



Debates

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Wednesday, 5 June 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.

Payroll Tax Amendment Bill 2013

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

Title read by Clerk.

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

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

There is at present a widely held view within the business and legal community that the territory's payroll tax legislation and the administration of it is still out of step with other jurisdictions, particularly New South Wales. The extent of this has been made clear to me through my interactions with the ACT business community, and it has been concerning to hear that a number of these businesses have considered moving their operations across the border to New South Wales.

At a time when business confidence is decreasing as a result of this government's mismanagement of our economy, it is understandable that businesses moving interstate is not a good thing for the ACT. In this regard the amendment bill that I am tabling in my name today seeks to address this from the perspective of improving the ACT's payroll tax legislation to make it more equitable and give businesses greater certainty in establishing their true tax position.

In this regard my amendments today seek to give greater clarification to the Payroll Tax Act on matters pertaining to discretionary trusts, retrospective degrouping, the breadth of degrouping, and joint and several liability. At present, under sections 72(6) and 74, beneficiaries of a discretionary trust are grouped with other beneficiaries of the trust and the trustee. This can have the perverse result whereby individuals are grouped without their knowledge or consent by being appointed beneficiary. This is a matter where people could be grouped for many years and be liable for tax accordingly without knowing.

In most instances, at law gifts can be disclaimed retrospectively, and this would alleviate the issue of grouping without consent and/or knowledge. However, in the ACT, there is no clear-cut practice to allow for disclaiming retrospectively, and in cases brought to ACAT, the territory has argued that this practice is tantamount to tax avoidance.

The outcome of the present legislation surrounding discretionary trusts is that if a trust is declared listing certain beneficiaries and these beneficiaries are not made known of their position accordingly for, let us say, 10 years, the beneficiaries' ignorance is irrevocable unless the commissioner chooses to exercise his power to degroup.

In this regard it is worth while noting that until 1 July 2008 the commissioner was only empowered to degroup companies grouped by common employment. At the time the ACT was the only jurisdiction with such a limited degrouping provision. Subsequent changes to the Payroll Tax Act in 2008 allowed for degrouping of entities regardless of how they were grouped, with the exception of related bodies corporate. However, it has been illustrated in cases brought to the ACAT that there has been considerable contention as to whether retrospective degrouping also applies to instances prior to 1 July 2008 or from 1 July 2008 onwards.

Although the tribunal agreed with taxpayers that retrospective degrouping should apply to cases prior to 1 July 2008, the ACT is the only jurisdiction whereby the power to degroup prior to 1 July 2008 is limited to common employee groupings and companies grouped by discretionary trust provisions could not be degrouped.

It has also been noted through interactions with the local business community on application of the Payroll Tax Act that the degrouping power cannot be used to divide a larger group into smaller groups. Instead the general practice in the ACT is to maintain that only individual companies can be degrouped, and only if independent from each and every other company in the group.

The example given to me was as follows:

This would produce absurd results: if a beneficiary of the trust buys a share in Telstra, Telstra is thereby grouped with the business of the trust. If Telstra has a subsidiary company, that company also is grouped. Since the power to degroup does not extend to holdings/subsidiary company relationships, Telstra cannot be degrouped from its subsidiary. As a result of present interpretation of the grouping power, because Telstra cannot be degrouped from its subsidiary, it cannot be degrouped from any other company. Thus Telstra cannot be degrouped from the beneficiary's company. This cannot be right.

Then we have problems with joint and several liability. Section 81 of the Payroll Tax Act provides:

If a member of a group fails to pay an amount ... in relation to any period, every member of the group is liable jointly and severally ...

At present there has been considerable contention as to whether this applies to grouped companies while they are grouped or, in the case of the territory's interpretation, "at any time". Under current application of the legislation, if, for instance, company A accrues a tax debt over, say, 10 years, up to 30 June 2012, and then grouped with company B on 1 July 2012, company B is liable for company A's tax debt regardless of the fact that it had no association with company A when it was accruing its tax debt.

In this sense, the legislation is far-reaching both for entities in a group and for directors of these entities. Again, as a local shareholder noted:

One imagines the directors of Telstra might be surprised to find they can be made personally liable for the payroll tax debts of a family trustee company in the ACT, simply because one of the beneficiaries held shares in Telstra.

Of course, these issues have many impacts on businesses. The issue is made worse when taxpayers are mired in having to address tax avoidance allegations. In my dealings with the local community, I have, for example, encountered cases where a business had to wait approximately 3½ years from when they objected to notices of assessment and receiving a decision on these objections. In another instance there was a case where a business had provided the Commissioner for Revenue with information requested in 2006, but received no correspondence until 2010—four years later. The business had no certainty in that period as to what the outcome would be.

But delays are not the only problems faced. There was the example of the case involving new directors in 2009 who took over a company that ceased trading in 2007 and were issued in 2010 that they were jointly and severally liable for debts accrued on the basis of the grouping, only to find out that the objections period had expired. Then, of course, there are the cases of inconsistent application and application of ACAT rulings.

If we look at regrouping, the issues highlighted in relation to the Payroll Tax Act are ACT specific. Within the context of the changes made in 2008, members will remember in 2007 when the bill was passed it was on the assurance from the government that this brought us into line with New South Wales. Currently, the application is certainly not allowing that to happen. So within the context of the changes made in 2008 to bring our payroll tax regime into greater harmonisation with other jurisdictions, the present state of play in the ACT is unnecessary. It is bad for business, it is bad for our economy and it does not give Canberra taxpayers the certainty that they deserve—and, indeed, that they need to run their businesses effectively.

As much as the Treasurer likes to advertise the fact that we have the highest payroll tax threshold in the country, the present state of play shows that the regime behind the Treasurer's claim is unfair. The fact that businesses are contemplating moving across the border to New South Wales is indicative of the fact that they have weighed their costs and prefer legal certainty to a high tax threshold.

To conclude, as such, I now table the Payroll Tax Amendment Bill 2013 under my name. The proposed amendments clarify the issues I have outlined earlier with regard to greater harmonisation of our payroll tax regime with other jurisdictions, in particular New South Wales.

These include the following: in clause 4, we broaden the exceptions to the “service contract” deeming provisions, bringing the ACT's payroll tax legislation in line with New South Wales legislation. Clause 5 allows for beneficiaries to disclaim a gift upon being made aware of the gift and all of its consequences in the period prior to becoming aware of the status. Clauses 7, 8, and 9 expressly give plural operation to the commissioner in degrouping companies. Clause 10 clarifies the position that

retrospective degrouping power is applicable to cases prior to 1 July 2008. Clause 11 makes clear that companies are liable for each other's debts only when those debts were accrued when those companies were grouped.

I commend the bill to the house.

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

Budget 2013-2014

MS BERRY (Ginninderra) (10.12): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

(a) that the 2013-14 ACT Budget;

(i) aims at building a stronger economy and creating opportunity and fairness for all Canberrans;

(ii) begins the transformation of our city through major infrastructure projects to meet the challenges of our second century;

(iii) provides funding to progress with important capital projects such as Capital Metro and City to the Lake that will transform the city;

(iv) continues the Government's nation-leading taxation reforms and delivers a series of structural reforms that will be made to the Territory Budget to make the operation of government more efficient;

(v) returns to a balanced budget in a measured way, to ensure we can continue to provide high quality services and invest in the infrastructure that will transform our city; and

(vi) delivers high quality health and education services; and

(2) supports the projects, reforms and initiatives in the 2013-14 ACT Budget that aim to build and transform Canberra.

MADAM SPEAKER: Clerk. Sorry, I am just a little confused here this morning. Bear with me. The question is that the motion be agreed to. Sorry, I was reading something else and not concentrating on what I should have been, Ms Berry. I do apologise.

MS BERRY: I will try to make sure that the motion is exciting for you, Madam Speaker, so that you can be completely enthralled by the information that it will provide today.

Yesterday the ACT Labor government outlined its plan to build and transform Canberra. Our budget starts down the path of delivering big, transformational projects, including city to the lake and light rail. It also continues our nation-leading tax reforms while setting out a responsible and measured return to surplus. We are implementing the important national education and disability reforms and delivering on our election commitments in education and health.

The government continues to plan and deliver major infrastructure projects to meet the economic, social and environmental challenges of Canberra's second century. The city to the lake project and capital metro are two transformational initiatives that will not only revitalise but also redefine the city and Canberra more broadly. The latter in particular will fundamentally change how a great many of us will live and move around in the coming decades.

Elsewhere, the Majura parkway, new public schools in Molonglo and Gungahlin, and a new subacute hospital on the campus of the University of Canberra are all to be constructed in the near future. These are perhaps only the highest profile of the many infrastructure projects the government has committed to, as detailed in our infrastructure plan and its annual updates.

However, the role of the commonwealth and business in delivering new infrastructure is also acknowledged by the territory, and I would specifically like to note the continued expansion of the Canberra international airport and the rollout of the national broadband network as being important for Canberra's future. The major infrastructure investments that I have just talked about and others across the government, including education, health and transport, as well as the contribution of the commonwealth, will help Canberra meet some big challenges as we enter our second century.

First, we need to ensure ongoing economic growth, sustainability and resilience, including helping our local businesses export their goods and services around the world to help create growth here in the ACT economy. We need infrastructure that will attract new investment, support new high value-added businesses and leverage our unique heritage to increase tourism and interest in the nation's capital.

The second challenge is to increase connectivity through infrastructure that will improve the sharing of information and knowledge, skills and capabilities, including through new and emerging digital and telecommunications technologies. This is critical in supporting our wide and varied knowledge-intensive industries.

The third challenge is to protect the environment and to wisely manage our natural resources. Careful infrastructure decisions will help us conserve landscapes, protect biodiversity, increase community awareness of conservation values through recreation and tourism, help build a sustainable economy through initiatives such as increased use of solar energy and create healthy built environments and precincts.

Climate change poses its own unique challenges for the territory and the greater Australian capital region. Less rainfall, drier winters and more intense summer

temperatures will require us to adapt our infrastructure planning. We need to use water more efficiently and we must become more prepared for, and resilient to, the increasing threat of bushfire.

The fourth challenge is planning for population growth so that the ACT avoids the experience of other cities, such as traffic congestion and air pollution and long journey times. An integrated, flexible approach to urban planning and infrastructure development will help us mitigate these problems and ensure that the built environment serves the needs of the community and supports productivity.

The territory's population is expected to reach over 500,000 in the next few decades. By consciously planning for this growth, we will ensure that the needs of our growing population are actually met. We will embrace diversity and provide a fair go, opportunities that will ensure individual and community prosperity and wellbeing.

Fifth and finally, we need to plan for demographic and social change as many of us become older, as we achieve greater gender equality in the workplace and as we redefine traditional roles in work and family. Ultimately, meeting these challenges through major infrastructure investment requires the same thing: good governance, by which I mean transparent, accountable, evidence-based decision making undertaken in collaboration with industry, the community, our regional neighbours and the commonwealth. At the end of all of these challenges is the need to support liveability and the outstanding quality of life we enjoy in the territory.

Collectively, the government's major infrastructure commitments and plans will ensure that our city remains vibrant and liveable. They will do this by meeting the abovementioned challenges, through supporting our productivity and our health and wellbeing, enabling the accumulation of knowledge and skills in our community, making us more mobile and connected and increasing our sustainability and protecting the aspects of the environment that we value.

The infrastructure constructed in Canberra over the last hundred years has been extraordinary. The accomplishments of Canberra's past and present planners, engineers, builders and others cannot sustain us indefinitely, though. This government will continue to seek to make infrastructure decisions to support the best possible future achievable.

The ACT budget will ensure that Canberra continues to enjoy a world-class health system, with \$129 million over four years for growth and new initiatives and \$72.3 million in capital funding. The government remains committed to ensuring investment in health care, both in new initiatives and in key health infrastructure, with a total spend of around \$1.3 billion. The government is building better infrastructure and delivering more health services to meet the needs of patients. We are delivering \$45.5 million for an additional 31 inpatient beds across Canberra and Calvary hospitals to meet increasing demand and six hospital in the home places.

The 2013-14 budget also includes \$33 million for elective surgery to continue to reduce the number of people waiting beyond standard time frames for care, \$12 million to expand access to emergency medicine and rapid assessment services at

our public hospitals, \$6.3 million for three additional beds in the neonatal intensive care, paediatric and foetal medicine units at the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children, \$1.3 million to design a multi-storey car park for up to 700 vehicles on the Calvary hospital campus, \$8.2 million to complete the planning and forward design stages of the new University of Canberra public hospital, and I am proud that our government is delivering \$9 million to expand the new Belconnen health centre.

The upgrades include more high-quality health services, including a nurse-led walk-in centre, breast screening and aged-care and rehabilitation services and community mental health services. This initiative will deliver better health services for the people in my electorate.

In education, the 2013-14 ACT budget invests almost \$900 million in ACT schools, including funding for government and non-government schools for the Gonski reforms and for more resources for teachers and students. Last week, the ACT became the second state or territory to sign on for the national education reforms. To meet the increased investment from the commonwealth, the ACT government is delivering more than \$34 million over four years in new funding to reflect our contribution and transitional support under the national education reform agreement. The budget includes \$2 million to commence the refurbishment of Belconnen High School. This project funds upgrades to six classrooms, the school front office and the school hall.

We are also delivering \$5 million over four years for grants to non-government schools to establish and upgrade preschool infrastructure and we are delivering more than \$300,000 over four years to assist parents of children entering preschool to engage in the school community and in their child's education.

I am proud that the ACT Labor government is delivering \$14.3 million to build a facility for the Canberra College cares program at the Canberra College's Phillip campus. Canberra College cares is a fantastic program that allows pregnant and parenting students to complete their studies. The new facility will provide learning spaces and facilities, giving these students the best opportunity for an education.

We are also investing \$3.5 million over four years to provide support to experienced teachers to increase their professional qualifications and undertake research during their careers.

The 2013-14 budget balances tough economic times with the need to invest in projects that will transform our city into its second century. We are building upon our strengths in education and health, delivering new infrastructure and better services, and we are working with the commonwealth government on the important education and disability care reforms. The Gallagher government is delivering on its commitment to make Canberra even stronger.

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (10.23): Madam Speaker, the opposition will not be supporting this motion. It is the sort of motion that you get from a government that is desperate to make a case, because the budget cannot stand on its own. We already see today the inability of the government to involve itself in debate about the budget. Of course, Mr Barr, in a cowardly act, refused to debate the opposition at the breakfast

this morning. None of the Labor members turned up at Tuggeranong Community Council last night to tell their residents, their constituents, about how the budget would affect them. People, I think, were genuinely surprised that there was nobody there from the Labor Party.

Of course, there was no chamber of commerce event last night. That has been put off to Friday when, again, only the government will speak. I guess that is the price you pay so that the Treasurer can go off to an AFL do in his black tie to be there with the hoi polloi, the literati and the glitterati instead of looking after his community.

When we look at the motion, it is just the sort of thing you would expect from a government on the day after a budget. I would like to go through the points one by one. We are told that the budget is aimed at building a stronger economy and creating opportunity and fairness for all Canberrans. It is kind of funny that this comes after the Payroll Tax Amendment Bill that I just tabled because this is not a government that is being fair to all businesses in the ACT. It is certainly not a government that is building a stronger economy.

This is a government that still see themselves entirely dependent on commonwealth spending because they have done so little except to tear down the local business community in the last 12 years. I think the last 12 years will be remembered as the wasted years, just simply wasted. All the opportunities have gone begging. You see it in this year's budget. The cranes have all disappeared from the skyline in the ACT, certainly in Civic. What we see, instead of having a government that consistently bring forward a program of new capital works to stop the boom and bust cycle, is nothing but plans and forward studies because this government were not ready.

I am sure the Treasurer will jump up after this and extol the virtues of his budget and how dreadful Tony Abbott will be. It is the same drum that Andrew Barr has been beating for four years, all at a time when his revenue outstrips his estimates every single year. He earns more money through his high taxes than he ever estimates.

Mr Hanson: It is a Labor budget.

MR SMYTH: It is a genuine Labor budget; big spending with no regard to the future. You only have to look at the estimates. In regard to revenue, the estimates have been pretty right over the last couple of years and they have spent the lot, Madam Speaker. They have spent the lot. Their spending outstrips their revenue. When talking about a stronger economy and creating opportunity and fairness for all, Mr Barr portrays this as a budget for a rainy day. He says that they have put something away. He has certainly squirreled it away because there is not much left to put away.

Then, of course, we have the deceit that is inherent in this budget. Before the last election this government claimed that they would not triple rates. But Mr Barr let the cat out of the bag yesterday. He said, "Yes, rates will go up 10 per cent every year." If that continues for about 11 years, rates will triple as we predicted and as groups like the Ratepayers Association said would happen.

Of course, the minister denies that he knows what is going to happen over the period. I think yesterday he was talking about 25 to 30 years from now. If rates go up by 10 per cent a year for the next 11 years, then they will have tripled in terms of what rates you are paying today. That is without taking into account any increases in the value of property.

Indeed, the Chief Minister appeared in ads saying, just like Julia Gillard, “No carbon tax under a government I lead. No tripling of rates under a government I lead.” The cat is out of the bag. The Chief Minister was unable to answer this morning when Mr Hanson asked her that question. They say, “It is all on the never-never. We have not made those decisions.” At the end of the day, if you want to get rid of those taxes, rates must triple. It is very simple mathematics.

It is not a stronger economy. They are not creating opportunity because in fact they have taken opportunity away from the business community. In 2006 they gutted the business programs, they gutted the tourism support and they are struggling now to get back into the game. They are just reinstating programs that either we had or they had. They have just rebadged and renamed them. It is interesting that the minister always says you should not have industry plans, that industry plans and funding industries are the past.

But the biggest commitment that this government have to a single industry is to NICTA, which sounds and looks and smells very much like an industry plan, all at a time when they have got no genuine vision to diversify the economy. We know that Mr Stanhope believed it could not be done. We know Ms Gallagher said we would always be a government town. We see no indication from this minister, apart from a document which was just a reciting of so many things that had gone before—a rebadging and a renaming. There is no genuine commitment to building a stronger economy and to creating opportunity and fairness at all.

Then, of course, we get to transformation, beginning the transformation of our city through major infrastructure projects to meet the challenges of our second century. Transformation appeared, I think, nine or 10 times in the speech yesterday. “Transform”, “transformation”—somebody has got a buzz word. Joel Fitzgibbon-like, they have got their sheets that say, “You must say ‘transformation’ three times a day to meet your KPI as a member.”

There they are. They are all out transforming the world! But it comes after 12 years of neglect. The city has been neglected by this government for a decade, except where they sold off blocks of land to try and balance their budget or to fuel their cravings for spending. Bits and pieces have been sold off willy-nilly without any view. This government do not have a plan for the city. After 12 years this government still do not have a plan for the city.

Of course, there are three documents from the last Liberal government: “Building our city”, “Creating our city”, “Our city”. They were used by the OECD for their urban renaissance document. There were plenty of plans. Terry Snow had the sense to see that Civic needed a plan and put his own money into it which, of course, Mr Corbell,

the then planning minister, decried. Colin Stewart, one of the great planners and architects of the city, put a lot of effort into that. That was in 2005. Mr Seselja put up a bill in 2005 to establish the city developing authority to get the show on the road. That was eight years ago, and here we are, in 2013, and the government has found the city at last. Fascinating, is it not?

But they only found the city after they had done the city to the lake. A criticism from the business community is that you get this doughnut effect where you have got this ring of activity around the city. There is a concentration on the north-east side of the city. It is primarily around Garema Place and the Canberra Centre. Now the government has got to go to the south-west side of the city because they have finally got religion. They have found the city.

But the city plan is yet to come. It is like so many things that they do. It is like the great big government office building. They were going to build the office building and then work out the government accommodation strategy. We are told, "We are going to build the city to the lake. We don't know what the city is going to look like and what the city will be, but we will do the to-the-lake bit."

You question why they would do the to-the-lake bit first. Look at the way the city-to-the-lake project has evolved. Initially they wanted the new convention centre down at the lake. But then they worked out that you do not get as much return on a block of land for a convention centre as you do for residential. So the city to the lake unlocks value. It says here on the second page of the presentation we were given, "City to the lake transforms the city and unlocks value."

This is about money. This is about revenue. This is about feeding the urge to spend. It is about feeding the hungry beast that is a Labor Party budget. Spend, spend, spend! The presentation continues, "And aligns with and complements the capital metro project." We are going to sell off the city to fund the train centre so the boys can fight over who runs the train, who drives the train and who gets to play with the train.

But at the end of the day we still do not have a city centre. We still do not have a CBD. It is like so many things that they do, Madam Speaker. They get the sequencing wrong. They do not work out their capital works projects. That is why their projects blow out so often. I do not think anybody can have any faith that this will actually be delivered. I do not think anybody realistically has any confidence that this can actually be done after the 12 years that this government has had in delivering their capital works, most of which have been over time, over budget and under scope.

Indeed, I remember going to the tourism awards in December 2001. Ted Quinlan proudly stood up and said, "This time next year we will tell you where the new convention centre will be." Twelve years we have waited for that announcement. They have got it finally located on the plan. But the question is: can anyone have any confidence that they will actually get there and that they will actually build it based on their record?

They talk about beginning the transformation of our city through major infrastructure projects to meet the challenges of our second century. Most of that work was done by

the federal Liberal Party. It was done in 2006. It is called the Griffin legacy. The variation to the national capital plan has been done to allow that. That has been on the books for about six years, consistent with this government and their record. It would actually be a transformation if they did something. It would actually be a transformation if we got an outcome out of this. That would be quite spectacular.

Subparagraph (iii) of the motion states:

provides funding to progress with important capital projects such as Capital Metro and City to the Lake that will transform the city;

They will transform the city to the lake, but you still have to have your city plan, which we are waiting for. Twelve years without a plan for the city is quite disgraceful and most unfortunate. Subparagraph (iv) states:

continues the Government's nation-leading taxation reforms and delivers a series of structural reforms that will be made to the Territory Budget to make the operation of government more efficient;

That should actually read, "To give us the ability to spend more money." That is what this is about. It is about fuelling their urge to spend. Labor governments measure their progress by how much they spend. We heard it yesterday: "This is the biggest budget. We are spending more on education." Education and health budgets very rarely go backwards. It is not that much of a great achievement to continue the trend that you have had for the last 12 years. Have you delivered better outcomes? Are people happier with the system? What are we up to in terms of plans for the emergency department and addressing the waiting lists? Is this plan 9 to address that or is it plan 10? There are so many plans now that are done over and over again because they cannot manage the system properly. That is why it does not work. Labor cannot manage. The motion goes on to state:

returns to a balanced budget in a measured way, to ensure we can continue to provide high quality services and invest in the infrastructure that will transform our city;

Let us talk about the balanced budget. Let us talk about the Treasurer and the internal contradiction that we have in this budget. The Treasurer says that we have a very strong economy. But our budget is deeply in deficit. If the economy is so strong, why is the budget so bad? It is because of your spending. It is because of your inability to deliver. It is because of your tax policy.

Let us look at the lease variation charge, the lease variation tax. It was to be this huge windfall but it would not affect the market; it would not affect the price of land; it would not affect the cost of rent. But it has done all three of those things, all at a time when the market was softening.

Of course, we have got 4,800 blocks coming on to the market. Let me see. We are told, "Tony Abbott is going to ruin the ACT economy," but in that same period, "I'm going to sell all these blocks of land. My revenue goes up by \$1 billion over the next four years." It is his budget. This man has budgeted, Wayne Swan-like, for revenue that he

does not have. He says on the one hand that we will not get it because we are going to be in a recession. But on the other hand, the revenue goes up about \$250 million—a quarter of a billion dollars a year—and the budget four years from now would have gone from \$4 billion to \$5 billion. The contradictions are stark. You cannot have all that in your document and all that in your rhetoric. It is inconsistent. You say that growth will drop and yet that the revenue will increase.

That is cloud-cuckoo-land. That is ridiculous. If you are expecting the growth to decline to such a dramatic extent that you can beat your anti-Abbott drum, but at the same time each year for four years your revenue goes up a quarter of a billion dollars, there is something wrong in your accounting. You cannot have it all. You cannot beat your chest and say, “What a good economy we have got because of what we have done,” and, “Woe is us, because we are going to be in turmoil.” Yet we are going to sell all these blocks of land and we are going to get all this money. It is inconsistent in the extreme and it is disingenuous to tell people what you have told them.

Paragraph (2) of the motion states:

supports the projects, reforms and initiatives in the 2013-14 ACT Budget that aim to build and transform Canberra.

Let us look at some of those initiatives. Let us look at the extra funding that goes to ACTION because you cannot run the bus service. Let us look at the money that is going to corrections because you did not budget properly for the prison. What was the claim? It was that it would save us money. I think at the start it was actually going to save us money because all that money was going to be in the ACT economy and we would get better outcomes. That is right; it was going to have capacity for 20 years. Those 20 years have gone pretty quickly. What is it? Is it two or three years—four years?

Now we have got a forward design worth \$3 million for extra capacity at the Alexander Maconochie Centre. Why? It is because Minister Corbell got it wrong. The government got it wrong. The minister of the day got it wrong. The delivery got it wrong. They pared it back. It has cost us more per bed than was originally planned. Now we are going to spend a whole lot of money fixing the mistakes that they made because you cannot trust this government on delivery.

This is a government that never delivers. Let us go to the budgeting. I think they have budgeted for two surpluses, budgeted for just two surpluses, in 12 budgets. (*Time expired.*)

MR BARR (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Sport and Recreation, Minister for Tourism and Events and Minister for Community Services) (10.38): I thank Ms Berry for moving this motion this morning. It is always a pleasure to follow that beacon of light and hope and goodwill, Brendan Smyth—the saddest politician in Canberra, the longest-serving shadow treasurer in the history of the Federation, the man who has had nothing new or positive to say on economic policy in this city in his time in this place since he lost office 12 years ago.

Mr Hanson: You're a grubby little man, Mr Barr.

MR BARR: Twelve years ago, Madam Speaker. And that is the same speech—

Mr Rattenbury: A point of order, Madam Speaker. Mr Hanson just interjected across the chamber, "You're a grubby little man." I believe Mr Hanson has actually taken a point of order on just such barbs thrown across the chamber, and I ask that you rule on that interjection from Mr Hanson.

MADAM SPEAKER: I ask Mr Hanson to withdraw the interjection.

Mr Hanson: Yes, I withdraw, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Barr.

MR BARR: Thank you, Madam Speaker. So that contribution from the shadow treasurer was the same as his 2002 contribution, his 2003 contribution, his 2004 contribution, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, and I will boldly predict that he will say exactly the same tired old lines in 2014, 2015 and 2016 and, if he seeks to extend his career in opposition, in 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020. Nothing new to add to the debate; nothing but a series of talking points. He made the accusation that government members have some sort of talking points when he has just run exactly the same lines that Mr Hanson ran yesterday. He has three things to say, it seems, essentially parroting what is said nationally. So no points for originality; the same old contribution from the shadow treasurer.

I did not expect anything different from the shadow treasurer. The challenge for the Leader of the Opposition will be in his address in reply tomorrow to then outline some of the spending cuts he intends to make if he does not support the elements of investment across the directorates in this ACT budget. Let us be fair dinkum about it, Mr Hanson. If you believe we are spending too much, outline in your budget reply tomorrow where spending should be cut. If the Leader of the Opposition believes we should be putting stamp duty back up again, let him come forward with that view. Do you or do you not support the reduction of inefficient taxes in our economy? Do you or do you not support cuts to stamp duty and insurance taxes? You cannot have it both ways. You cannot support the tax cuts and then seek to argue that we should be running smaller deficits or no deficits and not seek to replace the revenue that is lost from cutting those inefficient taxes.

There is no magic pudding. If you are to reform taxation you need to make up that revenue that is lost from the abolition of inefficient taxes. We know we need a level of revenue to run services in this community. The fundamental questions this place has to address are: what is the most efficient way to raise that revenue? What sorts of taxation measures will have the least distortionary impact on our economy? What sorts of taxation measures will encourage investment in our economy?

If the opposition believes stamp duties and insurance taxes and further transaction taxes that are inefficient and unfair are the preferred way of raising revenue then let us

have that out on the table tomorrow in the Leader of the Opposition's address in reply. If the Leader of the Opposition believes services should be cut, let him outline in his address tomorrow which services should be cut. If he does not support new investment across the health budget, in education, in disability services, let him say so. I will give Mr Smyth credit for one thing in his appearance on the television news on Sunday night—he said clearly he does not support additional funding in education.

Mr Smyth: I didn't say that.

MR BARR: So he does not support more money for Catholic systemic schools. That is what you said.

Mr Smyth: No, I didn't.

MR BARR: You were quite clear. Well, you do support that spending now, do you?

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Barr, address the chair.

MR BARR: Put that on the record, then. Madam Speaker, he has now changed his position from Sunday night to Wednesday morning. Do you or do you not believe the ACT government should be providing our share of funding for education into the future and signing up to this agreement? Mr Hanson, you will have the opportunity tomorrow to state your position one way or the other. Do you or do you not support the abolition of stamp duty? Do you or do you not support the reduction in the top rate of stamp duty for commercial properties, slashed from 7.25 per cent to 5.5 per cent? Do you or do you not support that initiative? Do you or do you not support the increase in the first home owner grant? Do you or do you not support the increase in eligibility for the homebuyer concession scheme? Do you or do you not support investment in education, in health, in community services?

You have the opportunity tomorrow night, the first major speech of your time as opposition leader, to clearly state an alternative position for this community. Put forward what sort of budget you would have delivered, Mr Hanson, in the circumstances. You put something forward, and if you disagree with the government, fantastic. But at least have the courage to say where you disagree and how you would pay for an alternative policy position, because you are already on the record as wanting to pay more in wages and salaries.

MADAM SPEAKER: Standing order 42, Mr Barr.

MR BARR: Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is already on the record as wanting to pay more in wages and salaries. That costs \$20 million for every one per cent increase above two per cent cumulative in the outyears—so three per cent over the next four years, \$20 million in this coming financial year, \$40 million the year after, \$60 million the year after that and \$80 million in the final outyear. If that is your position—which is what you have stated on radio already when you ruled out five per cent but you said you wanted more than two per cent, which costs money—you will need to explain, Mr Hanson, how you are going to pay for that. You will need to explain how you are going to pay for your position, because now you are in the position of Leader of the Opposition—

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, do not interject.

