in her local community. Like many single parents, Kelly is highly involved in the life of her school. Over the years, she has undertaken a variety of voluntary activities that supported both her children and their classmates.

Last year when the clothing pool at her children's school was going to close, Kelly took it over. Kelly knew the value of this program because she had faced the yearly challenge of kitting out four kids for school. And as any parent in the chamber knows, between lost jumpers and growth spurts, school uniforms are a constant expense for most Canberra families.

Kelly also knows the importance of modelling volunteerism for our next generation. In 2009, 65 per cent of Australians who volunteered reported having a parent or role model who made a voluntary contribution to their community. Kelly not only provides this example for her children; she finds the time in a busy life to foster another generation of volunteers through her work as a leader in her local girl guide troop.

Single parents often take on the small but indispensable roles that make our communities work. They run sports teams, guides, canteens and P&Cs. Their contribution has a financial and social impact; and, in the way it is often so closely tied to the lives of their communities, it plays a vital role in modelling the kind of active citizenry that makes Canberra such a great place to live.

Again, I thank Ms Porter for bringing this motion to the Assembly. I look forward to hearing more about volunteering as I spend more time here in the Assembly.

**MS PORTER** (Ginninderra) (6.28), in reply: I would like to thank all members for their contribution to the debate. As Mr Hanson said, it is good when we can all agree on something—and there is no argument, I believe, about this motion.

As members said, there is a very wide diversity of volunteer tasks. Some members have highlighted other areas, and thank you for reading out the list of category winners, Mr Hanson, because that enables us to sample that wide diversity and be able to congratulate the category winners as well as the other winners of the volunteer of the year awards.



Thank you, also, Mr Barr, for highlighting the corporate volunteering area, which I had neglected to mention. It is a very important type of volunteering indeed, evidenced by many corporate groups, for instance, up at Greening Australia, joining together in the plantings.

It is interesting to reflect that not so many years ago volunteers in sport and rec, as well as volunteers in schools, would not identify themselves as volunteers as they thought that they were just parents or grandparents. Now they realise that it is not actually every parent or grandparent who is stumping up on the sports field or is at the school canteen, the library or the many other areas that have been mentioned here this afternoon.

Thanks particularly also to Mr Rattenbury for highlighting volunteering work with animals, which I neglected to recognise before. That work is extremely important. This Sunday let us not forget the Million Paws Walk. I hope to see many of you there. Remember that you do not need a dog; you can turn up without a dog.

In closing, I thank all the volunteers and the voluntary organisations who work with them. Of course, I add my congratulations to Maureen Cane and her team at Volunteering ACT. I note that at the moment Maureen is Acting CEO of Volunteering Australia as well, so she has a heavy workload and wider responsibilities.

I thank members for their support of this motion. Again, I encourage you to find a volunteer—other than me, Mr Hanson—to thank. I know you did thank your—

**Mr Hanson:** Easts under-7s.

**MS PORTER:** I beg your pardon, Mr Hanson?

**Mr Hanson:** Rotary I did as well. Remember?

**MS PORTER:** Yes, you did. You thanked your rugby team, I believe, and those who support—

**Mr Hanson:** And every volunteer of the year.

**MS PORTER:** Yes, you did. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Motion agreed to.

## **Adjournment**

Motion by **Mr Barr** proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

**Volunteers****Kirk Family Foundation trivia night**

**MR COE** (Ginninderra) (6.31): Madam Speaker, before I say the remarks which I prepared earlier, I would like to also acknowledge two recipients of today's volunteer of the year awards. They are the volunteers at Ronald McDonald House and Chris Ellis of Kippax Uniting Church. I have had some involvement with both those winners—Chris Ellis from Kippax and Ronald McDonald House. I can certainly say that both are very worthy winners, appropriately acknowledged by Volunteering ACT today.

On 14 April I was pleased to attend the first Kirk Family Foundation trivia night. The trivia night was attended by nearly 200 people and raised \$70,000 for the foundation, which will be distributed by the Lions clubs in Queanbeyan, Yass and Braidwood. The masters of ceremony were John Barilaro, the New South Wales state member for Monaro, and Peter Lindbeck, the owner of Lindbeck's Butchery in Queanbeyan and a member of the foundation's board.

The Kirk Family Foundation was established by Don and Barbara Kirk in 2007. Its vision is to improve lives and strengthen the Queanbeyan community by providing opportunities for children and youth. It aspires to support them in their development to be resilient and well-adjusted individuals. The foundation gives assistance in the areas of health, education and sport to disadvantaged children and youth in the Queanbeyan, Yass and Palerang areas.

Since it was established, the foundation has distributed \$250,000 worth of grants to over 100 children and their families. The grants have included funding for children to study dance in New York, to study music in Sydney and to tour Sri Lanka to further cricket talents. The foundation also provided funds to restore the SmartStart for Kids program to Queanbeyan schools in 2012. SmartStart used the funds to provide health and health and fitness assessments for 700 schoolchildren.