MR BARR: Now you are in the position of Leader of the Opposition, you have a responsibility—

Mr Hanson: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, you have already ruled under standing order 42 that the minister should be addressing you. He is continuing to ignore that ruling and is addressing me, and I am simply responding to that. I ask that the minister adhere to standing order 42 and address the chair.

MADAM SPEAKER: Irrespective of whether Mr Barr flouts standing order 42, which he has been doing, it does not give you licence to interject. Mr Barr, I remind you of the provisions of standing order 42.

MR BARR: Madam Speaker, the challenge for the Leader of the Opposition is to state an alternative position and to explain to everyone how he would fund that position. I do not think it is unreasonable to ask the Leader of the Opposition to undertake such a task tomorrow. I am not expecting it today; I am expecting the usual array of recycled speeches, cliches and Jeremy Hanson's greatest hits. I am sure we will get that today; you can almost predict his speech now. It is exactly what we have heard before and what I am sure we will hear ad nauseam over the next four years.

Mr Hanson: He is obsessing about me, isn't he? Is he nervous?

MR BARR: Not particularly. I really do not spend too much time worrying about what you say about anything, Mr Hanson. I am seeking to work, as I have indicated this morning to the Canberra Business Council, with people who are interested in the future of this city and who are prepared to work constructively in order to advance our economy and opportunities for people in Canberra. I must say that the response from the wide variety of stakeholders and organisations to the initiatives announced in this budget has been very positive. We certainly look forward to working in partnership with the various industry associations, community sector organisations and people of good heart and good mind who have the courage to work constructively to see this city through what could be very difficult times if Tony Abbott and Joe Hockey take the axe to the public service and our economy.

It is very clear that there is goodwill across a number of organisations in the ACT to work collaboratively with the territory government to see us through these difficult times. I think there is one organisation that will not work constructively—and that is the Canberra Liberals.

MS PORTER (Ginninderra) (10.49): I welcome the opportunity to speak on this most important topic, and I thank my colleague Ms Berry for bringing it to the Assembly.

As expected, this is a true Labor budget that has responded to the needs of a transforming city, and I am delighted to stand in this place and highlight how it will

contribute to the growth of the communities in my electorate. But before I do, I would like to state that I am proud to be part of this Labor government, which has, and always will, put our community first; a government that has always looked after those most vulnerable in our community, and always will do.

It has been said several times in this Assembly that the global financial crisis and the subsequent European debt crisis have hit global financial markets hard, and the effects are still being felt across the globe. As we are aware, in an environment of this nature governments are faced with very difficult budget decisions. Early last month we saw one such budget handed down by the federal government. Needless to say, federal budgets have an effect on the ACT, and we have always acknowledged this. One of the decisions that governments are faced with is whether to choose to cut to the bone, as those opposite and their federal colleagues have suggested on numerous occasions, or whether to choose to protect jobs, maintain confidence in the economy and protect those most vulnerable.

As the Treasurer has repeatedly said in this place, good governments do not pursue policies which have been shown to fail and which destroy businesses, families and communities. Knee-jerk austerity, which the conservative side of politics is fond of, at a time of challenge only deepens contraction and does not support growth. This Labor government has once again acted to continue protecting economic activity, protecting jobs, and promoting confidence, even in these challenging times.

This Labor government's vision is to ensure that the ACT remains the happiest, healthiest and most sustainable community in Australia, a high wage community with the lowest unemployment in the country. We want to ensure that Canberra remains a fantastic place to live, with the highest standards of living. This is evident from the latest economic figures, which show that Canberra's economy continues to be strong, with very low unemployment. These are essential elements for achieving this vision.

We on this side strongly believe that Canberra deserves the best—and, more, that Canberrans deserve a government that can understand their living cost pressures but also understand the economy and what we need to do to ensure that Canberra continues to thrive. I must state clearly here that maintaining a strong economy is not the same thing as maintaining a budget surplus, as those opposite would have you believe. There is always the possibility that they do not quite understand that. Whereas surpluses are a good thing to have at the right time of the economic cycle, during downturns such as we are facing it is important that a government prioritises correctly. By this, I mean support the economy and the disadvantaged in our community while at the same time having a solid plan to bring the budget back to balance.

The 2013-14 budget that the Treasurer delivered yesterday is another example of a responsible and well-prioritised budget by this Labor government. It is a budget that will let us respond to the challenges we are faced with without damaging local confidence, local businesses and local jobs. The budget demonstrates the government's determination to continue investing in local infrastructure across the ACT, as Ms Berry said, which will place this city in a strong position to tackle future

challenges that we may face. The budget also delivers critical social reforms, which will ensure fairness, opportunity and appropriate support for the most vulnerable in our community.

As I mentioned earlier I will now draw members' attention to some aspects of this budget which will greatly benefit constituents in my electorate.

As is now well known, Canberra's population, and that of Australia generally, is ageing. In fact, over the last two decades the median age of the Australian population has increased by 4.8 per cent according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, and the ACT's population is ageing faster than anywhere else in Australia. It is expected that by 2047 the proportion of people living in the ACT aged 65 years and over will represent 21.5 per cent of the total population, which is double the current elderly portion of our population. This means there are proportionately more elderly people within the population, which presents unique challenges for governments throughout Australia in diverse areas such as labour force participation, housing and, particularly, health.

There has been much discussion in this place about our health system. While I, and indeed those on this side, believe that we have a great health system, those opposite have persistently talked our health system down and refused to acknowledge the hard work of our doctors, nurses and other front-line health service personnel. Unlike those opposite, this government understands, and in this budget the government is investing \$8.3 million to complete planning and forward design for the new University of Canberra public hospital. As you all know, when complete this will mean an extra 200 beds, with aged care, mental health and subacute services.

The budget also allocates funding for an additional 15 beds at the Calvary Public Hospital, comprising 11 general inpatient beds, 10 of which will come on early in 2013-14, the other ones coming on from January 2014, and a four-bed designated stroke unit. Further to this, there is \$12 million provided to expand access to emergency medicine and rapid assessment services at our public hospitals. From this provision, Calvary Public Hospital, which is in my electorate, will establish a new eight-bed rapid assessment unit to improve access to specialist services.

It does not stop there, Madam Speaker. There is also a \$9 million allocation to expand the new Belconnen health centre to provide more high quality services, including a nurse-led walk-in centre, breast screening, aged care and rehabilitation services and community mental health services. All this provides for the needs of our health system into the future and will ensure that Canberrans, and indeed the people of Ginninderra, have access to the quality health care that they need and deserve.

This government recognises the diverse opportunities that a quality education presents to our children and young people, and has, over the years, endeavoured to ensure that all ACT children, notwithstanding their circumstances, have access not only to quality education facilities but also to quality teaching. That is why I was pleased when the ACT government recently signed the national education reform agreement with the commonwealth, which, as you know, will focus on further improving students' learning and on strengthening teaching, school leadership, transparency and accountability. No doubt many of my constituents will benefit greatly.

A further \$13 million has been set aside for the capital upgrades program for ACT schools. This will see several schools in my electorate benefit from upgrade programs such as school security improvements, car park and traffic safety improvements, classroom refurbishment and roof upgrades, just to name a few. Over and above this, this budget has allocated \$2 million for the stage 1 modernisation of Belconnen High School, which Ms Berry mentioned, and a further \$3 million for the west Macgregor primary school expansion, which, as you know, will cater for the fast-expanding suburb of west Macgregor.

I am happy that this government continues to acknowledge the need to encourage Canberrans to lead healthier lifestyles. Members would be aware that there are many preventable diseases that continue to cause serious illness. This budget, through the urban improvement program, has focused on improving recreational options to encourage active living. Specifically, through this program, the Ginninderra community will see \$100,000 set aside to undertake improvements to access arrangements at Emu Bank, a very popular area for local skaters and residents who wish to access Lake Ginninderra. Further funds have been set aside for completing the design and renewal of playgrounds in a number of parks, including John Knight park, which, as you all know, is a very well patronised park. The Weetangera neighbourhood oval will also benefit from the urban improvement program, ensuring that the local community enjoy high quality sporting facilities. It is developments such as this that encourage our young people to pick up a sport of their choice and aspire to play on first-class grounds such as this and the other recently refurbished grounds in my electorate.

These initiatives, and many others that my colleagues have talked about or will talk about, acknowledge the growth in my electorate, and my constituents will greatly benefit from the critical services that will be provided.

To conclude, Madam Speaker, I reiterate that this budget is a good and responsible Labor budget that will set Canberra in a better position to address future challenges. Canberra residents are better off through the many initiatives contained in it.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (10.58): When I first saw the notice paper for today, and in the discussion in admin and procedures yesterday, I was a little surprised to see two opposing motions on the notice paper on the budget. Standing order 59 says that we should not be anticipating matters that are due to come before the Assembly, and I had thought about asking advice on a point of order as to whether these were in order today. But it seems that it is the will of the Assembly to talk about the budget, and perhaps it is past practice. It raises interesting questions about the purpose of the standing order, but nonetheless this is where we find ourselves.

I understand that it was also the plan to debate these two motions cognately. Now we find ourselves with the motion brought forward by Ms Berry that essentially praises the budget, and Mr Smyth's motion, next, which clearly is going to put a counterview, so we can prosecute all these arguments with the next notice on the notice paper. Perhaps we could have done it cognately and had that one overall debate.

Nonetheless, I have circulated amendments. My amendments seek to tidy up a few things in the motion from a grammatical point of view and then acknowledge that we are about to go into a significant process. I seek leave to move my amendments together.

Leave granted.

MR RATTENBURY: Thank you, members. I move:

- (1) In paragraph (1)(a)(iii), omit “with”.
- (2) In paragraph (1)(a)(iv), omit all words after “structural reforms”, substitute “to make the Territory Budget and operation of government more efficient”.
- (3) In paragraph (1)(a)(v), omit all words after “measured way”.
- (4) Insert new paragraph (1)(a)(vii):
 - “(vii) will be now subject to extensive consideration by the Select Committee on Estimates, followed by debate on the detail of each proposed expenditure during the August sittings of the Assembly;”.
- (5) Omit paragraph (2), substitute:
 - “(2) calls on all Members of the Assembly to thoroughly consider each expenditure outlined in the Budget papers and support measures that will make Canberra a more amenable, sustainable and enjoyable place to live.”.

As I was saying, one part of the amendments is just to make a few tidy-ups on the text of the motion. The other is essentially—rather than forming a defined view on the budget, and I will speak to my views on it in a moment—to acknowledge the fact that we are now about to go into a lengthy process of consideration of the budget. We are going to have the in-principle debate tomorrow; I expect members will put their views again then—possibly the same views as we have heard today. We then go into the estimates process, in which we go through a lot of detail. Certainly from my point of view, with the portfolios that I am responsible for, I look forward to that process. I imagine there will be some robust debate about some of the initiatives in the budget and some of the areas where changes have been made; I think there will be a fair bit of information that will come out through that process as well. So my amendment simply acknowledges that that process is about to take place, and I trust that all members will actively participate in the detailed discussion of the budget.

In terms of the actual content of the budget, overall the budget has delivered a couple of key outcomes. The first is to deliver a pathway of fiscal responsibility. I said yesterday in some public comments that from the Greens’ point of view, we are a party that has a strong view about the need for sustainability, and when it comes to sustainability that includes economic sustainability. I do not believe that we can live on the credit card forever, and that is a party view; we must have budgets that are

balanced over the economic cycle. That means we should not never have a deficit. At the same time we also need to not always be in deficit; we need to have surpluses to either pay back previous deficits or have the money to pay for the infrastructure that we want. I think that the budget has set us on that pathway of the fiscal balance that we need, and I support that overall direction of the budget. I think it is quite important, and is the right direction for the ACT to be going in.

The Treasurer has in part said that we need this to be able to fund the infrastructure that we are moving towards. That is the second important thing for me. We are seeing in this budget a commitment to significant investments for the future of this city, investments that will shape Canberra to be a more sustainable city into the future, bringing a level of change and new urban amenity, new initiatives that I think the community will really thank us for down the line.

Of course, I particularly refer to two issues of interest to me that arise from the parliamentary agreement. One is the commitment to move forward on light rail, the capital metro system. What we see in the budget is investment that will get that process underway. We are well past the stage of discussing whether Canberra will get light rail. We are now in a process of implementing rolling that light rail out for this city, and I think that is a very positive phase.

With the establishment of the capital metro authority and the resources to go with that, we will now have the staff on the ground who will be planning the implementation of that public transport system that will really make a difference to the future of this city when it comes to both seeing a level of urban renewal and also providing a public transport system that tackles key issues of climate change and oil depletion and actually helps to give us a transport system that is not polluting the planet, that is not simply driving congestion and reliance on oil reserves that are predicted to decline in the future. We are moving to an electricity-based transport system that offers future Canberrans, and indeed the current generations, the opportunity to have a different mode of transport and a more convenient city where you do not simply have to drive everywhere, where there is an alternative to needing a private vehicle, with the substantial costs that go with that.

The second point that I particularly want to touch on is the funding of the common ground initiative. This is an initiative that seeks to break the cycle of homelessness for some of the most disadvantaged in our community. It is a very significant initiative, one that is widely recognised in the community as offering a real breakthrough in delivering a different model for ending homelessness. By providing a stable basis of accommodation, and assertive services to go with that accommodation, it really offers people who have, for a range of reasons, found themselves either homeless or at risk of being homeless in a situation where they can stabilise their lives and rebuild their futures with that stable accommodation as a basis. I am very pleased that initiative is moving forward in the budget.

There is a range of other matters, but in this context I thought I would simply touch on two of the key highlights I see in the budget and the broad direction. I look forward to participating in the extensive debates that are yet to come through the formal Assembly processes around the budget, and I commend my amendments to the Assembly.

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) (11.05): I thank Ms Berry for bringing this motion on today. I would like to add my support to the motion. This is a budget which lays the foundation for works that will deliver a positive transformation to this city. It is a budget that really does seek to deliver high quality services and greater opportunities to all Canberrans while returning the budget to a surplus in a measured and responsible way.

This is in marked contrast to other jurisdictions that have simply taken an axe, and a blunt one at that, to vital community and education services. I have no doubt that such an approach will have a long-lasting and negative effect on those communities long into the future. This is an approach that is not the Labor way and, indeed, it cannot be the path taken by any responsible government that is committed to looking after its most vulnerable and ensuring the ongoing prosperity of the community. The Labor approach, as demonstrated in this budget, is an approach which is a moderate and measured approach which continues to invest in vital infrastructure and services and continues to provide opportunity to future generations of Canberrans.

There can be no conversation about future opportunities, economic prosperity and transformation without a discussion on education. I know, and this government knows, the power of education to change lives for the better. It is the silver bullet that delivers change not only to the individual but to society. Report after report highlights the power of education to create happier, healthier and more prosperous people and communities. As a Labor government, a government that is about supporting our most vulnerable and delivering quality services for all, I am very proud to say that this is a budget that will deliver on the promise of a high quality education to all Canberrans regardless of their location, their school or their background.

The budget includes delivery of many of our election commitments, including the canteen grants, support for students with disabilities, degree scholarships for early childhood educators, support for non-government school students, new buildings for the Canberra College cares program, a Tuggeranong introductory English centre, Coombs primary school design, and stage 1 of the modernisation of Belconnen high—which, Madam Deputy Speaker, I have no doubt that you have a strong interest in.

It is this budget that delivers on the national education reform agreement. It was a great day to witness the Chief Minister and the Prime Minister sign on to a commitment that will deliver \$190 million of additional funding to ACT schools over six years. This budget will deliver on that agreement. It will provide funding certainty to all ACT schools regardless of system and ensure funding is given equitably to support schools and students to achieve their best.

This agreement commits the ACT government to over \$34 million over four years in new funding to transition to this agreement. The education reform agreement represents a paradigm shift in the funding of education and will put in the past the arguments about funding equity. As the Chief Minister has said, it puts to bed the

government and non-government school divide once and for all. This is a new system that provides equitable funding to all schools based on need and we are indeed proud to be a part of it.

This agreement and funding will provide resources to improve our teacher quality through enhanced professional practice and recruitment. It will give principals and school communities the capacity, capability, support and authority to make decisions over how best to allocate their resources for the benefit of their students. It will ensure that schools are given the resources to reflect the needs of their students and to put in place measures to support those students who are at risk of falling behind.

It will mean greater transparency and accountability of all our schools, so that parents and the community can have confidence that their local schools are delivering upon the promise of a great education for all students. These are once-in-a-generation changes and will transform our education sector for the better, delivering a better system for today's students and students in the years to come.

In addition to the substantial reform and commitment to improved education in the ACT, the ACT government has also committed to significant investment and reform through DisabilityCare Australia, formerly known as the national disability insurance scheme. We are delivering on our substantial commitments to vulnerable Canberrans through this and through delivery of our election commitments and the parliamentary agreement.

On disability, the ACT government, in partnership with the commonwealth government, has agreed to the phased launch of DisabilityCare in the ACT. This will progress to a full scheme in 2016. The initial phase will see a co-funded enhancement for ACT disability and mental health services and a program of work to prepare the ACT prior to the transfer of ACT clients into DisabilityCare from July next year. The enhanced service offer will be made available to eligible people in the ACT in a way which will be sustained when they transfer to DisabilityCare and will be delivered within the principles of choice and control. The readiness initiative addresses the needs of funded organisations to transition to a different funding model and provide people with a disability with information and resources that enable greater choice and control. Total joint funding of \$16 million over three years has been committed to achieve the launch in the ACT.

In addition to our commitment to DisabilityCare Australia, this budget also demonstrates our ongoing commitment to vulnerable children, young people and families in the ACT. We have committed \$1.2 million a year to support young people transitioning from care and expand youth engagement and family support for youth services. We continue to invest in the parents as teachers program, which is an intensive program for vulnerable children and families and is the cornerstone of early intervention.

In line with recent recommendations from the Auditor-General, we are working to upgrade our children and young people system within the office for youth and family services. We have committed to ongoing financial investment in the Bimberi Youth

Justice Centre and will continue to provide intensive and targeted programs to young people which have a demonstrated positive impact on transition outcomes for young people.

We are continuing to work on a robust and strategic out-of-home care strategy to reform the delivery of out-of-home care services in the ACT. We are establishing a micro-credit program, Indigenous scholarships, a mobile attendant care and evening service in disability, and we have begun design work to renovate respite properties.

In the arts, we continue to fund the Fringe Festival and music, visual arts and multi-art hubs at Ainslie, Kingston and Gorman House. For our multicultural community in Canberra we have boosted the funding for the festival, community language schools, interpreter scholarships and multicultural sports grants for events such as the global cricket challenge.

ACT Labor recognises the importance of building and transforming our city, and we know this means investing in our people, not just our physical infrastructure. This is a budget that does just that. It begins the task of delivering on substantial election commitments that we have made—to our families, children and people in need. It locks in two major transformational social reforms—the introduction of funding for school education based on need and equity and a system of support that provides choice and dignity for people with a disability. I commend the budget but, more importantly at this moment, I commend the motion to the Assembly.

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) (11.14): I am pleased to join in this debate with my colleagues in support of Ms Berry's motion on the important measures outlined in this year's budget and the contribution they will make to the continued growth and development of our city. This morning I would like to focus on two particular areas. The first is the capital metro project, which has been talked about at some length in this debate.

This project is a critical one for changing the way we view public transport in our city. It was a commitment that this government took to the last election. It was a commitment taken by our colleague Mr Rattenbury on behalf of the Greens to the last election. It is a commitment that—shock, horror!—the government is now implementing. It is implementing a clear and explicit election commitment.

The commitment is to develop the first link of a light rail network for our city. Why have we chosen to make this investment? We have chosen to make this investment because it will provide an enhanced level of service for Canberrans who choose to use public transport, particularly on that very busy corridor between the city and Gungahlin. It will encourage more Canberrans to consider using public transport because of the reliability, the features, the perceptions and the comfort associated with commuting in a light rail vehicle.

We have chosen this model because we know that the impact of light rail is beyond that of the physical transport task that it performs. It has a much bigger impact. It

drives investment certainty along the corridor. It encourages people to live on the corridor. More people living close to public transport is consistent with the government's long-term transport strategy, and light rail is a key way of starting this to work on the corridor between Gungahlin and the city.

I have spoken about the investment it will drive along the corridor. We know the experience of other cities nationally and internationally where you see higher house prices and greater desirability for access to live close to the public transport corridor because of the reliability and the easy accessibility that it provides. It reduces the need for people to have to live with one or two cars in the garage. Instead, they can take some of their journey by walking or cycling if they are commuting into the city, if they are commuting further away, rather than having to join what is an increasingly congested area of our road network.

It is the issue of congestion as to why Northbourne Avenue has been chosen. Northbourne Avenue is at capacity—three lanes in each direction at capacity in peak hour. The problem that has to be resolved there, of course, is that one of those lanes in each direction is currently dominated by public transport use, buses, in conflict with private motor vehicles. There is no priority for public transport. You have, effectively, one lane of traffic which could be used by private motor vehicles being used by public transport. This is creating further congestion, particularly during peak times, when you consider the very large number of buses that travel north and south along the corridor every day.

So for all those reasons, this work needs to be done. It needs to be done in a way which is a long-term solution for the city, not a short-term one, not even a medium-term one. If we are going to be making the sort of investment we need to make on this corridor, let us make it a long-term investment for the future of our city. That is why capital metro has been chosen. I am very pleased that the government provides funding in this year's budget to establish the capital metro agency. It provides for the engagement of a highly experienced project director and chair of the project board and the recruitment of the skilled workforce we will need to drive this project through to its construction commencement phase.

This is a big project for our city, and it is the right time for this project to be commencing. At the start of a potential downturn in our economy, which will be exacerbated if we see some of the drastic job cuts that colleagues of those opposite federally have been talking about, we must have large infrastructure projects coming through the pipeline ready to respond. This will be one of those projects—\$12.3 million for the establishment of the capital metro agency and another \$5 million for the preliminary design studies and a delivery strategy to progress the light rail transit corridor.

This will be an important body of work that gets this project well and truly underway. We will need to undertake further economic and financial analysis, including the identification of finance funding and procurement options and a range of further investigations, as well as the development of a property release strategy along the corridor.

This is not just a transport project; it is a city building project. It is about creating and changing the way the city develops into the future. Do we just continue to build more and more suburbs or do we change that mix and give people a real choice to live close to the city centre—increasingly, many people are seeking to do so anyway—and then support that with a fixed, constant and reliable public transport vision at a high frequency? That is what this project is all about.

Of course, the government views this link as only the first link of a broader city-wide network. Whilst our focus over the next four years will be to deliver this first link, we will also make sure that the broader strategic planning is in place to identify routes for the broader network across the city. This year's budget provides \$1.4 million for that task—to investigate and identify the issues for consideration for a future Canberra-wide light rail network.

We will build on the strategic planning work that has been done to date. The rapid transit corridors are already identified in transport for Canberra and, indeed, in the territory plan. We will need to review their suitability for the light rail technology, take into account any particularities that arise and make sure that those are properly reflected in a master plan for our city.

This is a project not just for the north side, not just for Gungahlin. This is a project that starts a change for the city as a whole and from which everyone benefits ultimately in the long term through the expansion of the network. We know that, once you build a link, the networks grow. That has been the experience of cities right around the world. There is also a short and immediate-term benefit. If you are using Gungahlin Drive, if you are using Majura parkway, if you are using Commonwealth Avenue or if you are using Parkes Way to get to and from work every day, relieving congestion on Northbourne Avenue makes the whole of the road network work better. That is what capital metro will allow us to achieve. Those benefits for the broader city should not be discounted or ignored when we debate this very important project.

This project really does highlight the government's long-term view as to how it wants to shift and change the shape and the manner in which our city grows and develops into the future. We want to create a more sustainable urban environment. We want to create a more liveable and accessible urban environment. We want to create an urban environment where more people of all income types, of all backgrounds, can live close to the city centre and live close to the level of services and amenity that it provides. This will be critical for our economic future, for our social future and for our environmental future. This important budget initiative delivers on those key tasks.

DR BOURKE (Ginninderra) (11.24): This is a responsible budget that builds and transforms Canberra through a stronger, fairer economy, major infrastructure projects, taxation and structural reforms and delivers high-quality health and education services. I would particularly like to highlight the benefits of this budget, like my Ginninderra colleagues Ms Berry and Ms Porter did, to our constituents in Ginninderra in the areas of education, health and jobs.

This centennial year budget is clearly about building on the achievements of our city and launching us into the next century. Ensuring our next generations receive the best education has been one of the hallmarks of this government and is essential for the future prosperity of Canberra. The total education budget this year is almost \$900 million, including new funding for government and non-government schools to support the introduction of the national education reform agreement.

The Chief Minister has recently signed on to the national education reform package, building on the Gonski review to provide better, fairer, needs-based support for all ACT students. The government has supported this initiative with \$34 million over four years in the budget. The national education reform agreement, along with the national disability insurance scheme, the NDIS, will ensure a much better future for some of our most disadvantaged students, as will disability access and special needs transport initiatives.

Specifically in Belconnen, I am proud the government is honouring our election commitment to modernise the ageing Belconnen High School. This is one of Belconnen's oldest and most central high schools, in Hawker. Two million dollars in this budget is for stage 1 of this upgrade that will eventually see new buildings and major refurbishments to renew existing buildings. Nearby, Canberra High School in Macquarie will have major work to upgrade its roof, while the Macquarie Primary School staffroom will be refurbished to modern standards and the school will receive a fence.

The Mount Rogers Primary School classrooms will be renovated and upgraded and the school and students will also be protected, with new security fencing. The expansion of Macgregor Primary School to allow for students from west Macgregor development is also funded in this budget.

Schools throughout Ginninderra will benefit from the continued rollout of programs to upgrade traffic safety in car parks, improve sustainability through solar panels, better glazing and lighting, improve electronic security systems, encourage healthier choices through the provision of water refill stations, support P&C-run canteens and provide support for our teachers' professional development through the Teacher Quality Institute. Other initiatives will improve access to preschool through the preschool matters program and through capital upgrades.

CIT Bruce campus is a very important part of the education mix in Ginninderra. Capital upgrades for CIT Bruce include upgrades for solar, fire alarms, security, fire and building management systems and better signage.

This budget sees major investments in the University of Canberra at Bruce, including over \$8 million for the design of the University of Canberra public hospital. Not only will this new hospital provide a greater range of patient care in north Canberra, along with training and research opportunities integrated with the University of Canberra, but also the hospital will become another major employer in north Canberra. It will also fit well with the enhanced services provided by north Canberra's major hospital nearby at Calvary, but I will discuss those later.

To assist with the rapid growth of student numbers at the University of Canberra, the ACT government in this budget is providing the university with a loan facility of \$24 million to provide additional affordable student accommodation. The government is also investing \$3.5 million in the University of Canberra sports commons project. This will support community sports and provide opportunities for students studying various sport-related careers in terms of sport administration, and the grant will also assist the Brumbies in their relocation to the sports hub.

Turning again to health matters in Ginninderra, Belconnen residents and people working in Belconnen will be especially pleased to hear the new Belconnen health centre will include a nurse-led walk-in centre. The walk-in centre will increase the range of options for people seeking advice or medical assistance and take the pressure off other front-line services, which will improve their efficiency and effectiveness. The walk-in centre is just one of the benefits from the \$9 million allocated for the nearly completed new Belconnen health centre to greatly expand the range of community health services available in Ginninderra.

This budget continues the major investment in Calvary hospital, with 16 new beds funded, to include 10 general inpatient beds opening in the near future and early next year, and another bed in a dedicated four-bed stroke unit. A new eight-bed rapid assessment unit at Calvary hospital will improve access to specialist services. Patients, visitors and staff at Calvary will welcome the allocation of \$1.3 million for the design of a multistorey car park at Calvary. It will alleviate the growing demand for parking, allowing up to 700 vehicles to park onsite.

The government has allocated another \$2.3 million for extending the Belconnen to city bus transit way along College Street and Haydon Drive in Bruce. This will make the public transport option on ACTION's blue rapid route faster and more efficient for people travelling to and from the University of Canberra and Calvary hospital and, of course, beyond.

In the time remaining to me, I would also like to touch on the budget initiatives for first Australians in Canberra. Last year, the Productivity Commission estimated the ACT government's total Indigenous expenditure at \$131 million, of which about 24 per cent was provided through Indigenous-specific services. A new initiative for Canberra's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community amounts to nearly \$2 million in new funding. The government is investing in key areas such as education, through the Indigenous scholarships program now with an extra \$400,000. These, having successfully supported secondary students wanting careers and education, are now also extended to those students interested in careers in health. These scholarships will support students in year 11 and year 12 and at the start of their tertiary studies.

On employment, the allocation of \$880,000 for the community helping Aboriginal Australians to negotiate choices leading to employment and success, the CHANCES program, builds on the success of a program first piloted in 2012. And in line with the recommendations of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body, there is

\$75,000 for design work on a public housing community for elderly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tenants, along with \$404,000 for the implementation of the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tobacco control strategy.

Mr Wall: Where's the bush healing farm?

DR BOURKE: I am getting there. Other ongoing initiatives and programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the budget include ongoing support for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body, the Koori preschools, improving legal aid and dispute resolution, ongoing work on the healing farm and a micro-credit program advice and support service.

Mr Wall: Another 10 years.

DR BOURKE: You may think this is a laughing matter, Mr Wall, but it is not.

Mr Doszpot: We don't think it is a laugh at all. We don't think it is a joke. We think it is very important, Chris.

DR BOURKE: Then why are you laughing?

Mr Doszpot: We're not laughing.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Doszpot, you were.

DR BOURKE: You just did. If you think these are matters that are funny—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Stop the clock please. Sit down, Dr Bourke. Members, this is not an ongoing conversation across the chamber. Dr Bourke has the floor. You will remain silent until he finishes. Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. This is an intelligent, responsible budget addressing our current needs and our aspirations for this great city.

MS GALLAGHER (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Health and Minister for Higher Education) (11.33): I thank Ms Berry for bringing this motion to the Assembly today and also indicate that the government will be supporting Mr Rattenbury's amendments to this motion.

The budget that was delivered yesterday is not only about building and transforming Canberra but also about holding on to the deep convictions of our government: promoting fairness and protecting jobs. The budget not only benefits from the smart economic management of ACT Labor over many years but also creates capacity for the delivery of transformative infrastructure projects and major policy reforms into the future.

The government is committed to creating a city with strength and prosperity for the long term. This is what we took to the last election and what the forward-looking

ACT community expects of us. That is why this budget includes funding to commence 70 per cent of our election commitments and delivers the next stage of reforms for a fairer and more efficient tax system.

Canberrans expect us to respond to the challenges of the time, not least the buffeting our economy has taken through contracting federal government spending and the drain on confidence created by the promises of the federal opposition. And that is why the budget has a strong focus on maintaining confidence in our housing and construction industries, in our growing health sector, in the education sector, in ICT and, of course, in thousands of Canberra households. Our track record shows we can and will keep making this city even better, and the 2013-14 budget lays out a plan for Canberra as we move into our second century.

Here lies one of the great chasms between the major political parties in this city. We have a plan for a fair and prosperous Canberra, with jobs, infrastructure, health and education systems and services which really are the envy of the nation. The federal Liberal Party has a plan to send Canberra into recession, and the Canberra Liberals do not have a plan at all. Mr Hanson rolled out the standard misleading response on radio this morning in one breath, "You should be spending more, building more, employing more people, funding more programs, rates and government fees should never, ever go up," and then in the next, "You should be saving more, there should be no deficit." That is not how balancing a budget works.

The stark contrast between the two sides of the Assembly traces back to the 2012 election and beyond. The government have a vision for what Canberra can be. We believe in creating a city where public services and infrastructure are world class and creating an environment where the private sector and the community can both thrive. With \$1.3 billion allocated for infrastructure and capital projects over the next four years, support for our construction sector and money for those infrastructure projects, the 2013-14 budget will deliver urban renewal and will support our economy. And that was acknowledged at the budget breakfast this morning and, indeed, by stakeholders in their response to the government.

Major infrastructure cannot be built overnight and it cannot be built without proper planning and development, which is why the measures in this budget are part of a long-term plan. An economy cannot be completely restructured overnight, which is why we are delivering tax reform incrementally and investing strategically in industry diversification under the growth, diversification and jobs framework. The government fully understands the ACT's place in the regional, national and global economies. We understand that responsible economic management is about careful planning and decision making over the longer term.

Our investments in health and education services and infrastructure reflect the government's absolute commitment to the health and wellbeing of the Canberra community. We are a relatively young community but we are growing and we are ageing, and that is why we are looking ahead and investing to make sure Canberra continues to enjoy a world-class health system. The overall investment in health in this budget is \$1.3 billion, growth of around seven per cent on last year. This funding will deliver more services, more beds, shorter waiting times and more jobs for health

professionals. The workforce will grow by 131 full-time positions which, combined with a \$45 million investment in elective surgery and emergency departments, will assist us to reduce waiting times for people waiting for treatment.

We are delivering new infrastructure across our major health facilities, with new beds, new services to meet the demand for outpatient services which have been generated by our increase in elective surgery. We have got more money going into cancer outpatient services for the brand new Canberra Region Cancer Centre which will open later this year and \$40 million to deliver the next stage of the hospital's redevelopment which will include design and approvals for major new clinical buildings and extension to the emergency department, including the dedicated paediatric area. There will also be extra services for women and children through the centenary hospital.

At Calvary hospital there will be extra beds going in there, the design money to construct a 700 car space multistorey car park, funding to operate the eight rapid assessment beds unit, extra hospital in the home places and funding for the construction and fit-out of the north side birthing centre. The nurse-led walk-in centre model will be taken to Belconnen and Tuggeranong as promised, with capital funding for the fit-out of those clinics at \$950,000.

We will also progress to the next stage of the University of Canberra public hospital, with funding of \$8.2 million to take that project to preliminary sketch plan stage. The government is looking into the future with this project. The UCPH will be designed to respond to growing demands for subacute rehabilitation, aged care and mental health services. Being connected to the university makes sense and crosses in with my portfolio of higher education, and we will be able to weave clinical education and research into the running of the new hospital. This is one of the many strategic investments that will help our thriving tertiary education sector continue to grow.

We will also invest money into our universities, as employers and as exporters, through the \$2 million study Canberra initiatives, and of course the funding that we are providing to support the establishment and recruitment of a world-leading expert in cancer research that will come to the ANU and help provide clinical expertise to the Capital Region Cancer Centre.

Despite the constraints on the budget, the government has made savings and allocated funding for the rollout of two nation-building reforms in disability care and the national education reform agreement. We are proud to join with the federal government in leading the way in the next great wave of Labor reforms.

The beginning of DisabilityCare Australia will be a defining moment of 2013-14. The ACT was the first jurisdiction to sign up, and this budget includes \$5½ million over two years, which will combine with \$10.6 million from the commonwealth to prepare for the rollout. And any one of us, as MLAs, who have attended those carers meetings in our role as ordinary members of this place and also in the lead-up to elections will simply understand the magnitude of the reform that is coming with this initiative so that we will not have a situation where parents will be begging for respite care for

their children, where elderly parents are given some comfort about the long-term support plans for their children. This will be a significant and major reform, and the ACT is very proud to have been at the forefront of it.

Under the national plan for school improvement, there will be a joint investment of additional money. I keep saying “additional” because the opposition seem to have some trouble grappling with that term. It seems the Christopher Pyne letter, which I understand was received in the Liberal Party’s inbox about three days before it actually managed to get into my office and days after it had been received elsewhere, was simply rubbish, and I said so at the time. I have had officials scratching their heads as they have tried to formulate and understand the table that Christopher Pyne has put in that letter.

But it is good to see that Mr Hanson, who does not seem to have any independent thought, has accepted Christopher Pyne’s numbers hook, line and sinker and just spouts the \$31 million. It is extra money going into ACT schools and I think it is perhaps a failure to understand how the indexation arrangements operate in the federal allocation of education funding. Perhaps that is the biggest problem here and the fact that the New South Wales and Victorian governments have slashed their education budget, resulting in a much lower indexation rate than was going to flow through to the ACT. This gives us funding certainty and will improve educational outcomes across the board and, again, we are very proud to have been at the forefront of this reform.

This budget is sensible, it is measured, it is a budget for the times, it does respond to what we are seeing in our local economy and it is balanced against the things that we have to do and the things that we would like to do more of. I commend the budget and the motion to the Assembly.

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella) (11.43): I am pleased to rise today to speak in favour of Ms Berry’s motion. This government has handed down a fiscally responsible budget that prepares the people of Canberra, including my electorate of Brindabella, for a stronger future. This government is committed to investing in Brindabella’s future, with particular emphasis on the most important issues facing my community today—health, education and jobs.

When talking to my electorate, the main thing they raise with me is access to health care, and especially affordability. That is why this government is delivering on its election commitment of a nurse-led walk-in centre that will provide free services to the Tuggeranong community. \$951,000 has been committed to the design and fit-out of the Tuggeranong and Belconnen nurse-led walk-in centres. With thousands of Canberrans already using this service at the Woden campus for minor injuries and illnesses, this government is happy to be able to take this service out into the community.

The walk-in centre will be located at the Tuggeranong town centre, and the community will be able to utilise this resource far more readily than it has been used before. Everyone I talk to in Brindabella about this is absolutely ecstatic that this service is being brought into the community.

This, of course, adds to the \$4.9 million allocated through the rollover to stage 2 of the upgrade of the Tuggeranong health centre. The Tuggeranong Community Health Centre delivers a comprehensive range of healthcare services to the local community. The centre offers services aimed at assisting clients to better manage acute and chronic conditions in the community and closer to home, while reducing the reliance on hospitals.

It provides community nursing, including ambulatory care clinics; allied health services such as physiotherapy, podiatry and nutrition; diabetes services, including services for those with gestational diabetes—a nurse educator and a dietician; services for women, youth and children; adult mental health services; alcohol and drug counselling; and pathology collection. The upgrade of this facility is something that is welcomed by the community. The improvements will make the community health services in Tuggeranong something that the community will be truly proud of.

Tuggeranong will also see great improvements to education, with several initiatives around the area. These include \$1.8 million for the establishment of a new introductory English centre at Wanniasa Hills Primary School. The new facility will give students with limited or no English speaking background who have recently arrived in Australia and Canberra the opportunity for intensive language tuition before settling into mainstream schools in the Tuggeranong school network.

This work is added to by the rectification and upgrade of Taylor Primary School, costing \$12.93 million. This project involves the removal of asbestos-containing materials from the school, upgrading and replacing core infrastructure and providing quality 21st century learning and teaching environments at Taylor Primary School. These incentives are vital for growth in the area and ensure that all families will be looked after in the area. This is added to by commitments that work with the ACT schooling system as a whole, including investing in our children's future

The budget includes targeted investment in government and non-government schools to give every child in Canberra the best start in life, including more than \$34 million over four years in new funding to reflect the ACT government's contribution and transitional support under the national education reform agreement with the commonwealth, which provides a new and innovative funding framework for all Australian schools on a needs-based approach.

This budget also looks at special-needs students, with \$1.6 million in 2013-14 to support the transport of students with disabilities to and from ACT public schools, as well as support for students with disabilities with \$1.3 million in 2013 to provide additional support for students with complex learning needs in ACT public schools. This is integral to the national education reforms and will support ACT students in this important area.

This government also recognises that teachers are a key part of the education system, which is why this government has committed to investing in our teachers with \$3.5 million over four years to provide support to experienced teachers to increase their professional qualifications and undertake research during their careers.

The ACT government has also committed to transforming the vocational training sector in Canberra, with 23,900 vocational education students in the capital, which is why this government is delivering \$180,000 to undertake a feasibility study investigating how CIT education can best be provided for in the Woden valley, Weston Creek, Tuggeranong and Molonglo communities, ensuring that current skill shortages are addressed and students in Canberra can obtain qualifications in the skills they want to. The government has also committed \$240,000 to continue to support the children's services sector to upskill its workforce to meet requirements of the national quality framework and to bring workers up to the required certificate III level.

Capital works programs are also creating Tuggeranong-based jobs, as well as continuing the important growth that is required for the area. I am pleased to be able to say that the ACT government has allocated \$17.36 million for the area. This will provide a new fire station in the Calwell-Conder area as part of the emergency facilities upgrade and relocation from the current premises. With the draft variation now approved, it is only a matter of time before we see the bricks and mortar on the site as the building starts, to ensure that as the south of Tuggeranong grows, the emergency services will grow with it.

Brindabella will also see \$1.6 million for stage 2 of the upgrade to Ashley Drive. This will see the duplication of Ashley Drive between Erindale Drive and Johnson Drive, providing a four-lane divided carriageway on this important road. This will include bridge structures at three locations as well as upgrading lighting and follows the \$7 million investment that the ACT government made for stage 1, from Sternberg Crescent to Erindale Drive.

Ashley Drive also provides an important link between Johnson Drive in Richardson and Sternberg Crescent in Wanniasa. It has experienced significant growth in traffic volumes. A major study undertaken by the Territory and Municipal Services Directorate recommended a two-stage approach for that upgrade of works. It is also coupled with \$250,000 to undertake a traffic safety investigation, including Sternberg Crescent in Wanniasa, to ensure that safety of drivers in Brindabella continues.

The government is also committed to transforming the capital's public transport with the continued rollout of park-and-ride and bike-and-ride systems, with \$120,000 for the development of design studies for bike-and-ride as well as park-and-ride facilities at Erindale, Wanniasa and Gungahlin. This adds to the upgrades of the ACTION system as a whole, including \$250,000 for ACTION's bus seat refurbishment program, \$2.6 million for the management of the MyWay system, and \$275,000 to upgrade CCTV systems across all ACTION bus stations;

This budget provides support for families in the ACT through greater access to the ability to purchase their first home. This budget increases the first homebuyers grant from \$7,000 to \$12,500. The ACT government will also increase accessibility to young families to purchase their first home by lowering the stamp duty rate. A young family purchasing their first house in my electorate of Brindabella, say for around \$500,000, will see a saving of \$3,400 in stamp duty. From today, if that family earns a combined income of less than \$160,000, it will have access to the homebuyer concession scheme, meaning that when buying a new property under \$420,000 they only need to pay \$20 in stamp duty. I frequently talk to young couples in the area that

are looking to buy their first home and these savings will ease the pressures that they continue to face.

This government is committed to transforming the capital and these announcements mean real improvements to the local community. This budget provides affordable health care to residents, with out-of-hours care available and care in the home for those who need it. We are providing upgrades to schools, with a particular emphasis on introductory English and special needs, as well as ensuring that while Brindabella continues to grow, the infrastructure grows with it. I commend the motion.

MS BERRY (Ginninderra) (11.53): I think it is important for good governance in this territory that all views are heard on the financial management of our government, and I thank everyone for their contributions to this debate.

Before I move on, I would like to note that we might just have witnessed Mr Smyth's final speech as shadow treasurer, and to acknowledge the contribution that he has made to this position. I look forward to seeing who Mr Hanson chooses as his shadow treasury spokesperson after the post-Seselja reshuffle. It might be Val. Bring on Val, hey?

It is clear to me that we on this side of the chamber have a vision for our city that is articulated in the budget, and those opposite do not. As Mr Barr said yesterday:

The reforms and funding outlined in this Budget demonstrate the Government's commitment to implementing its plan to build and transform our economy and create opportunity and fairness for all Canberrans. This plan will deliver—

it will deliver, Mr Smyth—

important reforms to ensure Canberra remains a great place in which to live, work, study and do business, and to ensure we grow and prosper in the long term.

Mr Smyth in his speech had a different vision, albeit a narrow, mean-spirited and tired vision. In fact, he might need to head off to the Tuggeranong walk-in centre. There might be some infection in his eyes, because he is lacking vision.

All we have heard this morning from Mr Smyth is the same old rhetoric—spending bad, cutting good. Like a mix tape supplied by the Institute for Public Affairs, Mr Smyth is singing from the song sheet of ideological conservatives from a century and a half ago. The problem is that he is out of tune.

I do not believe that good community infrastructure is a luxury. I do not believe that a modern and accessible health system is a luxury. And I do not believe that funding extra work safety inspectors to make sure that subbies and tradies get home safely is a luxury.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I was happy to see, as you mentioned, that John Knight Memorial Park is receiving an upgrade. As a regular visitor to the park with my children and friends, our favourite part is the waterfall, which the kids like to paddle

in. Inevitably, accidentally or on purpose, they end up getting wet, but we always leave the park with a great adventure story to tell.

As a dog lover, I was especially pleased to see that the RSPCA and Domestic Animal Services are each receiving significant amounts of funding from this budget. This funding will enable them to continue to provide essential services, including the provision of an animal shelter for stray and injured animals, including native wildlife, as well as animal welfare inspector services.

Fellow dog lovers in the inner north will also be pleased that this government has committed to building a new dog park in their neck of the woods. As a regular user of the Belconnen dog park, I know how much these pieces of community infrastructure are appreciated by the community.

As a parent of children who attend Macgregor Primary School, I know how excited other parents, children and staff are at watching the school's community grow and strengthen. That is directly as a result of this government's support. A friend of mine, Helen, who lives in Weetangera and whose children attend Belconnen high, will be pleased with the \$2 million upgrade. Belconnen high is a great school and one that will greatly benefit from this new funding.

This budget shows that this Labor government is also looking after the aged and elderly members of our community. The budget lowers the age of qualification for the seniors gold card from 75 to 70. We are investing \$1.7 million for a new mobile dental clinic that ensures proper dental care for those who are not able to travel a distance to see a dentist. We are also upgrading parks and footpaths that are frequently used by our aged and elderly residents. I know that the Groovy Grannies of Holt, who regularly walk through the west Belconnen suburbs, are especially pleased to see that the footpaths along Spofforth and Drake Brockman in Holt are receiving some TLC in this budget.

This budget sets us on a path to make the most of available resources to make sure that our city remains a fair and caring city, and I commend this motion and the amendments to the chamber.

Amendments agreed to.

Question put:

That the motion, as amended, be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 9

Noes 8

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

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Economy

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (12.03): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) the Government's failure to disclose job and service cuts to the community in the lead up to the election;
- (b) the Government's lack of honesty, in their assurances to Canberrans that their election promises were fully funded;
- (c) the failure of the Gallagher Labor Government to manage the ACT Budget sustainably, budgeting for a deficit in excess of \$340 million in the current year and borrowings to increase to approximately \$3 billion over the forward estimates;
- (d) the Government's inability to deliver important projects on time and on budget, with failures including, but not limited to, the Gungahlin Drive Extension, North Weston Pond, the Hospital car park, Emergency Services Headquarters and the Cotter Dam;
- (e) the ACT Treasurer's unwillingness to debate the ACT Budget in a public forum; and
- (f) the Government's failure to diversify the ACT economy after more than 12 years in Government; and

(2) condemns the ACT Government for their failure, after 12 consecutive budgets to:

- (a) be honest with Canberrans about projected job and service cuts;
- (b) deliver vital infrastructure on time and within budget; and
- (c) put the ACT in a firm financial position, giving Canberrans almost \$3 billion of interest bearing debt for future Canberrans to pay.

Mr Coe: Did the IPA draft this?

MR SMYTH: No, Mr Coe, the IPA did not draft this motion.

Mr Coe: Shame.

MR SMYTH: It is interesting that Ms Berry puts these things in. She is a new member, with such extensive knowledge of what has gone on in this place before, but,

again, she follows the Andrew Barr line: if you have not got something sensible to say, you just go the slur. But the IPA, whether you like it or not, is a reasonably well-respected think tank on matters economic.

Mr Coe: The oldest in the world.

MR SMYTH: As Mr Coe points out, it is, in fact, the oldest in the world. So there we go. But let us get to my motion. This is a motion about, in effect, dishonesty. This is a motion about a government that say one thing and does another thing. This is about a government that failed in the lead-up to the election to disclose job and service cuts in their election promises. This is a government, through their lack of honesty, that assured Canberrans their election promises were fully funded, but now we find they are not. And this is about the failure of a Labor government, a Gallagher Labor government following on from a Stanhope Labor government, that have not managed the ACT budget in a sustainable manner and that are budgeting for deficits. Indeed, they have budgeted for deficits I think in 10 out of their 12 budgets. They have had some surpluses, but their process has always been to budget for deficits.

This is about the government's inability to deliver important projects on time and on budget, which include but are not limited to the Gungahlin Drive extension, the fabulous north Weston pond courtesy of Mr Corbell, the hospital car park—\$29 million to \$45 million—the blowout in the emergency services headquarters budget, and, of course, the shining icon of capital works delivery, the Cotter Dam.

Of course, this all comes in the context of a Treasurer who was unwilling to debate the opposition publicly, who made demands, who blackmailed business groups and said, "We will not—

Dr Bourke: A point of order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: A point of order. Mr Smyth, resume your seat. Dr Bourke.

MR SMYTH: Could we stop the clock?

MADAM SPEAKER: Stop the clock, please.

Dr Bourke: Madam Speaker, Mr Smyth has been using unparliamentary language to describe Mr Barr. I ask him to withdraw, please.

Members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Sorry, Dr Bourke, I really did not hear what you said.

Dr Bourke: Well, if they keep on interjecting, what do you expect?

MADAM SPEAKER: No, I cannot hear your voice. Could you—

Dr Bourke: Madam Speaker—

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, now the microphone is on.

Dr Bourke: Mr Smyth has been using unparliamentary language to describe Mr Barr. I ask that you request him to withdraw.

MADAM SPEAKER: Could you enlighten me as to what the unparliamentary language is?

Dr Bourke: He accused Mr Barr of blackmail.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Smyth, could you withdraw the assertion that Mr Barr blackmailed.

MR SMYTH: I withdraw. It is now apparent that the Treasurer told certain business groups that he would not appear if the opposition were invited. So you work out what that is and make your own conclusions. We now have two groups who have had longstanding functions—the chamber of commerce cocktails and the Canberra Business Council—

Members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order! Chief Minister, Mr Hanson. Mr Smyth has the floor.

MR SMYTH: budget breakfast—changed because the Treasurer refused to attend if the opposition were invited. So there you go.

Of course, this motion is about the government's failure to diversify the ACT economy after more than 12 years in government. It asks the Assembly to condemn the government for their failures after their 12 consecutive budgets, for their failure to be honest with Canberrans about protected jobs and service cuts, about their failure to deliver vital infrastructure on time and within budget and their failure to put the ACT in a firm financial position.

I am sure Mr Rattenbury will agree with this motion because, as we heard him say in his last speech on the previous motion, we have to stop living on the credit card. And we agree with you, Mr Rattenbury—we have to stop living on the credit card. So it will be interesting to see whether Mr Rattenbury actually believed what he said in the last debate and backs it up in this debate with his vote.

What have we got in this budget? Well, to quote the CPSU, those well-known friends of the Liberal Party, this is a budget full of weasel words and blank statements. What did Vince McDevitt say last night? Weasel words and blank statements. That is the vision according to the CPSU. And even the CPSU said the budget is light on detail. Now, remember when the Chief Minister rose to the throne and assumed the crown—she said this was the new era of openness and accountability. What has that era of openness and accountability delivered? Weasel words, blank statements and light on detail. So there we have it.

This is the new era from this Chief Minister. But why should we be surprised? This minister has form. Remember she went to the 2004 election and said there will be no school closures. And we all know what happened after 2004—23 schools were closed in the territory. In 2008 what did she say before the election? “All my plans are on the table.” She forgot the small plan to purchase \$77 million worth of Calvary hospital and at the same time sell the hospice. And, of course, in 2012, “All our policies are funded. There will be no job cuts.” They accused us of the job cuts they are now committing, and she said she would not triple the rates. But Mr Barr has let that little cat out of the bag by saying rates will go up 10 per cent a year. You only have to do that for about 11 years before your rates triple. And there is the dilemma—you cannot believe this government.

So what do we have tabled yesterday? It is a budget of debt. It is a budget of deficits. It is a budget of deceits. It is a budget that does not deliver. And that is the one thing that this government is consistently doing—under-delivering, whether it be reforms in the emergency department, whether it be reforms to ensure that waiting lists come down, whether it is a failure to budget for a surplus and deliver surpluses or whether it is a failure to keep their promises.

What is in this budget of weasel words and blank statements and light on detail? We have revenue increasing \$250 million a year for the next four years. The Chief Minister spoke in the last debate about the hard times we have encountered. But those hard times have seen their budgeted revenue increase every year. So they are very interesting hard times in a budgetary sense when their revenue increases every year, according to the budget, and the actuals were even higher. They actually got more every budget from 2007-08 right through to the projection in this budget than they had actually budgeted for. I am sure that will happen in the 2013-14 budget as well because they get it wrong.

It is their addiction to spending that is the problem, not the revenue, because the revenue has not declined. Mr Barr talks about the hard times that he says causes his deficits. It is never his fault, have you ever noticed that? When something is good it is always Andrew Barr’s policy, but when it is wrong it is the GFC or the Tony Abbott effect or somebody or something else. But the stark reality is in the budget papers. They get more revenue every year and have so since 2007-08 and will do so for the next four years. When their budget goes up the revenue goes up about a quarter of a billion dollars a year.

It is never Andrew Barr’s fault. It was the GFC. Now it is Tony Abbott. Well, how about it being “our spending”? How about it being “our ability to deliver on capital works”? How about it being “funding our personal follies”? And how about it being the taxes that did not work, like the lease variation tax? I see they have finally revised that down in the outyears—finally. They are still clinging to the hope that \$17 million will turn up this year, and we will see the outcome of that. But the tax has not delivered what was promised and, in fact, has had a very sad effect on urban renewal.

We had Mr Corbell with his sermon pontificating to us that we do not understand the importance of what they are doing. But he does not decry the fact that their taxes have

destroyed urban renewal. We have got Mr Rattenbury who says, “We want urban renewal and greater density so that we have got passengers for the light rail, but I have got a 15-storey tower so I will knock it down to a 12.” Okay, times two, there are six storeys that will have to be put somewhere else. So you have all these contradictions from those opposite. You have the platitudes, but what they need is a dose of reality, because it is a dose of reality that the taxpayer got from this budget.

Total government revenue increases \$250 million per year over the forward estimates. A billion dollars. The budget goes from \$4 billion to \$5 billion in just four years. Taxation revenue has increased by 25 per cent over the same period. Rates collection is up 16 per cent this year and 36 per cent in the forward estimates. Residential rates are up 10 per cent or \$139 per annum on average with a 13 per cent increase in the fixed charge for rates. The government cannot say that that does not affect all households.

Commercial rates are up 26 per cent or \$3,388 per annum, with a 44 per cent increase on the fixed charge hitting all commercial properties, big and small. This will directly affect business. Payroll tax collection is up 24 per cent over the forward estimates. The fire and emergency services levy collection is up 30 per cent over the estimates. Traffic infringement revenue is up 31 per cent from the current year to the end of the forward estimates. Revenue from parking is up 12 per cent over the forward estimates, yet there is no provision to upgrade parking machines.

We have expenditure on capital works. Revenue goes up by a billion dollars, but expenditure continues to outstrip revenue. And there is your problem. This government simply cannot control their spending. At the same time, they do not deliver the outcomes they promised. They never have, they never will. There is expenditure on various feasibility studies and design work for infrastructure programs but no major infrastructure programs are actually being started. And this is after the Treasurer beats the drum for four years, “Tony Abbott’s coming. It’s going to be terrible. Woe is us. I’m putting money aside for a rainy day.” But there is nothing to run. That is all at a time when his federal colleagues, who he has never once condemned, are cutting the federal public service. The cuts are happening now, Mr Barr, and you have done nothing to stop them.

The budget paper states that there are total savings of \$142 million, but there is absolutely no detail on how these savings will come about, where they are coming from and how much is being taken from each directorate. At least the budget last year had that detail. But here is the new era of accountability under the Chief Minister where even that detail is denied to people. The government either knows where this money is coming from or is simply hoping to raise \$142 million. But to reduce the savings chapter in the budget to just over a page is to be contemptuous of this place, and it belies the fact that we have got a new era of openness and accountability.

Then, of course, we are looking for more savings. The government is going to spend \$1.7 million looking for cuts in parks and city services, ACTION, the Emergency Services Agency and Corrective Services, all of which, of course, blew their budgets and all of which are getting what is called in the budget papers operational support. You can simply say that is code for, “We didn’t manage our budgets,” which so often happens with these departments under this government.

Then, of course, there are the staff cuts they did not tell anybody about. Remember in the lead-up to last year's election that it was the Liberals who were going to cut everybody. "Not us. We don't cut staff." But 100 staff are going from Education and Training, 17 from the CIT, 38 from Community Services and 29 from environment. Yes, Health gets 131 jobs.

Mr Coe: There may be allies from the ACT branch as well.

MR SMYTH: Yes, there might be cuts at headquarters as well. But it is very hard for people in education or Community Services or environment to morph into being new nurses. So there are cuts and people are affected by this. People are losing their jobs.

Then, of course, there are the liabilities. Borrowings are up \$531 million over the forward estimates, reaching a peak of \$3.52 billion. The government will borrow \$769 million within 24 months. Of course the interest expense is \$655 million over the forward estimates. \$655 million. You talk about why you should have surpluses. Well, if you have a surplus, you do not pay interest. Very simple. I think the approach the Howard government took where they paid off the debt that the Labor Party left them and had money to spend on programs is something people should look at.

Then, of course, there is the cost of living statement. That statement is inconsistent with last year's because last year it proved to be such an embarrassment for the government when they clearly put out the effect the increase their budget would have on cost of living in the ACT. It is hard to directly compare, however, in all five of the household situations, property taxes increase in excess of nine per cent after concessions. That is the stark number. I think it was 7.76 per cent last year in total. So there we go. We see utility increases and transport will also generally increase. This is a government not being open and accountable but making the statements incomparable. Clearly the cost of living is rising; they are just unable or afraid to tell people exactly what it is.

Paragraph (2) of my motion condemns the government for their failures—their failure to be honest in the lead-up to the election, including both the 2004 and 2008 elections. Clearly, for the 2012 election they did not tell the people of the ACT the truth. In that they were deceitful. The problem with this budget is the debt, and the belief that, miraculously, in a number of years we will suddenly have this \$29 million surplus. It is kind of like Wayne Swan's surplus that we just had to have so he could prove that he had budgeted for a surplus.

There is doubt that this government can deliver infrastructure on time and within budget, and we see the fallacies of previous projects coming home to roost. They cut the prison and said it would last for 20 years. Well, it probably did not last 20 months before it was full, and now we are going back to spend in a very interesting environment. Building new buildings inside existing prisons is very difficult and very expensive, all of which we said at the time.

This is a government that does not deliver for the ACT. This is a government that has not put the ACT on a firm financial position. This is a government that does not

deliver vital infrastructure on time and within budget. And this is a government that has not been honest with Canberrans about projected jobs and service cuts. I commend the motion to the house.

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) (12.19): I thank Mr Smyth for bringing on the second motion today debating the government's excellent budget. The budget that I handed down yesterday has a plan and a vision for the city of Canberra. It starts the journey to build and create capacity to undertake transformational projects within the city—projects like the University of Canberra hospital, the city-to-the-lake project and the capital metro project. Critically, this budget funds important once-in-a-generation social reforms such as DisabilityCare Australia and the equally important Gonski education reforms.

I am pleased to say that it further progresses tax reform. I would especially like to spend some time this morning on highlighting the infrastructure program and what these projects will mean for Canberra. The infrastructure program is \$1.27 billion over the next four years. In the coming year, 2013-14, it is a \$700 million program. It is the single largest program, in one physical year, in the history of self-government. What we are seeking to do in the outyears is to create the capacity to invest in these large infrastructure projects that will be transformative for our city. They are essential for our long-term economic prosperity.

Our city is renowned as one of the world's great planned cities. It certainly has evolved in its first century to develop a unique identity with wonderful parks, gardens and tree-lined streets. However, our city is more than this. As it matures, it certainly can become one of the great cities in the world, an exemplar of a progressive, inclusive and vibrant living city. Canberra is poised for a new phase of development that will see it become more diverse and urban and less of a drive-through city.

City to the lake and capital metro will completely change the way people engage with the city centre. They will enhance the experience of being in the city centre by making it more accessible, with great public spaces and facilities. They will make it more attractive to residents and visitors, a place where people will happily stay longer. It will be more active. It will be safer. It will be accessible with a diverse range of activities day and night.

City to the lake and capital metro complement each other. When implemented in tandem, they will profoundly transform and strengthen the centre of our city. By doing this, they will deliver environmental, social and economic benefits right across our city. These projects unlock considerable economic value, creating new urban blocks on land in our CBD, land that is in public ownership that is either currently surface car parks or over-scaled road reserves. Experiences from other cities that have invested in light rail is that economic activity is significantly boosted. We need to ensure that our city centre is an attractive anchor for the capital metro project and that value is captured from this increased economic activity.