Don Kirk was just 14 when he left St Edmund's College to work. He was soon working as a fuel distributor and continued to operate a fuel distribution business for the next 30 years. Don also owned a demolition contract and recycling building material supplies business and a truck dealership. He was a heavy transport consultant to Indigenous Business Australia and the joint operator of Canberra Off Road, which provided engineering equipment for four-wheel-drive and mining vehicles. Other enterprises Don has been involved with include breeding commercial beef cattle, and rural residential land development through his partnership in Land Development Co. Don has also been involved in the management of many other organisations.

Don and his wife, Barbara, decided to invest \$1 million in the establishment of the Kirk Family Foundation in 2007 to give to children in need in their local area. The other members of the foundation are Trudi Kon, Tania Donohue, Marcus Chacos, Peter Lindbeck, Sue Whelan, Peta Thompson, Karen Fogarty and Lee Bath.

I congratulate Don and Barbara Kirk and thank them for their generosity. I thank all the members of the Kirk Family Foundation for their support of disadvantaged children and youth in the capital area.

**Sir Alex Ferguson**  
**Office of the Legislative Assembly—staff**

**MR DOSZPOT** (Molonglo) (6.34): As ACT shadow minister for sport, I would like to pay tribute to Sir Alex Ferguson, Manchester United's legendary manager. Winning 38 trophies for united, including five FA cups, four league cups, 13 premier league championships and two champions league titles over 27 years, makes him probably the most successful manager in world football history, and certainly in the United Kingdom. At his final match at Old Trafford a few days ago, a banner simply said, "Sir Alex—Immortal". With a stand bearing his name and statue showing his image, at Old Trafford he is immortal.

It is highly unlikely that Manchester United will ever again see someone of the stature of Sir Alex Ferguson. His vision, energy, determination, and ability to build teams delivered him and Manchester United the incredible success they have enjoyed and certainly justify his immortal tag. Knighted for his services to English and Scottish football and to his club, Manchester United, Sir Alex Ferguson has set the ultimate standard for managers to aspire to, and at 71 years of age he has also defied the culture of youth that sport is often criticised for. As shadow minister for ageing, I also thank him for his leadership and example in this regard as well. Alex Ferguson's reputation and global influence is such that the Manchester United share price fell nearly five per cent on news of his departure.

Here in Australia his departure will also be felt. There are many thousands of man united fans in Australia and obviously in Canberra. Even here in the ACT Assembly his influence has been felt through someone whom I suspect is more than just a fan and a supporter. I have secretly thought since I met him nearly five years ago that our Acting Senior Security Attendant in the ACT Assembly, one Peter Edwards, was sent to Australia by Alex Ferguson to be a talent scout or even an ambassador for the club. I have no evidence to the contrary to suggest he is not, and his knowledge and tracking of every move that man united and Sir Alex make only reinforces my suspicions.

Peter also excels as a player in the ACT Assembly parliamentary football team and has played in a number of matches where we have beaten our federal parliamentary counterparts. It will be interesting to see whether Sir Alex will now ask his successor, David Moyes, to also endorse Peter Edwards in his local mission on behalf of Manchester United. We will have to wait and see.

Still on a sporting note, I would also like to recognise the achievements of yet another attendant, Dennis Axelby, who is a member of the ACT over 60s cricket team, who are the current Australian national over 60s cricket champions. And while on the subject of Assembly staff, I would like to extend congratulations to a number of staff who were recently awarded long service certificates by Tom Duncan, the ACT

Assembly Clerk: Senior Attendant Andrew Tyrie, currently on secondment to the executive wing, five years' service; Acting Senior Security Attendant, Peter Edwards, our man united talent scout, five years' service; Richard "Rick" Hart, our Facilities Manager, five years; Marilyn Warner and Russell Lutton, Hansard editors, 10 years' service each; Security Controller/Principal Attendant, Rod Campbell, who is also quite a fitness fanatic, has clocked up 15 years, and David Skinner, Director of Governance and Communications, also 15 years' service. Congratulations to all.

### **Little athletics**

**DR BOURKE** (Ginninderra) (6.38): Tonight I am going to talk about Little Athletics Australia. Little athletics is a great avenue for ACT children to keep fit and have fun, and I emphasise the importance of a healthy lifestyle through physical exercise. Little athletics began in Australia in 1967. It precipitated a phenomenal growth of interest in competitive athletics for children—boys and girls under 12 years of age.

I was a little athletics kid. Growing up in country Victoria, I was already into running and jumping at primary school, but the throwing sports of shot-put and discus were unfamiliar. My father inventively solved the problem with practice equipment manufactured by chain-sawing the end off a log. "There is a discus for practice." And the practice shot-put was simply half a brick.

Today there are approximately 100,000 boys and girls aged between five and 16 affiliated with 550 centres nationwide. There are 17 centres in the ACT and surrounding region. In Ginninderra, there are the Belconnen West Little Athletics Club and the Ginninderra Little Athletics Club. The little athletics motto is "Family, Fun and Fitness". Their aim is to provide skills development opportunities for children through track and field as a foundation of all sports.