1.2 million square metres of diverse mixed use development and in excess of 10,000 new residents can be accommodated in the most accessible locations in Canberra

around West Basin, City Hill and along Constitution Avenue, thus delivering high rates of return on the public investment, significant benefits to existing businesses within the CBD and, importantly, a more compact and less car dependent city. This development is the equivalent of three new suburbs in a greenfield estate. Providing a more cosmopolitan city with the offer of more attractive urban lifestyles will help retain wealth, and attract and retain skilled workers.

In ambition and scope, this can be compared with the major waterfront projects in other Australian cities such as Barangaroo in Sydney, Docklands in Melbourne, Southbank in Brisbane and the Perth waterfront. We seek to learn from those projects in other Australian cities and importantly also from progressive international cities such as San Francisco, Boston, Portland, Barcelona, Seoul and Toronto. They have all rejuvenated their city centres by reducing the dominance of private car transport and improving public transport services. In many cases, they have even demolished or moved underground their inner-city motorways to allow improved access to their waterfronts.

So the key to connecting city to the lake is how we treat Parkes Way. I think everyone agrees that it is a major barrier that disconnects the city from its waterfront and from our main city parks. To overcome this it is proposed to construct Parkes Way as a split-level boulevard allowing the free-flowing traffic at the lower level and to have local city streets at the surface level. A new CBD stadium as part of this project adds substantially to the life of the city.

Unlike the existing underutilised drive-in/drive-out facilities, a multipurpose venue in the CBD will enable concerts, exhibitions and other recreation and wellbeing activities to thrive. It is close to all of the other attractions in the city centre. It is accessible to all and it will be supported by enhanced public transport. A new stadium anchoring one end of City Walk will bring life to an area that is currently lifeless outside business hours.

Similarly, the National Convention Centre needs renewal in order to continue to attract new and larger conventions to the city. We need to consider whether a significant expansion and improvement of the existing facility or a new facility on a new site in the CBD is appropriate in the next few years. Most importantly, we need to support projects that will support jobs growth during the construction phase and ongoing into the future.

I will use some of my remaining time to address the specific issues in the shadow treasurer's motion. Firstly, Mr Smyth is wrong. The public service has not been cut. It in fact increases. Let me be clear: there are no involuntary redundancies in this budget—

Members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, members! Members of the opposition are becoming too disorderly. It is making it difficult for the Treasurer to address his comments.

Mr Smyth interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Smyth! I call Mr Barr.

MR BARR: Thank you, Madam Speaker. That is very interesting. Tony Abbott's involuntary redundancies at 12,000 are fine. No involuntary redundancies from the ACT government is cause for concern for the opposition. There is your classic double standard, Madam Speaker. The government, of course, in every budget reviews its expenditure. Is the shadow treasurer seriously suggesting that we should not? From what I have heard this morning from the shadow treasurer, he believes we are spending too much. If he is fair dinkum about that, he should identify where he would cut.

Mr Hanson has the perfect opportunity tomorrow afternoon to outline an alternative budget. That will be Mr Hanson's opportunity to finally front up to difficult decisions. I reckon he is going to squib it. I doubt he will be able to come up with an alternative budget. I am fairly confident that he will just say exactly what he said previously. But surprise me, Mr Hanson. Deliver an alternative budget tomorrow. I look forward to what you can come up with.

Madam Speaker, in the first year of our four-year term we are commencing the delivery of our election commitments that we took to the electorate and received an increased vote for. We are very pleased to be able to implement the clear mandate that we received at that election. The government has delivered nine surpluses in the last 10 budgets. The current economic environment is challenging for states and territories.

I was interested to note that the other budget that was delivered yesterday was in Queensland. The conservative government there delivered a \$6 billion deficit. Madam Speaker, I am sorry. I missed all the outrage at the deficit that was delivered in Queensland. They delivered that deficit in spite of cutting what—15,000 jobs out of their public sector. It is not as if the issues that we are facing in the ACT are unique to this territory. They are being experienced by every government across Australia, conservative or Labor. The difference is how those governments choose to respond to those circumstances.

Let me be very clear. The idea that you run a surplus in every budget regardless of the economic conditions is pure economic folly. It is pure economic folly. We have run nine surpluses over the last decade to build up the resource base for this territory. We have the second lowest debt ratio of any jurisdiction in Australia. We have the capacity in difficult times to run deficits, and that is what we are doing now.

On the question of debate of this budget, we have now had 2½ hours of that. We will continue well into the afternoon, I am sure, and again tomorrow. There will be at least 30 hours of debate on the budget in August as well as two weeks of budget estimates. This will be the most scrutinised \$4.5 billion.

Mr Hanson: Except by the Business Council.

MR BARR: Well, the Business Council had an excellent function this morning, Madam Speaker, and the feedback was very positive. Let me assure the Leader of the

Opposition that he will not be getting a party invite any further and that the event will remain in its current format. It was a very productive function this morning.

If the Leader of the Opposition wishes to engage with the Business Council, he should hold an event. He could approach them and hold an event with them. That option is open to the Leader of the Opposition. He could turn up. He could see how many people are interested in his view. He could see how many people are interested in his view on the territory economy. I know it upsets you. You were very disappointed not to be able to be there. Tough luck, organise your own events. Madam Speaker, as we are now over the luncheon break I will conclude my comments.

Mr Doszpot interjecting—

Dr Bourke: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Point of order, Dr Bourke.

Dr Bourke: Mr Doszpot has been using unparliamentary language towards Mr Barr. He has been called a blackmailer. I heard you say it.

Mr Doszpot: Me!

MADAM SPEAKER: I am sorry. I did not hear any unparliamentary language from Mr Doszpot. Would you care, Dr Bourke, to illuminate what you claim?

Dr Bourke: As I said, he used the word “blackmail” to Mr Barr.

MADAM SPEAKER: You are asserting that Mr Doszpot—

Dr Bourke: Yes, I am.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Doszpot, we have already had one discussion this morning about withdrawing the word “blackmail”. I would ask you to withdraw the word.

Mr Doszpot: Madam Chair, I withdraw.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you.

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 12.31 to 2.30 pm.

Questions without notice

Budget—rates

MR HANSON: Madam Speaker, my question is to the Treasurer. Treasurer, your tax reforms plan to remove stamp duty and a range of other charges totalling \$347 million

and collect this lost revenue through rates. Rates revenues last year was \$173 million, and you would need to increase this by \$347 million to make up for the lost revenue. This is an undeniable mathematical tripling of rates revenue. Yesterday's budget shows that rates are increasing, on average, 10 per cent a year every year, which would result in rates tripling in just over 11 years. Treasurer, you have consistently denied rates will triple to complete your reforms, and have consistently refused to table or publish the projections of rates increases to complete your reforms. Do you still stand by your commitments that rates will not triple to complete your reforms, and will you now explain how you can transfer lost revenue from stamp duty to rates without tripling rates revenue?

MR BARR: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. The Leader of the Opposition appears to fundamentally misunderstand how taxation works. He appears to have no understanding of the concept of inflation. He seems to have no understanding of the concept of inflation. He seems to assume in his mathematical model that there is no growth in the city at all, that there are no extra taxpayers over a 20-year period. He also assumes—

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, Mr Hanson! You have asked your question.

MR BARR: He also assumes that over a 20-year period there will not be further reforms to commonwealth-state financial relations. He also assumes—

Mr Seselja interjecting—

MR BARR: We do receive more money from the commonwealth from time to time, Mr Seselja. Are you suggesting that at no point in the future—

Mr Smyth: It's the magic pudding.

MR BARR: Are you suggesting that at no point in the future—

Mr Smyth: I thought Tony wasn't giving us any more money.

Members interjecting—

MR BARR: I do not expect Tony Abbott will be a long-term prime minister, if he is a prime minister at all. I do not believe he will be a long-term prime minister, if he is prime minister at all.

Members interjecting—

MR BARR: When it comes to magic puddings, the Leader of the Opposition is the man who wants to cut taxes but does not believe that you need to raise any revenue to run government services. He is an economic imbecile.

Mr Seselja: Point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: Resume your seat, Mr Barr. Point of order.

Mr Seselja: Madam Speaker, apart from getting Mr Barr to withdraw the last comment, made as I was getting to my feet—I ask him to do that—he is not being relevant at all to the question now. It is around the tax reforms. The question was very specific about whether the Treasurer still stands by his commitment that he can complete the reforms without tripling rates. He has not answered the question.

MADAM SPEAKER: Before you sit down, Mr Seselja, I was telling Mr Barr to sit down and I did not hear what it is that you assert that he said should be withdrawn.

Mr Seselja: I prefer not to have to repeat the slur on the Leader of the Opposition. Mr Barr knows what he said. He might just withdraw it.

Mr Rattenbury: I might assist, Madam Speaker, if you wish. I believe—

MADAM SPEAKER: Point of order, Mr Rattenbury?

Mr Rattenbury: No, no. You did not hear. I believe Mr Barr described Mr Hanson as an economic imbecile.

MADAM SPEAKER: Would you like to withdraw the comment? We have had this discussion over and over again, Mr Barr, about how we address people in this place. Would you withdraw the comment.

MR BARR: I withdraw, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: On the point of order, Mr Hanson did ask you did you stand by your commitments in relation to rates. I would ask you to be directly relevant to the question.

MR BARR: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Yes, I stand by my commitments in relation to rates.

Let me make it very clear what will occur over the remainder of this parliamentary term. The government will progressively reduce taxes on insurance and on stamp duty. Rates will be used to replace lost revenue, and rates increases in each year for the next two years will have three components: the wage price index, revenue replacement for the abolition of insurance taxes and revenue replacement for the abolition of stamp duty. Insurance taxes will be completely abolished by 1 July 2016. From then on, we will no longer need to replace revenue from the abolition of insurance taxes. The rates increases from that point onwards will simply be the WPI plus the stamp duty component. On current projections for WPI, that is three per cent next year. If we then had a three per cent stamp duty replacement component, rates would go up six per cent.

My expectation at this point—there are variables here: what the WPI is in any given year, and do we accept that? The circus over there accepts that point. There will then

also be a component of stamp duty replacement. But once insurance taxes are abolished we will not need that component of revenue replacement in future rates increases. So they will be around the 10 per cent mark for the next two years and then they will drop. I would also point out that those opposite appear to have not had any understanding of the impact of inflation and the real value of money over time. (*Time expired.*)

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Treasurer, why won't you table modelling that shows the full impact on rates by your reforms?

MR BARR: The member can see the modelling for the next four years in the budget papers.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Minister, as the reforms only benefit people who were intending to purchase homes, is it not true that every family not planning to move will be financially worse off under your reforms?

MR BARR: Every family that has insurance will get their insurance tax cut completely.

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, members! Mr Seselja, Mr Hanson.

MR BARR: It would appear that the opposition's preference is that people pay a tax on their insurance and then pay GST on that. You cannot abolish taxes and not seek to replace revenue by a more efficient means. If the opposition are suggesting that we should abolish those taxes but not replace the revenue, let them say so.

Mr Hanson: Madam Speaker, on a point of order on relevance, the question is actually very specific. It is about families that are not planning to move, and will they be better off or worse off under these tax reforms.

MADAM SPEAKER: My notes do reflect what Mr Hanson said, so I would ask the minister to be directly relevant to the question: will people be worse off if they are not moving?

MR BARR: If they are not moving then people will be making a contribution through rates and—

Opposition members interjecting—

MR BARR: I would point out, Madam Speaker, that the average Canberra household moves every seven years. They move every seven years, on average; some people more often. What the opposition leader supports is taxing people whose family

circumstances might necessitate them having to move house. Maybe if a relationship ends, they want to tax people \$20,000, \$30,000 or \$40,000 in stamp duty if their circumstances change. That is what Jeremy Hanson stands for: taxing people who get divorced and whose financial circumstances are such that they have to move house.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, Mr Hanson!

MR BARR: They are taxing people who have more children and who might need to buy a bigger house—

MADAM SPEAKER: The member's time has expired. Sit down, Mr Barr.

Mr Smyth: Madam Speaker—

MADAM SPEAKER: Sit down, Mr Smyth. I know it is the day after budget day and everyone is a little bit excited about the budget, but I think that people need to be a bit restrained. Mr Hanson, I have spoken to you on a number of occasions. Mr Seselja and Mr Coe, I have not mentioned you by name but I was about to. I would ask you to keep the level of noise down and also when I tell members to resume their seat, I expect them to do so. Mr Smyth, on a supplementary.

MR SMYTH: Minister, given that many families pay rates on their family homes, do you still view the family home as a tax haven?

MR BARR: It is true that there is no taxation on family homes at a national level—

Mr Smyth: So that is a yes.

MR BARR: There is no taxation on family homes at a national level and we at the municipal level collect rates to provide services to the people of Canberra. If the Liberal Party do not believe that services should be provided to the people of Canberra, let them say so.

ACTION bus service—patronage

MR COE: My question is to the Minister for Territory and Municipal Services. Minister, despite dramatic increases in the cost of parking in recent years, including an 80 per cent increase in the city since 2008, why has ACTION patronage remained stagnant?

MR RATTENBURY: I thank Mr Coe for the question. I think there are a number of reasons why that might be the case, and I am sure that you have got your set of reasons that you speculate on as well. In the conversations I have with people, there are a number of reasons why they find a bus service is perhaps not suitable for them. One of the things that we are doing as part of the process of reviewing the network—and I think it is well known that there will be a new network that is being developed at

the moment—is inviting public consultation on that so that people might give us feedback on improvements they would like to see in the network so that it will make it more suitable for them.

Certainly in the community meetings that I have been to, people have expressed to me a number of areas where they would like to see improvements in the service that would make it more suitable for them, things like more frequent Xpresso services, more Xpresso services from areas where they do not currently exist. These are the sorts of improvements. Certainly the Calwell park and ride is an area where I have had significant positive community feedback about what a difference that is going to make. People see that as a real opportunity that would make it more possible for them to use the ACTION network.

So I think the question is looking at why people are not using the buses at the moment and seeking to address some of those concerns. I think also, to be honest, there is a reputational issue. I think that many Canberrans have in their mind a sense that the bus network does not work for them, because there are naysayers around who spend their time saying the bus service is no good. But if you actually talk to people—and I meet people who do not own a car—they say they get around town quite well. The service does work well for very many people. So I think there are a range of reasons behind the question you have asked.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Minister, why does ACTION continue to fail to increase patronage? Will network 13, like every network beforehand, promise to solve all of ACTION's problems?

MR RATTENBURY: I believe the new network will address a range of issues. As I have just outlined in my previous answer, it is inviting community feedback. Feedback over the last couple of years has been taken into account. ACTION gets feedback all of the time. So there is a strong endeavour to have the new network address some of the concerns that people have. Will the network solve all the problems in ACTION or all the reasons why people do not catch the bus? No, I do not think so. There is not a silver bullet. It is about constant improvement. I think that the staff of ACTION are looking for areas of improvement, and the public are providing us with areas that they believe will provide improvement as well, and that will make the service more attractive to them.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Minister, what are the worst performing areas of ACTION?

MR RATTENBURY: I am not going to speculate. By what benchmark, Mr Wall? Are you talking in the opinion of the Liberal Party, in the opinion of certain parts of town? I do not think there is any benchmark for that and I am not going to provide an answer to the question.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Minister—

Members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Can you keep it down? I can't hear Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Minister, how would real-time messaging help to improve the ACTION bus service?

MR RATTENBURY: I thank Dr Bourke for the question. I think he has touched on an example of the sort of thing I was talking about in my very first answer—that ACTION and the government are looking at a range of potential improvements that will make the bus service more accessible and more convenient for different segments of the Canberra market. There are a group of people who will find the provision of real-time passenger information very useful for them. It will mean that they can time their trip to the bus stop more accurately. They can have a better sense of whether a service is perhaps running behind, and these sorts of issues.

I think that will be part of building the confidence that people have about the reliability of the service. It is one of those areas that I touched on in my earlier answer. People have questions about reliability. So this is one way of improving the communication. Certainly, again, from the feedback I have had, there is real anticipation in the community about having real-time information available as one way of improving ACTION and assisting in increasing the patronage of the service.

Budget—cost of living statement

MR SMYTH: My question is to the Treasurer. Treasurer, the government's cost of living statement in this year's budget takes into account "people aged 15" who are married. Minister, how do people possibly take your cost of living statement seriously when the scenario assumptions are so fundamentally flawed?

MR BARR: They are not, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Treasurer, outside the issue of marriage, were young teenagers factored into the cost of living statement as paying households, and how did this impact on the cost of living statement?

MR BARR: I draw the shadow treasurer's attention to the variety of different scenarios in family households contained within the statement.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Seselja.

MR SESELJA: Treasurer, why did the government change the format for this year's cost of living statement?

MR BARR: Because we are able to change the format of the budget any time we want.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Treasurer, what benefits will arise for Canberra families from this budget?

MADAM SPEAKER: No, I cannot rule that in order, because it was a question about the cost of living statement.

Health—budget

MS BERRY: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, can you provide an overview for members of the Assembly of the government's commitment to the ACT health system as detailed in the 2013-14 budget?

MS GALLAGHER: I thank Ms Berry for the question. The 2013-14 budget continues this government's very strong commitment to building and supporting quality health care in the ACT, and we do that through a variety of ways, whether it be through the funding of new services or the establishment of new infrastructure to deliver those services from. This budget will deliver \$129 million over four years for growth and new initiatives and an additional \$72 million in capital funding.

I would say that this was a decision that we took in the 2006 budget to put away and make provision for health growth funding into the outyears, which has proven to be, I think, a demonstration of our fiscal responsibility. We understood that in order to fund health appropriately we were going to have make provision right through the forward estimates and over a longer period of time. I think this is about our seventh year of providing this growth formula. What it allows us to do is to better plan and make allocations for services. It also allows us to speak with the experts around the allocation of those funds in a more efficient way because those funds are guaranteed.

The funding this year is primarily targeted to expanding our hospital services, both in Canberra Hospital and Calvary Public Hospital, through a range of different means, whether it be through extra beds within the hospital, a new birth centre for Calvary, extra support for the emergency departments or, of course, the very expensive business of elective surgery.

It will also go to other areas of need, like women's and children's health, expanding our outpatient services at the Capital Region Cancer Centre and our community health service provision, with the expanded or enhanced community health centre at Belconnen, which will open later this year, and will include a walk-in centre. It will include breast screening in the community, aged-care and rehabilitation services, community mental health and renal services, in addition to the standard community health services.

There will also be some extra support for outpatient clinics at the Canberra Hospital. There is significant pressure there and that pressure is directly correlated with the

expansion of elective surgery, because more people are being seen and therefore have to be treated in the outpatient clinics once they have had their surgery or in the lead-up to surgery.

We have also got an important program around Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander smoking cessation, which we will implement over the next two years. A subject that the Assembly has discussed in this place in the last month or so is around advance care plans—it is also being discussed by the Local Hospital Network Council at the moment—to provide better community awareness around the importance of advance care plans and support for completing them.

We will also provide \$3.6 million to start off the obesity management service which will be established to improve the health of patients who are severely obese through coordinated intervention and prevention services. This is the first time that the ACT public health system—whilst we provide services to clients, this is a targeted and multidisciplinary approach to supporting those people in our community who are battling with their weight.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Ms Berry.

MS BERRY: Minister, how will this year's budget assist in further improving elective surgery waiting times?

MS GALLAGHER: I thank Ms Berry for the question. There is an extra \$33 million for elective surgery to continue our elective surgery blitz that has been, I think, a feature of our health budgets now for the last three years in cooperation with commonwealth funding. This will allow us to provide over 8,000 elective surgery procedures in this financial year with the easing off of the commonwealth funding that was provided for the emergency department and elective surgery.

This is having a big impact on our elective surgery program. I would say that I think the waiting list remains—I think I saw a figure today—at around 4,700. But while we are removing more people from the list, we are getting more additions to the list. It seems a direct correlation that the more elective surgery you do, the more patients you generate to have more elective surgery. So that is something that we are having to watch closely.

I think the additions to the list have grown almost identically with the removals from the list. We are removing around 12,800 from the list every year and we are having about 13,000 join the list. So we are keeping an eye on that, but our median wait time is coming down, not that that is a great measure of the performance of elective surgery, anyway. But it is coming down.

I would say that we are the only jurisdiction in the COAG Reform Council's report to have met all nine targets under the national health reform plan. We are the only jurisdiction that has done that. So there might be a few amendments made to Mr Hanson's stump speech on elective surgery. We are seeing continued and pleasing improvement in this area.

MR GENTLEMAN: A supplementary question.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary from Mr Gentleman in a moment. I am not quite sure how long the answer to that supplementary question was because we did not start the clock.

Ms Gallagher: I did not exceed two minutes.

MADAM SPEAKER: I do not think you did. Mr Gentleman.

MR GENTLEMAN: Minister, what initiatives are included in the budget to enhance the emergency departments at Canberra and Calvary hospitals, and why were these prioritised?

MS GALLAGHER: We are needing to expand and continue to support the emergency departments as presentations continue to increase. So the budget does have some targeted measures to support the emergency department at both our public hospitals.

There will be the establishment of an eight-bed rapid assessment and planning unit at Calvary hospital. There will be an expansion of the emergency management unit at Canberra Hospital of six beds, an additional 31 general in-patient beds, increased staffing and resources to support those new initiatives. There will be a paediatric nurse within the emergency department—and it is a senior nurse who is able to make decisions at that high clinical level—to improve the flow of young people to move through and into the paediatric or adolescent services at Canberra Hospital. There will also be expansion of the hospital in the home program and, of course, some of those community initiatives around the opening of the walk-in centres in the community.

We are looking at this as a whole-of-health system and a whole-of-health approach. Really the biggest initiatives that will help the emergency department are initiatives that sit outside the emergency department, and this budget reflects that.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Minister, what increases in staffing will be needed to support these initiatives?

MS GALLAGHER: I thank Dr Bourke for the question. Overall, with respect to the initiatives contained in the new budget commitments that we are delivering on, there will be 131 new jobs, full-time equivalent jobs, added to the ACT Health workforce, including staff at Canberra Hospital. The majority of those staff are nurses—83 of them are nurses. The balance are made up of doctors and allied health professionals. By way of example, 38 staff, including 28 nurses, one doctor and four allied health professionals, will be required to support the additional inpatient beds and hospital in the home places at the Canberra hospital. We are also factoring in extra staff for the Belconnen walk-in centre, and of course there are about 17 extra staff at the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children.

These are targeted. They have gone to areas of pressure. They are not only going to areas of pressure; they are also going to support the expansion of those services which

we believe will support the whole of hospital achieving the targets that the government has signed up for.

Sport—funding

MR DOSZPOT: My question is to the Minister for Sport and Recreation. Minister, in the budget there is an allocation of \$200,000 for design work associated with a synthetic football pitch at Melrose high and \$40,000 for design work for Greenway oval. Both these projects were Labor promises during the 2012 campaign, with a total of \$1.5 million claimed to be allocated in the 2013-14 budget. Minister, where is this funding located in the budget papers?

MR BARR: The government has allocated funding to progress those projects. Once they have been through their various development processes and are shovel-ready, the government will fund their construction.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, when will the football facilities in Melrose be completed?

MR BARR: I will update the Assembly on that matter once the first stage of work on the project has been completed.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Minister, you promised completion of Greenway oval improvements during the 2013-14 financial year. How will you deliver on this promise?

MR BARR: I have indicated in response to Mr Doszpot's question that we will get the design work complete, get the project through the development assessment process and, once it is ready for construction, provide funding.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Minister, how many other Labor election promises on sport are not fully funded as promised for the coming financial year?

MR BARR: It is an excellent budget for sport and recreation. There is support for a wide range of initiatives, and the government will be completing all of its election commitments. As I indicated previously in regard to the earlier questions in this series of questions, the government will look to fund construction projects once they are shovel-ready.

Budget

MS PORTER: My question is to the Treasurer. Can the Treasurer outline to the Assembly how the budget handed down yesterday builds and transforms the ACT and strengthens the ACT economy?

MR BARR: I thank Ms Porter for the question and for the opportunity to talk about the budget's contribution to building and transforming our city. The budget is about strengthening our economy and creating opportunity and fairness for all Canberrans. The budget makes a series of investments in transport infrastructure projects and in other critical infrastructure projects. Importantly, it also delivers on a number of critical social reforms for our community, most particularly the funding of disability care but also the funding of the national education reform agreement.

The budget creates capacity to deliver the Capital Metro project, the city-to-the-lake project and the University of Canberra public hospital, which along with the government's four-year infrastructure spend of \$1.27 billion contributes to thousands of construction jobs which are being supported across the territory this coming financial year and into the future.

In an environment in which the commonwealth is cutting back its expenditure in our economy and against a significant threat, as acknowledged by the shadow treasurer on the ABC television news the other night in relation to what his federal colleagues plan for this city, we are through our infrastructure projects seeking to provide economic impetus for this economy to see us through this difficult period in the context of commonwealth government investment in our economy.

The city not only needs a transformational transport network; it needs a major project like Capital Metro, which provides not only transport renewal but urban renewal. City to the lake and Capital Metro completely change the way we engage with our city centre. The projects enhance the experience of the city centre by making it more accessible and by providing great public spaces and facilities that are attractive to residents and to visitors. It is a safer, more accessible and more diverse range of activities that are supported through this infrastructure investment.

It has certainly been very topical in the last 12 months. The government continues through this budget to support nation leading tax reforms. Every treasurer in Australia knows that these reforms are the right thing to do. It is important to stare down the nay-sayers and to ensure that we go about systematically removing inefficient taxes from our system to remove the dead weight loss that those taxes bring to our economy. Unfair and insidious taxes should be abolished, and the government is doing so.

The budget also contains a number of measures to assist our construction sector, which is facing a range of challenges over the next few years. But by providing targeted incentives, reforms to the first homeowners grant, stamp duty cuts and stamp duty concessions for properties valued up to \$525,000 for those on household incomes of up to \$160,000, we are making a very positive contribution to assist the industry through a difficult period and to ensure that we add to the supply of housing in our city. All of these initiatives contribute to providing our economy with a boost and we look forward to their implementation. (*Time expired.*)

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Treasurer, how does the tax reform strengthen the economy?

MR BARR: Abolishing inefficient and distorting taxes and replacing them with efficient broad-based taxes improves the economic efficiency of the economy. It boosts economic growth and it boosts employment growth. The new stamp duty rates come into effect from today. Stamp duty on every single property in this territory is cut. That provides a real saving to everybody who is in the housing market. On average, Canberrans move every seven years. Some move more often than that, and so pay stamp duty repeatedly. It is an insidious tax that should be abolished, and the government will be abolishing this tax. So someone who buys a property tomorrow at \$400,000 will save \$2,400 in stamp duty. Someone purchasing a \$600,000 property will save \$4,150 in stamp duty since our tax reforms.

Those are real savings. They are not paying interest on the borrowings in order to fund that stamp duty, particularly for first homebuyers. Through our homebuyer concession scheme discounts, combined with the first home owner grant, someone who is purchasing an eligible property under \$425,000 will save \$26,000 on that transaction. That is Labor delivering to first homebuyers in a meaningful way.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Minister, how much will a ticket cost for a transformational ride on capital metro from Civic to Gungahlin?

MR BARR: That detail will be available as the project develops.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Treasurer, how will the measures in the budget boost construction?

MR BARR: We are providing significant boosts in the residential construction centre, as I was saying in response to the earlier supplementary question. We are, through the homebuyer concession scheme and the retargeting of the first home owners grant, providing a real incentive for the construction of new properties. We have also a significant land release program over the next four years all over the city, providing opportunities for new residential development in Tuggeranong, in Molonglo, in Woden, in south Canberra, in north Canberra, in Belconnen, in Gungahlin. And we are very pleased to be able to announce today a new development front at Riverview in west Belconnen. So the government is providing opportunities in the long term for the ACT construction sector and providing targeted policies to assist the sector over the next 10 years.

Alexander Maconochie Centre—capacity

MR SESELJA: My question is to the Minister for Corrections. In 2007, in estimates hearings, the Attorney General stated in relation to capacity at the Alexander Maconochie Centre that it would, and I quote:

... certainly gives us a facility in terms of its current bedding configuration, as currently being constructed—not its potential but its current bedding configuration—to meet our needs over the next 25 years or so.

The AMC opened in 2009, at nearly \$20 million over budget. In the budget yesterday, \$3 million was allocated for the development of final sketch plans for a facility to meet medium-term accommodation requirements. Minister, why is the jail full after four years instead of the promised 25 years?

MR RATTENBURY: As Mr Seselja knows, I have been Minister for Corrections since November. During that time I have, obviously, become briefed on the situation at the AMC. I have formed a view and I have put a bid to cabinet that this is the approach that we should be taking. The reason that I have done this is that the AMC is not at capacity. The purpose of having these additional beds is that it will provide AMC officers with more flexibility and options to house detainees based on operational requirements such as security and separation.

I think those that have taken time to examine the way the AMC operates will have a good understanding of the fact that we do have a unique correctional facility. We have a prison population that spans the full range of security classifications and also we have a prison population where detainees tend to know each other. They come from a small town. So we have significant issues requiring separation. Also, with a mixture of remand detainees and sentenced detainees and also the range of protection classifications we have, we have a range of operational issues, particularly around separation. That means that, even with the number of beds that we do currently have, we need greater flexibility.

Take, for example, the women's section of the AMC.

Mr Hanson: Madam Speaker, on a point of order on relevance, the minister is providing a lecture on the nature of the AMC. The question was very specific. It contrasted a statement made by the then minister who said that the configuration was adequate for 25 years with the fact that this government is now building extra capacity because it needs to at the AMC, and an explanation of why that is so, rather than a broad discussion on the nature of the AMC.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, I think Mr Rattenbury was giving a broad-ranging answer to the question why is the jail full or why is there a necessity to build more beds, and I do not take the point of order. I think that Mr Rattenbury is in order.

MR RATTENBURY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I was just about to make the observation—and I think this will go to Mr Hanson's point of order—for example, in the women's section we have 25 beds. At most times in recent periods, we have had somewhere between 10 and 15 female detainees. We have got 10 or so spare beds. We obviously can only use them for female detainees. This goes to the question of how many beds there are and whether the prison is full or not.

That is why I am talking about the purpose of these additional beds. There are two stages in the budget. It is 30 beds and then an additional 80 beds. But the particular pressure for the 30, which is the first solution, is to provide a level of flexibility so that we can operate within that need to put the detainees in places where they are needed to deal with that range of separational issues.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Seselja.

MR SESELJA: Minister, what are the medium-term accommodation requirements and how long will this new accommodation meet demand?

MR RATTENBURY: The funding provided in the budget is for two stages of designs—a 30-bed accommodation and then a subsequent 80-bed accommodation. The basis of the advice that I have is that that will provide us with the accommodation capacity that we need for the foreseeable future.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, given the original facility was delivered over budget, how can we now be confident that the new facilities will be delivered on budget?

MR RATTENBURY: The budget bid that went forward and the money that has been allocated as part of the budget is for \$3 million. That has been allocated for design work for the provision of additional accommodation options. I am confident that those design works will be delivered for that \$3 million budget allocation.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, how does a jail at or near capacity impact on the ability for it to operate as a human rights compliant jail?

MR RATTENBURY: I think the first thing to observe in response to Mr Doszpot's question is that the population does fluctuate quite a bit. Certainly in the time that I have been minister, the numbers have gone up and down quite substantially. There is a range of factors that relate to that.

In terms of the human rights compliance, I think this is part of the issue I have raised—that having greater flexibility around separation issues in particular ensures that we can maximise meeting the goal that the government has of having a human rights compliant prison. Having that flexibility will ensure that we are not mixing those detainees that perhaps have the potential for conflict, which minimises the potential for dangerous incidents, assaults and that sort of thing. It also maximises the capability for detainees to access programs within the centre. This is about continuing to strive to have the highest possible standards we can within a correctional facility.

National Multicultural Festival—funding

MRS JONES: Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister for Multicultural Affairs. During the 2012 election campaign, Labor promised additional funding to the Multicultural Festival of \$100,000 each in 2013-14 and 2014-15, increasing to \$110,000 extra in 2014-15 and 2015-16. However, in the budget papers there is only funding allocated for the 2013-14 and 2014-15 years, and there are zero dollars allocated for this extra funding in the outyears of 2015-16 and 2016-17. Why is the promised funding not delivered in the budget papers?

MS BURCH: I thank Mrs Jones for her question. We have made a commitment to the National Multicultural Festival. I think that to support them in planning an appropriate engagement with stakeholders, particularly for next year, which has already started to be in place, we have committed these two years. But, as the Treasurer said, we are very firmly committed to delivering on our election commitments. It is a tough budget. We secured two years, and I think in these two years we need to work with the sector and the community about how best to deliver the Multicultural Festival. You may have realised that last year we stretched the capacity, the footprint and the number of stalls even more, and some of the feedback is that perhaps we have reached our footprint limit. It is very important to consider all those views, secure funding for the first two years and make sure we get it right in the outyears for our community.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mrs Jones, a supplementary.

MRS JONES: Minister, were the funding documents that were produced by Treasury as a result of budget promises inaccurate in their statement that they would cover those extra two years?

MS BURCH: We remain committed to our election commitment to fund in the outyears what we have been seen to secure for the two years. As I have explained, I am very comfortable in working through 2014 and 2015 and working with the community to make sure that we get that planning right in those outyears.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Minister, how important is it to continue to support the Multicultural Festival?

MS BURCH: I thank Ms Porter for her question. It is one of the key activities, and certainly the participation levels of our multicultural community in the festival are extraordinary. At the last festival, in February this year, we had over six performance stages, over 250 groups and, I think, over 350 stalls, the bulk of which were local community stalls coming in. This is often the major fundraiser for many of our local multicultural associations. This is quite significant. That is why we continue to invest and grow the festival. But I am very mindful that there is a point when the footprint gets to the point where we need to contain it or constrain it. There could sometimes be too much of a good thing, but I do not think there is ever too much of our Multicultural Festival.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, in regard to your response to Mrs Jones's questions, is it simply an attempt to make the bottom line look better?

MS BURCH: I think if you paid attention to my response to Mrs Jones, it was that, yes, we recognise that it is a tough budget, but it is also about the early feedback that I have picked up through the community groups in regard to the footprint, the size and the number of stalls. Perhaps we have reached our limit. It is important that we work

with our multicultural community. As I indicated in answer to a question from Ms Porter, this is one of their key, fundamental fundraising activities, so I want to support as much local association participation as possible, while being mindful also of the strong interest by other providers wanting to come in. So it is about having secure funding. Let us work with the community and secure the outyears.

Education—Canberra College cares program

DR BOURKE: My question is to the Minister for Education and Training and relates to the funding provided in the ACT budget for a new purpose-built facility for the Canberra College cares program. Can the minister inform the Assembly what new facilities this will provide to the staff and students of CCCares?

MS BURCH: I thank Dr Bourke for his interest in CCCares. The CCCares program is a long-standing and award winning program to support young mothers and some young dads that benefit from life changing education. The project that I announced last week will deliver on the government's \$14 million election commitment to transfer the award-winning Canberra College cares program from the former Stirling College site to the Woden campus of Canberra College.

This new facility will continue to provide essential education and support facilities for up to 170 pregnant or parenting students and their children from throughout the Canberra region. Its new facilities will have the capacity to support 80 students at any given time and provide learning spaces and facilities to support the latest educational and care practices for students and their children.

The integration of the new facility with other college facilities will allow CCCares students to participate in academic streams as well as vocational training courses. It will also provide better access for students to the full range of curriculum options available at Canberra College. It will also allow them to mix with their peers and to give them an opportunity to take part in a mainstream educational setting with access to the support they need to be great students and great parents.

The new facility will include purpose-built spaces. Students will have a state-of-the-art ICT environment; childcare areas, including play groups, playrooms, kitchen, laundry, sleeping rooms, age-appropriate bathrooms and change areas; external child play areas, play equipment, shade structures and outdoor furniture; counselling rooms for external agencies such as employment, case workers and Centrelink staff; full health clinic facilities, including two nurse consulting rooms; secondary medical services for children and adolescents who require medical or developmental assessment; allied health services, including assessment, intervention and consultation; health services for young mothers, including medical and counselling services; health interpreter services and cultural awareness training; and vocation certification in courses such as hospitality, retail, business, child care, hair and beauty, and IT.

Students at the college will also learn essential life skills for young parents. This includes home maintenance, financial management, home kitchen skills and assistance with developing a healthy family environment.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Minister, why is it important to have a program such as CCCares, and what evidence do you have of the benefits it has already produced?

MS BURCH: Reconnecting with education can often be a difficult prospect for young women who become mothers. One of the most effective ways to minimise the risk of such outcomes is to support young pregnant women and mothers to stay connected to schooling by creating tailored programs such as CCCares, which cater for individual student needs.

CCCares addresses the social exclusion and welfare dependence that is often faced by many pregnant young women and parenting young people, who are often living below the poverty line and have little access to support, services and education.

The majority of students enrolled in the CCCares program face educational challenges not generally encountered by ACT students in the mainstream setting. Particular challenges for CCCares include supporting and catering for an extremely high level of independent living students, educationally disenfranchised students, and culturally and linguistically diverse students, including refugees and students from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

CCCares works to reduce the social isolation often experienced by young parents. It offers specialised support for young mums and young dads who are also students and supports their transition to life after CCCares.

The particular strengths of the program include the combination of “one-stop shop” onsite health and educational specialists. The close collaboration between CCCares and our partner agencies has resulted in significant improvements in student participation, enhanced engagement in active learning outcomes and greater rates of certification. On average, 12 to 15 students a year graduate with an ACT year 12 certificate. That is a dozen or so people each year who are now able to get an education and skills that will change their lives and those of their children.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Minister, when will the facilities be completed and will it match the education directorate’s record on completing school projects on time and on budget?

MS BURCH: I thank Ms Porter for her interest. As I have noted, the Education and Training Directorate has a strong record of on time and on budget delivery of projects—of course, most recently at the new Neville Bonner school and Franklin Early Childhood School, which were not simply delivered on time but were also \$28 million under budget.

This was achieved using a lump sum tender process with a specific form of contract, known as a GC21 contract. This is a collaborative and non-adversarial form of construction contract with an emphasis on prompt and effective communication. A

lump sum tender procurement model was proven to achieve the most competitive tender prices over other construction delivery models.

In terms of timeliness, ETD is managing this project for an opening at the start of the 2015 school year. The directorate has already progressed the final sketch plans. These documents will be submitted to ACTPLA as part of the development application process. It is anticipated that approval will be given around September this year. The project architect has now been instructed to prepare detailed design documentation for the construction tenders.

The directorate has engaged a peer review architect to ensure that the designs are buildable and will not cause any concerns or delays. The project planner will be asked to review the detailed design documentation and I am confident that the project will be delivered on time and on budget.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Minister, given that you mentioned procurement, when will the payment disputes about Gungahlin College be settled?

MS BURCH: I do not have that detail in front of me, but ETD has a very strong history and capacity on managing very key projects. That includes Gungahlin College. As I have said, we came in under \$28 million on those two most recent schools.

Health—bush healing farm

MR WALL: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, In 2009 you announced that a 16-bed drug and alcohol rehabilitation facility for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples would be established at a cost of \$5.5 million and be completed for use by June 2010. This facility has been rescoped to be an eight-bed facility, and in the budget handed down yesterday the cost has blown out to \$7.933 million and it will not be ready for use until August 2015. Minister, why is your government unable to deliver infrastructure projects on time, on scope or on budget?

MS GALLAGHER: I thank Mr Wall for his interest in the Ngunnawal bush healing farm. It is great to have a refreshing perspective on that very important—

Mr Hanson: I had a pretty keen interest too, Katy, remember? Do you remember that?

MS GALLAGHER: Yes, you did, Mr Hanson, a lot of interest in bagging it and raising concerns about the local winery, as I understand it, and trying to run a fear campaign, which I have to give you credit for. If there is one thing the Liberal opposition can do quite effectively, it is run a fear campaign.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Ms Gallagher, could you sit down please. Mr Hanson, you are being rather noisy this question time. Ms Gallagher, I would ask you to comply with

standing order 42 and address the chair and not go out and bait members of the opposition. Ms Gallagher.

MS GALLAGHER: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Of course I will not bait members of the opposition but it is hard not to reply. I will get to the question. There have been changes to the Ngunnawal bush healing farm, primarily in negotiations, with the local expert council that has been appointed, around how this service should run, and my view is we needed to get the model right and we needed to take the time to reach agreement on that. And we have.

In relation to the delays—and there are some delays now—there have been a number of objections from local land owners through the planning process. There have been objections to the development application that has been put forward. Now it has to go under that process as well. And I do not know how long that will take. We have had objections, I think, from all of the local land owners around that project. So we cannot start construction until the development application is approved.

In addition, there are some contamination issues in relation to a sheep dip on the site, which we also have to remediate. And we are using the extra funds from the recurrent allocation of funds, where provision was made, to remediate that site.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Minister, given the cost blowout of this project in the budget of \$2.4 million, will it now be completed as per the original scope to include 16 beds?

MS GALLAGHER: No. It is to be built with eight beds because of the design of the building and the remediation costs that we are now looking at to address the issues of the sheep dip on that site.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Minister, will you guarantee now that this project will be completed by August 2015 and that there will be no further cost blowout or reduction in the number of beds?

MS GALLAGHER: It is dependent on the planning approvals. It is being contested by the local landowners. We have not called the project in. It will go through that process now. I am in the planning authority's hands and, indeed, the objectors to the development about whether they pursue their options to appeal any approval that is granted.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Minister, what impact has the delay of this project had on local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people?

Ms Porter interjecting—

MS GALLAGHER: I find that question interesting, considering that you spent a good part of estimates a couple of years ago trying to, I think, kill off this project with running your fear campaign around the location of a winery—

MADAM SPEAKER: Ms Gallagher, I will ask you to be directly relevant and stop making assertions about people's character. I will also ask Ms Porter to withdraw the comment that she made when Mr Hanson asked the question.

Ms Porter: I only said he wasn't listening.

MADAM SPEAKER: No, that is not what you said.

Ms Porter: I beg your pardon; that is what I said.

MADAM SPEAKER: I heard you say he did not care, and you will withdraw the comment.

Ms Porter: I believe that I said that he did not listen.

MADAM SPEAKER: I will have to review the tape.

Ms Porter: Please review the tape. I think I said he did not listen. I could have said that, but I do not recall saying that.

MADAM SPEAKER: Ms Gallagher.

MS GALLAGHER: This government has a very proud record of investing in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services, particularly in the health area. We are working to close the gap in terms of—

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson!

MS GALLAGHER: No, in terms of health services for Indigenous Canberrans. I am very pleased with how they are going. This will be in addition to the service suite that is available for Indigenous people in the ACT. We will deliver it, but we are required to go through a number of planning approval processes and, as I said, we have to remediate the sheep dip as part of that work.

Emergency services—infrastructure

MR GENTLEMAN: My question is to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Minister, can you please outline for the Assembly the proposed new fire station for Tuggeranong?

MR CORBELL: I am very pleased to confirm that, as indicated in the budget, the government is proceeding with a new fire station for the south Tuggeranong area.

This project has been allocated \$17.950 million over four years for the construction of a new fire and rescue station, to be located at the south-east roundabout intersection of Tharwa Drive south and Tharwa Drive east, at the intersection with Drakeford Drive, on the border between the suburbs of Calwell and Conder.

The site on the border of Calwell and Conder was chosen based on the current and future needs for our urban fire service for the south Tuggeranong area. The south Tuggeranong area has been identified as an area that has a need for improved fire response coverage, and the location of the station at this point will greatly improve the level of fire cover available, particularly to people who live in the Lanyon valley.

This will mean, when completed, that the existing fire station based at Greenway will close, with the current fire crews relocating to the Calwell-Conder site. It is proposed that the Greenway fire facility will then be converted to become a new ambulance station for the Tuggeranong area.

This is the second new emergency services station to be built as part of the government's ESA station upgrade and relocation strategy, which I released in 2011. Construction of the new south Tuggeranong fire station is planned to commence in the final quarter of this year and is expected to be completed by the end of 2014.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Gentleman.

MR GENTLEMAN: Minister, how will building this fire station contribute to safety for Canberrans in the Tuggeranong community?

MR CORBELL: I am sure that residents in the south Tuggeranong area will welcome the development of this new fire station to service their local community. During the public consultation process for the territory plan process which was completed earlier this year, which rezoned the land for a fire station purpose at Conder, and also at Aranda, the station will provide better response times for residents, particularly in the Tuggeranong valley.

Currently, fire crews have to respond to an incident in the Lanyon valley from either Calwell or Greenway, and this has hampered the capacity to meet their response times. The provision of a fire station at the Calwell-Conder location will assist dramatically in improving response times for fire calls from residents, particularly in parts of the south Tuggeranong area such as the Lanyon valley but indeed right across Tuggeranong as a whole.

The strategy is about improving community safety as the city expands and focusing on the protection and preservation of life, property and the environment. Implementation of the strategy provides major benefits to the ACT, strategically locating ambulance and fire stations to better serve the needs and expectations of our community. I am proud that the Labor government is funding this very important piece of infrastructure for the Tuggeranong community.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Minister, how does the Tuggeranong fire station fit into the broader station relocation strategy and what has been the progress to date on other elements of the strategy?

MR CORBELL: An extensive analysis has been undertaken into where ambulance and fire stations need to be located across the territory for the next 20 years. This analysis identified options as to where new ESA stations need to be located to meet current and projected demand based on existing population growth and settlement patterns. In 2011 I released the strategy and implementation plan and announced the commencement of community consultation on phase 1, which is the proposal to locate ESA stations in Charnwood, Aranda and Calwell-Condor.

I recently, as I intimated in my last answer, tabled territory plan variations in the Assembly for re-zoning of land in Aranda and in south Tuggeranong. We are now able to proceed with construction on these sites because of the success of that re-zoning exercise. An amount of \$1.65 million was allocated in last year's budget for due diligence assessments related to new or improved facilities in Fyshwick, Calwell, Greenway, Gungahlin, Pialligo and the city centre area. The due diligence and forward design components of phase 1 of the strategy have now been completed and this is informing phase 2 of the strategy.

Last year the government allocated \$21.318 million for the construction of the new collocated ambulance and fire station in Charnwood. The new station is the first in a series of steps to deliver on our commitment to improve and relocate our stations to make sure that we have the fire and ambulance cover our community needs. After an open tender process last year, Manteena was awarded the contract to construct Charnwood and that project is now well underway. (*Time expired.*)

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Seselja.

MR SESELJA: Minister, given the cost blowouts and problems with the ESA headquarters and the Jerrabomberra fire shed, how will you avoid those problems with this fire station, and can you confirm that this fire station will be big enough to have fire trucks driving in and out?

MR CORBELL: I am very pleased to confirm to members that the members of the Jerrabomberra brigade can quite adequately park and open their vehicles in their shed, as constructed. I am happy to provide photos to Mr Seselja if he is in any doubt. I can also advise members that the Charnwood fire station is both on time and on budget and I look forward to its delivery in the coming months.

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

Supplementary answer to question without notice Health—budget

MS GALLAGHER: I have one matter out of question time. I sold the Health Directorate's management of elective surgery short; the waiting list is down to 4,035, not 4,700 as I said.

Economy

Debate resumed.

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (3.38): To refresh members' memories, before lunch we were having a spirited debate about the budget. I commend Mr Smyth for bringing his motion before the Assembly. It is interesting to actually go through this motion. Again, it is one of those motions I am sure that the government will not support, but when you actually go through it line by line you will find that there is real truth in what Mr Smyth is saying. The first point is that he notes—

Mr Barr interjecting—

MR HANSON: There is more interjection from Mr Barr, but it will be interesting to see which one he disputes. Mr Smyth notes:

... the Government's failure to disclose job and service cuts to the community in the lead up to the election ...

Does anyone remember Katy Gallagher, Andrew Barr or any of the rest of them going out there and saying: "At the next budget we'll cut jobs. We'll cut services. Our policies aren't fully funded."

Mr Wall: I think they did talk about job cuts.

MR HANSON: Did they? Oh, that is right. They did have job cuts, didn't they? Remember? They went out and they said that the Canberra Liberals had a secret plan to cut jobs. It is ironic really, because one of the big parts of their scare campaign was that Mrs Dunne was going to cut jobs from the Community Services Directorate, that she was going to transfer jobs from the Community Services Directorate to somewhere else. That was part of the scare campaign. The CPSU were out there warning everybody. Joy Burch was out there warning everybody. And what is in this budget? There are 38 jobs going from the Community Services Directorate to somewhere else. So what Katy Gallagher, Andrew Barr, Joy Burch and the CPSU said was wrong—running a scare campaign. That is exactly what this government has done in this budget.

And there are a hundred jobs out of education. The first thing that we see from Gonski, the first reform we see from Gonski, is a hundred jobs going from the education directorate—and 17 from CIT. It is good to see Mrs Dunne sitting in her chair there. I am sure that she feels some degree of vindication after being vilified, as she was, by those opposite and the CPSU. It is great to see that Mrs Dunne is someone whose word you can trust—much different from those opposite.

The next point that Mr Smyth is asking us to note is this:

... the Government's lack of honesty, in their assurances to Canberrans that their election promises were fully funded ...

I remember “fully costed”, “fully funded”. Again this was one of their criticisms, wasn’t it? They said, “All of ours are fully funded. Just ask Treasury.” But when it actually comes to it, now, the government is saying, and has said on the record, that in order to fund its priorities there are \$142 million of hikes in fees and cuts to services. Again, nothing wrong with that!

The next point is this:

... the failure of the Gallagher Labor Government to manage the ACT Budget sustainably, budgeting for a deficit in excess of \$340 million in the current year and borrowings to increase to approximately \$3 billion over the forward estimates ...

In fact, it goes up to \$3.5 billion in a couple of years. So Mr Smyth is being quite generous in trying to give you the benefit of the doubt in a couple of years. So I am not sure that there is anything wrong with what Mr Smyth is saying there.

The next issue in the motion is this:

... the ... inability to deliver important projects on time and on budget ...

We got one from Simon Corbell. He thinks he might have one that he might, for the first time in his career, be delivering on time and on budget. But there is a long list of examples which were not on budget and not on time.

The next point is this:

... the ... unwillingness to debate the ACT Budget in a public forum ...

That is on the record. We have had a number of conversations with the business community. I have had a number of conversations with people at the budget breakfast; they said it was not worth going to. They said it was just a bunch of spin from the government and that without the opposition there to actually provide the alternative view it was not worth going to and they will not be going again. They were disappointed at the event, described in the media as the Labor love-in.

Mr Barr: We have got to give this bloke enough rope. Let him talk; let him talk.

MR HANSON: I think I might have got under his skin, Mr Assistant Speaker—what do you think?—as he rants and storms out of the Assembly. “Let him talk; let him talk.” I am happy to talk, happy to support Mr Smyth in his motion.

The next point is this:

... the Government’s failure to diversify the ACT economy ...

That is quite true, and it is a point that Mr Smyth has made. To say he has made it quite regularly in this place I think would be an understatement.

And the motion calls on them to do a number of things. It calls on them to be honest about the job cuts. Ms Burch is there having a bit of a chat. Why wasn't she honest about the job cuts that she was going to bring forward in her directorate? Why was she criticising Mrs Dunne at the last election for secret job cuts—a fiction, a complete deceit—when the truth in this budget is that it is Ms Burch who has cut the jobs? She is cutting into her department. Public servants out there right now in education, Ms Burch, Community Services, Ms Burch, and CIT, Ms Burch, are all saying: “Where are these jobs going? Why hasn't our minister stood up for us? Why hasn't she stood up for us? Why did she run a scare campaign about Mrs Dunne and the Liberals when she has failed to stand up for us through the budget cabinet?” That is what the public service will be saying today.

The motion refers to delivering vital infrastructure on time and within budget. That would be something that we would call on the government to do. And it refers to putting the government in a firm financial position. That would be a pretty useful thing to do.

What we see from Labor is dishonesty. I just went through the issues with the jobs and the cuts. But also, with the deficit and the debts that have been delivered—when you look at the structural deficits, when you take out the superannuation—what you see is that this government's revenue has gone up significantly and is projected to go up. By the end of the forward estimates it is a billion dollars a year more than it is now, but every year—every year—taking the superannuation speculation out of this, they are spending more than they are receiving. That is exactly like the federal Labor Party. That is what got this country and the Gillard government into trouble, and that is what is going to get this government into trouble.

We then have the issue of rates. It is quite clear now that rates are tripling. It is quite clear that in this budget rates are going up 10 per cent a year. Andrew Barr has confirmed that. Katy Gallagher has confirmed that. They are going up 10 per cent a year. We say, “What does that mean?” If you extrapolate that out, you see that rates will triple within 12 years—11 and a bit years. That is assuming that your house price, your land value, does not go up at all. And we know that historically it does, significantly. And if it goes up at the historical rates, rates will triple in a far shorter time than the 12 years that is currently projected.

We have said, “Prove us wrong.” We have repeatedly said to Andrew Barr, “Show us what your plan is. Show us what your plan is beyond the budget.” He has refused to do so. Why? If he is confident about his projections, if he is telling the truth, if he has a good story to tell, show us that these rates do not triple. Show us. But the reality is that rates are tripling. We see it in the budget and we know from what we have seen from the government's information so far that there is no other way they can remove stamp duty and the other fees and charges without tripling rates.

The other great con appears to be Gonski. Again we had the minister this morning saying, “Gonski is good for the ACT, and it's going to provide more funding.” But when you actually look at the analysis in the budget, I am not sure that that is the case.

The minister says that the previous funding under national partnerships expires. It does not. It is being cancelled. It actually appears in the budget. If you go to budget paper 4, pages 299 and 300, you will see all the lines in the budget: “Commonwealth grants—empowering local schools NP”, national partnerships; “Commonwealth grants—national schools SPP”; “Commonwealth grants—reward for great teachers”; “Commonwealth grants—reward for school improvement”; revised profiling; low socioeconomic status school communities; and on and on. These were all the programs which were in the budget—in the budget and planned, ready to roll out. When you compare that with Gonski, there is a \$31 million or thereabouts deficit. And the minister is still not being truthful about it.

I commend Mr Smyth’s motion to the Assembly. We should support it because what it shows is that this government has provided a budget that is dishonest.

MS GALLAGHER (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Health and Minister for Higher Education) (3.48): As the Treasurer has outlined when speaking to Mr Smyth’s motion, the government will not be supporting this motion today. What we have seen in the last 24 hours from the Leader of the Opposition is his complete failure to understand responsible budgeting and any sense of fiscal management. Clumsy mistakes are being made about what the budget presents. There was a figure he used today in relation to servicing debt. He is alleging that the budget is going to cost ACT taxpayers, I think, \$600 million over four years. That shows his failure to even understand how to read budget papers or an acknowledgement that the government borrows on behalf of ACTEW.

Even this morning we had the classic example from the Leader of the Opposition of this belief that you should never cut services; you should never, ever stop anything you are doing. There was a question to me in the Assembly about a program that was funded for four years that has come to its four-year end. You should never be able to do that. You should pay everybody more. You should never raise a fee or charge. You should deliver more, but you can never run a deficit. It just does not make any sense at all.

Then on tax reform we have him saying that there is an argument for reducing stamp duty and transferring that over to rates. So there we have it—a new position from the Liberal Party. It is a position I actually welcome because it supports the view of the Labor Party. In terms of transferring the revenue base from stamp duty over to rates, there is some argument for that. There we have the first admission from the Leader of the Opposition that there is some argument for that and, yes, we do want to see a reduction in stamp duty.

It is an admission that the Liberal Party genuinely believes that nine per cent of Canberrans should pay 25 per cent of the revenue base; it is an admission that that is what they support. When I look at the houses that are for sale on allhomes, the majority of them are family homes. Taxing families—only nine per cent that choose to move in a year—is okay from the Liberal Party’s point of view: no probs with that; you can spend \$40,000 on stamp duty. But a more equitable system that delivers an increase, on average, of \$139 per household is outrageous. You cannot have that. We much prefer families paying \$40,000 forever on stamp duty without any reform there.

Then we hear the dialogue about honesty. The actual gall of the Canberra Liberals to lecture this government on honesty—the architects of the single biggest untruth, or mistruth or lie, that was ever perpetrated in an election campaign. The architect is leaving the building. Actually, he has left the building. He is no longer here to support that lie that he led. And you have the gall to lecture us about truth and honesty.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MS GALLAGHER: The budget presents you with that modelling, Mr Hanson. You fail to understand it, from what I can understand. Then this morning we have, “Well, actually, maybe it is tripling your rates over 11 years or maybe it is 12 years.” That was not a big part of your election narrative last year, was it? I remember going to candidate meetings and having Liberal candidates saying, “Your rates will triple in the next few years.” Is that 11 years or is it 12 years? Is it one electoral term or is it three electoral terms? Do not come in here and lecture us about honesty.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MS GALLAGHER: Mr Hanson has had his opportunity, Mr Assistant Speaker, to present his arguments.

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Doszpot): Mr Hanson—

Dr Bourke: On a point of order, Mr Assistant Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is waving props around. I know that parliamentary practice prohibits that. Could you do something about it, please?

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, could you please refrain from waving any props? Thank you.

Mr Hanson: I have a number of documents, Mr Assistant Speaker. I am not sure they would qualify as props, but I am happy to put them away.

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr Hanson. Ms Gallagher.

MS GALLAGHER: We had Liberal candidates attending meetings and running the line, when it suited them, that under a Labor-Green government, rates would triple in the next few years. That was the line constantly in the election campaign.

Mr Smyth interjecting—

MS GALLAGHER: It was, Mr Smyth. I attended those meetings. We have got the letters that were circulated—“in the next few years”, and candidates stuck to that line.

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Ms Gallagher, could you just resume your seat for a second. We have given a fair bit of leeway, but let us adhere to the rules from now on. Mr Smyth and Mr Hanson, could I ask you to listen to the current speaker. Ms Gallagher.

MS GALLAGHER: Thank you, Mr Assistant Speaker.

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Can you please talk through the chair as well?

MS GALLAGHER: I will, Mr Assistant Speaker. It is interesting that Mr Smyth interjects that what I was saying was not true. We have the letters. I attended the meetings where that was the line that was used by candidates. Candidates attend those meetings with lines issued from head office. Everyone knows that, and that was the narrative. All those people wandering around with the big signs on election day certainly were not talking even 12 years. They were not talking 13 years. They were not talking 14 years.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MS GALLAGHER: No. I am not responding to that, Mr Hanson, because it is not true. You have the nerve to come in here and lecture this government about honesty. On that issue alone, you are discredited. The architect of that campaign is leaving the building and leaving the Assembly forever.

In relation to the education reforms, again, there is an interesting little example that Mr Hanson uses. My understanding is that Mr Hanson received Christopher Pyne's letter to me several days before my office received it. In fact, my office had to ring Christopher Pyne's office to get the copy of the letter that he had sent to me.

Mr Hanson: Look at the budget papers, Katy.

MS GALLAGHER: Look at the budget papers? You cannot even read budget papers, and you are having me believe that you compiled that all together. You are reading Christopher Pyne's line. You have swallowed it hook, line and sinker. It is a very similar line. I think there is even a media release from Christopher Pyne alleging that the ACT school system would be \$30 million worse off if we signed the national education reforms. Again, I have been seeking to explain this. Mr Hanson is running interference and seeking to allege that I am not telling the truth on this.

Mr Seselja interjecting—

MS GALLAGHER: What you do not understand and what you fail to understand, and I note the senator-elect has re-entered the building and has started interjecting—

Mr Seselja interjecting—

Mr Wall: On a point of order, Mr Acting Speaker, time and time again people that have occupied the chair have requested members on the opposite side to refer to members by their proper parliamentary title. Can you please bring the Chief Minister to order?

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Chief Minister, I think that is a fair comment. Please refer to members by their correct title. You may continue.

MS GALLAGHER: Thank you, Mr Assistant Speaker. What the opposition fail to understand—and they never listen to this point—is that indexation that flows from the commonwealth to the states is determined by the states and territories' indexation of their own system. We have seen the Victorian and the New South Wales governments cut their indexation. They have cut it to 1.6 per cent in New South Wales and 1.2 per cent in Victoria. That constitutes 60 per cent of the standard that is used to provide indexation from the commonwealth to the states. Through that process, through those cuts in the states, indexation from the commonwealth was going to reduce from 5.6 per cent to below three per cent.