In April, ACT Little Athletics hosted the 2013 Australian little athletics championships at the AIS track and field facility. It was proudly sponsored by the Community Centenary Initiatives Fund. I attended the opening ceremony. With over 180 junior athletes from across Australia, it was a fantastic day for all those involved.

Little Athletics recognise that children vary widely in shape, size and athletic ability, and track and field caters for all. By gaining enjoyment out of a sport at an early age, it is hoped that a lifelong participation in physical education and a healthy lifestyle are developed and maintained. This is important for several reasons. Childhood obesity is a growing global concern, and physical exercise helps to decrease the effects of childhood and adult obesity. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, a quarter of Australian children aged 15 to 17 are overweight or obese—alarming statistics for personal health, both physical and mental, and for economic reasons.

For Little Athletics, enjoyment plays an important role in maintaining a child's interest. They get the chance to be part of a community, socialise with other children locally and nationally and are provided with a goal to work towards each week throughout the little athletics season. Studies show that frequent and regular physical exercise reduces the risk of heart disease, cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes and, as I said before, obesity. It also improves mental health, helps prevent depression and

helps promote or maintain positive self-esteem and body image. When we think that physical inactivity is ranked closely with cigarette smoking as a cause for ill health, we could also imagine the economic impact on our health systems.

For all these reasons, the ACT government is aware of the importance of encouraging a healthy lifestyle and investing in sporting facilities. And ACT Little Athletics is a recipient of the 2013 sports and recreation grants program. Thank you, minister.

### **St Vincent de Paul**

**MR GENTLEMAN** (Brindabella) (6.41): I rise tonight to congratulate the great work of St Vincent de Paul and their efforts at Blue Door at the Ainslie Village. Blue Door has been an integral part of the Ainslie Village in Canberra since 1983. Ainslie Village, as you might be aware, is located in the Canberra suburb of Campbell and is a large community housing site providing accommodation to approximately 200 people living on very low incomes.

Blue Door is a drop-in centre that provides support such as free and nutritious breakfast, lunch, haircuts, clothing and furniture vouchers, as well as information, advice, advocacy and referrals. These services are delivered in a non-confrontational way and setting, ensuring that Blue Door is a non-threatening, safe and secure place for Ainslie Village and other guests to access these services. They also relax there and socialise.

Blue Door has over 2,000 drop-ins each month. Clients of the service usually have some mental health issues, including drug and alcohol issues, and that is alongside their family and social issues. The smiling faces of the two full-time workers and their supporting volunteers who are more than happy to sit and have a chat with people who pop in are something to see. They also hold Alcoholics Anonymous services, church services, and have a volunteer tailor to come in and mend clothes for some of the drop-ins. The food there is donated by the Yellow Van.

In conclusion, I think it is a fantastic program by St Vincent de Paul, and I would urge all members to go and see the great work they do in that area of social justice. Can I acknowledge Paul Potter and his great team, Shannon and Frank Brasson for helping me out on the visit, the Yellow Van for all the food they supply and the effort they put in, and of course St Vincent de Paul.

### **Walk Safely to School Day**

**MS BERRY** (Ginninderra) (6.43): Before I begin, I would like to say it is refreshing and nice to see Mr Dospot paying tribute to such a committed ALP supporter and good trade union man as Alex Ferguson. It is always refreshing to hear that from the other side of the chamber.

I rise tonight to talk about the upcoming national Walk Safely to School Day. On Friday next week I will be leading a Macgregor Primary School Walk Safely to School Day walking group. Walk Safely to School Day is a great initiative that shows

how a little effort can have a big impact. Each year on Walk Safely to School Day parents and carers are asked to make a special effort to walk or use a combination of walking and public transport to do the school drop-off.

The benefits of finding the time in our busy lives to help our kids learn to walk to school safely are significant. Walking has important health benefits, like all kinds of exercises that Dr Bourke talked about in his adjournment speech earlier. In a country with growing rates of obesity, helping kids build regular walking habits at an early age is an easy way for them to complete their 60 minutes of physical activity and set up patterns of activity that will last them for life.

Walking to school from a young age also helps children learn important road safety skills as they will need to become good pedestrian road users. There has recently been much discussion in this place about the challenges of balancing the safety of all road users. Walking to school is a great way for parents to model safety around roads and on multi-use paths. Walking to school also has the potential to improve road safety around schools by reducing the amount of traffic in the morning drop-off.

As a working parent, I know how hard it can be to find the time to walk to school with the kids, and it seems too often when we leave the house it is only to head straight for the car. It is undeniably more convenient to drive in the morning, but finding the time to take an alternative—to walk, ride or to combine a walk with public transport—helps our kids set up good habits for life. It teaches them that convenience is not the only factor when choosing a way to get around.

I have to admit that in my house we have weeks where the convenience of the car outweighs the long-term benefits of walking. Looking at the number of cars outside our school, I know I am not the only one. When this happens, I think about the immediate benefits walking offers. Walk to School Day offers a great reminder for my family of how enjoyable it is to start the day with a leisurely walk through our neighbourhood and a chat with other kids and parents on our way to school. I encourage everyone to make a little effort to support this great initiative.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

**The Assembly adjourned at 6.47 pm.**