What we have done is lock in indexation at a rate that will guarantee funding certainty to schools. The independent schools seem comfortable with the agreement reached. The Catholic system schools seem comfortable with the agreement reached and the government schools are. It is only the Liberal Party here in Canberra that are complaining about the national education reform agreement. I have spoken with the Catholic Education Office. I have met with the AIS, and they did have concerns around the indexation arrangements, but I have since received correspondence from them where they urge the government to index at three per cent, which this budget does. I have met with the AEU over it. All of those people who represent the school system here in the ACT are supportive and have accepted that the funding certainty that has arisen from signing the agreement is good for their schools. The only people running this crazy line that \$31 million is being cut are the Canberra Liberals.

MR SESELJA (Brindabella) (3.59): The Chief Minister's speech is breathtaking—breathtaking in its hypocrisy and its dishonesty. I think she actually believes that she is honest. Yet we see at every election another lie. In 2004 this Chief Minister said that she would not close any schools. They closed 23. She looked people in the eye and said they would not be closing schools. They closed 23. In 2008 she hid her plans to buy Calvary hospital, despite saying that all her plans were on the table.

Mr Gentleman: On a point of order, Mr Assistant Speaker—

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Mr Seselja, resume your seat.

MR SESELJA: Can we stop the clock, Mr Assistant Speaker?

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Yes, please stop the clock.

Mr Gentleman: We just had a ruling a moment ago on props in the Assembly. Mr Seselja is waving a prop around in the chamber. I would ask that he not be allowed to wave a prop around in the chamber.

MR SESELJA: On the point of order, this is a document that I will be reading from and seeking to table. It is not a prop.

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Carry on, Mr Seselja. Can we start the clock again?

MR SESELJA: I know they do not like this particular document because it puts the lie to what the Chief Minister was just saying. She claims that we did not actually say

that they were going to triple in a decade; we never said that. How many of these were printed, do you think? I think it was in the hundreds of thousands that were printed. They were distributed to every household in Canberra—in some cases, more than once. In fact, they featured in Labor Party advertising as they circled them and said it was not true. They were lying, Mr Assistant Speaker. Their ads were lying. They looked people in the eye and they said, “Your rates won’t triple under Labor.” We said they would. We used their own documents. They said that that was a lie. It turns out that the new story after the election is, “But you said it would happen in three or four years.” Well, we did not. We actually used the Quinlan review. It was in our documents. And now it turns out that rates will triple in that time.

The other big piece of deceit from the Labor Party at that election, of course, is that Katy Gallagher looked people in the eye and said that she was going to abolish their stamp duty. She said, “Vote for me and I’ll abolish your stamp duty.” Did you say that in your ads? You did. She did not say, “I will abolish stamp duty if I get re-elected five times. If I am re-elected five times I will abolish your stamp duty.” How honest was that, Mr Assistant Speaker? I seek to table this document because it fundamentally disproves what the Chief Minister was just saying in her speech.

Leave granted.

MR SESELJA: I table the following paper:

“Our plan for better local services and lower rates & charges”—Canberra Liberals’ election brochure.

This document disproves what the Chief Minister was just saying. It shows that their whole election campaign, in fact, was based on a lie. They claimed rates would not triple, and they will. We see that now in the budget. We see that as a result of this year’s budget. She now tries to claim that we were saying all sorts of things which we were not saying, which this document shows. She says, “Oh, no, you were hiding it.” We put out hundreds of thousands of documents with the government’s own numbers. They said that was a lie. They used an ad to say that it was a lie. These are the facts.

The facts are that if you abolish \$350 million worth of taxes and move them over to rates, which at the start of the process were collecting around \$170 million in taxes—you add \$350 million and \$170 million and you get around about \$510 million—it is around about triple where you started. These are the fundamental mathematics. This is what the Quinlan review found. The Chief Minister, who still, in her heart of hearts, believes somehow that she is honest, has again been shown not to be honest, not to be telling the truth. We see it again today. We saw it in her speech and we saw it in her ads.

The flipside, of course, is that they tried to sell to the community that you could have the gains of tax reform but none of the pain. She said, “Oh, no, it’s off in the never-never when rates will triple”—it turns out that was not true—“but we’re going to deliver you no stamp duty.” No stamp duty was the impression she was giving. People would have thought, from what the Chief Minister said in those ads, that they would actually see no stamp duty if they voted Labor at the election. It turns out they will have to wait about 20 years, if that is ever delivered. They will have to go through five

elections before they will see no stamp duty. But their rates will triple well before that. They will see a tripling of rates well before they ever see stamp duty going.

I commend Mr Smyth for this motion. All elements of his motion are factually based, as so eloquently displayed by the Leader of the Opposition. This motion should be supported because it highlights the hypocrisy of this government. It highlights the dishonesty of this government, as we have seen and as has been reinforced by the Chief Minister's fundamentally dishonest speech and contribution to this debate.

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (4.05), in reply: We asked how would the taxes that were being abolished and were being transferred into rates apply. It is a reasonable proposition, when you have reform of this size, that you do the work and you actually work out whether it does work and whether or not it is sustainable. And when we asked the Treasurer about what the reforms would mean, he simply said, "I refer you to the Quinlan tax review."

We asked a number of questions about what it would mean for rates over what time frame and what effect it would have on households, and his simple answer was: "I refer you to the Quinlan tax review." And the document in the Quinlan tax review that talks about the distributional impacts on households over 10 years clearly shows that rates triple. We asked a question, we were sent to the review. The review said triple.

We used that document in our document. It is actually sourced. We say where it comes from. And it shows what will happen. The mathematics are simple. If you are going to attempt to remove all of these taxes—and I say "if" because it is not quite clear that they will remove them—and it goes into the rates, then the rates take must triple. It does not work any other way.

You have to have doubt whether they will actually do what they set out, because I note conveyancing, which is one of the taxes that we are getting rid of, goes up seven per cent in 2014-15, five per cent in 2015-16 and another seven per cent in 2016-17. So you have got a tax that has been abolished but that continues to grow. And I know the Treasurer will be saying, "Yes, but the population base grows and this is a factor and value goes up," all of which would be true. But if you are abolishing it, at some time it must come down. In fact, it must disappear. And when it disappears, this tax that currently grows must go into rates. And the distribution simply says, and it is confirmed by Quinlan, that it must triple. It is inescapable.

There is an easy answer to this, of course. The Treasurer could come, and as we have asked many times over the last 12 months, into this place and could simply table the document that shows how the taxes that they claim to be abolishing disappear, where the money goes and what the distributional effects are. He could finish this argument now. But he has not, he will not and he cannot because he knows, for those taxes to disappear, then the rates take must triple and consequently the rates on households must also triple.

If we were wrong and he had a document to prove it, he would be down here immediately and would have done so in the budget debate last year. But he has not, and they have not been able to refute it. They have not been able to refute it today. And it clearly stings. It stings because they are caught out.

They are caught out on so many things in this budget. For instance, state final demand in 2013-14 is only meant to be a quarter of a per cent. So we create this straw man almost. "Woe is us, we are faced by all this economic woe, we have battled through the GFC and our revenue has taken this big hit." But the revenue has not taken a big hit. The revenue has grown every year and the revenue will continue to grow every year between this and the fourth year of the cycle by about a quarter of a billion dollars. The revenue grows.

The actual revenue we see is always greater than the budgeted revenue, and it has been so since 2007-08. I did not go back before that, but I could go back before that if the Treasurer wants to know. So they have this creation, and that is all it is, that somehow they are struggling because revenue has dipped. The revenue has not dipped. And if you look at the budget in the outyears, the revenue does not dip. The revenue continues to grow apace.

The problem is that the minister is caught in his own contradictions. And it is a contradiction. He is constantly claiming we have got our rating, and only we and WA have this rating, and we have got a good economy. Then why is the budget in such desperate straits? The revenue has increased every year. But the budget is still in desperate straits. The revenue will increase every year for the next four years. But the budget apparently is still in desperate straits.

He blames everybody but himself. He blames everybody but the person who is charged with and responsible for the good management of the ACT's finance, the Treasurer. He is responsible. But seemingly the good news is his and the bad news is somebody else's fault. We have heard him for four years beating the Tony Abbott drum and how bad it will be. But never once have we heard him take his own federal Labor colleagues to task and say, "Leave the ACT alone."

In fact, for one budget he said that it was a really good thing, canning some of the funding from the National Gallery, because they will cut their regional visiting program and therefore people will come to Canberra. And on the radio that day, when it was put to Kate Lundy, not even she could buy that one. There he is, the chief cheerleader for the Rudd-Gillard budgets and the Rudd-Gillard mismanagement of the Australian economy, which of course also has dire effects on the ACT economy. There are cuts going on and have been going on in the federal arena in the last financial year and in the coming financial year. And we are the victims of that.

So we are apparently asked to believe that we will be in a recession and yet we are going to sell more than 4,000 housing blocks in that time. We are currently asked to believe that things are grim; yet revenue goes up by a quarter of a billion dollars a year. The budget goes from \$4 billion to \$5 billion in the cycle. But things are grim. Things are grim because, as with all Labor governments, they cannot pay their way.

It was simple today. I asked in question time today, "What is the cost of a ticket on capital metro?" "We do not know. We are doing that work." We are steaming full steam ahead to build a rail system about which we know nothing, apparently, or again they know too much and they are not willing to share that information. If they had done their work properly and if they had done some calculations, they would know

what revenue to expect and therefore what level of subsidy would be required to make the capital works function every year.

This government is about to put a millstone forever around the neck of the people of the ACT, without doing the proper work. “We have got a good idea, we do not care how much it costs, we do not care how much you have to pay, we do not care how much we have to subsidise this good idea because it is our idea and it is a good idea.” It reminds me of a Monty Python skit from many years ago. “I have an idea.” Somebody over there had an idea but nobody has done the work. You really have to do the work on a major project like this to know whether it can be sustained long term.

Mr Coe asked questions about ACTION. ACTION this year have picked up \$25 million of operational subsidies in the budget because they are not meeting their targets, they are not delivering the service and they are not looking after the people of Canberra. And when I asked Mr Corbell would there be job losses in ACTION when capital metro came, he said, “No, we will have ACTION and capital metro. We can subsidise both.” I do not think anybody can oppose a project where you put a clear case for it and you can explain the finances to people. But you cannot burden 374,000 Canberrans—

Mr Corbell: You do it all the time.

MR SMYTH: I know it stings, Simon. This is the man who delivers nothing. This is the man who stood up, what, six years after it was meant to be completed and said, “I have completed the GDE on time. In fact, I completed it early. Here I am standing by a road I completed early.” It was only six years late and four times the cost. This is the man responsible for the Emergency Services headquarters debacle that went from, what, \$13 million to about \$75 million and the Auditor-General said, “It will be more.”

If you do not do your work properly, the taxpayer pays. And that is the problem with all Labor governments. The taxpayer always pays. It goes into their cost of living. It is their money, their hard-earned tax dollars. It should be respected. But instead we have got deficits, we have got debt, we have got to sit and wait and we get no delivery from this government. This motion should be supported.

Question put:

That the motion be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 8

Mr Coe	Mr Seselja
Mr Doszpot	Mr Smyth
Mrs Dunne	Mr Wall
Mr Hanson	
Mrs Jones	

Noes 9

Mr Barr	Ms Gallagher
Ms Berry	Mr Gentleman
Dr Bourke	Ms Porter
Ms Burch	Mr Rattenbury
Mr Corbell	

Question so resolved in the negative.

Supreme Court (Appointment of Resident Judges) Amendment Bill 2013

Debate resumed from 8 May 2013, on motion by **Mr Seselja**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

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) (4.19): The government will not be supporting Mr Seselja's bill today. The government is on the public record as to why it does not support, at this time, the appointment of a fifth resident judge for the ACT Supreme Court. On 20 March this year, I stood in the Assembly and took members through the reasons why a fifth judge is not needed. As I have said previously, I assure the Assembly that the government takes the issue of delays in the Supreme Court very seriously and continues to work with the court on the issue of delay.

However, this debate about the need for a fifth resident judge comes down to two pivotal questions. The first is: is the Supreme Court under resourced? Second, would the appointment of a fifth judge sufficiently reduce the delays in the court to justify such expenditure?

I have previously explained why the government is not prepared to appoint a fifth resident judge at this time. Firstly, it is a long-term expense to the territory. The work pressure does not justify it, and yet calls for a fifth judge have continued. At present our Supreme Court has a permanent contingent of four resident judges, the Master and additional judges, Federal Court judges who permanently supplement the work of the court on a part-time basis. In addition, we have temporary acting judges who are appointed when needed such as in the lead-up to the commencement of the new docket system in 2012.

A good way of looking at whether we need a fifth judge is to compare work pressure on the court and the superior courts of other jurisdictions. Lodgements per judicial officer is the best available way of determining the actual workload of the court as compared to the workload of courts in other jurisdictions. The 2013 report on government services, ROGS, provides a basis for the comparison. ROGS allows us to aggregate Supreme Court and District Court jurisdictions and their judicial officer complement where jurisdictions have two superior courts. If Mr Seselja is correct, if we really do need another judge, when we compare the ACT to other jurisdictions we would expect to see ACT judges dealing with far more matters than their state counterparts.

However, when the comparison is done, a very different picture emerges. In relation to all lodgements, civil and criminal, the ACT Supreme Court's workload per judicial officer is below, that is right, the national average. In relation to criminal lodgements, the Supreme Court's workload per judicial officer is also below the national average. In relation to civil lodgements, the Supreme Court's workload per judicial officer is the second-lowest in the country. The only jurisdiction with a lower workload is the

Northern Territory. This data shows that workload cannot be the cause of delay in the court. Our judges are simply not overworked when you compare them with the workload of their peers in other jurisdictions. Because workload is not the problem, the appointment of a fifth judge does not appear to be the best use of public resources to address the problem.

When people call for the appointment of a fifth judge to the court, they are, in fact, asking the government to increase the judicial full-time equivalent to include one new judicial full-time equivalent, which is an expensive and long-term proposition. The cost of appointing a fifth judge is approximately \$1 million per year when salary, pension, other expenses such as a car and travel, office accommodation, ICT and support staff are taken into account, and judges have a constitutionally guaranteed tenure until they reach 70. That means when we appoint a new judge we are making a \$1 million commitment each year for the period until that judge reaches the age of 70.

Would the appointment of a fifth judge sufficiently reduce delays to justify the expenditure? If the government appointed 10 judges, there might not be any delay at all but would the taxpayer be getting value for money? Would it be a responsible use of our resources? I do not think so. Instead, what we need to focus on is the way the court manages its existing workload. Until changes in processes and culture can have the chance to take effect, it will not be clear whether the appointment of a fifth judge will have the effect of dealing with the underlying issues in the court. The government does not agree that the circumstances warrant the appointment of a fifth resident judge at this time, and the evidence does not indicate a workload sufficient to support the appointment of a fifth judge.

I challenge those opposite to explain what the workload of ACT judicial officers would be in a five-resident-judge court. On the government's estimates, we would expect that an ACT judicial officer would have half of the workload of a Queensland judge, two-thirds of the workload of a New South Wales judge or a Tasmanian judge, nine-tenths of a Victorian judge or a Western Australian judge. Only a judge in the Northern Territory would have less work. So this is not a proposition that stands up to any clear analysis.

At a time of fiscal constraint, we would be saying to other areas calling on the public purse here, "Don't worry about those costs, don't worry about your needs. We're going to spend money on services that cost a million dollars a year for people to do less work per capita than every other jurisdiction except the Northern Territory." The court is not overworked. The way the court manages its work is the issue.

Others will continue to argue that there is a need for a fifth judge. Perhaps they should also explain why they base their arguments on the issue of number of judges per head of population. The ACT is not like other jurisdictions. The ACT has the lowest lodgement rate of matters per 100,000 people in the population when compared to all other Australian jurisdictions. So when you look at the data from the report on government services, you see not only is the number of matters that our judges deal with per judicial officer less than all other jurisdictions except the Northern Territory, but the total number of matters being lodged in our courts per 100,000 population is the lowest in the country. Is this a situation, is this an environment, that justifies an increase in judicial resources or should our eyes be turned elsewhere?

There simply is no basis for arguing that we need more judges. There is no immediate correlation between the workload of a judge and the population of a jurisdiction. We have fewer lodgements per head of population than any other jurisdiction, less work per judicial officer than every other jurisdiction except the Northern Territory. That is where our Supreme Court sits, based on the Productivity Commission's reports. And it is for these reasons that the government does not support proposals to increase the number of resident judges on the bench in the Supreme Court.

Delay in the court is a serious and grievous issue and one that I take extremely seriously. But we need to respond to it by looking at the systematic reasons why delay occurs. And it is not because there are not enough judges. The facts demonstrate that. It is because of the way matters are managed. That is why the government has worked with the court to put in place measures that will improve the way matters are managed.

There is, of course, a very famous—I should say infamous—judgement from the High Court of Australia known as *Aon*. And in that judgement one of the judges makes the observation that the court was tardy in the way the matter was managed. There was more colourful language than that, but we all know what *Aon* says. But the message from *Aon* is that the court has to improve the way it manages cases, that it does not allow for delay and that it does not accept as a matter of right the need for continual adjournment, relisting or for time lines to simply slip because it is not convenient for one party or another. That is what case management is designed to address. And that is the focus the government wishes to bring to this matter. It is for those reasons the government will not be supporting this bill today.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (4.30): Delays in justice certainly are a serious matter. They leave people waiting on remand, they compound emotional suffering for victims and they burden the community with additional costs. Currently the ACT Supreme Court has an unacceptably long waiting list. Listing dates can be many months. Some judgements have been reserved for several years. I have met with and spoken to many stakeholders about this issue. There is a lot of concern in the community and in the legal profession, and it is clearly an issue that needs attention.

Mr Seselja's solution is to appoint a fifth judge to the Supreme Court. The bill he has presented would achieve that by amending the territory's Supreme Court Act. Currently that act says that the executive may by commission appoint as resident judges a Chief Justice of the court and other judges of the court. It does not specify a number of judges. Mr Seselja's bill seeks to change the act, firstly, so that the executive must appoint resident judges and, secondly, so that the appointment must include a Chief Justice and at least four other judges.

This is, of course, a simple mechanism for Mr Seselja to reprosecute the case for the ACT Supreme Court having a fifth judge. As members know, this is an issue that the Assembly debated comprehensively in March this year. At that time Mr Seselja introduced a motion to the Assembly calling for a fifth judge. The Labor Party and the ACT Greens represented by me did not support that call. This is essentially a matter of timing. I believe some day the court will need a fifth judge, but I do not believe that time is now. It is not the right time to appoint the additional judge. This is because the

government has recently implemented a raft of initiatives to address the delays in the Supreme Court. It is sensible to at least give these measures some time to work. I will expand on these measures in a moment.

First, though, I wish to make the point that it does not really advance the case for Mr Seselja to bring on the same debate and repeat the same arguments as he did just a few weeks ago. The Supreme Court delays have been the subject of a lot of media attention recently, and Mr Seselja's bill and this debate appear to be a spotlight for Mr Seselja to air the same arguments, hopefully get some media and, I suppose, give the impression of going out fighting. Since the debate in March where we all stated our positions I have not been approached by the Liberal Party for any discussions on this issue and nor have they engaged me with any new arguments or alternatives. It does seem a little artificial. As I said, this is especially so given that the Assembly in March resolved to report back on the issue in March next year.

I will restate my position, which remains the same as it did in March. I have said clearly that I am not prepared to support a call for the immediate appointment of a fifth judge. That does not mean I will not support it in the future. I agree with Minister Corbell's proposal to assess the progress of the court over the year and to re-examine the issue in March next year. The reason is that there are substantial changes occurring in the Supreme Court at the moment. They are a result of several initiatives introduced over the last year or so. I think the government has made a genuine attempt to alleviate the problem. We need to acknowledge this and give the changes time to take effect. I remain very hopeful that these initiatives will help alleviate the problems with delays. I would be interested to know if the Canberra Liberals have already decided that these initiatives will fail. It is convenient to ignore all these initiatives and pretend a fifth judge is the one and only solution.

Some of the initiatives that are currently underway are worth reflecting on. There is now an increased Magistrates Court civil and criminal jurisdiction. This should assist to shift cases away from the Supreme Court into the Magistrates Court. I think this is an important initiative, because there are some matters that go to the Supreme Court which do not warrant going to the highest court in the territory. It is quite appropriate that they are dealt with in the Magistrates Court, and anecdotally I am told by those I know in the profession that we are now beginning to see an increase in matters in the Magistrates Court away from the Supreme Court. So certainly that initiative appears to be having an effect, and it may end up being that it is the Magistrates Court that needs additional capacity if these sorts of measures play out.

That applies also to reforms to the Bail Act. Those went through in the last Assembly, and they also had the effect of limiting the number of bail matters going to the Supreme Court. Again, a bail matter should not be in the Supreme Court unless there is some new and significant issue of law. The reforms to that have seen more matters going back to the Magistrates Court. That, again, may raise the issue of capacity in the Magistrates Court, but that will be a matter for future discussion as well.

We have seen reforms for judge-alone trials. There is now a single registry and a listing review system. We also have the new Supreme Court docket case management system. As I said during the last debate, this year we will also see a change in

personnel in the Supreme Court through members of the current bench reaching retirement age. With the new court in place next year and with a number of the measures I have just described having time to actually take effect, we will have a better picture of whether or not we are making progress and whether or not the Supreme Court is able to manage its workload in a way the community would expect.

In conclusion, I reiterate that this matter is not closed for me. It is a very serious issue that impacts on people's lives and the administration of justice in the territory, but we are in the middle of a tranche of ACT court reforms that should have an impact in addressing the delays. If these reforms do not work I remain open to appointing a fifth Supreme Court judge, but today is not the time. On that basis I will not be able to support Mr Seselja's bill.

MR SESELJA (Brindabella) (4.37), in reply: I will comment briefly on the contributions from Mr Corbell and Mr Rattenbury. Mr Rattenbury again seeks to question motivations for bringing forward legislation when what we are doing is bringing forward the concerns of virtually the entire legal community. What you are doing right now is not working, and I will get to that in a minute. Talking about anecdotes versus the feedback from all areas of the legal community is not evidence based; it is based on hope, and hope is not a strategy, Mr Rattenbury.

We know additional resources are backed by every aspect of the legal profession. I do not think their motivations are simply to get publicity, as Mr Rattenbury implies. What we are talking about here is an important way of ensuring we get better access to justice in the territory. In yesterday's budget I think we saw just how badly this Labor-Greens government is doing on these measures. The budget showed that since last year the percentage of criminal cases waiting in the Supreme Court for more than 24 months has increased from five to 10 per cent and that the percentage of criminal cases waiting in the Magistrates Court for more than 12 months has also increased from five to 10 per cent. The civil backlog is just as concerning, with the average number of days to finalise civil cases from time of lodgement in the Supreme Court increasing from 550 to 617. Possibly even more worrying was that there was no new initiative and no new spending to address these delays. Disappointingly, it seems that it is only the Canberra Liberals who are fighting for justice in this area.

I make the point again that what you are doing right now is not working. You can talk about anecdotes, but we are seeing the stats year after year, and they are not pretty. These are real people involved and this is a real solution. It is not the only solution, but it is one significant improvement. That is why all areas of the legal profession believe it is right. What Mr Corbell and Mr Rattenbury are saying is that everyone else is wrong and this government is right. Everyone else who deals with it on a day-to-day basis is wrong but Simon Corbell is right. Well, I do not think this government has a record where it can show that it is actually making progress on this and that it actually has the policy solutions.

The Supreme Court (Appointment of Resident Judges) Amendment Bill would make a simple but effective amendment to the Supreme Court Act. It would provide that the executive must by commission appoint as resident judges a Chief Justice of the court and at least four other judges of the court. I have already spoken during the introduction of this bill about the reluctance with which I introduced this bill—it

should not have come to this. We would have hoped that the government would have listened to the community affected by long delays—key stakeholders on this issue like the Law Society and victims of crime—who have all called for long-term and sustained action to ensure that residents in the ACT receive timely access to justice.

Just on Monday we had another stakeholder calling for a fifth judge. In fact, criminologist David Biles said in an opinion editorial in the *Canberra Times*:

The appointment of a fifth judge to the Supreme Court is the essential first step to reverse the trend towards ever-increasing remand numbers.

He joins the long list of people calling for a fifth judge. The ACT Law Society expressed their support in a letter to me, the Attorney-General and Mr Rattenbury. The ACT Bar Association has stated they are in strong support of the legislation which they state will “undoubtedly alleviate the pressures and delays currently experienced by the court.”

We have got all of the experts in the field saying this is an essential step. It may not be the only step, but it is an essential step, yet we have a government that wants to double the size of the Assembly apparently for efficiency purposes but does not believe a territory with 360,000 people which has amongst the lowest number of judges in the country should have a fifth judge in order to deal with the backlog and see speedier resolution of cases in the territory.

Our debate follows reports in the *Canberra Times* that further highlight the issues facing our justice system despite the short-term measures that the government argues it is putting in place. The *Canberra Times* states that the outstanding caseload of a particular judge includes a number of decisions that have been reserved for longer than 18 months, with one more than four years old. Obviously allowing this judge time away from the bench to address these cases will provide some short-term relief to the pressures on this particular judge. However, in the long term taking one judge away from the bench increases the delays for the cases still to be heard and increases the pressure on the remaining judges. The delays to judgements are well known and they continue to get longer year after year. The Attorney-General is only prepared to take short-term measures that take off some of the pressures for a few months, and the delays continue.

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

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

The justification put forward by Mr Corbell and Mr Rattenbury about their failure to address this serious issue is well documented. However, criminologist David Biles, as stated in the opinion editorial I quoted earlier, argues:

Whatever way one does the analysis, and bearing in mind that the ACT Supreme Court only hears the most serious cases, in my opinion the need for an extra permanent judge is beyond dispute.

Yesterday's budget showed how much worse the situation is getting in the ACT. And it is clear that this is a problem created by this Labor government because we can compare our situation to other jurisdictions. According to the latest report on government services, we have 3.4 judges per 100,000 people. This is the lowest number of judges per capita in the country. It is relevant to compare to similar jurisdictions such as the Northern Territory, which has 11 judges per capita and Tasmania which has 4.1 judges per 100,000. Importantly, we are also well below the national average of 4.8 judges per 100,000 people.

The delays we are currently experiencing do not serve to benefit anyone. Many Canberrans have had their lives turned upside down by court cases, and the continued delays in addressing them have meant that their suffering is exacerbated. Businesses caught up in long litigations are putting at risk their livelihoods and causing untold stress. The accused awaiting trial are often detained on remand at the AMC only to be released soon after trial as they are deemed to have served their sentence. Their classification in the prison of being held on remand rather than sentenced means they often cannot participate in rehabilitation programs.

There is a serious problem in the ACT. Everyone in the legal fraternity agrees that one way of addressing this problem is to appoint a fifth judge—that is, everyone except the government, who have put their hands over their ears and are ignoring the facts and the opinions of the people most affected. It is a sad day when the government refuse to listen to the electorate and refuse to listen to the community who is best informed on the issue. The refusal by this government to appoint a fifth judge reflect their arrogance about the legislative process.

It is often quoted that justice delayed is justice denied, and today Labor and the Greens have denied justice to thousands of Canberrans. I again commend the bill to the Assembly.

Question put:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 8

Mr Coe	Mr Seselja
Mr Doszpot	Mr Smyth
Mrs Dunne	Mr Wall
Mr Hanson	
Mrs Jones	

Noes 9

Mr Barr	Ms Gallagher
Ms Berry	Mr Gentleman
Dr Bourke	Ms Porter
Ms Burch	Mr Rattenbury
Mr Corbell	

Question so resolved in the negative.

Housing—home ownership initiatives

DR BOURKE (Ginninderra) (4.49): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

(a) the 2013-2014 Budget delivers a package of initiatives aimed at making home ownership more achievable for more Canberrans;

(b) this package includes:

(i) an increase in the First Home Owner Grant to \$12,500 from 1 September 2013. The grants will be retargeted to new and substantially renovated properties from 1 September 2013;

(ii) expansion to the Home Buyer Concession Scheme—the income threshold will rise from \$150,000 to \$160,000;

(iii) an increase in the property threshold up until which a full concession is available to \$425,000, with a partial concession for properties valued up to \$525,000;

(iv) retargeting of the Land Rent Scheme to lower income households;

(v) new dwelling sites in Belconnen, Gungahlin, North Canberra, South Canberra, Woden, Molonglo and Tuggeranong through the Land Release Program; and

(vi) delivers high quality services to Canberra; and

(2) supports the initiatives being delivered by the ACT Government aimed at making home ownership more affordable.

Housing affordability continues to challenge governments around the country. It is a challenge this government has addressed head on and one against which significant progress has been made over the last six years. Based on many indicators, the ACT would appear to be one of the most affordable capital cities for housing in Australia. For example, the Real Estate Institute of Australia's last housing affordability report says that the proportion of average household income needed to service the average mortgage is 18.7 per cent in Canberra.

This is compared to the national average of 30.4 per cent. However, these indicators, based on Canberra's high average incomes, can mask the impact that continuing demand—continuing high demand—for housing has on many Canberrans that may not have such a high income. That is why 12 months ago this government released the third phase of our affordable housing action plan and, at the same time, announced a major program of tax reform, which is making significant improvements to housing affordability in the territory.

Today we have announced a further measure to provide more affordable housing in the territory. I was pleased to join the Minister for Economic Development, Andrew Barr, alongside Mary Porter and Yvette Berry, to announce a new housing development for west Belconnen. The development is a partnership between the government and locally owned land development company, the Riverview Group. It will result in the construction of around 4,500 homes accommodating 12,000 people over the next decade.

The need for additional retail and community services generated by families and singles living in this new development will also lead to enhancements to the Kippax group centre as a community, shopping and public transport hub. This will also be of benefit to the wider west Belconnen area. Existing schools such as Macgregor primary and Kingsford Smith will take students who are living the new development and, as the estate grows, new schools will be constructed. It goes without saying that this project will transform Belconnen. It will bring thousands more residents, more shops, more schools and more people to local sporting teams and community groups. It will also be a great place to live—close to the Belconnen town centre and close to the Molonglo River.

Mr Assistant Speaker, with the release of the 2013-14 budget, we are continuing our commitment to affordability, with further reductions in stamp duty, an increase to the first home owner grant and an expansion of the homebuyer concession scheme to cover more homebuyers and properties. On 5 June 2013 the second reduction in stamp duty rates took effect as part of our plan to completely phase out the tax. These changes will further reduce the amount of stamp duty payable for residential and commercial properties. Compared with the stamp duty rates before our tax reform, someone buying a home valued at \$300,000 will now pay \$1,400 less in stamp duty. Similarly, someone buying a home valued at \$500,000 will pay \$3,400 less than before our tax reforms.

Under these changes the ACT will also go from having the highest rate of stamp duty in the country to one that is much more competitive with the rest of Australia. Indeed, over time the ACT will be the only jurisdiction to completely abolish conveyancing duty. Whilst all homebuyers will benefit from our plan to phase out stamp duty, low and moderate income households will benefit even more through changes to the homebuyer concession scheme.

The scheme, which provides additional discounts on stamp duty for new homes, was expanded in 2012-13 and is expanded even further again in the 2013-14 budget. The scheme's household income threshold is being increased by \$10,000 to \$160,000 to ensure that more people are able to take advantage of the concession.

Similarly, the value of thresholds which determine which properties are eligible for the reduced duty are also being increased. A full concession will now be available for properties up to a value of \$425,000, an increase of \$45,000 over the previous threshold. The threshold for partial concessions will also increase from \$450,000 to \$525,000. This affectively means that a family with an annual income of \$160,000 buying a new home for \$425,000 will pay a mere \$20 in conveyancing duty.

This is a significant outcome for homebuyers in the ACT. If that home happens to be the family's first, they will also be able to take advantage of a \$5,500 increase the first home owner grant, which would increase to \$12,500 from 1 September 2013. Coinciding with this increase, the first home owner grant will only apply to new or substantially renovated homes.

This change will further support construction activity and increase Canberra's housing supply. It will also align the first home owner grant in the ACT with other states, including New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria. These changes are merely the latest in a long line of housing initiatives implemented by this government. They date back to the release of our first affordable housing action plan in 2007.

Now in its third phase, the action plan has introduced a total of 98 housing affordability initiatives to the territory, the vast majority of which have already been completed. To name just a few of the achievements, we have, firstly, released over 16,000 new building sites to the market in the first four years of our accelerated land release program between 2008-09 and 2011-12.

Secondly, we have exchanged or settled more than 1,300 land rent scheme contracts; 1,300 land rent scheme contracts! Fourthly, we have required that 20 per cent of all new buildings in greenfield developments are delivered at an affordable price. Fifthly, we have introduced the LDA's OwnPlace program, which is delivering over 450 homes straight to moderate income earners; 428 homes have already been completed.

We have also contributed to the delivery of thousands of new affordable rental dwellings under the national rental affordability scheme, making us the most successful jurisdiction per capita in Australia. This includes 2,000 affordable new dwellings for the ACT's university students, which will also benefit the broader rental market. We have supported the community housing sector to grow its capacity. We have reduced land tax on properties with lower land values to increase the supply of affordable rental dwellings in the private market.

Combined with these achievements, it is the government's changes to homebuyer assistance schemes, such as the first home owner grant and stamp duty concessions, that will continue to deliver positive housing affordability outcomes for Canberra into our second century.

MR COE (Ginninderra) (4.59): The government has had a misguided approach to the provision of property here in the ACT and enabling individuals and families to purchase property here in the ACT by almost indicator in almost any survey put out by any reputable body. Whether you look at rent or look at purchase prices, here in the ACT we are always at the top of the table. The fact is that that keeps many people out of our property market. It means that for many people who grow up here in the ACT, they will not be able to buy a house in the place where they grew up. I think that is a tragedy.

It is largely a tragedy not because of market forces, but because of government intervention. It is because of this government's excessive tax regime and because of this government's poor record when it comes to delivering land to market. In addition to that, the government's inability to deliver infrastructure to support residential land estates in addition to existing developments, existing suburbs, means that there is a continued pressure on the ACT housing sector, which drives prices up and up and therefore makes housing more and more inaccessible for Canberrans.

Dr Bourke has pointed to a few aspects which he believes would be beneficial for Canberra as stipulated in the budget. But all these schemes are in fact flawed schemes. They are schemes that have been there before and that have failed. What this government does over and over again is tinker with bad schemes. Rather than saying, "Enough is enough; it didn't work," they keep tinkering with them and keep tinkering with them so that they gouge more and more money out of the residents of Canberra.

One such scheme which is far from being what it was intended is the first home owner grant, which in government speak has been "re-targeted". What that means is that thousands of people who purchase established houses here in the ACT are now going to miss out on the first home owner grant. The government's changes, whereby they restrict first home owner grants to people who purchase new properties or substantially renovated properties, means that thousands of Canberrans who would want to purchase an existing property, who would want to purchase perhaps an ex-government property to do up, who would want to purchase an existing apartment, or who would want to purchase their first family home in an existing area—perhaps near to where they grew up—would now not get that support. All this is happening under the banner of re-targeting.

The same can be said for the homebuyer concession scheme, whereby once again we have a re-targeting. This means that thousands of people who would want to get the support that other Canberrans would have access to will not be able to get it because they are purchasing an existing property as opposed to a new or substantially renovated property.

This notion that you can purchase a substantially renovated property for under the threshold, which is 420,000, I think is very wishful thinking. It is pretty hard to get any property in Canberra for under \$420,000, but to get one in an established area that has been substantially renovated, that is done up to a very high standard, under \$420,000 I think is wishful thinking.

Yet again we see a change to land rent. This is a bad scheme. It was a bad scheme at the beginning. It was a bad scheme after the first iteration, and the second iteration, and the third iteration, and here we are for the umpteenth time looking at another iteration of land rent that I am sure would fail just as all the other ones have before.

We have mixed messages from the government, because on the one hand they are saying that we want people to live on transport corridors, we want people to live in built-up areas but not to put pressure on greenfield development, which supposedly is better for the environment. Yet their own schemes, of course, push people to greenfield developments.

It is interesting that the government should say that we are in for tough times with the coalition government. How tough can times be if the government expects to sell 4,800 blocks this year, 4,700 blocks next year and 4,000 blocks the year after? The fact is that many businesses in Canberra are currently going through a tough time. That has got nothing to do with Mr Abbott. That has got to do with bad financial management here in the ACT and up on the hill. They are the reasons why so many businesses in Canberra are struggling. It is the lack of certainty. It is the lack of confidence. It is in effect government mismanagement that has created an environment in which people do not want to take risks.

Here in the ACT I do not think we have enough people who go out on a limb and take risks, create opportunities and who are generally entrepreneurial. We do not have enough of those people in Canberra. Yet here in the ACT it seems that when we do get these people, we seem to stifle that innovation. One such way that happens is, of course, the change of use charge. The change of use charge seems to me to be absolutely counterintuitive to what the government states they want in terms of urban renewal. If you do not want to push people onto greenfield development, if you want to get people living in built-up areas, then surely you would be encouraging the change of use, not restricting it.

But that is what this policy is all about. It is about actually not having urban renewal and pushing more and more out into greenfield development. We in the opposition do not have a problem with greenfield development. We just think it is hypocritical when the government says that they have got a problem with it, yet all the policies are geared towards pushing more and more people to that position.

Another significant hindrance to the ACT property sector and to potential purchasers of houses here in the ACT is, of course, DV306. I think it is highly likely that we are going to see technical amendments come through in the coming months to try and patch the serious flaws which exist in draft variation 306, which has now been enacted into the territory plan. I think the provisions in the variation will severely restrict the property sector here in the ACT. I think it potentially will have a far greater effect on property here in the ACT than a change in the federal government might ever have. The fact is that under DV306 the extension of almost any house in Gungahlin is going to be near impossible. It will be near impossible due to the shadow limitations.

There are also many, many other cumbersome regulations within variation 306 which really will put the handbrake on property development here in the ACT. The real risk to the ACT property sector, the real risk to the ACT economy, is not a future Liberal government; it is the current Labor governments here in the ACT and, of course, federally.

What does all this mean? In competitive federalism when we have a little island jurisdiction like we have in the ACT, it means every time we make it harder and harder and harder to develop property here in the ACT, every time we drive up the cost of property here in the ACT, whether it be through land, whether it be through rates, whether it be through many of the other taxes which this government has placed on the sector, all that ends up doing is driving more people into New South Wales.

That is why there is such exceptional demand in Queanbeyan, in Jerrabomberra, in Googong, in Tralee and in other developments just over the border.

It is my belief that a lot of people that are buying just over the border in New South Wales would actually rather live here in the ACT. I do not think they are going to New South Wales developments necessarily as their first option. I think their first option would be to stay in the ACT where they grew up. But the fact is that this government has made purchasing a property near impossible for so many families in the ACT.

It is for that reason the Queanbeyan City Council and the New South Wales government are cashing in on this jurisdiction's problems and making developments over the border in Queanbeyan far more attractive comparatively. So it is no wonder that we see people going across there in droves. The Queanbeyan City Council is responding to the very high thresholds that we have here in the ACT and making a very attractive marketplace just over the border.

Mr Assistant Speaker, in conclusion, the Canberra Liberals think that this government does have a misguided approach to the property sector here in the ACT. It is first homebuyers who struggle. It is people already in the market that struggle. It is people who have pride in the ACT and want to stay in the ACT that suffer as a result of this government's misguided policies. Rather than being a blueprint for a strong economy, I think what we have in this budget when it comes to the property sector is more taxes and more gouging of Canberrans.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (5.10): The provision of housing, particularly the provision of a spectrum of housing options, is a difficult challenge. I believe the government has an obligation to provide first and foremost for those most in need. To do this we have in place a range of measures. Some of these include providing additional assistance to those who can afford housing but for whom a little extra assistance can mean they move along the spectrum into their own house. In some circumstances this will mean they "free up" more affordable housing for those who cannot afford their own home.

The degree to which this idea is realised in real life is, of course, difficult to ascertain. Given this difficulty we need to be very careful to ensure that public resources are used where they are needed the most. The motion makes a number of notes about the provision of housing assistance measures in the budget. I think they are essentially observations of fact.

One of the areas I would particularly like to turn to is the issue of the first home owner grant. Members will remember that in previous debates on this issue the failure of the grant has been highlighted at some length. Certainly my colleagues in the previous Assembly made some observations to this effect.

There is no doubt, and all the evidence confirms, that the first home owner grant has been a failure and an almost complete waste of taxpayers' money. Reports from the Senate Select Committee on Housing Affordability in Australia, the Productivity Commission and the OECD all show that demand side assistance does nothing more

than inflate the cost of housing, negating the benefit of the grant to the recipients—not to mention the impact on those who do not get the benefit of the assistance, who to some extent have a double whammy.

This is an area where probably I have a different view from some members of the Assembly. Mr Coe, if I understood his comments correctly, has just spoken about his view that the first home owner grant should be available to all. I think there is a real debate to be had about the merits of that sort of policy in light of the studies from groups like the Productivity Commission and the OECD, and their comments on demand side assistance.

That principal concern noted, I will say that I do support the retargeting of the scheme and recognise that what is being proposed is better than what we have currently. I think that some questions can be asked about whether this particular subsidy to the construction industry delivers the best public return; nevertheless, I do believe it is an improvement on the current situation.

On that basis, I have indicated in discussion in cabinet and in my views to the Treasurer that I think this is an improvement and one that I can support in that regard. What this illustrates is that we need to be very carefully considering the impact of our policy decisions to ensure that we have the greatest impact in the provision of affordable housing for Canberrans who need assistance.

I would also make the observation that we will be debating legislative change to give effect to the new policy, and no doubt the matter will be considered in greater detail at that time.

Members will see that I have also circulated amendments. I seek leave to move my two amendments together.

Leave granted.

MR RATTENBURY: Thank you, members. I move:

(1) Omit paragraph (1)(b)(vi).

(2) Omit paragraph (2), substitute:

“(2) calls on all Members of the Assembly to thoroughly consider all Government initiatives to assist home ownership to ensure they meet their objectives in a sustainable and equitable way.”.

These amendments are very simple. Amendment No 1 is just a grammatical issue. The second amendment is similar to my amendment on the motion this morning about the status of the budget, calling on members to thoroughly consider all the issues surrounding these policy changes. As I said this morning, no doubt they will be the subject of consideration during the estimates process and further debate in the Assembly.

The amendment asks members to be aware of the various issues around the policy initiatives, and certainly some of the shortcomings that have been expressed

previously, so that we might avoid repeating those errors, and also to give further consideration to the matters at hand. As I said this morning, I hold a view that, in light of the fact that we have got a whole formal process to go on the budget, I have some discomfort in signing off on a motion today that essentially endorses that. I think there is a formal Assembly process to go through. That is the purpose of reframing the words in my amendment.

I think that the rest of the motion is all statements of fact and reflects things that are happening in the budget. It is quite appropriate for the Assembly to note those and provide a platform to at least start the debate today and have some discussion to that effect. On that basis, I indicate my support for the broader motion and commend my amendments 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) (5.15): I thank Dr Bourke for moving this motion today and I thank the deputy leader of the opposition and Minister Rattenbury for their contributions.

There are a number of things to put on the record this afternoon. The first is that over the past four years we have made significant inroads in satisfying a backlog of unmet demand and in stabilising home and unit prices and private rents in the territory. A land release program has certainly assisted in providing a supply-side solution to our housing market challenges.

Whilst demand for apartments appears close to being met with recent releases, there is considerable evidence in the marketplace that demand for detached housing is still strong, particularly in the affordable price brackets that have been targeted in this particular budget for further stamp duty concessions. So we recognise the need to maintain the existing level of residential land supply in locations across the territory.

Today I was very pleased to be joined by Ms Porter, Ms Berry and Dr Bourke for the launch of a major new transformational project for west Belconnen. The ACT government has entered into a partnership arrangement with a locally owned land development company, the Riverview Group, to construct 4,500 new homes accommodating 12,000 people over the next decade, to be built on land adjacent to Holt and west Macgregor in Belconnen.

This new residential development will be a boost for housing affordability and a stimulus for the residential construction sector. The primary aim of this development is to increase the supply of affordable housing for Canberrans looking to purchase a home. The first 200 blocks are anticipated to go to market in 2015. There will be variety of choices in this estate for affordable housing on different sized blocks, and rental opportunities are also planned.

Due to the changes that I announced in the budget yesterday, purchasers of every block sold in the new development will be eligible to access the first home owner grant, which, as Minister Rattenbury alluded to in his comments, has been retargeted to focus on new property construction. We are particular keen to do this because there

is evidence that simply fuelling the demand side without providing a supply-side stimulus does just push prices up. If you just put more money into the economy, chasing the same number of houses, you will see price inflation. So we are very clear in making this policy change that we wish to encourage additional supply in the marketplace. I think that is an important thing to seek to do with any demand-side stimulus.

I think it is fair to observe, also, that, in the context of this new west Belconnen development, many of the blocks will be eligible for the home owner concession scheme, which reduces the amount of stamp duty that is paid to just \$20, saving those purchasers around \$13,000 or \$14,000 in stamp duty, depending on the value of the house and land package, for example. What the government has achieved through the retargeting of the first home owner grant is to make a saving and to apply that saving to further reduce stamp duty.

There is a variety of ways to reduce stamp duty through the ACT budget. In addition to those targeted incentives, the government is cutting stamp duty on every single property in the territory. It has been lowered again this year and will be lowered again each year that I am Treasurer.

I think this west Belconnen development is a timely announcement—a shot in the arm, if you like, for the construction sector. Construction and building are a major employer in our city and a significant economic driver. The building of necessary infrastructure and the construction of new homes are always a great employment generator in our economy, and the multiplier effect with the purchase of new household goods associated with people moving into new homes is a boost across the territory economy.

The development area in question is two kilometres from Kippax, six kilometres from the Belconnen town centre and 13 kilometres from the CBD. It is closer to the CBD than many existing parts of the urban development footprint within the territory. At this distance, the development is essentially a form of infill for Belconnen, that part of Belconnen, and will stimulate commercial and community activity in and around this area.

The project also addresses demand for affordable detached housing blocks of sufficient size to attract young families. It will certainly reinvigorate the area's demographic profile, which is ageing, and will provide the impetus for infrastructure and community facility renewal, particularly in Kippax. The market price for many of the blocks in the more affordable range will be around the \$220,000 mark, making them significantly cheaper than elsewhere in the city. And with an average size across the development of around 400 square metres, these blocks will be especially welcome for people looking to have a backyard.

The west Belconnen project is an extension of the existing urban area. It provides a third development front within the territory, in addition to the remaining suburbs in Gungahlin and the Molonglo valley estate. It is well located and well suited to urban development. The land release program in the budget anticipates the release of just over 16,000 sites over the four years to June 2013, an increase of 51 per cent over the previous four years, in which just under 10,800 sites were released.

This record level of land release across the Gungahlin, Belconnen and Molonglo districts provides greater choice for new homebuyers and has coincided with stabilisation in dwelling prices, which have risen by less than the consumer price index in the last three years.

Despite the ongoing levels of high population growth, driven by natural increase and interstate and overseas migration, it is estimated that the unmet demand that created pressure on housing markets has contracted from the position where we were about 8,000 dwellings short in 2010 to the position where we were 870 dwellings short in March 2013. A lot of these measures do, however, mask ongoing challenges at the lower price end of the market.

In addition to the many dwellings that have already been made available since 2007 as part of the government's affordable home purchase initiatives, we are very keen to see 20 per cent of homes in future greenfield areas continue to be set aside for affordable home purchase. In order to continue this momentum in the housing sector, a new four-year indicative residential land release program proposes 18,000 dwelling sites over the four years. It is assumed that there will be some private sector supply of land over this period. We are very keen to see these new policy settings in place, so tomorrow I will be bringing legislation into the Assembly in relation to the first home owner grant.

In the time that remains, it is important to stress that the retargeting of the first home owner grant does not just include greenfield estates; it also provides the opportunity for purchases in urban renewal locations. Just a quick look on certain real estate websites provides dozens of property opportunities under the thresholds. Kingston, Belconnen, Northbourne Avenue, Harrison, Franklin, Dunlop, Phillip, Dickson, Wright, Harrison, Holt, Lyneham and Crace all have properties on the market that would be eligible for both the grant and the homebuyer concession. There are options right across the city. We want to encourage more. Over the next few years we want to see the construction sector busy adding to the supply of housing in Canberra, because that will put downward pressure on prices and on rents.

DR BOURKE (Ginninderra) (5.25): I thank Mr Coe, Mr Rattenbury and Mr Barr for their contributions this evening. I also thank Mr Rattenbury for his amendments.

I take issue with Mr Coe's statements around the substance of this motion. In particular, I am not sure that he was really listening when I said that the Real Estate Institute of Australia's latest housing affordability report says that the proportion of average household income needed to service the average mortgage is 18.7 per cent in Canberra compared to the national average of 34 per cent. Was I supposed to construe from what he said that the Real Estate Institute of Australia is not a reputable organisation? I simply do not know, Mr Assistant Speaker.

Mr Coe got a bit confused about the first home owner scheme and said that it was not available to do renovations, when in actual fact it is, and that really is not an adequate criticism of that scheme at all. Then he pointed to the land release scheme, which, as the Treasurer has quite clearly articulated, is about providing additional supply to meet a stimulated demand. This is a fundamental step to ensure that we continue to

maintain a supply of affordable housing. You do not stimulate demand without also improving supply, and that is exactly what we are doing.

I commend the motion to the Assembly.

Amendments agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Australian Capital Territory (Ministers) Bill 2013

Debate resumed from 15 May 2013, on motion by **Mr Hanson**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

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

That the debate be adjourned.

Question put.

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.

Debate adjourned to the next sitting.

Economy—cost of living

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (5.32): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) Canberra families are experiencing increasing cost of living pressures;
- (b) rates and utility charges have increased significantly since ACT Labor came to power in 2001;
- (c) the Cost of Living Statement in the 2012-2013 Budget noted an increase of \$641.58 in Government rates and charges on an average Canberra family;

- (d) the Cost of Living Statement excluded significant and basic Government charges such as parking fees and the utilities tax;
 - (e) the Government has an accumulative deficit of \$575 million over the forward estimates;
 - (f) the Government has embarked on a disproportionately high carbon reduction and renewable energy target;
 - (g) that the Government is currently undergoing a massive restructure of the tax system that, according to numbers provided by the Government, will triple rates revenue; and
 - (h) the Government continues to prioritise expenditure on items such as the Skywhale instead of measures that will ease the burden on Canberra families; and
- (2) calls on the Government to:
- (a) prioritise expenditure decisions to reduce the impact of cost of living pressures on Canberra families; and
 - (b) provide a more comprehensive Cost of Living Statement in the ACT Budget.

It is most timely that this motion comes before the Assembly today. Given the context of the budget and the debate we have had about rates, increased fees and charges and the impact of this budget on Canberra families, it is timely that we talk about the cost of living pressures on Canberra families. It is certainly something this government are not focused on and do not assess as a priority. Their priorities are elsewhere.

There is no doubt that Canberra families are experiencing cost of living pressures. The cost of living situation in Canberra appears to be getting worse. On 8 May Anglicare reported that 98 per cent of low income households in New South Wales and the ACT accessing their emergency relief services were not sure where their next meal was coming from or were unable to provide food for their family on a regular basis. This is the government that talks about a transformation of Canberra. Further, they reported that 95 per cent of families surveyed ran out of food in the last three months because of unexpected expenses such as medical bills, car repairs, sudden rent increases or large power bills. This demonstrates that for many Canberra families the cost of living pressures are real.

And this issue goes far beyond Katy Gallagher's recommendation to simply turn off your Foxtel. Since Labor came to power in 2001 utility charges have increased significantly. Water prices have tripled, electricity prices are up 85 per cent, including a 17.8 per cent increase this year due to the carbon tax. Property rates and charges have increased by 90 per cent, with some suburbs having increases above 100 per cent. A chart in the *Canberra Times* showed the impact of the budget in one year alone on every suburb in Canberra. We have seen increases in suburbs like Banks of 152 per cent; Charnwood, 158 per cent; Chisholm, 130 per cent; Dunlop, 137 per cent; Spence,

148 per cent; and Holt, 138 per cent. This is in addition to rents going up by 77 per cent. Childcare in the ACT is \$13 a day more expensive than the national average. First homes now cost on average more than \$408,000 and, for the first time, first homes are now more expensive for 50 per cent of first home owners due to the charges in stamp duty concessions. And it goes on and on.

The cost of living statement in this year's budget has been changed, and the reason given by Andrew Barr today was, "Because we can. Because we can." That is what he said. But when we look at what the cost of living impact is and when we finally get to the nub of it, we see a whole bunch of things have not been included in this cost of living motion that we have called on the government to include. We are still investigating whether that is all in there.

The cost of living statement in the 2012-13 budget noted an increase of \$641 in government rates and charges for an average Canberra family. The documented increase of \$641 for that family in the 2012-13 year was due to government taxes and fees going up. As an example, rates went up 9.6 per cent, utilities by 11.5 per cent, electricity by 17.8 per cent, gas by 11.5 per cent and sewerage by 8.2 per cent. Fees and charges rose from \$8,425 a year to \$9,066. So things like the ambulance levy and the utilities tax were missing last year. The increase in CTP insurance was not accounted for. And, apparently, the family did not park their car, which can add another \$3,200 to charges if they park their car in Civic. Mr Coe might be able to confirm an increase of nine per cent in parking in this year's budget again?

Mr Coe: Twenty per cent in total takings.

MR HANSON: Twenty per cent in total takings of parking across the ACT. That is a direct hit to the cost of living of Canberra families. That is even more important as an issue when the federal government is cutting the free parking for many public servants. So for many Canberrans who work in the federal public service, they are facing an increased bill in the parliamentary triangle of \$2,640 a year. If you have got two family members who work in different departments on either side of town, you can double that. Perhaps one is working in the federal parliamentary triangle and one is working for the ACT. What people will find is their fees and charges going up by 20 per cent. So if federal Labor is not getting you, then local Labor will, and that is what we are seeing.

An additional comment in the review of the last budget on ways to improve the cost of living statement by the Centre for International Economics was that using after-tax income as the disposable income would more accurately reflect the government's rates and charges as a proportion of income and that median household income should be used rather than average because of household income distribution.

I note that one of the changes in the statement on cost of living in the budget was for people who were married 15 years and over, which I think would be illegal. So, I am not quite sure how that—

Mr Barr: No, you've not read the commonwealth Marriage Act then, have you?

MR HANSON: Well, pretty unusual, I think. The government has embarked on a disproportionately high carbon reduction renewable energy target. This is something we have talked about in this place before. It is disproportionately high. The carbon emissions target is eight times the national target. This government are talking about debts, talking about deficits and talking about doing everything they can to manage this budget, but at the same time are having another conversation with another constituency which is pretty small in this town—about 10 per cent of Greens—about how much they love 40 per cent, how much they love light rail, how much they love 90 per cent renewables, how much they hate plastic bags and how much they love solar feed-in tariff. The reality is, though, that the reason they are having that conversation is that they are trying to appease a constituency of one—that is, the sometimes minister, sometimes crossbencher and, as we have seen today, the sometimes Speaker of this Assembly.

Mr Coe: He's a man for all seasons.

MR HANSON: He is, indeed, a man for all seasons, Mr Coe. He seems to be someone who wants to play on both sides of the football team and be the referee at the same time. But because of the government's decision to appease that individual and that small section of the community, they are driving the ACT on a very expensive course of carbon reduction that is disproportionate. The full cost of that the government will not expose. The full cost of that is impossible to determine, and we still do not know the facts.

Mr Corbell: You refuse to read the document. You are absolutely atrocious on this issue. You really are. You are absolutely atrocious.

Mr Barr: More atrocious than normal.

Mr Corbell: It's pathetic.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Corbell! Stop the clock, please. Mr Corbell, I ask you to keep silent while Mr Hanson is speaking. He has the floor. You will have your opportunity to voice your opinions at a later stage in the debate. Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Thanks, Madam Deputy Speaker. Simon Corbell with his little tantrum there is quite illustrative of a sore point. We saw one earlier from Mr Barr when he stormed out of this chamber. "How dare people question my budget! I am the great transformer. How dare people question me!" I am not sure whether we will come up with an appropriate name for Mr Corbell. I recall his old "monergy" thing. Certainly—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Hanson! Stop the clock, please. Mr Hanson, you are not debating different nicknames for those on the government benches. You are here to debate your own motion, so be relevant to your motion, please. We have already had this discussion with Madam Speaker about calling people other than their proper names. Just get back to the motion, please.

MR HANSON: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Regardless of how those opposite see themselves—as transformers or otherwise—there is no doubt that there is a little bit of a contest going on between Mr Corbell and Mr Rattenbury in this government about who can get to the left and be the most extreme Green and who is the most progressive. Now, there is a race—

Mr Barr: The equivalent contest in your mob about who can be the most right wing is pretty amusing, too.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Barr!

MR HANSON: At least Mr Barr does not dispute what I am saying. He accepts the premise. He accuses us of the same but on the other side, but he certainly accepts the premise. No-one is disagreeing that there is a bit of a charge to the left. And the charge to the left is costing Canberrans. The charge to the left costs average Canberrans out there.

The feed-in tariff scheme, remember that one? Mr Gentleman certainly does. It was not such a success for him back in 2004 when he led the charge on the feed-in tariff scheme and the people of Tuggeranong gave him their verdict, which was a resounding no. And that brought Ms Burch into this place. But that is adding \$225 a year to households. Now, that is all good for the people that can afford to put solar panels on their roof, and they are dotted across the muesli belt of the ACT. That is very good, and a lot of people are doing quite well out of that, but how many hundreds of dollars a tonne? The price was—

Members interjecting—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Barr, Mr Corbell!

MR HANSON: Those interjecting opposite might be able to tell me what the cost per tonne of that is. I remember it was \$400 a tonne. The carbon price, that gem of federal Labor, is \$23 a tonne, but the response from ACT Labor was a feed-in tariff that was going to cost average Canberrans \$400 a tonne of carbon abatement. If that is an effective or efficient way to reduce carbon, then they have got me beat. I am not a big fan of the carbon tax, but I will have to say that a feed-in tariff at \$400 a tonne is really something quite special.

There was also the renewable energy target for 2020. The figures around that for the average cost of electricity would see, based on today's costs, bills increasing by close to \$500 a year. The government's own action plan 2 says that it will require \$1.7 billion of private investment. We will see whether that is forthcoming, because all the available capital will be used up in everybody's rush to get into that great light rail deal I am sure private investors will be queuing up for! There is obviously going to be a lot of this private equity people in the government think will be spent on all these wonderful environmental projects that are going to be littered across this town.

Mr Corbell: You really have no idea about the renewable energy market.

Mr Coe: What a stinging criticism, that one was.

MR HANSON: I must admit, Madam Deputy Speaker, as I reach this point it is—

Mr Corbell: There can be more than one market.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Corbell, I know it is late, but we are really not having a conversation across the chamber. Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. It has been quite interesting today—a bit illuminating, I think—that we see this government bite. The government and the opposition disagree on many things, and that is the conclusion that has come from this debate and the others that we have had. We disagree on things like rates reform. We think it will triple; they know it will triple, but they just will not tell us. We think the carbon reduction scheme of this government at eight times the national target is too much. They disagree with that. We think that people's cost of living is a real issue and is something that should be addressed and should be a focus of this government. That mob opposite do not.

However, what it would appear we agree on—and there is no dissent from those opposite—is that there is a race to the left between Simon Corbell and Shane Rattenbury. This is probably most illuminating. There is no dissent from those opposite. There is encouragement there. The only highlight of this government putting up the costs, the fees and the charges and the only thing that will probably be of any benefit to what this government is doing will be to see who wins that race between Simon Corbell and Shane Rattenbury to be the most progressive, the most Green minister in the ACT.

MR BARR (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Sport and Recreation, Minister for Tourism and Events and Minister for Community Services) (5.48): It is always a pleasure to follow Mr Hanson in a debate. He is nothing if not entertaining at times. I rise tonight to speak particularly in relation to part 2(b) of Mr Hanson's motion. Part 2(b) of Mr Hanson's motion calls on the government to provide a more comprehensive cost of living statement in the ACT budget.

I was very pleased to be able to deliver in advance on part 2(b) of Mr Hanson's motion by indeed delivering a more comprehensive cost of living statement in this year's budget, and I thought I might take the available time to talk a little about the cost of living statement.

Mr Hanson: You will be supporting my motion, then?

MR BARR: I will not be supporting the first parts of your motion, Mr Hanson, but I think it is worth outlining some of the issues that are contained in it.

Mr Coe: How many 15-year-olds do get married in the ACT?

MR BARR: This is one that I am pleased you raised, Mr Coe. Let me read the sentence from the cost of living statement:

ACT residents are on average relatively younger, have a higher level of education and higher incomes than the rest of Australia. Canberra families have an average of 1.8 children and 48 per cent of people aged 15 and over are married.

That is an ABS statistic. That is the figure they use, 15 and over. The reason they do so, Mr Coe, if you had read the commonwealth Marriage Act—

Mr Coe: You are right, I have not.

MR BARR: You have not read the commonwealth Marriage Act? It does say that a person who has attained the age of 16 years but has not attained the age of 18 years may apply to a judge or magistrate in a state or territory for an order authorising them to marry a particular person. All we have reported in the cost of living statement is the ABS measure of the number of people 15 years and over who are married. And yet that leads to a rather perverse series of questions suggesting that—what?—we are supporting 15-year-olds getting married or something. It is weird.

What the cost of living statement says is a statistical fact, that 48 per cent of people aged 15 years or over in the ACT are married. There is nothing too controversial in that, I would have thought. Perhaps the only controversial element there that relates to the Marriage Act is the exclusion of a large number of Canberrans from the opportunity to get married. But that is another debate, one we will have another day.

In the budget the government has set out a plan to build a healthier and smarter city, to transform our city through urban renewal, to grow the territory economy and to improve the liveability and opportunity that our city offers our citizens. We do have the highest incomes in the country. We are the healthiest, smartest and most productive members of the Australian community. We as a community devote more money and volunteer more time to community activities than our counterparts across the country. I think it is against this backdrop that we need to look at our capacity within each budget to provide assistance to those in need and to ensure that we are targeting concessions for low income households to meet cost of living expenses.

If you look at the detail of our population, at the 2011 census 10.7 per cent of our population was 65 years of age or over and 25.3 per cent were 19 years of age or under. Employment status in the ACT mirrors that of the rest of Australia, with 65 per cent working full time and 25 per cent working part time. The majority of households, just over two-thirds, own their own home, with or without a mortgage, while just over 30 per cent rent.

The vast majority of households own at least one motor vehicle. The median weekly family income for families with children was \$3,060, compared to \$2,310 in the rest of Australia. In the last 12 months, wages in the ACT increased by 3.4 per cent, from the March quarter 2012 to the March quarter 2013. That was above the national

increase of 3.2 per cent. Over the period from budget to budget, as shown in the cost of living statement, we have seen the Reserve Bank decrease the cash rate four times, from 3.75 per cent to 2.75 per cent, and this has certainly improved the cost of living for those with a mortgage. We experience in Canberra the highest standard of public services, and that is, I think, demonstrated on page 45 of budget paper 3 in the cost of living statement outlining the government's expenditure across those range of directorates and areas of service provision.

I think the most interesting chart in the cost of living statement is chart 2.4.1 on page 45 that outlines the ACT government's spending per capita on the different age groups within the city. And what it shows is that in 2013-14, for almost every age group, but for a small period when people are in their early 20s, the ACT government expends more than \$10,000 per capita in services to individuals.

Obviously when students are at school from the age of five to 16 or 17, that expenditure rises to over \$20,000 per year, and you particularly see the cost of health services rising significantly as people approach 85 years and beyond. And there is a significant amount of money expended in providing services to every individual in our community but particularly those who are young and going through our school system and those who are older and who require access to our health system.

We have in this budget a series of targeted assistance and concession programs to help offset cost of living pressures for some households, particularly those on low incomes. These programs apply differently to households, depending on their circumstances, and are reviewed and adjusted on a regular basis to make sure they remain targeted and appropriate.

As we have discussed at some length this afternoon, the ACT government provides concessions and rebates to help with housing costs. The most significant of those is the first home owner grant, which has been increased to \$12,500. This can be applied to any new property of a total value of \$750,000 or less. Eligible purchasers also have access to the home buyer concession scheme, which assists people purchasing residential land or a home by charging stamp duty at a concessional rate. And for eligible households, this stamp duty can be reduced to as low as \$20.

The home buyer concession scheme has been extended in the 2013-14 budget. The eligibility criteria have increased in terms of household income to \$160,000, and the property threshold for which the full concession is available increases from the 25th percentile of the housing market to the 40th percentile. So this provides a full duty concession for a property valued up to \$425,000, with a partial concession available for a property valued up to \$525,000 or the 65th percentile. Eligible purchasers can also defer the duty on their property through the duty deferral scheme.

The ACT government also assists low income households in the rental market through the provision of affordable housing programs. This is in addition to the provision of public housing for people who have difficulty obtaining housing in the private rental market or who have special needs. The total rent rebate provided by government for public housing concessions—that is, the gap between the market rent of the portfolio versus the amount collected in rebated rents from tenants—was in the order of

\$133 million in the 2012-13 fiscal year. So this is a significant cost of living assistance for people on low incomes to ease their cost of living pressures.

The 2012 targeted assistance strategy was aimed at those people and those households who sit above the concessions safety net and who are not receiving government income support but certainly are at risk of financial shock. These families are more likely to experience financial stress but are less likely to seek assistance from community or welfare organisations. So the focus of this strategy is on how to ease household pressures and reduce the shock of a big bill hitting the family budget. The strategy provides a total of 34 recommendations on how government, business and community groups can, in the short, medium and long term, better target assistance to Canberrans in need. And the territory government continues the work across all of its directorates to advance the recommendations of this strategy.

One outcome of the strategy was the establishment of a single website, the ACT government assistance website, assistance.act.gov.au, that was launched in 2013. The website provides a single portal for all government and community assistance. It has been promoted by government and by community sector partners and has received a very positive feedback from the community. I am pleased to advise there were over 76,000 visits in its first year. Other initiatives have included targeted energy efficiency schemes, building financial capacity through the flexible payment of fees and fines and better access to public dental schemes.

Eligibility for concessions is based on income and asset tests determined by the commonwealth government. People eligible for concessions are generally holders of commonwealth health or pension cards. There are also, though, a number of age-related concessions through the seniors card which qualify a holder for public transport and motor vehicle registration concessions. Concessions are predominantly targeted, quite rightly, to low income earners, young people, people with a disability, concession card holders and seniors.

In the 2013-14 budget the government will provide a significant range of concessions to households, most notably in the areas of general rates, the fire and emergency services levy, drivers licence and motor vehicle registration fees, public transport fares and utility charges. Concessions are also available for some eligible individuals for spectacles, the energy costs of life support equipment, taxi—

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 BARR: As I was saying, concessions are available for some individuals for spectacles, the energy costs of life support equipment, the taxi subsidy scheme, energy and water efficiency programs and e-waste. For those interested, information on available concessions can be found on the ACT government's assistance website or by phoning Canberra Connect. A range of commonwealth concessions and assistance programs are also available to offset eligible households' living costs, but we did not include those in our cost of living statement. They are, of course, available and real and are provided to tens of thousands of households across the ACT.

Under section 11(1)(f) of the Financial Management Act, the territory is, indeed, required to provide a cost of living statement. We have done so in this budget. I am particularly pleased that we have been able to provide a more comprehensive cost of living statement. And so there is one element of Mr Hanson's motion that I agree with. It did come as a bit of a surprise today that there was such upset from the Liberal Party in relation to this more comprehensive cost of living statement. Nevertheless, it provides a variety of information and a variety of different scenarios in terms of how different households in the territory are impacted by decisions taken in this budget.

But in the time that remains to me, I would just like to acknowledge a couple of other rebates that have been increased. We have increased the general rates rebate from \$565 to \$622. We have increased the secondary bursary scheme from \$500 to \$750 for eligible households, and we have also increased the energy concession by 10 per cent, taking the concession from \$292.82 to \$322.10, helping some of the most disadvantaged households, about 27,000 of them, across our city to meet some rising costs associated with energy. (*Time expired.*)

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (6.03): It is hard to know where to start with this motion. I think there are serious issues to be discussed about those who are doing it tough in this town, who are finding it hard to make ends meet, and then there is Mr Hanson's motion. This is a motion that is clearly a political statement. It is a bit of a mishmash of things and, frankly, some of them are best described as inaccurate. I think that is unfortunate because it probably disguises some issues that warrant a serious discussion.

We have discussed these sorts of issues many times in this place. Certainly, with the areas that I have portfolio responsibility for, I am well aware of the fact that many Canberrans are finding it hard at times for a range of different reasons. We live in a city, of course, where the averages often hide that disadvantage. We live in a city that is, overall, quite wealthy. But it is important to recognise that within that, when one looks past the averages and statistics, there are individual cases that certainly tell stories about disadvantage and difficulty.

It is worth perusing some of the specific paragraphs in Mr Hanson's motion. Again, this points to the way in which one can use statistics. If you take paragraph (1)(a), which is about the cost of living pressures, and then look at something like the latest state of the states report, that shows that the ACT has the equal highest wages growth in the country and the second lowest inflation, meaning that, in real terms, Canberrans have enjoyed the largest growth in real wages in the country.

We have the highest average weekly earnings and the highest average household earnings—\$700 more than the national average. When you start to have a discussion about cost of living pressures and then look at a set of figures like that, it requires a much greater level of nuance than is brought forward in Mr Hanson's motion today. That points to the fact that some Canberrans, frankly, probably do not even notice—and I am sure that is the case—whereas for others some of these pressures are very real and particular cost increases are quite challenging.

I think this plays out when we look at paragraph (1)(b), which talks about utility charges. We note that electricity costs in the ACT are the lowest in the country. That has been the case for some time. We have certainly debated that matter in the chamber before. We know that simply having an electricity account right here in the territory or having one across the border in Queanbeyan can result in a difference of literally hundreds of dollars—

Mr Barr: \$1,000 a year.

MR RATTENBURY: Up to \$1,000 a year? I have not looked at the most recent figures. I will take Mr Barr's advice on that one. But whatever it is, it is a substantial difference. Again, that points to where we need to have nuance in this sort of discussion—because electricity costs have gone up in the ACT and if we roll out the figures they have gone up each year in recent years.

I think it then comes to what the solution is to that. That is why I took up the case a couple of years ago and started talking about the need to increase the energy concession rebate. It is the people at the bottom end of the spectrum who are struggling and need assistance. I am pleased to see that in this year's budget there is a 10 per cent increase in the energy concession rebate. So the government, through this budget, is actually assisting those people who need the most assistance and notice these increases.

That is also why I talk about energy efficiency so often. The energy efficiency scheme that was legislated last year and is now starting to roll out is really important when it comes to a debate in which we are not just bringing in a political motion but actually talking about nuance and the issues that really make a difference. Electricity prices will continue to go up for a whole range of reasons and we have debated them extensively in this place before.

One can pull out the figures and certainly go back across the last decade. People stand in here and say, "It's the carbon tax. It's outrageous. It's these Green measures." There is a whole series of figures that show that that is not, in fact, the case. The primary driver of electricity price increases in the last decade in any jurisdiction you care to look at has been network costs, the need to upgrade the infrastructure. That is an unavoidable cost. We have to maintain good infrastructure, safe infrastructure, and infrastructure that minimises transmission losses. So we need to have as efficient a grid as possible. Those costs, one can make a fairly decent argument, are unavoidable. There is a debate about whether they have been gold plated or not but, putting that to one side, those are costs that are built in. The only way to avoid those costs is to use less electricity. That is why so often I come in here—and I am often mocked for it—and talk about energy efficiency being the best way to avoid those electricity price increases.

I note paragraph (f) in a similar vein where Mr Hanson talks about the government embarking on a disproportionately high carbon reduction and renewable energy target. Clearly, there is a value judgement in that statement. I am still amused—as Mr Seselja gets ready to leave the chamber this week—that we never debated his legislation that

called for a 30 per cent greenhouse gas reduction target; we never resolved that issue. The Liberal Party were deeply critical of the 40 per cent target that was passed by this chamber. They have always got to be awkward and they were a little bit silent when we started talking about their 30 per cent target. I note that that legislation was never—

Mr Barr interjecting—

MR RATTENBURY: I also note the reference in Mr Hanson's motion to the *Skywhale*. I quote the exact text:

... the Government continues to prioritise expenditure on items such as the Skywhale instead of measures that will ease the burden on Canberra families—

I found the debate on the *Skywhale* quite fascinating. If we accept that the price is around \$300,000, how exactly is that a prioritisation of government expenditure? We have a centenary budget of \$30 million, of which this is a small component. I note that the opposition has not been nearly as exercised, for example, by the international cricket match in Canberra which cost more than the *Skywhale*. I went to the international cricket match and I enjoyed it, as many Canberrans did. Equally, there are a group of Canberrans who have derived pleasure, interest and enjoyment from the *Skywhale*. I think it points to the fact—

Mr Coe interjecting—

MR RATTENBURY: We can have a debate about how many enjoyed each one, but it points to the fact that in a \$30 million centenary budget there rightly should be scope for a range of activities.

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, Mr Hanson and Mr Coe! Mr Rattenbury has the floor.

Mr Barr interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Barr!

MR RATTENBURY: In a \$30 million centenary budget there are going to be a range of activities that take place and different groups of Canberrans are going to enjoy each of those activities. I think the whole debate about the *Skywhale* has, frankly, been blown a little out of proportion.

Mr Barr: It has. There is a lot of hot air.

MR RATTENBURY: There is a lot of hot air. Because of the obvious political nature of a range of the statements and the fact that, unfortunately, that has disguised the important issues that lie behind some of the points I think Mr Hanson probably wants to make, I will not be able to support the motion today.

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (6.11), in reply: I thank members for their contributions. It is disappointing that the government will not be supporting the motion. As we go through the cost of living statement that has changed its form we will look to see whether it has been enhanced or not as we unpick it; and that is certainly something that we will examine during estimates. If indeed it has been enhanced then we will welcome that. If it includes all those things we talked about like parking and all the other components then we will welcome that. If it does not then I think we will have seen more mistruths and bending of the truth by the government. But that is probably a debate for another day.

This is a serious motion. The cost of living is something that has been a recurring theme. Certainly, it was a key point with the Canberra Liberals in the last term—and it will remain a key point of difference, I think, between our two parties in terms of priorities. Priorities are what it comes down to ultimately. It is where the focus of the government is. It is disappointing if Mr Rattenbury is going to leave during the debate because I think that—

Mr Rattenbury: Mr Hanson, for your benefit I will stay.

MR HANSON: I am disappointed Mr Corbell is not in here as well. The point that I was making about priorities and competition between the two hardcore lefties in this place, the environmental extremists, seems to be a factor that is contributing to the cost of living in this town. I do not think Tom Waterhouse is taking odds yet on who is going to cost Canberrans the most with their progressive ideals. I am trying to assess where the odds might sit. When we look at who we can tag each of these policies to, I am sorry to say, Mr Rattenbury, that I am going to have to award the 40 per cent carbon emission targets policy to Mr Corbell as minister for the environment.

Although you have been a strong advocate for that and dogmatic in your pursuit of it, you will be disappointed to see that it is that and the 90 per cent renewables policy that are costing Canberrans so much. The needles and syringes you will probably take over as a bit of a campaign. I am not sure how much that will cost or how much has been spent on the numerous studies that we have had on that ideological pursuit. I am happy to pass that one on to you. Then there is public housing. I think the bill that we saw from the Greens-Labor parliamentary agreement was \$1 billion. It was costed by Treasury as \$1 billion. I happily give that to Mr Rattenbury.

Wood heaters? I am not sure; it seems to split between the two with the jurisdictions. I will award that to both of them in terms of the cost of living pain that is being inflicted on Canberrans. Light rail? Again, although Mr Rattenbury is an advocate for light rail and, indeed, wants light rail pretty much everywhere in Canberra—the Greens' plan in the lead-up to the election was for light rail all across Canberra at God knows what price to ratepayers; it would be many billions of dollars, I am sure—as it falls under the jurisdiction of Mr Corbell, I think that one probably goes to him.

I was actually struggling with who wanted ownership of the *Skywhale*. It would seem that Mr Rattenbury has claimed that, so he can take that—if only because it is a smaller amount than perhaps the billions that have been spent elsewhere. But the

\$300,000 that is going to be tagged somewhere onto someone's bill I think we can accord to Mr Rattenbury.

Regarding plastic bags, the cost of that can go through to Mr Corbell. All of the costs from DV306 and the solar aspects to that—again, Mr Rattenbury is a strong advocate but Mr Corbell seems to have taken that one up. But let us share the parking pain. The increases in parking that are trying to drive people who drive their cars—

Mr Rattenbury: It's not worth staying, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: It is not worth staying for? You could find out who wins, who is the biggest leftie, who is driving up the cost of living the most with their ideological pursuits.

Mr Barr: So have you ruled out light rail now?

MR HANSON: Have I ruled out light rail? At any cost I have, yes. I can clarify that the Liberals will not, as Mr Barr said, deliver light rail at any cost. I commend Mr Smyth for his questioning in committee. I think that is the only cost-benefit that has been done on this by the Labor Party—"at any cost".

There is a range of these things. The more serious point of the pain that will be inflicted on Canberrans in terms of their cost of living is, sadly, that this is a government that, whatever words one wants to use—"transformative", "progressive"—is the most green government in Australia. It is pursuing an ideological agenda that suits a narrow majority of this town at the expense of the majority, and the majority pay for that. They have paid for that in their cost of living. I commend this motion to the Assembly.

Question put:

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

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 8

Noes 9

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

Question so resolved in the negative.

Adjournment

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

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

**Havelock Housing Association
Team Jim Jam**

MR COE (Ginninderra) (6.21): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak about the work of the Havelock Housing Association. Havelock Housing Association is a not-for-profit association which provides housing to people on a low to moderate income using the community housing model. The association's mission is to provide members with safe and secure accommodation consistent with community housing standards that will contribute positively to their quality of life. In achieving this mission, the association will promote social justice, work towards maximising members' participation, follow sound business principles and be responsive and an innovative organisation.

Havelock Housing Association seeks to provide housing for low- to moderate-income earners, young mothers, single-parent families, students, asylum seekers, refugees, people with mental health issues and apprentices. The association encourages tenant participation in the management of the properties as well as ensuring that tenants are represented on its board.

Havelock House in Turner was first opened in 1951 as a hostel for public servants. The Australian Federal Police were given control of the building in 1983, but after strong community protest an agreement was reached to allow the building to be used for low-cost housing. It was handed over to the association, and the first residents moved into the building in April 1988.

The association currently provides accommodation for over 100 residents as well as providing space for community groups within Havelock House, including the Tenants Union, welfare rights, ACT Shelter and the women's legal centre.

The association's board is Craig Shannon, Jeff House, Paul McBow, Amanda Oosterweghel, Faye Digby, Franklin Hardi Bangura and Laurie Hovi; the CEO is Loc Luu. This government has not recognised the role the Havelock Housing Association plays in our community, but I hope under a new minister things will change.

The association has extensive partnership with community groups, including Richmond Fellowship, Anglicare, St Vincent de Paul, Koomarri, CatholicCare, Home Help Services, the Australian Federal Police, the Community Programs Association, the National Training Group, the ACT Neighbourhood Watch Association, the Canberra Student Housing Cooperative, the Canberra Institute of Technology, the YWCA of Canberra, the Red Cross, the AIDS Action Council, ACT Mental Health, the Canberra Men's Centre, SNP Security, the ACT fire brigade, the Rooftop Foundation, MARSS and Construction Charitable Works.

Last Friday I was pleased to attend the Havelock Housing Association's 25th anniversary afternoon tea. I congratulate all involved, including the board members, staff and tenants, for the wonderful work that they do, and wish them all the very best for many more successful years. For more information about Havelock Housing Association's work, I encourage members to visit their website at www.havelock.asn.au.

Madam Speaker, I would like to pay tribute to the Lynch family and other members of Team Jim Jam for their amazing fundraising effort as part of the RSPCA's Million Paws Walk. Jamie-Leigh Lynch tragically died in a car accident on the Kambah Pool Road recently. Jamie-Leigh's parents, Markus and Sheila, decided to celebrate her life and love of animals by taking part in the Million Paws Walk. They named their team Team Jim Jam in honour of one of Jamie-Leigh's nicknames.

Team Jim Jam raised over \$15,000 for the RSPCA and was the highest fundraiser in the history of the Million Paws Walk. In recognition of their amazing efforts, the RSPCA will dedicate a dog kennel and an area in the cattery in honour of Jamie-Leigh. I commend the family and friends of Jamie-Leigh for this wonderful tribute which will leave a lasting legacy here in the ACT.

World Environment Day

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella) (6.24): I rise tonight on World Environment Day to discuss the importance of recognising our own environment on this important day. World Environment Day was started by the United Nations environment program in 1973 and has continued to grow since that time with the theme this year being think, eat, save. Think, eat, save is an anti food waste and anti food loss campaign that encourages you to reduce your environmental footprint.

According to the UN Food and Agricultural Organisation—FAO—every year 1.3 billion tonnes of food is wasted. This is equivalent to the same amount produced in the whole of sub-Saharan Africa. At the same time, one in every seven people in the world go to bed hungry and more than 20,000 children under the age of five die daily from hunger.

Each year in Australia 60,000 families go without meals or are stressed about where their next meal will come from. Meanwhile, 20 per cent of all food produced in Australia—that is over four million tonnes—is dumped as waste. This puts a massive strain on our environment with the fact being that food is wasted.

It means that the resources and inputs used in the production of all food are also lost. For example, it takes about 1,000 litres of water to produce one litre of milk and about 16,000 litres goes into a cow's food to make a hamburger. The resulting greenhouse gas emissions from cows themselves and throughout the food supply chain all end up in vain when we waste food.

This is an important theme that focuses our attention on food wastage. Thankfully, we have an organisation in Canberra that is assisting to reduce this large amount of waste in the ACT. Each month the Yellow Van rescues over 20 tonnes of quality excess food from more than 100 food retailers, event caterers and restaurants. A large proportion of food is fresh food and vegetables.

The food is distributed free of charge to around 80 charities and refuges supporting vulnerable people in Canberra's regions. That includes domestic violence refuges, disability support services, homeless shelters, youth refuges and programs, and mental

health support groups. It also includes agencies supporting people with drug, alcohol and gambling issues, school breakfast programs and agencies supporting people experiencing financial hardship.

This is all done for under \$1 per meal while still maintaining a high level of nutrition. This organisation runs purely on donations from the community with three refrigerated vans, five paid staff and over 40 volunteers. One of the great organisations that receives meals from this service is the Blue Door, which I have previously spoken about in this chamber. The second is the care and share program operating out of the Tuggeranong Communities@Work organisation.

Seeing first hand this food delivered was truly touching. The food is not just of economic benefit to these organisations. It also gives them the opportunity to connect with the vulnerable people in the community and to continue to support them through referrals and other forms of assistance as needed.

World Environment Day is a great time to stop and reflect on what you are doing to reduce your footprint on the environment. Food wastage is not the only thing that you can look at to change or reduce your footprint. The ACT government has set up ACTSmart to assist Canberrans in reducing their footprint with rebates and consultations available to reduce reliance on energy.

This, coupled with the ever-increasing uptake of solar hot-water systems and solar-powered systems—I can now advise the Assembly that we have up to 14,000 PV installations across the territory—is showing that Canberrans are continuously looking for ways to lower their footprint on the environment.

Smith Family VIEW clubs

MR SESELJA (Brindabella) (6.28): I would like to say a few words about the Smith Family VIEW clubs. VIEW—voice, interests and education of women—is a club which is a product of the Smith Family. I met recently with Margaret Gooch, the national councillor of VIEW clubs in the ACT and surrounding area.

Nationally the organisation has 19,600 members, and it is part of and supports the work of the Smith Family. It provides support and friendship for women throughout communities nationally. It provides networking events and a chance to get more involved in the community along with helping disadvantaged Australian children supported by the Smith Family.

In Canberra and the surrounding area there are 20 VIEW clubs with a total of 841 active members. VIEW currently supports 34 learning-for-life students in the area. There are a total of 1,607 students sponsored by the Smith Family in the area. Last year, \$67,241.76 was raised by members in the area through fundraising events. VIEW nationally supports 985 disadvantaged students.

VIEW members volunteer their time and talent in a number of ways, including reading with local children to advance their literacy skills, helping children with

school work at the Smith Family's after-school learning hubs, acting as mentors for students taking part in the Smith Family's mentoring programs, and making library bags and donating school stationery packs for disadvantaged students.

Membership of VIEW is suited to all women interested in meeting regularly, establishing lasting friendships and contributing to the community. So I commend Margaret Gooch and I commend the VIEW clubs and all of those involved in them in Canberra and the region, and indeed right around the nation.

Yunupingu—death

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) (6.30): It is with sadness that I rise today to present this condolence motion in honour of one of our nation's most talented and long admired musicians and Indigenous rights campaigners.

I speak, of course, of the incredible Yunupingu, who sadly lost his long and courageous battle with kidney disease, passing away surrounded by family at his Northern Territory home on Sunday. He was only 56 but packed so much into those five and a half decades, leaving an indelible mark on this country's community, musical and political landscapes.

Here in Canberra he had many friends and connections forged and fostered during years of campaigning and time spent in the capital. Yunupingu would come here to talk to political leaders, highlighting the challenges and triumphs of his Arnhem Land community, the Yolngu people, while also bringing wider Indigenous issues to the national stage through his award winning musical career.

A few years back he graciously agreed to appear as the headline act of our city's National Multicultural Festival. It was an honour to have him represent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians as part of the nation's biggest yearly celebration of cultural diversity. His contribution that year drew thousands of people to the lawns of Old Parliament House to watch him and Yothu Yindi belt out their hits, including the worldwide smash *Treaty*.

When he sang that, the crowd that day moved as one, all mouthing the words to a song that, upon its release, garnered the spirit and determination of a better way of life for our country's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It was a message that echoed across the globe—Yunupingu's voice reverberating from stereos and radio stations in countries spanning the full gamut of time zones.

In 1992, during one of his many visits to Canberra, he was named Australian of the Year for his role in building bridges between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, and he held that mantle with great pride. To Yunupingu, it was about continuing to spread the message on a more prominent stage, helping mend the wrongs of the past, paving the way towards a better future for his people.

But despite all the accolades, the eight ARIA awards, song of the year and being inducted into the ARIA Hall of Fame in 2012, it was his family that made him most

proud. Yunupingu leaves behind his wife and six daughters. No doubt they, too, will continue to carry his message forward into the future, as will, perhaps, his best known song, *Treaty*.

When future Australian generations listen to it in decades to come as the gap continues to close and life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples continue to improve, they will be able to reflect on the struggles of the past and a magnificent voice that helped shine a light on them. That voice, those lyrics, that moment in time will never fade, and I offer my condolences to his family.

Turkey

MS BERRY (Ginninderra) (6.33): I rise tonight to speak on an issue of truly significant importance. Yesterday I joined with my friends in the Turkish community at a demonstration to draw national attention to the violent response of police to a peaceful protest in Turkey's Taksim Square. On 31 May a group of concerned residents had gathered in Taksim Square to protest the conversion of Istanbul's last green space into a shopping district. Over the course of the day the protest grew to a significant size and riot police moved in to physically break up the peaceful crowd using tear gas and pepper spray. This act of violence has sparked further violence from both the protesters and their government. Images of violent clashes across Istanbul are now being seen around the world.

Listening to stories from our Turkish community, some of whom have friends and family protesting on the streets of Istanbul today, I can only imagine their anger and fear over such violence in their usually safe and peaceful home. The issues that are fuelling the protests in Taksim Square are complex. They are of the development of a nation's capital city and of the nature of the society that exists within it. In many ways these protests are part of a larger conversation being undertaken in Turkey about their national identity and, as such, it is only appropriate that they should be determined by Turkish nationals.

I joined yesterday with our Turkish community, not to express views on these complex issues, but to collectively defend the right of all people across the world to use peaceful protest as a way to progress their cause. Often coming together is how we physically demonstrate the strength of our convictions.

Peaceful protest has a fine history in this country. It protects workplace safety, progresses the rights of disenfranchised groups and offers a chance for everyday people to have their voices heard. Just as fine is our history of response to protest. Standing with Canberra's Turkish community yesterday, no-one was afraid of the few police around. They were not afraid for their families or their jobs. They knew that they had a right to express their views, and in doing so they highlighted the need for their friends in Turkey to be able to feel the same safety in Taksim Square.

Finally, I would like to pass on my condolences to the families of Abdullah Comert and Mehmet Ayyalitas who have been killed during the protests. The death of a young person who is campaigning for a future they will not get to see is deeply sad and my thoughts are with their families, communities and with all the people of Istanbul who have been affected by this violence.

Jennings Germans

DR BOURKE (Ginninderra) (6.36): Tonight I pay tribute to the group of skilled craftsmen known as the Jennings Germans. I had the pleasure of meeting several of them on the weekend and presenting them with certificates from the Chief Minister recognising their important contribution to the building of Canberra in the 1950s. They included Karl Kloos, who documented his experiences in his book *To Build a Nation's Capital: A Migrant's Story*; Konrad Dimpel; Hans Pillig; Klaus Scharrer; and Alfons Stuetz, author of the book *The History of the Jennings Germans*.

The men I met on Saturday were just some of the 150 tradesmen from Europe, mostly from Germany, who came to Canberra in the 1950s to work for AV Jennings and became fondly known as the Jennings Germans. Much of their work still stands in the 1,800 houses they built in O'Connor, Ainslie, Narrabundah and Yarralumla. When the AV Jennings' founder, Sir Albert Jennings, was confronted by the task of building this vast number of government houses during the critical labour shortage of the early 1950s, he looked to Europe for the skills he needed.

These men have had some recognition over the years as a group, but we had a special opportunity last Saturday at the launch of the new exhibition *Fred Ward: A Life in Design* at the Gallery of Australian Design. The connection is that many of these fine European craftsmen, especially the carpenters and joiners, went on to work on Fred Ward's beautiful furniture designs for the ANU and other commissions. The gallery is making a unique contribution to the centenary, with this exhibition and others highlighting the visionary designers of our past and our designers of the future. I thank Derek Wrigley for championing Fred Ward's place in design history through his biography of Fred Ward.

Derek Wrigley, AV Jennings, the craftsmen and their families have all supported formal recognition of the Jennings Germans' role in building and enriching our city. Their story is little known outside Canberra, unlike international workers who came to our region at about the same time to work on the Snowy Mountains hydro scheme. I believe there is an application in for the recognition of the Jennings Germans with a plaque in the ACT honour walk, which would be appropriate.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 6.38 pm.